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Photos by: Ashish Dhir, Shivaji Choudhury & www.worldbank.org

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Letters to the Editor

Dear *NewsReach*,

Thank you for dedicating your August 2009 issue to Prof. Ranjit Gupta. The article from Vijay Mahajan was most befitting. Many a times I have wondered why nobody wrote about Prof. Gupta, especially the many leaders whom he initiated to the development sector from the Indian Institute Management, Ahmedabad. The August issue of *NewsReach* does justice to Professor's pioneering contributions.

I consider myself fortunate to have studied and later worked during the first two years of my career under Prof. Gupta. I have had the opportunity of long interactions with him between 2001 and 2005, and those interactions still inspire me to be a development entrepreneur and an institution builder, which he always considered the noblest profession of man on Earth. He exhorted me and my batchmates to always achieve better than our best and repeatedly told us that excellence is a never-ending pursuit. In spite of his ill health, he attempted to establish a second rural university project through some of us—his protégés—in two different blocks of Tamil Nadu, which eventually had to be given up midway. But even then, through long hours of painstaking efforts, of reading and correcting our field notes, and supplementing them with direct sessions, he brought out a process document of our efforts and the resultant changes.

With his inspiration, I have co-founded a start-up called ROPE (Rural Opportunities Production Enterprise). ROPE is a company that tries to provide market opportunities to rural production centres engaged in the manufacture of handmade and hand-woven products.

Sreejith N.N.
www.ropeinternational.com

Dear *NewsReach*,

We have received the July and August 2009 issues of *NewsReach*. We found the articles on vermicompost and SRI quite interesting.

I read with avid interest the special issue on Prof. Ranjit Gupta. It is sad that people like him and their contribution are not widely known, to even amongst those in the development circle. I truly hope that *NewsReach* is widely shared with development practitioners so that they get to know about such personalities.

Sachin Oza
www.dscindia.org

Need for Legal Interventions to Empower Women—Part II

ANTARA LAHIRI

Part I of this article presented case studies to highlight the problems faced by poor adivasi women in the villages of Kesla block. It had interviews with women, who faced or took on the administration, police or the judiciary to assert their rights, and with persons from the administration and the lower judiciary to assess the role played by the state. Part II of this article distills observations and provides recommendations to further empower adivasi women in the prevailing socio-legal context.

FINDINGS

Awareness of rights

Some of the women who were interviewed during the course of the study seemed to understand that women, as a community, were entitled to rights. In addition, they were willing to stand up to government authorities in order to ensure the same. This, however, forms a relatively small percentage of the village women and, consequently, the overall awareness levels regarding legal rights and entitlements of women remains fairly low.

Education

Most people interviewed in the course of this study were illiterate. However, they understood the value of literacy and education. Consequently, they were all very proud that they were being able to send their children to school and seemed to actively support their children's education.

Perspective of husbands on meetings

Various women stated that they were hesitant to disclose to their husbands or families that they were going out to attend meetings and to aid women. The husbands and other male folk seem to perceive the idea and nomenclature of 'meetings' as threatening.

Nari Adalat

With the assistance of Pradan, an interesting experiment known as Nari Adalat has been started in the block, to bring about easy accessibility of justice for women. This is an innovative idea, whereby a court manned by local people is set up on an ad-hoc basis for the resolution of civil and property disputes. These 'judges'/'arbitrators' are given basic training in the working of the law; instead of statutory laws, the court is governed by the general principles of natural justice. However, such courts are not yet effectively operational.

Obtaining *jati praman patra*

There seems to be inadequate information available to the tribals on the procedure to get a *jati praman patra*, in order to be able to utilize the various schemes made available by the government for STs. Saiwati Bai mentioned that she had been trying to get a *jati praman patra* in order to let her children avail of the scholarships available for ST children. However, the lawyer she spoke to stated that he would charge Rs 1,000 to make the two certificates.

With the assistance of Pradan, an interesting experiment known as Nari Adalat has been started in the block, to bring about easy accessibility of justice for women

The Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 2005 in order to ameliorate the condition of women, who have suffered abuse and violence in a domestic relationship. However, the persons required to be appointed as per the said Act (for example, the protection officer, etc.) have not been so appointed

in Kesla block. Further, there is complete lack of knowledge on the part of the government functionaries and the village women about the existence and recourse available to women under the Act.

Alcohol

The permission given by the Government of India for tribals to prepare and store alcohol for the purposes of preserving their cultural tradition seems to be acting detrimentally on the *adivasi* society. The primary effects of ready and easy accessibility to alcohol are, inter alia, domestic violence and the frittering away of the family income on alcohol.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a rampant problem across all the villages visited. Most times, it is an alcohol-induced problem. Lalmani mentioned that during discussions in the SHG and the cluster meetings, they constantly hear that women are being beaten up. However, lack of knowledge about the law and the recourse possible for these abused women hampers them from being able to effectively advise or help these abused women.

It is unfortunate that the incidents of domestic violence are accepted by certain sections of the villages as a natural societal reality and, therefore, does not need to be addressed as a problem.

It is heartening to note that the women in Narmada Mahila Sangh (NMS) are addressing the concept of domestic violence as an issue and have put in place informal structures to address it in their society. These informal penal structures, put in place by the village women (for example, fines levied on the husband if he commits domestic violence, speaking to the husband about the physical abuse being committed by him, etc.), have enabled the village women to exercise a degree of punitive action, independent of the state, and these have proved to be an effective deterrent in most cases. These structures have definitely paid better dividends than the recent enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, about which there seems to be lack of awareness in the area.

Dying declaration

Dying declarations are based on the principle of '*Nemo moriturus praesumitur mentire*', that is, a man will not meet his Maker with a lie in his mouth. Such declarations are an exception to the rule of direct evidence, required under the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. Such an exception is permitted because

in certain situations, there will not be any other witness to the crime, except the person who has since died. As a matter of prudence, the local magistrate is called in, to record a dying declaration.

Women in the panchayat still face many problems associated with their identity as women

women, inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources."

The various people interviewed indicated that the reservation has been successfully implemented in the course of the last decade.

Upon conversing with the Executive Magistrate for Shahpur, it was seen that women, who have been physically abused such that they are nearly dead, even upon their deathbed endeavour to safeguard their in-laws. This is because they believe that they will have to live with the same family when they recover, not taking into consideration that they may not survive.

Representation of women in panchayats

The Constitution (73rd Amendment Act) 1992 converted the concept of village *panchayats* from the status of being a Directive Principle of State Policy in the Constitution of India to a uniform structure of three-tier local government institutions for rural areas, to be implemented by the states with clarity on authority, functions, jurisdiction and finances. The 73rd Amendment also created space by way of reservation in these local government institutions for representation of women and SC/STs. This was in line with the sentiment expressed in the Statement of Objects and Reasons to the 73rd Amendment Act:

"Though the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been in existence for a long time, it has been observed that these institutions have not been able to acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to a number of reasons—including absence of regular elections, prolonged supersessions, insufficient representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and

Women in the *panchayat* still face many problems associated with their identity as women. These, inter alia, include the usurping of control of *panchayat* meetings by men, election of women to the *panchayats* on the basis of prevalent caste/social alignments, which results in the use of such women to wield power by the caste/family; requirement of permission from the male members of the family/community to enter the 'male' domain of politics, etc.

With the exception of Smita Uikey, the persons interviewed gave the impression that women who have been elected to positions of political power in *panchayats* remain unaware about the associated responsibilities and the role of an elected official in such institutions.

A common phenomenon noticed across the villages is the concept of a *sarpanch-pati*. In practice, the woman, who in line with the terms of the 73rd Amendment, has been elected to a position of power as a *sarpanch* does not independently exercise any power. Her husband carries on the business of the *panchayat* as *sarpanch* in her name. A *tehsildar* remarked that the phrase *sarpanch-pati* had become like a designation in the area.

Lack of information among tribal women about forest land rights

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights)

Act was enacted in 2006 to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in, inter alia, forest dwelling STs, who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights had not been formally recorded. This was done with the aim of addressing the long-standing insecurity of tenurial and access rights of forest dwelling STs.

Although the government officials are aware of the same, there was lack of awareness amongst the tribal people of the area regarding the Act and the procedure put in place under the Act.

Adivasi women are apparently facing problems in getting access to local forests in order to procure wood and forest produce. There is a discrepancy between the statement of ground reality given by the government official and the woman interviewed. The government official gave the impression that the issue had been sorted out whereas the woman insisted that the problem was still very much existent.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

NREGA has been enacted with the aim of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by building durable assets. The Act guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the prescribed minimum wage rates.

Although the women interviewed seem to know about the basic procedures prescribed by NREGA, they seem to be unaware that the

Adivasi women are apparently facing problems in getting access to local forests in order to procure wood and forest produce

same is an entitlement for them as opposed to a favour they are seeking from the *panchayat*.

The implementation of NREGA seems to be inadequate because work is not being readily offered, job cards are not being utilized and

favouritism is the determinant in being able to get work.

Women seem to be especially suffering in this scenario because the interviewees stated that many women have not got the opportunity to use their job cards at all.

Bigamy

Bigamy is a criminal offence under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. However, bigamous marriages seem to be a commonplace phenomenon. This is seen more as a social problem for the wife than as a criminal offence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alcohol

Suggestions are required to be made to the government to withdraw the prevalent permission to prepare and store alcohol, currently enjoyed by tribals.

The village women involved in the preparation and sale of alcohol need to be sensitized to the problems they are aiding and abetting in their own society by undertaking this business. Towards this end, Saiwati Bai, Smita Uikey, etc., can be asked to speak to groups of women across villages to disseminate information on the harm caused by alcohol to families.

Training in alternative methods of livelihood generation may be conducted for women

who are currently involved in the preparation and sale of alcohol as their principal means of livelihood.

Legal awareness training and information dissemination

There needs to be training given to natural leaders in the NMS on certain legal concepts. Persons such as Lalmani, Saraswati Bai and Saiwati Bai are very eager to learn. They can be given training in basic modules relating to the rights of women, such that they are in a position to disseminate the information to the village women they come in contact with.

The fact that domestic violence is an offence is not understood by the village women. Information needs to be given to the women about the prescribed procedures and persons they may approach in the event of abuse and violence, under the Domestic Violence Act. The state government officials in the area need to be approached in order to get a Protection Officer appointed under the said Act.

As part of the legal awareness training, modules may be conducted on bigamy as a criminal offence, the value of a dying declaration in prosecutions, assault and battery under IPC, etc.

In addition, information dissemination on rights and procedures under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 needs to be conducted for the villagers in order to enable them to access government machinery to protect their lands.

The concept of Nari Adalats could be given a more structured and institutionalized format. Given the inaccessibility of most of the villages in the area to formal judicial structures, it would be useful to have a structure like this in place, where local problems can be sorted out without incurring substantial expenditure on lawyers and travel

Information dissemination is also needed to be done on the rights of persons under NREGA, and the superior government authorities that may be approached if there is infringement of rights specified under the said Act.

Empowering women in panchayats

A local workshop may be organized wherein women representatives in *panchayats* can understand their role in the working of the *panchayat* and the associated powers and responsibilities. In addition,

they may be provided the required support to understand that they can function independently of the influence of their husbands and families.

Women representatives such as Smita Uikey are good local role models and speakers. The village women are easily able to identify with them. Such women could be given an opportunity to speak to a group of women representatives in *panchayats* about their experiences.

Nari Adalat

The concept of Nari Adalats could be given a more structured and institutionalized format. Given the inaccessibility of most of the villages in the area to formal judicial structures, it would be useful to have a structure like this in place, where local problems can be sorted out without incurring substantial expenditure on lawyers and travel. The nearest court for the Kesla region falls in Betul. This is a long distance for most villagers to travel and also leads to substantial expenditure for them.

A panel of local 'judges' may be selected and persons from amongst them, on the basis of their availability, can be utilized in order to hear cases. Some practical training in basic laws (relating to property, family, etc.) may be given to such 'judges'. It may also be useful to give such 'judges' a sense of the role they would be playing for the community and to that extent of the responsibility involved.

Linkages with law schools

Pradan can establish linkages with law schools in the region to have easy access to free legal services for the community.

Through this mechanism, the law students and the faculty may be utilized in order to train SHG/cluster/NMS members to enable them to disseminate information regarding the basic legal rights of women.

Further, the services of the law school faculty may also be utilized to impart legal training to the judges of the Nari Adalat.

CONCLUSION

'Empowerment' has been defined by the World Bank as the *"process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions, which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets"* (Ruth Alsop et al, *Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Interpretation, Directions in Development*, World Bank, 2006)

The SHGs set up by Pradan in Kesla along with the NMS have gone a long way in helping women in the region become 'empowered'. It has helped women to earn their own livelihoods as well as achieve a sense of solidarity with other women. The common theme echoed by all the women interviewed is the empathy and support they receive from fellow women, by being part of such an organization and the empowerment that this provides for them. It has also resulted in bringing women in touch with the public arena and has given them exposure to entities outside their families. These result in changing the manner in which a village woman looks at herself and the position she occupies in her society. This also enables her to have the power to fight for her rights and demand equality with men.

The women interviewed, however, still lack access to information and awareness that will enable them to effectively raise their voice to assert their rights. If training in the basic rights of women and the special laws in place for their protection is given to the leaders of the NMS, it will enable these women to empower themselves and will also result in this information percolating to other rural women. In addition, given the remoteness of the villages visited, it would be helpful for the women to have informal adjudication structures like the Nari Adalat in place. This will allow them to efficaciously deal with local disputes and problems, without incurring substantial costs over the same. These measures will go a long way in helping these women achieve their true potential for empowerment.

Power of Women's Federations in Unequal Societies

VED ARYA

The World Bank President's interaction with the members of an all-women federation-cum-milk producing organization, Maitree, highlighted the useful lessons that may be drawn from the experience.

Maitree is a women's federation-cum-milk producer organization with a membership of 2,000 rural poor women in Deoli block of Tonk district in Rajasthan. The NGO Self Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN) facilitated the formation of Maitree, in collaboration with the District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) of the Government of Rajasthan. SRIJAN is focused on poverty alleviation through self reliance and joint action in water resource management and other livelihood initiatives in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka. Robert Zoellick, the World Bank President, travelled to Tonk to meet 100 women leaders of Maitree.

Maitree has established a milk value chain. It has sold milk worth over Rs 1.5 crores and transferred Rs 1.35 crores as income to women in the last three years. On an average, a member earns Rs 1,000 per month. The members of Maitree have taken their social responsibilities seriously. They raised the issue of teachers' absence from schools in which their daughters study and were successful in getting the District Collector to appoint new staff. Each woman Zoellick met had a daughter studying in school, sometimes in the higher grades—9th standard or above. None had dropped out.

Zoellick said the members of Maitree were an example for the other women in the country and other nations. He encouraged the women to teach their husbands—or if that were not possible, their sons—to cooperate, and use their collective power to avail of economic opportunities. When he asked what else would they like to do, the women leaders said that the government's education programme should be handed over to them so that they could open schools in each village and make each woman member literate. Currently, a mere one per cent of them is literate.

Zoellick sees the link between their empowerment through collective action, their ability to use economic opportunities and their demand that government programmes must address the pressing needs of the community. He voiced this in an interview to a national daily when he returned to Delhi. He indicated that if the Indian middle class alone benefited from the opportunities that globalization offers,

it would create opposition from those left behind. India has to carry the poor along just as it is being done in Tonk.

The challenges to inclusive development are many. According to a report by Martin Ravallion, Director of World Bank's Development Research Group, India has done worse than Brazil and China in terms of reduction of poverty (during 1991–2005). Government interventions are "extremely perverse" and India's inequality index is the highest among the three countries. For this, one may read 'The Gloves Go On', *The Economist*, 26 November 2009.

What lessons could the policy makers in the government garner from the Maitree experience? To mention a few:

First, it is not enough to promote self help groups (SHGs) in a scattered way and link them to banks or to micro-finance institutions. More than 17 lakh SHGs have been formed in this way under the largest national self-employment programme called the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY). It is better to promote SHGs in a concentrated way in contiguous villages, say 150 to 200 SHGs in 30 to 50 villages, and federate them. The collective power of women matters—either to make use of economic opportunities by achieving economies of scale or to demand that the government be accountable. Federations throw up opportunities for women to play leadership roles outside their homes, away from their hearths. Imagine the impact if all the poor women of 550-odd districts of this country had a federation

Zoellick sees the link between their empowerment through collective action, their ability to use economic opportunities and their demand that government programmes must address the pressing needs of the community

such as Maitree to voice their needs and raise their income.

Second, a bottom-up process of poor women themselves organizing their own value chain is a far superior way for a private public people partnership (P4) than by having a private sector company write an MOU with an NGO or a government agency in a state capital. In fact, by this, a

company may have the opportunity to have an MOU with a federation. The cost of setting up a supply chain is exorbitant, even for the biggest industrial enterprise in India. Moreover, when it is done by the private sector, the supply chain will be captured by the elite.

Third, an empowerment process is required to build a federation of poor women. This is possible only by a process of 'facilitation' that opens new doors of opportunities and builds their capacities, and not by a process of 'project implementation', a process that is driven by funds.

This facilitation could be conducted by a committed government or NGO staff member. We need people in the government, who are motivated to undertake poverty alleviation. Increasingly, policy makers complain about the lack of motivation and zeal to bring about change among their staff. They resort to recruiting people from the open market on short-term contract, with better results. They also complain of interference from political leaders in recruitment.

Lessons could be learnt from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where the political leaders and bureaucrats have worked

A bottom-up process of poor women themselves organizing their own value chain is a far superior way for a private public people partnership (P4) than by having a private sector company write an MOU with an NGO or a government agency in a state capital

in tandem to buck the trend and have shown that it is possible to hermetically seal the rest of the governance system, with all its undue pressures, from the recruitment of staff for a poverty alleviation project,

a project that is meant to deliver empowerment.

What prevents other chief ministers from doing so? They need to hear what Zoellick says about the need to carry people who are left behind in development, or else you will have an opposition.

The inequity of the bimodal curve of India's growth (urban vs rural, or industry vs agriculture) will get worse, and blame cannot be laid at the Maoists's door. The onus is on our political leaders not on external agencies such as the World Bank.

Maitree: A Women's Milk Federation

ACHLA SAVYASAACHI

Maitree has successfully linked micro-finance initiatives with dairy production and marketing in Tonk district of Rajasthan. Taking advantage of the World Bank-sponsored District Poverty Initiative Programme (DPIP), it is today a federation of 160 groups, comprising 1,900 women spread over 60 villages.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

In 2002, SRIJAN began its work in Tonk district by aiding the local communities to form common interest groups (CIGs). Tonk is a small town 96 km from Jaipur. It is popularly known as the 'Lucknow of Rajasthan'. Tonk has a population of 12,11,671, of which 19.24% are SCs and 12.04% are STs. The rural-to-urban migration in this area is estimated at a high 20%. This semi-arid district does not receive any canal irrigation from the Bisalpur Dam. The farmers depend on rainfall, which is erratic. Lack of water is a big deterrent. In such circumstances, the people of Tonk had, at one point, to sell their livestock.

In response, SRIJAN helped women in the district to form CIGs of 10–12 people each. Most of the members were either marginal farmers or were landless labourers. The group members started saving money and women started taking small loans from the group, under the thrift and credit services. Thereon, representatives from each group (from the nearby villages) started meeting regularly. This led to the formation of a cluster. On an average, a cluster comprises representatives of five groups. By the end of 2009, 13 to 14 clusters had been formed. Members would bring their problems to the cluster, seeking alternatives. Over a period of time, a need arose for a larger, overarching, federating body. This need translated into the formation of a federation, and cluster representatives began assembling under one roof, to discuss problems and identify alternatives.

FIRM STEPS

In 2005, the women decided to attempt dairy farming. Most of the members owned local breeds and others were given *murrah* buffaloes, under DPIP. Since the *murrah* breed is originally from Haryana, people found it difficult to rear them. The women members were not able to cover the cost of feed by the sale of milk. Despite this, there were many advantages in promoting dairy livestock. Some of these are:

1. Easy to begin because a member household had to procure only one buffalo. The increased returns make it possible to procure more animals as time goes by.
2. Increased availability of milk make the homes more nutritionally secure, especially in meeting children's dietary needs.
3. Milk can be easily sold through the traditional milkmen (even if at lower rates).
4. Women find it easy to interweave animal husbandry with other work at home and on their farms.
5. Marginal farmers can easily take up the activity. Crop residues from their lands and common land pastures make it possible to support the livestock.

In due course, members became keen to enhance their income through the dairy project and wished to explore a market channel for sustainable income through the sale of milk. To cut down on time, members hired a vehicle to collect milk. This gave birth to Maitree, a federation of livelihood-linked self-help groups (LHGs) that promotes micro-finance initiatives and links them with dairy production and marketing in Tonk district. At present, the federation has 1,900 members in 160 LHGs in the district. Within the federation, 300 members from 110 LHGs are involved in dairy activities.

SKILLS ENHANCEMENT

The dairy programme received its initial funding from the World Bank through DPIP. Maitree used Rs 3 crores of DPIP funds to subsidize the initial costs, primarily, to purchase buffaloes. Maitree members now

In due course, members became keen to enhance their income through the dairy project and wished to explore a market channel for sustainable income through the sale of milk

have 2,440 buffaloes. Further investment in the value chain, in the form of bulk coolers, working capital and training in improved animal husbandry practices came in from private trusts and donations. Maitree began collecting milk in three villages in September 2006 and marketing it to the government and private buyers.

By 2007, the programme had expanded to reach 27 villages. The scale of collection and the fat content of the milk were crucial to determine the profitability of the dairy. The crucial test for Maitree was to deal with challenges on both the production and institution building fronts. This required a great deal of capacity building at the community level. SRIJAN addressed the needs of capacity building in a systematic manner. Community members were made more aware of good rearing practices. They were provided an understanding of milk markets, apart from being trained in testing milk quality and processing it. Federation leaders were trained on the fat testing technique. However, since they found it difficult to handle multiple roles, Maitree encouraged community-level leaders to take on the responsibility of preparing members to run the dairy.

QUALITY CONTROL

A major determinant of fat content in milk is the feed for the buffalo. The villagers could not afford to buy supplements such as oil and oil seed cake. With the help of SRIJAN, efforts were made to find a balance between quality feed and the cost. There was a suggestion that oil from edible seeds, available in abundance in the rural surroundings, be

extracted. SRIJAN also introduced the community to standardized and appropriate supplements, purchased in bulk by Maitree and supplied to members at subsidized rates. However, after the initial enthusiasm, the members reverted to their old practices of adding water to the milk before selling it. This reduced the fat content. Members felt it was more profitable to sell to the traditional milkman as long as they got comparable prices. SRIJAN came to the aid here as well. It helped set up fat testing machines at every collection centre and milk pourers were counselled on malpractices and related issues. Members were encouraged to induct indigenous breeds, and artificial insemination was undertaken to improve the local breed. This led to profits for all the members.

After considerable thought, the Maitree members opened an independent office. The office has taken the chief responsibility of preventing milk spoilages by getting the milk chilled within three hours. Strict protocol has been set for the collection, processing and sale of milk, in order to reduce pilferages and spoilage.

CHALLENGES AND COMPETITORS

Impediments along the way have come in the form of external players coming into Tonk. When Maitree started its operations, there were no other players. Now, in addition to the milk centres of Maitree, there are milk collection centres of NDDDB, Reliance, SARAS and Mother Dairy in Tonk.

Members were encouraged to induct indigenous breeds, and artificial insemination was undertaken to improve the local breed

Efforts have been made to establish market linkages with big players; the quantity of milk from Maitree, however, has not been attractive enough to establish routes. As against few and simple fat testing machines of Maitree, Reliance has opened a centre and installed fat testing machines worth Rs 1.5 lakhs. This has, in many ways, dampened the confidence of Maitree members. Moreover, as against the large players, Maitree is a collective of poor women, most of who have one or two buffaloes.

The important thing at this stage is to make the system viable through proper marketing and focus on institution building. There are 180 groups attached to Maitree and the focus is as much to help them ascertain the long-term benefits of dairying as against being driven primarily by short-term gains. With the coming in of big players, Maitree needs the finance to obtain new technology that will scale up operations and ensure quality. There is need to access modern technology that is viable. There is also high risk in cash transactions. Another limitation is that only two or three banks are operating in 60 villages. There is urgent need for high quality veterinary care. There is also the need for good managers because most of the members of Maitree are illiterate and cannot handle accounts. SRIJAN is helping in building capacity, and despite these limitations, the women of Maitree have vowed to move on.

Review of Methodology for Estimation of Poor: Changes and Implications

HARSHVARDHAN

In attempting to provide a more realistic depiction of poverty, both in rural and urban India, the Dr. Tendulkar Committee Report provides a new method to measure poverty. A few of the changes and their implications are discussed here.

INTRODUCTION

The expert group appointed by Planning Commission of India for a review of the methodology for the estimation of poverty by Dr. Suresh D. Tendulkar, the current chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC), has submitted its long-awaited report. The report has significant policy implications for the country. The Tendulkar Committee Report has led to a significant upward revision in rural poverty estimates in the country. That a larger number of rural poor families, who were deserving yet found themselves outside the list earlier, will now be entitled to access a number of benefits being provided by government and other stakeholders, is a very positive development. The explicit inclusion of health and education concerns in the calculation of the new poverty line aims at ensuring a basic necessary entitlement for the reduction of human poverty.

CHANGES IN METHODOLOGY

1. The expert group has advocated the specifying of a numerical monetary value of private household consumption to determine the poverty line in the country. Hence, the 30-year old practice of anchoring the poverty line to calorie intake will come to an end. Originally, calorie norms of 2,100 and 2,400 per capita per day in urban and rural areas, respectively, were used for determining the poverty line. The expert group has recommended adopting a reference poverty line basket (PLB) of household goods and services consumed by those households at the borderline separating the poor from the non-poor. The PLB comprises certain socially acceptable minimal basket of inter-dependent basic human needs that are satisfied through the market purchases. The items that make for the PLB are enumerated as part of Table 1. The PLB will be adjusted for price variations across states and across urban and rural areas.
2. Even while moving away from the calorie norms, the proposed poverty lines have been validated by checking the adequacy of actual private expenditure per capita near the poverty lines on food, education and health by comparing them with normative expenditure consistent with nutritional, educational and health outcomes. FAO recommends a calorie intake norm of 1,770 calories

per capita per day for India, in close comparison to which the new PLB makes provision for 1,776 and 1,999 calories per capita per day in urban and rural areas, respectively. The normative expenditure on education incorporated in the PLB is based on expenditure involved in the schooling of all the children in the 5-15 age group in the household at the poverty level. Similarly, the normative consumer expenditure on health is calculated on the basis of cost, in accessing both institutional and non-institutional health care.

3. The estimates of poverty in the country will continue to be based on the private household consumer expenditure of Indian households, as collected by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). The expert group has used the new methodology to arrive at statewise and all-India rural and poverty lines on the basis of the 61st round of the NSSO survey, conducted in 2004–05. Statistics such as household expenditure, unemployment profiles, energy usage, educational levels and other data useful for planners and researchers was collected as part of the 61st round. The estimates will again be updated after the completion of the ongoing 66th round of the NSSO survey in 2009–10.
4. The report states that this has been done primarily to overcome the arbitrariness in specifying the numerical nominal value of PLB. In this regard, it may also be shared that the NSSO has decided to shift to the Mixed Reference Period (MRP) for all its consumption surveys in future, namely, 365 days for low frequency items (clothing, footwear, durables, education and institutional health expenditure) and 30 days for all the remaining items. This

change captures the household consumption expenditure of the poor households on low-frequency items of purchase more satisfactorily than the earlier 30-day Uniform Reference Period (URP).

5. Given an inescapable element of arbitrariness in specifying the numerical nominal level of PLB, the Expert Group considered it useful to recommend a reference PLB as per some generally acceptable aspect of the present practice. The estimated urban share of the poor population (described as head-count ratio or poverty ratio) in 2004–05, namely, 25.7% at the all-India level, is generally accepted as being less controversial than its rural counterpart at 28.3% which has been heavily criticized as being too low. In the interest of continuity as well as in view of the consistency with broad external validity checks with respect to nutritional, educational and health outcomes, it was decided to recommend the MRP equivalent of urban PLB corresponding to 25.7% urban head-count ratio as the new reference PLB to be provided to rural as well as urban population in all the states. That is, whatever the households, at the cut-off level of 25.7% as per the earlier methodology, showed as their current PLB, using the MRP method was taken as the base for calculation. The PLB equivalent of this for the rural areas was calculated and that was taken as the poverty line for the rural areas.
6. The new PLB has been adjusted to state-specific urban and rural price indices. The national estimate of 25.7% urban poverty had been arrived at as per the old methodology by aggregating

**TABLE 1: Consumption Items
Comprising the New PLB**

No.	Commodity Groups
1	Cereals
2	Pulses
3	Milk
4	Edible oil
5	Egg, Fish and Meat
6	Vegetables
7	Fresh fruits
8	Dry fruits
9	Sugar
10	Salt & Spices
11	Other food
12	Intoxicants
13	Fuel
14	Clothing
15	Footwear
16	Education
17	Medical: Institutional
18	Medical: Non-institutional
19	Entertainment
20	Personal items
21	Other goods
23	Other services
24	Durable goods
24 (a)	Sum of above items
25	Rent and Conveyance

Source: Tendulkar Committee Report, 2010

the state-level poverty ratios. Now, the same process has been reversed and the state-level urban poverty figures have been derived from the national-level poverty line. As a result, there has been comparatively small change in the urban poverty ratio in the states. However, there have been significant changes in the rural poverty ratios in the states.

7. The new PLB is made up of 25 consumption items (See Table 1). The

data set for computing rural and urban price indices for states has come from various NSSO surveys on consumer expenditure (61st round), employment-unemployment (61st round), morbidity and health (60th round) and labour bureau data.

IMPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The new methodology is a significant improvement over earlier such efforts and extensively uses statistical tools and adjustments to arrive at a poverty ratio for the country and states. However, this refinement in estimation has come at the price of increased complexity in the process, and it further poses challenges before the government and other stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation efforts. Some of the implications and statistical outcomes of the new method are detailed below.

1. The new methodology makes conscious attempts to align with the concept of human poverty, as advocated by UNDP, by explicitly incorporating education and health expenditure in the price indices for the new PLB.
2. The Committee has accepted that the urban poverty figures are close to reality and has not tinkered with the earlier estimate of 25.7% urban poverty at the national level. However, as per the new methodology, all-India, head-count ratios for rural India have gone up to 41.8%, and 37.2%.
3. The poverty ratio, as per the old methodology, estimated 28.3% for rural India and 27.5% for the country as a whole. Hence, the rural poverty ratio in the country has gone up by 13.5% whereas there has been an upward movement of nearly 9% in the overall poverty head-count ratio of the country.

4. The new poverty line for rural India is Rs 446.68 and Rs 578.8 for urban India. However, in a large country like India, state-specific poverty lines are more relevant; these are provided in Tables 2 and 3. Orissa has the highest rural poverty ratio at 60.8% whereas Bihar has the highest urban poverty ratio in the country at 43.7%. Bihar and Orissa occupy first two places in both urban and rural poverty head-count ratio.
5. On the basis of Tables 2 and 3, Table 4 provides a ranking of states in descending order of poverty.
6. The maximum number of poor live in Uttar Pradesh followed by Bihar and

TABLE 2: Rural and Urban Poverty Lines and Poverty Head-Count Ratio for States

No.	States/UT	RURAL		URBAN	
		Poverty Line in INR	Poverty Head-count Ratio	Poverty Line in INR	Poverty Head-count Ratio
1	Andhra Pradesh	433.33	32.3	563.16	23.4
2	Arunachal Pradesh	547.14	33.6	618.45	23.5
3	Assam	478	36.4	600.03	21.8
4	Bihar	433.34	55.7	526.18	43.7
5	Chhattisgarh	398.82	55.1	513.7	28.4
6	Delhi	541.39	15.6	642.47	12.9
7	Goa	608.76	28.1	671.15	22.2
8	Gujarat	501.58	39.1	659.18	20.1
9	Haryana	529.42	24.8	626.41	22.4
10	Himachal Pradesh	520.4	25	605.74	4.6
11	Jammu & Kashmir	522.3	14.1	602.89	10.4
12	Jharkhand	404.79	51.6	531.35	23.8
13	Karnataka	417.84	37.5	588.06	25.9
14	Kerala	537.31	20.2	584.7	18.4
15	Madhya Pradesh	408.41	53.6	532.26	35.1
16	Maharashtra	484.89	47.9	631.85	25.6
17	Manipur	578.11	39.3	641.13	34.5
18	Meghalaya	503.32	14	745.73	24.7
19	Mizoram	639.27	23	699.75	7.9
20	Nagaland	687.3	10	782.93	4.3
21	Orissa	407.78	60.8	497.31	37.6
22	Punjab	543.51	22.1	642.51	18.7
23	Rajasthan	478	35.8	568.15	29.7
24	Sikkim	531.5	31.8	741.68	25.9
25	Tamil Nadu	441.69	37.5	559.77	19.7
26	Tripura	450.49	44.5	555.79	22.5
27	Uttar Pradesh	435.14	42.7	532.12	34.1
28	Uttarakhand	486.24	35.1	602.39	26.2
29	West Bengal	445.38	38.2	572.15	24.4
30	All India	446.68	41.8	578.8	25.7

Source: Tendulkar Committee Report, 2010

TABLE 3: Population* below Poverty Line as Per New Methodology

No.	States/UT	RURAL		URBAN		Population of State under Poverty Line
		Population in Millions	Population under Poverty Line	Population in Millions	Population under Poverty Line	
1	Uttar Pradesh	141.626	6,04,74,302	38.198	1,30,25,518	7,34,99,820
2	Bihar	79.905	4,45,07,085	9.359	40,89,883	4,85,96,968
3	Maharashtra	57.859	2,77,14,461	45.359	1,16,11,904	3,93,26,365
4	Madhya Pradesh	47.635	2,55,32,360	17.567	61,66,017	3,16,98,377
5	West Bengal	60.533	2,31,23,606	23.744	57,93,536	2,89,17,142
6	Andhra Pradesh	57.917	1,87,07,191	21.935	51,32,790	2,38,39,981
7	Orissa	32.455	1,97,32,640	6.035	22,69,160	2,20,01,800
8	Rajasthan	46.713	1,67,23,254	14.423	42,83,631	2,10,06,885
9	Tamil Nadu	33.483	1,25,56,125	31.14	61,34,580	1,86,90,705
10	Karnataka	35.998	1,34,99,250	19.599	50,76,141	1,85,75,391
11	Gujarat	33.276	1,30,10,916	20.864	41,93,664	1,72,04,580
12	Jharkhand	22.31	1,15,11,960	6.536	15,55,568	1,30,67,528
13	Chhattisgarh	17.522	96,54,622	4.729	13,43,036	1,09,97,658
14	Assam	24.402	88,82,328	3.871	8,43,878	97,26,206
15	Kerala	24.481	49,45,162	8.508	15,65,472	65,10,634
16	Haryana	15.844	39,29,312	7.039	15,76,736	55,06,048
17	Punjab	16.526	36,52,246	9.198	17,20,026	53,72,272
18	Uttarakhand	6.648	23,33,448	2.425	6,35,350	29,68,798
19	Delhi	0.905	1,41,180	14.664	18,91,656	20,32,836
20	Himachal Pradesh	5.727	14,31,750	0.656	30,176	14,61,926
21	Jammu & Kashmir	8.022	11,31,102	2.761	2,87,144	14,18,246
22	Tripura	2.767	12,31,315	0.599	1,34,775	13,66,090
23	Manipur	1.682	6,61,026	0.598	2,06,310	8,67,336
24	Meghalaya	1.952	2,73,280	0.488	1,20,536	3,93,816
25	Goa	0.678	1,90,518	0.774	1,718,28	3,62,346
26	Arunachal Pradesh	0.868	2,91,648	0.287	67,445	3,59,093
27	Nagaland	1.733	1,73,300	0.361	15,523	1,88,823
28	Sikkim	0.501	1,59,318	0.068	17,612	1,76,930
29	Mizoram	0.458	1,05,340	0.477	37,683	1,43,023
30	Total		32,62,80,045		7,99,97,578	40,62,77,623

Source: Tendulkar Committee Report, 2010

*Arrived at by multiplying poverty ratio with population figures given in the Report.

* Does not include all the union territories.

TABLE 4: Ranking of First 10 States in Descending Order of Poverty

Rank	Rural Poverty Ratio	Urban Poverty Ratio	BPL Rural Population	BPL Urban Population	BPL Total Population
1	Orissa	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh
2	Bihar	Orissa	Bihar	Maharashtra	Bihar
3	Chhattisgarh	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra
4	Madhya Pradesh	Manipur	Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Madhya Pradesh
5	Jharkhand	Uttar Pradesh	West Bengal	West Bengal	West Bengal
6	Maharashtra	Rajasthan	Orissa	Andhra Pradesh	Andhra Pradesh
7	Tripura	Chhattisgarh	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Orissa
8	Uttar Pradesh	Uttarakhand	Rajasthan	Rajasthan	Rajasthan
9	Manipur	Karnataka	Karnataka	Gujarat	Tamil Nadu
10	Gujarat	Sikkim	Gujarat	Bihar	Karnataka

Maharashtra. The rural poverty population corresponds to the same order state-wise. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh account for the largest number of urban poor in the country. The head-count ratio for urban poor is the highest in Bihar followed by Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

7. Maharashtra, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh rank third, fifth and sixth among the states where the largest number of people live BPL.
8. Nagaland has the lowest rural and urban poverty head-count ratio in the country. The minimum population of rural poor live in Mizoram whereas the smallest number of urban poor live in Nagaland.
9. Andhra Pradesh has shown the highest increase in rural poverty ratio compared to the old methodology. As per the old

methodology, the poverty ratio in Andhra Pradesh was 11.2%; this has now increased to 32.3% (an increase of nearly 300%). It may be noted that rural poverty statistics in Andhra Pradesh had been questioned many a time in the recent past by leading academicians.

10. The Tendulkar Committee has adopted a new methodology for poverty estimation in the country. Hence, the poverty head-count ratios are not comparable and must not be compared with earlier NSSO surveys. However, the expert group has also used same methodology to estimate poverty in 1994–1995, to facilitate a two-point comparison. The comparison between two methodologies shows a similar decline in poverty between 1994–1995 and 2004–2005 at the all-India level.

TABLE 5: Decline in Poverty between 1994-95 and 2004-05 at the All-India Level

Year	As Per the Old 30-day URP Methodology			As Per the New MRP Methodology		
	Rural Poverty	Urban Poverty Ratio	All India Poverty Ratio	Rural Poverty Ratio	Urban Poverty Ratio	All Poverty Ratio
India						
1994–95	37.2	32.6	36.0	50.1	31.8	45.3
2004–05	28.3	25.7	27.5	41.8	25.7	37.2
Decline in %	8.9	6.9	8.5	8.3	6.1	8.1

POSSIBLE CONTROVERSIES

Some of the likely controversies are elaborated as follows:

1. The expert group has recommended that the URP estimate of urban poverty at 25.7% is less controversial and generally accepted. However, it has adopted a PLB equivalent to 25.7% head-count ratio, as reference line for poverty estimates. To be fair, the Committee has validated that at a PLB corresponding to 25.7% MRP, the basic nutritional, educational and health needs are met. However, this could prove to be a point of contention.
2. The Tendulkar Committee has recommended the use of the survey design of the 66th round of ongoing NSSO survey, which also captures data on a 7-day reference period for certain food items. It may be noted that a lot of heat was generated when a similar methodology was last adopted in the 55th round of NSSO in 1999–2000. It was alleged that data collection on a 7-day reference period leads to a lower estimation of poverty. Owing to a 7-day reference period, the current availability of goods and services, especially food, may create the impression that they are available year round.
3. Most of the conceptual framework for the present methodology has been adopted from a paper written by Planning Commission member, Dr. Abhijeet Sen. Some critics may point this as a potential area of controversy.
4. These recommendations have cast a cloud on the recommendations of the Dr. N.C. Saxena-led expert group that has parallelly estimated rural poor in the country on the basis of a different methodology. The Dr. Saxena-led committee had advocated a higher rural poverty head-count ratio. In states such as Orissa and Jharkhand, the rural poverty ratio was estimated to be above 80%. Recommendations to identify the poor had also been framed accordingly by the said Committee. The recommendations of Dr. Tendulkar's Committee at this point signal a significant departure from Dr. Saxena's approach.

Inconvenient Truth of Stone Crushers

CHANDAN SARMA

The plight of tribals engaged in crushing stone for private entrepreneurs, their callous exploitation, the lack of occupational safety and the lasting deleterious effects on their health is a horrific reality even today.

I have been working in Sir Syed Trust (SST) since April 2009 as a Project Executive. Prior to this, I worked for two-and-a-half years in Wipro Technologies, Bangalore. I have done my B.Tech in Electrical Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Silchar.

My trip to Saltora, organized by SST, was a part of my initial exposure and training in the development sector. I was in Saltora for two months and had the opportunity to mingle with the Santhal tribes in the block. Many women in Saltora have worked or are working in stone crushers. This article relives some of their accounts.

Saltora is a block on the outskirts of Bankura district of West Bengal. The inhabitants of this block are primarily Bengalis and Santhal tribes. The nearest railway station to this far-flung place is in Raniganj, roughly a two-hour drive by taxi. The nearest famous, or rather now infamous, place is Lalgurh, the epicentre of Maoist activity in the summer of 2009. It is about 80 km from Saltora. The summer season is characterized by unbearable heat and humidity whereas winter is mildly pleasant. For the first three months of the extreme heat of summer, the undulating roads are deserted during the day time.

There is inadequate sanitation system and people go to the open fields to answer nature's call. Any infrastructure that ensures water supply is like a distant dream for the inhabitants, and everyone in this block makes use of the ponds. The villages are divided along caste lines and caste plays a decisive and discriminating role in the social hierarchy, even to this day.

Driving to Saltora from Raniganj, one cannot help but notice the dust emanating from the many stone crusher units peppering the way. In summer, the extreme heat and humidity make Saltora an uncomfortable place to visit. Villagers prefer to stay indoors because it is foolish to venture out. As a corollary, the working hours invariably are from four to ten in the morning and a couple of hours in the evening during summer. The stone crusher units are the only places where human activity

continues in full swing during the day even in summer. Otherwise, Saltora looks deserted.

I was travelling with a friend, when we crossed the first of many stone crusher units in the area. Dust engulfed the road near these units and our bike came to a screeching halt. The two of us began to cough incessantly. We pushed the bike to the shade of a tree and took sips from a water bottle. I noticed then that there were women and young girls busy working in the stone crushers. 'Appalling' is an inadequate adjective to describe the working conditions in these crushers. I, as an outsider, with my bottle of mineral water, experienced a rude shock on being exposed to a place where I could barely stand for 30 seconds whereas the women and the young girls working there were unfalteringly breaking, carrying and loading stones. I decided that I would do a small study on the socio-economic conditions of the women working in stone crushers and the impact that their work has on their health.

Most of the workers in these crushers are Santhal women. Santhals are the largest tribal community in India and live in the states of Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand. Many of the Santhal villages in Saltora are remotely located and it takes quite an effort to reach them. I decided to study a village where accessibility would not be a major deterrent and where a majority of the inhabitants are/were employed in one of the many stone crushers. Ranipur Adivasi village, a Santhal village, seemed the most apt for such a study. It is one of the few villages that has a concrete road connecting it with the rest of the block.

'Appalling' is an inadequate adjective to describe the working conditions in these crushers

What typifies a Santhal *para* (that is, village) is the abject poverty in which the tribals live their lives. Poor accessibility, broken roads and muddy pools are the order of the day after every shower. There are

Santhal villages in this area, which remain disconnected from the rest of civilization during monsoons. The only way to reach these villages is to trek for two days through mud and slush. Electric posts in some of the Santhal villages are a surprising find.

A signboard read: 'Rajiv Gandhi Bijli Yojana'. Babulal Tutu, a village elder in the Moisorati village, grinned broadly showing his remaining two teeth and said, "*Kuwonta bhalo, kintu jole anek mati jemon bidyuter jotno achche kintu bidyut nei*", meaning that the well has water but it is muddy, just as in spite of having electric poles, there is no supply of electricity. As in most villages in India, the supply of electricity to this tribal village is erratic, to say the least.

Literacy levels are unbelievably low in Santhal villages and people have little or no access to basic amenities such as health care centres. Education, clothing and food security remain some of the burning issues crying to be adequately addressed.

Ranipur Adivasi village is just a half-hour drive from the main bazaar of Saltora. It is a village with an adult population of 129 people. Of these, 72 worked in stone crushers, of whom 32 were women. The first thing that struck me is the extreme fatigue and emaciated bodies of the women. Most show signs of premature ageing.

With assistance from a local NGO, Pradan, I called for a meeting with the women who

had been employed in stone crushers. We sat in a circle on a mattress, with 12 women, who peeped shyly at us through the *pallu* of their saris. Jibon, a local Santhal youth and the community resource person for Pradan, assisted me in the interaction.

The women initially presumed that this was some sort of meeting to discuss their SHG (Self help Group) matter. But, when they learnt that the agenda of this interaction is to discuss their experience about working in the stone crusher units, they cringed. Jibon, who had also worked in a stone crusher for a brief period, told me that the experience had left everyone in the village bitter. Gradually, the women opened up and relived their painful experience. Most of these women worked in the crushers for two years from 2006 to 2008. Neither protective glasses nor masks were provided. The women were thus directly exposed to fine granules of rock and dust for long hours. Most of these women have tuberculosis. And so do their infants, who were taken to the work place and left to fend for themselves in the quarrying sites while their mothers worked.

In these stone crusher units, there is rampant exploitation of tribal women. These units are also the breeding grounds for child labour. We were told that girls, as young as 13, are employed in these crushers, along with their older sisters and mothers. The number of women working in one stone crusher may vary from 10 to 20, depending on the size of the quarry. Many work in night shifts for an abysmal remuneration, which is controlled by the

Most of these women have tuberculosis. And so do their infants, who were taken to the work place and left to fend for themselves in the quarrying sites while their mothers worked

contractors. There are instances where some of the young girls are paid only Rs 30 a day. No medical coverage is provided for, even though the working conditions are operationally hazardous. Of the 129 adults in Ranipur Adivasi, several have TB; one of them has since expired. The high rate of TB among the villagers can be directly attributed to their association with the stone crusher industry. Studies have shown that workers feel the effect even years later. Problems of asthma, chest pain, muscular-skeletal weakness and osteo-arthritis are common in the village. The unbearable work load and stressful lifestyle also induce many to take up additives such as the traditional liquor to cope with the inhuman situations.

The modus operandi of the contractors is simple. A lorry or a tracker vehicle is sent to the villages in the morning and evening, as per the shift. The lorry loads these women (and young girls and men) and brings them to the quarries. They work there through the shift, and at the end of it, they are dropped back to the village. This process continues for about two years. Around this time, many women start showing symptoms of TB. The two years also sap all their energy and vitality. This is when the women can take no more, and more or less the entire village stops working in the crushers. At this point, the contractors target another Santhal village and the same process is repeated. The Santhals, with very little opportunities and options, fall prey to this vicious cycle of exploitation, which has long-term destructive implications.

The women are vulnerable to a variety of diseases and there is little economic viability in this work. Women join the stone crushers out of the sheer lack of alternative opportunities. NREGA schemes have not been able to make the requisite impact in this belt till date.

Saltora block has 75 such stone crushing units. The first of the units was opened in 1998. Since then, this industry has managed to carve out a niche for itself in this far-flung area. The District Land Reforms Officer, Bankura, doles out the registration certificate to these units. The stone quarries roll out a staggering royalty of 25 lakhs each year to the government of West Bengal. Of this, only a pittance trickles down to the Santhal tribes, who toil the hardest to

keep these units up and running. Shyam Hazda, the only graduate in the Ranipur Adivasi village and a former worker himself, laments at the lack of other concrete livelihood opportunities. I asked Aladi Hazda what she would do after recuperating fully from TB. "*Pet ar joonany garib jei rasta pabay oi raasta ie dhorbey*" (The poor will take any road that will provide for the stomach).

These unfortunate victims of poverty and exploitation suffer every single day just to live, or maybe, just to be in a 'state' that precedes death. All flowery tales of a supposedly 'shining India' with her economic growth gradients ring hollow. The truth of the situation is: Destitution forces an individual to surrender to unavoidable exploitation!



The Dr. Tendulkar Committee Report has led to a significant upward revision in rural poverty estimates in the country. That a larger number of rural poor families, who were deserving yet found themselves outside the list earlier, will now be entitled to access a number of benefits being provided by government and other stakeholders is a very positive development. The explicit inclusion of health and education concerns in the calculation of the new poverty line aims at ensuring a basic necessary entitlement for the reduction of human poverty.

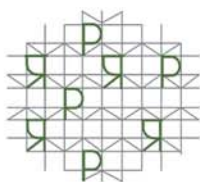
Methodology for Estimation of Poor



Pradan is a voluntary organisation registered under the Societies' Registration Act in Delhi. We work in selected villages in 7 states through small teams based in the field. The focus of our work is to promote and strengthen livelihoods for the rural poor. It involves organising them, enhancing their capabilities, introducing ways to improve their incomes and linking them to banks, markets and other economic services. Pradan comprises professionally trained people motivated to use their knowledge and skills to remove poverty by working directly with the poor. Engrossed in action, we often feel the need to reach out to each other in Pradan as well as those in the wider development fraternity. *NewsReach* is one of the ways we seek to address this need. *NewsReach*, Pradan's Monthly journal, is a forum for sharing the thoughts and experiences of Pradanites working in far-flung areas in the field. It fulfils the need of Pradanites to reach out and connect with each other, the development fraternity and the outside world.

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