

Direct Benefit Transfers in India



Source : - [Businessline, The Hindu](#)

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- Direct Benefit Transfers in India

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- Six counts on which the draft anti-trafficking bill falls short.

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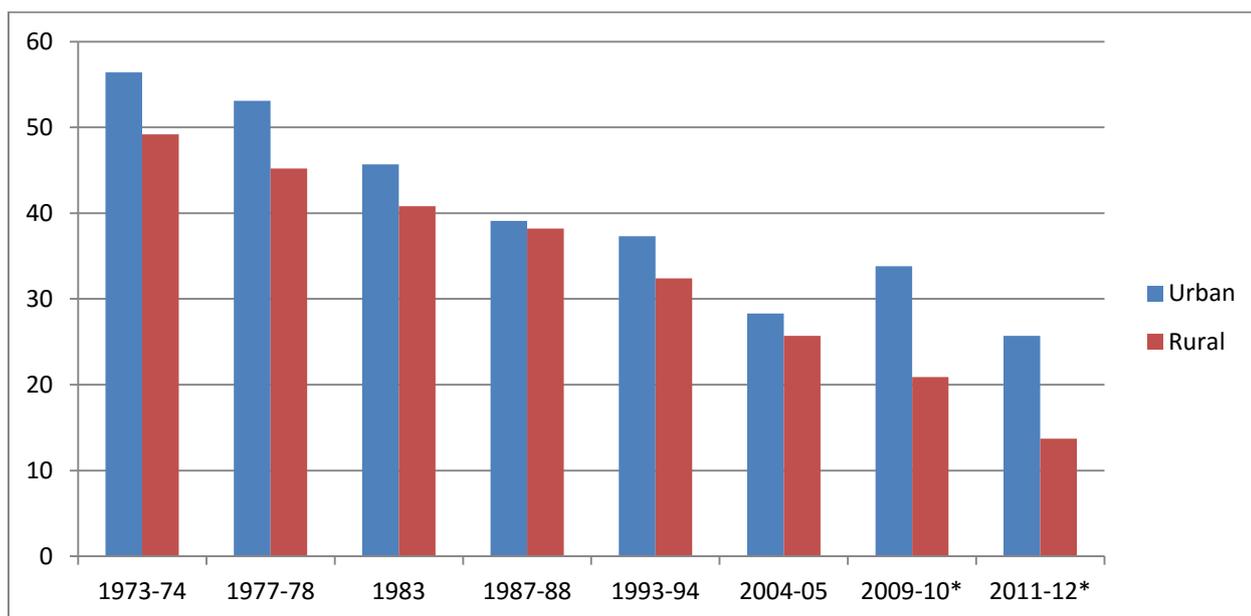
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Lead Essay

Direct Benefit Transfers in India

Poverty and destitution in India are widespread. The 2014 Rangarajan committee concluded that there are 363 million people living below the poverty line in India¹, implying that one in every four Indian is currently living below the poverty line and is leading an impoverished life even after 69 years of Independence. The official estimates show that the pace of reduction of poverty remains slow (Table 1 and Chart 1).

Chart 1. **India: Official poverty estimates (% of population below poverty line)**



Source: Planning commission, Government of India

* Tendulkar committee findings, Planning commission, Government of India

| Year | Rural India | Urban India |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Annual Poverty Reduction in percentage points | | |
| 1973-74 to 1987-88 | -1.24 | -0.79 |
| 1987-88 to 2004-05 | -0.64 | -0.74 |
| Annual poverty reduction normalized to initial year, percent | | |
| 1973-74 to 1987-88 | -2.19 | -1.6 |
| 1987-88 to 2004-05 | -1.62 | -1.92 |

Source: Planning commission, Government of India

¹ http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/pov_rep0707.pdf

Lead Essay

The instance of poverty remains very high even after the government of India has shown its full commitment to the eradication of poverty through an array of subsidies and targeted poverty reduction programs (Kapur, Mukopadhyaya, Subramaniam 2008). In 2014-15, there were at least 72 centrally sponsored schemes – hereafter collectively referred to as CSS – entailing annual expenditures of about RS 1.96 lakh crore². This is an increase of 31.75% over two years. Despite the huge expenditure, there is little rigorous analysis about the effectiveness of CSS and principal subsidies; however, there are multiple reports both from the government and non government agencies that points towards leakages and inefficiencies inherent in the CSS (Kapur, Mukopadhyaya, Subramaniam 2008).

The Government of India (GoI) has spent nearly 6 to 8%³ of GDP on a multitude of anti poverty schemes for the past ten years without having any substantial impact on poverty reduction. This view was also echoed by the then prime minister Dr. Manmohan singh who said “*we spend far too much money funding subsidies in the name of equity, with neither equity objectives nor efficiency objective being met*”⁴ Having figured out the inefficiencies in the current system of transfers in kind the government is slowly trying to move towards a more transparent and efficient direct cash transfer system. The first seeds for this were sown in the 2008 budget by Mr. P.Chidambaram, who introduced the, central plan schemes monitoring system (CPMS). This new mechanism empowered the government to track and monitor the state-wise/district-wise expenditures, outputs etc. (Kapur, Mukopadhyaya, Subramaniam 2008).

These views about the inefficiencies and leakages in the transfer in kind, redistribution done by transferring goods and services rather than cash to the end beneficiary system are not new. In fact, 30 years ago during an election rally in Kalahandi the then Prime Minister Mr. Rajeev Gandhi revealed that out of every 1 rupee that the central government spends only 15 paisa reaches the ultimate beneficiary⁵. This was an acknowledgement of the state of affairs during the pre reform era. However, despite embarking upon the liberalization policies in the early 1990’s, the mechanism to address poverty remained the same till 2007. The debate about the inefficiencies prevalent in the transfers in kind system was started by Mr. P. Chidambaram while addressing the National Development Council, where he remarked “*we need a PDS (Public distribution system) for the poor, but unless it is efficient, procures adequate quantities of food grain and delivers food to the poor, the PDS could become an albatross around our neck and an opportunity for rent seekers to enrich themselves*”⁶. Similar views were echoed by Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, planning commission deputy chairman. He said a panel study on the PDS (Public distribution system) had found that only 16 paisa out of every rupee spent on the PDS was reaching the targeted poor⁷. He also opined that 1% of all CSS expenditure should be kept aside for monitoring and evaluation of the CSS schemes.

The then United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government has tried to address the problems of leakages by resorting towards a technology based cash delivery system.

The Aadhar card scheme was launched on 28th January 2009 under the aegis of the planning commission⁸. The Unique identification authority of India (UIDAI) was formed and entrusted with the duty of collecting the biometric and demographic data of residents of all the citizens of India and store it in a central server so that government subsidies could be provided directly to deserving individuals directly rather than relying upon currently existing defunct delivery

²Source : Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 5105, dated on 24.04.2015 & Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1007, dated on 04.12.2015

³ <https://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/PublicationsView.aspx?id=16268>

⁴Prime ministers speech at the inauguration of the golden jubilee year of the Institute of Economic Growth December 15, 2007.

⁵ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rajiv-was-right-Montek-says-only-16p-of-Re-reaches-poor/articleshow/5121893.cms>
Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

⁶ Text of intervention of finance minister P. Chidambaram at the National Development Council meeting held on December 19, 2007.

⁷ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rajiv-was-right-Montek-says-only-16p-of-Re-reaches-poor/articleshow/5121893.cms>
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⁸ http://www.uidai.gov.in/images/notification_28_jan_2009.pdf

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machinery. After facing initial resistance from civil liberty groups, the UIDAI has generated over 100 crore aadhar cards and has covered over 93% of the adult population in India⁹.

After spending 6,678.32 crores¹⁰ and five and half years after issuing the first Aadhar card the necessary technological infrastructure have been put in place. Now it is up to the government to extract the maximum benefits it could derive from the existing technological infrastructure. However, to its credit, the current government has also shown its commitment towards taking the idea forward by passing “The Aadhar (Targeted delivery of financial, benefits and services) bill 2016”¹¹. With the passage of this bill, the government intends to provide direct cash subsidies to deserving individuals directly to their bank accounts, which will be linked with their Aadhar card.

A cursory look into the economic literature shows that the research community is still divided about the benefits of the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and no consensus has been reached. However, there is also ample empirical evidence showcasing the successes of the DBT system. In Namibia and South Africa, the direct transfer of old age pension has had a significant effect in poverty reduction in the short term. And, in the long run it also helped the beneficiaries to better cope with the Aids epidemic and increase human capital investment on their grand children (Case and Deaton 1998; Samson et al 2004). South Africa’s child support grant and Malawis Mchinji cash transfer programs have had a statistically significant effect on student enrollment in schools. DBT’s have also had a positive effect on the attendance of school children and have also found some effects in the reducing early school drop outs (Case, Hosegood and Lund 2003; Miller et al 2011). DBT’s have also been found to have worked well when directed for food consumption as well. In Zambia and Malawi DBT’s were found to increase the dietary diversity amongst its beneficiaries (Adato and Bassett 2009; Miller et al 2011; Aguero, Carter and Woolard 2006).

In India’s DBT program, the old age pensions scheme were found to be better targeted and presented a considerable scope for poverty reduction (Dutta et al 2010; Farrington et al 2006). There is also evidence of DBT’s reducing corruption and leakages. An experimental pilot cash transfer study in Delhi found that the treatment group, the group that was given cash instead of in kind transfer did not face any decrease in food consumption in comparison with the control group. The treatment group also experienced a significant increase in the consumption of pulses, egg, fish and meat. A DBT program that allowed 1.5 lakh farmers to purchase seeds at market rates while transferring them the subsidy directly to their bank accounts found the cost of subsidy reduce by 60 crore¹².

An equal number of studies have found out that DBT’s do not lead to increase welfare for its beneficiaries and could also lead to negative externalities for the whole society. A pilot study in Alwar, Rajasthan, provided cash subsidy for kerosene purchase lead to an increased destruction of forest for supply of fuel wood¹³. The same study also highlights some of the structural issues like lack of banks in rural areas and delays in cash transfers as an impediment to the successful implementation of the DBT scheme¹⁴. DBT restrict self selection of the beneficiaries. Inconvenience of standing in the line at PDS shops makes rich self-select out of the pool of recipients (Himanshu 2011). Latest case studies have shown that the PDS system has reduced leakages and are working efficiently in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Orissa¹⁵ negates any necessity for replacing the PDS with the DBT

⁹ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138555>

¹⁰ <https://uidai.gov.in/finance-budgets.html>

¹¹ <http://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-aadhaar-targeted-delivery-of-financial-and-other-subsidies-benefits-and-services-bill-2016-4202/> Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

¹² <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/subsidy-reform-seeding-change-through-direct-benefit-transfer/> Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

¹³ <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/cash-transfers-do-not-benefit--41758>

¹⁴ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/let-everyone-suffer-cash-transfer-say-kotkasim-beneficiaries/article4200710.ece> Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

¹⁵ <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/TTLqU0Cg2iF4hYtJSHtMRI/PDS-a-story-of-changing-states.html>

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scheme. In addition, the theory of reduced expenditure also does not hold water as the new report by CAG has debunked the government's claim of saving 22,000 crore through its Liquefied petroleum gas(LPG) DBT scheme¹⁶.

The initiative of linking the AAdhar card with the various government schemes shows that the government, as on 31st March 2016, h linked 12.28 crore LPG connection, 11.39 ration cards, 5.9 crore MNREGA job cards, .95 crore NSAP (pension scheme), 31 crore EPIC cards, 9.32 crore PMJDY, .24 crore passports, .45 crore income tax returns filed and .14 crore Jeevan Pramaan with the aadhar card¹⁷.

The adoption of technological infrastructure alone is not sufficient in delivering the effectiveness of the DBT scheme. The current transfer in kind program should take into consideration the views of the some eminent experts who have raised concerns about the way in which the DBT program is implemented. The following are some of the major concerns:

- **Effective targeting of the required beneficiary:** Most of the anti poverty programs in India have failed because the intended benefits do not reach the legitimate beneficiaries. This problem gets even more exasperated because DBT's transfer cash which is valued equally by the rich, middle class and the poor alike. Hence, targeting of the subsidies to the right beneficiaries becomes even more difficult. A clear mechanism taking into consideration the hetrogenous nature and the various socio economic conditions prevalent in the country should be used to identify the real beneficiaries before thrusting the DBT scheme upon the people. I.e. no legitimate beneficiary should miss out on the benefits intended to them.
- **Reduced public expenditure:** DBT scheme should not be viewed as mechanism to reduce the social spending expenditure of the government. It should be viewed as a mechanism through which the government could directly reach the beneficiaries without the interference of any middle-men. However, any additional benefits that the government gains in the form of reduced expenditure should be considered to be a windfall and not as a means from it. Unfortunately, the current government rather than taking the cautious route has gone into overdrive and has already started cutting the social sector expenditure¹⁸. After implementing the program successfully if the Government finds evidence to support the reduction of social sector expenditure because of increased efficiency from the money spent. The money thus saved should be used to increase the scope of the social sector spending and in principle should not be used to reduce the fiscal deficit of the country.
- **Program evaluation:** The primary priority of any social sector scheme is to bring equity. However, if done in an effective manner it would turn out to be good for both the society and the country. So, to determine whether the DBT is functioning efficiently and effectively as envisaged timely audits should be conducted and timely reports should be submitted in the public domain for public scrutiny

Conclusion: The 1990's balance of payment crisis ushered a new way of economic thinking for the country. Though the economy grew leaps and bounds the benefits of this economic growth did not reach the economically weaker sections of the society. Almost 25 years after the Indian economic miracle the Indian government is trying to address the issue of rampant poverty through an economic policy which has never been tried in such humongous scale anywhere else in the world. Problems are many and the skeptics of the new policy have rightly pointed out a lot of loopholes in the proposed system. However, any new system change is bound to be fraught with known and unknown problems. So, the test for the current government is not so much about increasing the range of the DBT but to address the pertinent

¹⁶ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cag-audit-nails-centres-claim-on-lpg-subsidy-saving/article8871994.ece> Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

¹⁷ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138555>

¹⁸ <http://www.newindianexpress.com/budget-2016/Subsidy-Bill-Cut-by-Over-4-to-Rs-2.31-Lakh-Crore-for-2016-17/2016/02/29/article3303131.ece> Date Accessed: 2.8.2016

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issues raised by the skeptics. However, if implemented effectively this program could go a long way in addressing poverty and reducing corruption in India.

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Headlines

Six counts on which the draft anti-trafficking bill falls short

(Prachi Salve, *Scroll*, August 8, 2016)

The bill is being introduced “to prevent trafficking of persons and to provide protection and rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking and to create a legal, economic, and social environment against trafficking of persons and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto”.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/813268/six-counts-on-which-the-draft-anti-trafficking-bill-fails-short>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Tough Tactics to Tame Valley Violence

(The Telegraph, August 7, 2016)

The Centre plans no political outreach to dissolve the violent clot in Kashmir. It prefers, instead, for the Mehbooba Mufti government to keep up the security heat to subdue the Valley-wide upsurge. No decision has been taken yet, but a fallback strategy where the armed forces return to a foreground role is ready, sources say. A similar call-out to the army was made following tumultuous violence triggered by the killing of student Tufail Mattoo in the summer of 2010.

Read More:http://www.telegraphindia.com/1160808/jsp/nation/story_101240.jsp#.V6gOPf97IU

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

Small and corrupt: Who is profiting from Maharashtra's water conservation programme?

((Mridula Chari and Supriya Sharma), Scroll.In, 8th August,2016)

The focus on decentralised, village-level water conservation marks a shift from large irrigation projects that have delivered greater benefits to the state's politicians and officials than to its farmers. A committee report tabled in the state assembly in June 2014 documented irregularities in contracts worth Rs 70,000 crore that had been awarded to irrigation schemes over the last ten years.

ReadMore:<http://scroll.in/article/812717/small-and-corrupt-who-is-profiting-from-maharashtras-water-conservation-programme>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

DEVELOPMENT

In the Absence of adequate Social protection, Billions are at a risk of poverty

(Jomo Kwame Sundaram, thewire.in, August 04, 2016)

Kuala Lumpur: According to the World Bank, the MDG target of halving the share of the poor was achieved by 2008, well in advance of 2015, the target year. However, increased unemployment and lower incomes in recent times remind us that poverty is not an unchanging attribute of a shrinking group, but rather, a condition that billions of vulnerable persons risk experiencing.

Despite the various shortcomings of money measures of poverty, they nevertheless reflect the extent of vulnerability. For example, the estimated number of poor globally in 2012 more than doubles from 902 million to 2.1 billion when one raises the poverty line by 63% from \$1.90/day to \$3.10/day per person, suggesting that a very large number of those not deemed poor by the World Bank are very vulnerable to external economic shocks or changes in personal circumstances, such as income losses or food price increases. fixed-term work, temporary work, on-call work and home-working – often mainly involving women.

ReadMore:<http://thewire.in/56751/poverty-vulnerability-and-social-protection/>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

GOVERNMENT

Maharashtra Government Rules Out Blanket Liquor Ban

(The Wire, August 8, 2016)

Days after social activist Anna Hazare demanded liquor prohibition in Maharashtra, the state government ruled out a blanket ban, but said it may adopt the Tamil Nadu pattern and disallow sale of country liquor. Finance minister, Sudhir Mungantiwa, who had followed up the issue of banning alcohol in his home district Chandrapur, said liquor sale generates around Rs 13,000 crore revenue and the government is not considering banning it in any other part of the state.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/55412/maharashtra-liquor-ban/>

Date Accessed: 3.8.2016

Governance & Development

EDUCATION

Perils of increasingly challenging college-entrance exams in India

(Dr. Abhijit Gosavi, *moneylife.in*, August 08, 2016)

As someone who grew up in India, getting his high-school and part of his college education there, and as someone who has been an engineering professor in the U.S. for the last seventeen years, I have had the opportunity to observe students from multiple nations. Students from India have key characteristics that are quite distinct from those of other developing and, of course, developed nations.

ReadMore: <http://www.moneylife.in/article/perils-of-increasingly-challenging-college-entrance-exams-in-india/47756.html>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

ENVIRONMENT

Why the Global Clampdown on Hazardous Refrigerants Hasn't been Effective

(Vaibhav Chaturvedi, *Scroll*, August 3, 2016)

After the euphoria of the Paris climate negotiations last year, a more mundane but significantly important set of negotiations are underway, which will shape the design of our homes, the growth of our industries and the future of the planet. Policymakers from across the world met recently in Vienna under the aegis of the Montreal Protocol to agree to a phase down pathway for hydrofluorocarbons.

Hydrofluorocarbons are potent greenhouse gases, largely used as refrigerants in refrigerators and air-conditioning for homes, commercial buildings and vehicles, but with global warming potential of thousands of times as compared to carbon dioxide. An amendment for limiting existing and future production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons has been described as the most significant step for mitigating climate change after the Paris Agreement.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/812972/why-the-global-clampdown-on-hazardous-refrigerants-hasnt-been-effective>

Date Accessed: 3.8.2016

LAW AND JUSTICE

Coastal Law Got a Skewed Review – and Now, an Opaque Revamp

(Meenakshi Kapoor, *The Wire*, August 3, 2016)

In June this year, the Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change disclosed the report of the committee constituted to review the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011. The environment ministry shared the report after eighteen months of its completion and that, too, on being directed by the Central Information Commission (CIC) to do so. While the ministry's reluctance to make the report public flouts the principles of democratic decision-making, the process of CRZ review in itself has been opaque, obscure and one-sided.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/55934/coastal-crz-czmp-environment-ministry/>

Date Accessed: 3.8.2016

Plantations, CAMPA Loom Large over Community Rights

(Sanghamitra Dubey, *Down to Earth*, July 18, 2016)

The forest department has installed CCTV cameras on the traditional lands of the community in Paikpada. Threats have been issued to the community against carrying out any cultivation activity on their own land, which if caught on the cameras, would lead to severe consequences for the Kutia Kondhs. This has left the community members terrorised. The forest department is of the opinion that shifting cultivation practices, which have been recognised as a traditional agriculture practice under the FRA, are destructive to the forests. The plantations are, therefore, being carried out in the name of regenerating “degraded” forests through afforestation.

Governance & Development

Several cases have been filed against the Kutia Kondhs for opposing forestry plantations on their lands. Some members of the community have been imprisoned as well.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/plantations-campa-loom-large-over-community-rights-54932>

Date Accessed: 3.8.2016

The Dichotomy between Manusmriti and a Liberal Constitution

(Alankar, *The Wire*, August 06, 2016)

The Indian constitution was one of the earliest constitutions to give universal adult suffrage. The idea of universal adult suffrage is antithetical to the ideas of Manu. On November 30, 1949 (four days after the constitution was finalised) the RSS's Organiser wrote: "But in our Constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. To this day Manu's laws, as enunciated in the Manusmriti, excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing".

Read More: <http://thewire.in/56983/dichotomy-manusmriti-liberal-constitution/>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

Society

CASTEISM

How powerful castes in Maharashtra plot against Dalit women sarpanches to grab control of panchayats

(Rahi Gaikwad, *scroll.in*, August 04, 2016)

Four men were seated in the gram sabha office in Bankaranja village in Kaij taluka of Maharashtra's Beed district, when sarpanch Maya Dahire, a Dalit woman, walked in. She avoided sitting on the blue swivel chair meant for the village head – the only distinguished piece of furniture in the prosaic room, otherwise occupied by plastic chairs, metal cupboards and a table. Instead, she chose a plastic chair on the side, which nearly shielded her from the view of gram sevak Bapurao Shinde.

“This [blue one] is your chair,” recommended Shinde, but Dahire brushed off the hint with an awkward smile. Nothing about her manner remotely conveyed a sense of power or authority usually associated with the position of village head.

Dahire is the second Dalit woman sarpanch of Bankaranja but has no idea how she got there, and nor does she want to talk about it. Her meekness is perhaps an indication of why powerful castes of the village chose to back her and manipulated the gram panchayat election process to oust her predecessor Aruna Dahire, a Dalit woman who is more assertive in comparison.

ReadMore:<http://scroll.in/article/812995/how-powerful-castes-in-maharashtra-plot-against-dalit-women-sarpanches-seize-control-of-panchayats>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

Complicity and inequality

(Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Indian Express*, August 08, 2016)

Ancestral practices of discrimination related to the so-called impurity of Dalits are particularly resilient in Gujarat. In 2013, a report, Understanding Untouchability, based on a survey conducted in 1,589 villages by the Navsarjan Trust — an organisation that promotes the rights of Dalits — documented some of these practices. In more than half of the villages surveyed, the Dalits did not have access to wells, temples, tea stalls, panchayat offices, barbers, non-Dalit mid-wives, mid-day meals etc. This state of affairs is partly due to the non-implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/dalit-protests-gujarat-una-dalit-flogging-bjp-congress-2960221/>

Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

GENDER

How Violence Contributes to Diseases Among Sex Workers

(Sumit Chaturvedi, *India Spend*, August 8, 2016)

Violence inflicted on sex workers increases their risk of contracting STIs, including AIDS. While sexual violence has a more obvious connection to STIs, physical and emotional violence also play a major role in increasing their vulnerability. As many as 24,815 women, or 22.7%, reported 92,838 bouts of sexual, emotional and physical violence against them in the six-month period of the survey, carried out in five states: Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The most prevalent form of violence is physical with 39,832 incidents reported, followed by emotional (35,887) and sexual violence (17,119).

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/how-violence-contributes-to-diseases-among-sex-workers-80952>

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Society

Six counts on which the draft anti-trafficking bill falls short

(Prachi Salve, *Scroll*, August 8, 2016)

The bill is being introduced “to prevent trafficking of persons and to provide protection and rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking and to create a legal, economic, and social environment against trafficking of persons and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto”.

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Date Accessed: 8.8.2016

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Behind the Healthy Exports from India’s Illegal Mica Mines, the Toil of 20,000 Child Workers

(Thomas Reuters Foundation, *Scroll*, August 3, 2016)

In the depths of India’s illegal mica mines, where children as young as five work alongside adults, lurks a dark, hidden secret – the cover-up of child deaths with seven killed in the past two months, a Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation has revealed. Investigations over three months in the major mica producing states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh found child labour rife, with small hands ideal to pick and sort the valued mineral that puts the sparkle in cosmetics and car paint.

But interviews with workers and local communities discovered children were not only risking their health by working in abandoned “ghost” mines off official radars, but they were dying in the unregulated, crumbling mines, with seven killed since June.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/813033/in-indias-illegal-mica-mines-at-least-seven-child-deaths-since-june>

Date Accessed: 3.8.2016

India and World

AFRICA

Debt in Eastern Africa rising rapidly, but remains Manageable

(Down to Earth, August 08, 2016)

Andrew Mold, a senior economist from ECA, recalled that it is estimated that an additional 600 billion USD is needed in Africa every year until 2030 in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Progress towards achieving such ambitious levels of additional finance can only be achieved by relying more on domestic resource mobilization, he argued, particularly since the prospects for ODA are not especially encouraging.

Read more: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/debt-in-eastern-africa-is-rising-rapidly-but-remains-manageable-55200>

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A.N.C. Suffers Major Election Setback in South Africa

(Norimitsu Onishi, The New York Times, August 05, 2016)

“We’re waking up to a new political scene in South Africa,” said William Gumede, a political scientist at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. “People are clearly not voting anymore based on the past. They’re now voting on the current reality of poor service delivery and the Zuma presidency.”

Read More: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/06/world/africa/south-africa-election-anc.html?ref=africa&_r=0

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Opinions/ Books

OPINIONS

Brexit Exposes Globalisation's Fatal Flaw

(Sunita Narain, *Down to Earth*, July 1, 2016)

When governments decide on policies they need to keep in mind inclusive and equitable growth. When markets decide on policies, they only need to mind profits. In Europe, the need for political globalisation is even more acute. This is because governments have conceded policy control to a faceless bureaucracy in Brussels. They need to balance this loss of control by decentralising and devolving power to the people. Governments need to work democracy for democracy to work. But it is not easy as Brexit has shown. In the end it reveals a fatal flaw in the current model of globalisation, which makes national governments cede power, without providing global leadership. When governments sit together to decide on global matters, they are guided by national self-interest. From climate change to wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria, it is about muscle power at the very top and not about democracy. Who decided? In whose interest and how was the decision taken? It is clear that the dismemberment of the United Nations is costing the world today.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/brexit-exposes-globalisation-s-fatal-flaw-54585>

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Free To Lie

(Gwynne Dyer, *The Telegraph*, August 8, 2016)

Every year the London-based polling organization, Ipsos Mori, does its 'Perils of Perception' poll, asking people in many countries what they believe and comparing their answers with the true numbers. Putting all the results together, Ipsos Mori then comes up with its famous Index of Ignorance. The level of ignorance is startling - and yet these mistaken beliefs can play a big role in the political choices that countries make. The five most ignorant countries in the world are Mexico, India, Brazil, Peru and New Zealand. And the five best informed are South Korea, followed by Ireland, Poland, China and the United States of America.

Read More: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1160808/jsp/opinion/story_101143.jsp#.V6gPC_197IU

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