



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 April 2012

Original: English

Substantive session of 2012

New York, 2-27 July 2012

Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Social and human rights questions: social development

Statement submitted by Rural Development Centre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.



Statement

The feudal socio-economic structure in India denies development opportunities to Dalits, a socially marginalized tribe, trapping them into a life of poverty and making the intergenerational transmission of poverty more likely. Religious-cultural norms and feudal-casteism practices exacerbate their vulnerability to land exploitation, gender violence, caste-based bonded labour and agricultural bonded labour.

Millennium Development Goal 1: India's Millennium Development Goals country reports of 2009 and 2011 (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) identify Maharashtra state as being "slow on track" to eradicate extreme poverty. With a poverty ratio of 38.1 per cent, it is one of the states in India recorded above the national estimate. In 2010, the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goal country report concluded that Maharashtra is unlikely to achieve its Millennium Development Goal target if progress continues at the current pace (30.4 per cent against the target of 25 per cent). Maharashtra has been identified as a "strategically critical" state where progress "would put India on track" to achieve its Millennium Development Goal targets. In addition, the Maharashtra government should target specific Dalit communities within Maharashtra who experience significantly higher levels of poverty than the state average.

Research by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies done in 2003 found that 36.82 per cent of the scheduled caste population in rural India live below the poverty line, compared with 22.73 per cent of the total population. The Government of India should commit to its eleventh national plan to address the extreme poverty of the Dalits.

Millennium Development Goal 3: India's progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women remains "off track". In rural India, two thirds of scheduled caste women depend on agriculture, and unemployment is acute; for example, the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies found in 2004 that 13 per cent of Dalit women were unemployed, as opposed to 7 per cent in the case of non-Dalit women. In the light of its cross-cutting salience, in 2010, the United Nations recognized the persistence of gender inequality as a major impediment to India's realization of all Millennium Development Goal targets. The Government of India should effectively implement its 2001 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women.

Millennium Development Goal 7: Although India's progress on Goal 7 is reported to be "on track" (country reports of 2009 and 2011), progress in integrating the principles of sustainable development into policies and programmes in rural Maharashtra appears to be slower. The focus should be put on the scheduled caste, who are the most affected by this disparity and suffer from, inter alia, a lack of sanitation facilities and lack of access to ecological farming methods. The eleventh national plan raised concerns about the food security of "farmers who are small and marginal, increasingly women, and who find it difficult to access inputs, credit and markets". The environment is central to the twelfth national plan. The plan offers a solution to both by integrating sustainable development into the livelihoods of the most deprived population groups.

Hence, we appeal to the global community to pay attention to the larger issues of the Dalit tribal community in India and to implement effective democracy.