

MAHARASHTRA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT LAUNCH

Date: June 4, 2002

Venue: Y. B. Chavan Centre, Mumbai

The Maharashtra Human Development Report (MHDR) 2002 was launched at a release function held at the Y. B. Chavan Centre in Mumbai on June 4, 2002. The English version of the MHDR was released jointly by Dr. Ratnakar Mahajan, Executive President of the State Planning Board, and Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney, Resident Representative of United Nations Development Programme-India and UN Resident Coordinator. A *Marathi MHDR version* was also released later in the day by Maharashtra Chief Minister Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh, who could not attend the morning function.

The Report is a collective initiative of the Government of Maharashtra, the Union Planning Commission and UNDP. The release function was followed by a *panel discussion* consisting of eminent government officials, social scientists and journalists. A *question and answer session* was also held, where participants from various backgrounds provided their inputs about MHDR and the HDR process.

A multimedia presentation at the release vividly demonstrated the essence of MHDR to a packed auditorium. The presentation highlighted aspects of Maharashtra's development, namely, trends and prospects in population dynamics, conditions of health and nutrition, educational scenario, gender issues, and the nexus between growth and human development.

The MHDR 2002 contends that Maharashtra has made progress in poverty eradication, and in the fields of education, health, employment and people's participation in local-level governance. Participation and role of women in public life have shown improvement. Nevertheless, certain areas demand active governmental action and a participative civil society to ensure that the most vulnerable groups benefit from the developmental process.

Among the issues MHDR identifies as challenges for the state are high population growth rate, large scale migration, persistence of poverty, lack of diversification of rural economy, existence of

a large number of land less farmers, alarming decline in the sex ratio and empowerment of women.

Welcome address

In his welcome remarks, Dr. Mahajan drew attention to the contradiction that 5 crore people in the state are starving while 6 crore tonnes of food grains are nurturing rodents in warehouses. He emphasised on the need for urgent implementation of structural mechanisms to perform the daunting task of making the most of what is available, accessible to the largest number. He opined that ‘the rule of the majority is not the rule for the majority’, and it can only be resolved through the realisation that there can be no planning for people without people participation.



He emphasised the need for taking up challenging measures to change the unsustainable scenario of Maharashtra. The state could envision a vibrant village economy by working towards replenishing the depleted natural resources vis-a-vis regeneration of the environment, reforestation, water, soil conservation, and reverting to organic farming thus preventing out-migration and unsustainable urbanisation. Dr Mahajan strongly proposed an Environment Guarantee Scheme for rural sustainability, as an alternative to the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of the state government.

Speakers:

Mr. Sumeet Jerath on behalf of the Government of India congratulated the government and people of Maharashtra for being the fifth state to have an HDR after Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Sikkim and Rajasthan. Mr. Jerath observed that since the last decade there has been a paradigm shift in the approach to development planning. From pre-occupation with the mere expansion in production of goods and services, it has shifted to considering outcomes that have a direct relevance to the enhancement of human well being. The HDR approach treats people as active subjects and not as passive beneficiaries; as an end by themselves and not merely a means to an end. With the cooperation of NGOs and a sensitised state government, laying more emphasis and expenditure on social sectors, Mr. Jerath was confident that Maharashtra would be able to accomplish success in the development of not only its economic but also its social sector.

Dr. Alexei Tikhomirov, the Chief of Asia and Transition Economies unit, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA): The success of the entire exercise of the MHDR reporting process has encouraged him to propose India as the location for a major UN supported international workshop to be held in Mumbai, in December 2002.

The workshop would focus on social and human development. Its major objective would be to promote the concept of social development. The elements of the concept of social development on poverty eradication, social integration and full employment will form the basis of its curriculum.

Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney: Dr. McSweeney expressed UNDP's excitement about the MHDR breaking new grounds in promoting progress on people-centred development. Since the state HDRs are essentially government documents to prioritise the human development agenda, they need to be taken from a platform of knowledge based on poverty eradication. Dr. McSweeney praised the state government for focussing strongly on the right to development approach in MHDR. She emphasised Maharashtra's long tradition of social responsibility and corporate leadership, and mentioned that development partners, multilateral organisations and bilateral donors have keen interest in the state's development. Therefore, realising the potential of the state, the whole UN family is keen to play a supportive role in the follow up work of the report, she stated.

Mr. Asoke Basak, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra: while expressing his vote of thanks mentioned that the MHDR exercise, which started as a joint commitment of the Maharashtra government, UNDP and the Planning Commission, also turned out to be a government-non-government partnership as well. Although facilitated by the Maharashtra government, he identified the fact that the MHDR exercise had benefitted from valuable inputs by experts from outside the government, and several expert institutions.

Mr. Basak recalled that Mr. Mahajan had first conceived the preparation of MHDR. The preparation of the report started with a tripartite agreement signed on 12th April, 2001, and was quickly completed with cooperation and help from eminent experts. He claimed that MHDR is not a stereotype Government report, but a report unique by itself

Dr. Rohini Nayar Advisor (Rural Development) in Planning Commission who was a partner in this endeavour constantly advised and encouraged the work. UNDP provided the engine, the driver as well as the fuel for this attempt. Dr. Seeta Prabhu, Head of the Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC) and Mr. Suraj Kumar provided continuous help and made valuable contributions to MHDR.

Acknowledgements: Mr. Basak acknowledged the support lent by several resource people -- representing non-government organisations (NGOs), universities, the state government, and autonomous institutions -- who contributed to the background papers of MHDR. Once the background papers were received, they were woven together into the format of an HDR report. The MHDR resource team comprised of individuals from various backgrounds.

- The renowned journalist Mr. Mahesh Bijapurkar, Bureau Chief and Deputy Editor of *The Hindu* carried out the task of editing the background papers for the English version of MHDR. This report also has a Marathi version to ensure that it reaches those at the grass root levels. Mr. Prakash Akolkar Senior Assistant Editor of *Maharashtra Times* prepared the Marathi version of the English MHDR. The advisory committee who contributed to the MHDR process include: Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Dr. Balachandra Mungekar, Dr. Rupa Shah, Prof. R. R. Singh of TISS, T. K. Roy Director, International Institute of Population Studies. Vijay Kumar from EPW coordinated press related activities. Designing of the cover, printing, separations were done in-house. The Government Press and the Information and Public Relations designed the report. The Directorate of Statistics has provided the latest information through the team of

officers led by Director Mr. Natrajan. The Maharashtra Economic Development Council (MEDC) organized the release function

Panel Discussion on “Future Strategy and Follow up” was held post lunch, 200-4:30 p.m.

Panelists: Dr. Ratnakar Mahajan chaired the post lunch panel discussions. Mr. V. Ranganathan, Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, Dr. B.L. Mungeker, V.C., Mumbai University, Dr. K Seeta Prabhu, Head, HDRC, UNDP, Mr. Arun Sadhu, eminent writer and journalist, Dr. Snehalata Deshmukh, former V. C., Mumbai University.

Mr. V. Ranganathan, Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, spoke on the "Role of bureaucracy and agenda for action."

Although the Maharashtra has achievements in certain areas of development, there are appalling indicators of unsustainability, stated Mr. Ranganathan. Among those he identified included, the state's high proportion of people below poverty line (BPL) of 25%, which was much higher than Maharashtra's neighbouring states, high level of urban poverty, negligible reduction in infant mortality rate, and the slow down from being one of the fastest growing state, to the declining growth of the state economy since 1995. He emphasised the need for awareness creation, and increased efforts to monitor and assess the progress of the MHDR follow-up process.

Dr. B.L. Mungeker, V.C., Mumbai University, spoke on "Education and the role of Universities".

Dr. Mungeker said unless higher rate of economic growth is achieved it would be difficult to solve the problem of unemployment, poverty, securing sustained increase in the living conditions of the people. He pointed out that economic growth is a necessary condition, but by no means a sufficient one for human development. To achieve human development one has to have an egalitarian society. Attempts towards state human development are a futile exercise without equitable distribution of income, which is largely influenced by class, caste and gender. The results of human development policies have to reach the common person in the remotest part of the country. Unless the common person become central points in the development strategy, it is meaningless to talk about HDR, he asserted.

Therefore the educational institutions could play a constructive role as facilitators. At the university level, the orientation of Development Economics needs to be changed. Universities need to include the experience of various development programmes and strategies devised by the

government. The reorientation based on hard facts and perspective need to be undertaken for various agencies operating in the education system, university and government levels.

Dr. K. Seeta Prabhu, Head, HDRC, UNDP, spoke on "Rural livelihoods and human development: Prospects for action".

Dr. K. Seeta Prabhu said that rural livelihood holds the key to sustainable human development. Pointing to the curious paradoxes in the Maharashtra economy, she said that growth in Maharashtra coincides and coexists with stark poverty, under-nutrition and a great deal of differences between urban and rural areas. There is also a lack of attention to the agricultural sector. Agriculture is the mainstay in the rural areas. Maharashtra is identified as an arid region. It has poor irrigation systems, and rainfall varies a great deal with 2000 mm in the Western Ghats to 600 mm in the plains. Water intensive cash crops like sugarcane also take up almost 50 per cent of the irrigation water available.

Dr. Prabhu also called attention to the sluggish growth rate of the state domestic product, and high unemployment rate in the rural areas of Maharashtra. Many factors contribute to the high rate of migration to urban areas. There are no adequate rural non-farm opportunities. Some districts are rich in mineral deposits, which are not exploited to a greater extent to generate employment opportunities. The Employment Guarantee State EGSs does not enable people to rise above the poverty line. HDR is a broad sweep of analysis and a bird's eye view. One needs to undertake intermediate studies in the follow-up process of the state HDR. There is need to disseminate the report to grass root levels, and facilitate debates on the rankings of the HDI, causal factors for such rankings, and possible strategies to improve the situation.

Mr. Arun Sadhu, Eminent writer and Journalist, spoke on "The role of media."

Mr. Arun Sadhu said that the media has got a very crucial role in moulding the societal opinions towards creating a sane and sustainable society. Media analyses, interprets the facts and issues of society and reaches them to the people. Media also possesses enormous power along with social responsibility for creating a just and harmonious society, which is evident from the evolution of media from the time of industrial revolution. The issue of human development is of prime importance to the media vis-à-vis the rights and values of the society. If the media forgets its role in the betterment of society it loses its potential. He concluded that the MHDR must be exposed to the masses by the media in the right spirit and perspective in order to achieve its set goals.

Dr. Snehalata Deshmukh, former V C Mumbai University spoke on "Gender, HIV and Public Health: Issues and Prospects."

Dr. Snehalata Deshmukh spoke about sad plight of the women in the state. Maharashtra ranks high in terms of the number of crimes against women. Household amenities such as water, and sanitation facilities are inadequate, as made evident from high incidence rates of reproductive tract infections (RTIs) among deprived women population. Infant mortality rate is relatively high. Citing MHDR, she said that the life expectancy has increased but the antenatal care, which is extremely important, is lacking. Anti dowry act needs to be implemented with its full implication to counter the menace of gender dominance and atrocities on women she said. Initial treatment and care focus attention on these issues are critical to the way HIV/AIDS will affect the gender dynamics and the status of women.

She also stated that health care needs to be improved; the corporation hospitals and the government hospitals have been following the GR of 1998, of charging the outpatients. It may not be the correct manner of administering health care to the poor, whose socio economic conditions are alarmingly pathetic.

Release of the Marathi version of MHDR

Maharashtra Chief Minister **Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh**, attended the afternoon function and released the Marathi version of MHDR.

In his speech after the release of the Marathi version of the report, Mr. Deshmukh complimented the Planning Commission and UNDP for collaborating with the state government in the preparation of the MHDR. He also congratulated the team for the completion of the report well before the scheduled time in just 14 months. He identified the report as an authoritative and comprehensive document providing in depth analysis of various aspects of human welfare in Maharashtra. The report has come at an appropriate time as the Xth Five Year Plan is being launched, he said. The valuable information and analysis contained in the report will help government and other agencies propose appropriate measures.

Maharashtra is widely acclaimed as a progressive and developed state. Its per capita income is 40%, higher than all India average. The Maharashtra government is making substantial efforts to provide basic minimum services to the people including drinking water, health, education and employment opportunities. Securing peoples participation, providing social protection to the poor, removal of regional imbalances and good governance are key factors for HD.

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Mr. Deshmukh identified the large scale rural migration to urban centres as a problem. This results in proliferation of slums, and growth in urban population at 14.2%. One third (1/3rd) of the urban population is forced to live in slums. This unhygienic and congested environment negates the benefits of urbanisation. Although Maharashtra has a second highest per capita state domestic product among 15 major states, the income distribution is uneven. There is substantial evidence of poverty, and a majority of the rural and urban population is under nourished.

The health sector has achieved significant results but a number of communicable and infectious diseases are prevalent. Gender inequality still prevails and preference of the male child exists in the society. Improving health care, education, food security to the poor, through public distribution systems (PDS), corrective measures to bring women and child under Integrated Child Development Scheme, are all essential for bettering HDI of the state. The MHDR suggestions are vital and therefore it should serve as a guide for the future planning for NGOS, media and the government.

Question - Answer Session

Prof. Desarada, an economist from Aurangabad, said that the state has to move towards concrete action from analysis. Development is a political issue and unless the politicians sell the idea politically and implement the steps, HD will not be attained. Unless development is pro-nature, pro-women and pro-poor we will fail to achieve the target, he stated.

He emphasised that as development is linked to societal issues and unless we look to development from ecological and ethical perspective, no HD is achievable. Citing numerous examples such as the plight of rural women, depleted water tables and the contradiction of high urban water consumption, he said that natural resources need to be replenished to facilitate

sustainability of rural population, especially the bottom half of Maharashtra that includes tribal areas. He contended that the tribals and their issues have been untouched in the MHDR.

Dr. Ritu Dewan, Professor from Mumbai Univ. Economics Department, mentioned that the gender section of the MHDR is remarkable. She suggested that a higher priority need to be given for the issues of women where there is illiteracy and high migration.

Dr. Rupa Shah, V.C. of SNTD Univ. Mumbai, and Advisory Committee Member for scrutinising and formalising of the MHDR, said that certain practices that are not only anti women but anti human need to be checked. The government should recognise the potential of women. She offered her university's services and infrastructure to be used for the implementation of MHDR based action plans.

Dr. Mahendra Dev, Director of Economics and Social Studies, Hyderabad, pointed out that MHDR clearly shows rural urban disparities, and that the HDI for Maharashtra ranks 8th. It is a long way to reach the top. He said that the ranking is low because agricultural development in Maharashtra was low due to obvious reasons. Only 15% of the area are under irrigation. One has to have higher agricultural growth to improve HDI in rural areas. Agriculture is the crucial area that needs urgent attention for enhancement, he said

In order to contain the population bomb in Maharashtra he suggested a combination of Kerala and Andhra model for Maharashtra, linking literacy, education, women's empowerment, sensitising people on family planning, and particularly the men. For education -- vis-a-vis drop out rates -- nutrition need to be linked, giving children cooked meals instead of dry rations following the success story of Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Lohia - Manav Lok Sevak organisation, highlighted the pathetic situation of alarming depletion and pollution of water sources in the villages, and demanded urgent measures for replenishing and provision of pure water to animal, vegetation and human use. He urged the state to make the government officials more accountable.

Mr. Mahadev Chavan - Pratham, Mumbai, mentioned that the state is only a facilitator of development, rather than an agent that actually brings about development. It is the Indian farmers who have brought about progress and not the government. In the political process, everyone fights and claims they have worked towards progress for the welfare of the people, which is a myth and

needs to be examined through the HDR. Although the 73rd Amendment has the Panchayati Raj aspect, people still feel that the government is responsible for everything. There is a need to educate the MLA's through the university, educational and various organisations. District wise indices need to be checked upon vis-a-vis the areas of education, women, nutrition and health.

Dr. Vinod Vyasulu from the Centre for Budget Policy Studies, Bangalore, remarked that the MHDR appeared to be a clone of Karnataka HDR (KHDR) with slight mutations. He wanted to know the impact of cooperatives, pani-panchayats and EGS on the income variable, and of equitable distribution, on the HDI, as Maharashtra is the first to come up with a kind of EGS poverty alleviation scheme in India.

Mr. Natrajan, Director, Directorate of Statistics said that the HDR needs to provide qualitative assessment, as it is necessary to know the life of the people as it is lived. The HDR motivates us to delve deeper into the issues of poverty, capabilities of the persons and the constraints. The report however does not assess the impact of the political system on HD.

Mr. Khande - Energy Expert from Mumbai mentioned about the urgent need for the provision of usable energy sources to improve the quality of life in the rural areas.

Mr. Benson George, Centre for Human Ecology (CHE), Mumbai, said that the economic yardsticks of measuring development and calculating HDI is intrinsically unscientific and unsustainable ecologically, as ecological parameters are not incorporated. A study by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, in the mid-1990s, based on the audit of national natural resources (ecological audit), calculated the GDP and found the then GDP to be in the negative. This clearly shows that at that point in history, about seven years ago, our nation had no resources to survive, and was thriving on borrowed resources from the future generations. What human development can we envisage and achieve in such a context? Therefore, first of all, conventional economics require reorientation concerning ecological principles. Then, we need to develop yardsticks to assess the time clock for survival (ecological deficit ranking) of communities and niches. These can be real indicators of sustainability (level of ecological overshoot that prevents/inhibits local ecological capacity to regenerate), which need to be incorporated as one of the indicators in the reckoning of HDI. Otherwise all efforts towards HD will be based on ecologically pseudo values and paradoxes, creating more and more self-contradictions and paradoxes of unsustainability.

Valedictory Address

In his valedictory address Dr. Alexei Tikhomirov, reiterated the importance and contribution of MHDR. UNDESA will make concerted efforts to facilitate proper follow up vis-à-vis appropriate proposals and recommendations to the governments concerned, based on the comments, remarks and programmes suggested.

- UNDESA will facilitate the evolution of appropriate roles for bureaucracy towards an agenda for action.
- It will work out proposals for basic social services, pursue recommendations on gender issues, and work out proposals for better prospects on livelihoods
- It will facilitate active participation, evolving pertinent roles for media in HD reporting.
- It will facilitate development of relevant curricula on HD meant for different target groups.
- It intends to facilitate international workshops, focussing on least developed countries and periodically reviewing the presentations, and providing timely proposals to the governments concerned.

Closing remarks

Dr. Mahajan in his closing remarks pointed out that the pertinent aspects highlighted in the presentations and active discussions would be duly considered for enhancing HD.

- The crucial area of agriculture needs urgent attention for rural enhancement.
- Aspects like linking education and nutrition vis-à-vis drop-out rates in the villages, and conservation, replenishing ecological resources towards the sustainability of vegetation, animals and humans require prime priority.
- Proper assessment of the impact of the cooperatives, pani panchayats, EGS and such schemes on HD also need to be carried out.
- Though the health situation has achieved considerable results, the sectors related to communicable, infectious and deficiency related diseases need more attention.
- Gender inequalities, preference of the male child are contradictions that require immediate attention.
- Pedagogical aspects, vis-à-vis the legislative/administrative members and other target groups, evolving a curricula on HD, linking the existing resources like university, educational and other institutions and NGOs will also be considered.
- Any lacunae in the criteria of assessing the HDI also need to be inquired into and assessed. As the economic and other criteria for assessing development and calculating HDI is not

sufficient, the ecological parameters also need to be incorporated in the HDI calculation and assessment of HD, to understand the holistic ground realities.

The MHDR findings are decisive and therefore it should serve as a guide for the government, planners, NGOs, media and all those involved in the development pursuits of Maharashtra. Dr. Mahajan commended the active involvement of all concerned, in the pursuit of continuous people's participation to plan, design, implement and evaluate their own pathways towards a sustainable future.
