

# India's Children

There are 375 million children in the country. They constitute more than one third of the population.



Photograph : Amit Mitra

*A country's budget is the most solid expression of its government's priorities, performances, decisions and intentions. HAQ : Centre for Child Rights, in partnership with Save the Children (UK), is undertaking an exercise in analysing the budget from a child rights perspective.*

**Are you concerned about them?**

# Do you know how many children actually survive?

Of every 1000 children that are born, 74 die before reaching the age of 5 years. This is the same as was in 1960.

## *This is the human cost of neglect.....*

Malnutrition and other diseases have claimed the lives of 24 newborn babies in village Ichapur in Dhenkanal district in Orissa in recent months... The tribals say that at least one baby dies every fortnight, leaving most families childless.

Babaji Pradhan, 50, lost seven children in the last year. "Children cry a lot some develop loose motions and die".

"Nobody knows the reason of their death. My efforts to raise the issue with the local administration officials have been futile. The only answer I get is that a team of doctors will come to check on the surviving children", says Hara Pradhan who has lost two daughters.

(Indian Express. 17 August, 2000)

"We need to hang our heads in shame. While the IMR had plateaued for three years, recent reports of it in 13 states are appalling. We need public health providers to tell us what is wrong."

– Minakshi Datta-Ghosh, Joint Secretary,  
Department of Health and Family Welfare.

(Times of India 23 April, 2000)

"The cost of malnutrition to the country is anywhere between 10 to 28 billion dollars annually in lost productivity, illness and death".

– Patrice Engle, UNICEF  
(Times of India. 29 May, 2000)

# Education for all - a dream we cherish

It is estimated that over 45 per cent children of India in the age group of 6-14, that is, about 80-90 million children are out of school.

Of all the children enrolled, 54 per cent drop out of school before completing their elementary education. Of them 51 per cent are boys and 59 per cent are girls.

*This is a not about the plight of children in some remote village in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh or Rajasthan, but what is happening to children in the heart of a metropolitan city such as Mumbai .....*

“Puja, a six year old refused to skip our extra training class despite being afflicted by chicken pox.

Arvind had a fractured right hand but insisted on using his left hand to write rather than miss his class.”

Having responded to the enthusiasm of the children and having enrolled 70 children in a study centre, Shobha Murthy from Arambh, an NGO, laments, “Retention of children is a major problem facing municipal schools today. Of the 100 children enrolled in class 1 of Zilla Parishad schools, barely 45 make it to class 5. Classrooms are overcrowded making it impossible for teachers to pay attention to slow learners or weaker children”.

(Times of India. 26 July, 2000)

### *In Orissa...*

**"The All-Orissa Federation of Teachers Organisation finds that for every one lakh of the population in Orissa, there are 133 primary and 36 upper primary schools."**

– Abani Boral, General Secretary  
(Indian Express, 25 July, 2000)

### *And in the Capital...*

**"Over 10,000 children studying in primary schools of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) have no class rooms. The civic authorities have failed to provide them with tents. The affected students are made to sit with students from other classes and as many as three sections are crowded into one room."**

– Atma Ram Gupta, Member of the Education Committee of MCD  
(Times of India, 4 December, 1999)

## **Gender discrimination still persists**

**At least 400 infant girls are killed every year in India. Others are not allowed to be born. The culprits are usually the parents. The female sex ratio has declined from 935 females per 1000 males in 1981 to 927 females per 1000 males in 1991.**

**Within a decade after the introduction of technology of sex determination in India, one estimate is that about 20,000 female foetuses are aborted every year. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) activists feel that the figure is**

about 50,000. In Tamil Nadu female infanticide accounts for 8% of all female deaths and 16% of female infant deaths.

Punjab and Haryana, 2 of the most economically advanced states in the country have sex- ratios of 882 and 865. In Bihar the sex ratio is 879 and in some districts of Rajasthan, it is as low as 600 for every 1000 males.

A village named Devra in Rajasthan had received its first "baraat" in 110 years because a girl child is killed immediately after birth – either by drowning the girl baby in a tub of milk or fed opium (afeem) or simply smothered with a pillow. The daughter whose baraat came after 110 years had survived because she was lucky. Her mother had delivered the baby in her parental home in another village where they were not averse to girl babies and therefore did not kill her. So the girl lived to be married.

(Times of India. 10 September, 1999)

**"The law has not been able to enforce a single conviction. The only perceptible change has been that blatant hoardings and advertisements on sex determination have disappeared"**

– Dr. Mira Shiva of the Voluntary Health Association of India  
(The Telegraph. 10 November, 1999)

**"The Government will not hesitate to put even the medical community behind bars if they were found to be helping in detection of the sex of unborn children with a view to committing female foeticide"**

Dr. A.K. Walia, Delhi Health Minister  
(Pioneer. 8 August, 1999)

**This is not the end of the saga. In fact it is a mere glimpse. There are many other violations that children confront...**

- There are 11 million children living on the streets.
- 45 % of the children in India (about 169 million) are employed - the largest number of working children in the world.
- Government estimates that of the nine lakh prostitutes in India, four lakh are child prostitutes.
- There are 15,000 children orphaned in Kashmir in the on-going turmoil.
- Every third rape victim is a minor. In the last 10 years, rape of children below 16 years has accounted for more than 25% of the reported cases. Rape of children below the age of 10 years has increased by 10%.
- Incestuous rape is the commonest form of sexual abuse.

## **We need to ask some very hard questions**

**There are several constitutional promises, laws, policies and programmes for children. Yet there is very little incremental change in their lives. Why is that so?**

**The budget allocations is the best reflection of the government's political commitment. Are the government's good intentions and commitments to children being reflected in it's budgets?**

## **Is an adequate budget being allocated to ensure effective implementation of universalisation of elementary education?**

### ***What is the necessary investment?***

An additional 40,000 crore rupees is needed for elementary education over five years is the estimate of the Saikia Committee in 1997.

An additional 137,000 crore rupees is required for universalisation of education over a period of 10 years is the estimate of the Tapas Mazumdar Committee.

### ***What is currently being invested?***

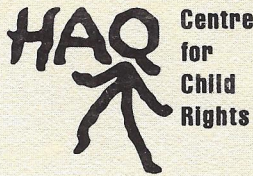
In Mumbai alone with the existing resources the government cannot ensure the education of a staggering 25,30,000 children. (Indian Express. 23 August, 2000)

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As early as the 1960s, Commission reports have called for a raise in education expenditure to 6% of GNP. On the contrary, the share has fallen from 4% in 1991-92 to 3.2% in 1995-96 similar to the figure in the 1980s. (D.J Ravindran. Hindu. 30 July, 2000)

### ***An alternative view***

It has been estimated by Professor Mahbub ul Haq and Dr. Amartya Sen that if military spending is cut by 5 percent a year over the next five years, it would release \$22 billion, to achieve the goal of Universal Primary Education within the next five years.



**HAQ: Centre for Child Rights**, a Delhi based non-profit organisation, seeks to recognise, protect and promote child rights. Started in 1998, it was formally registered under the Societies Registration Act XXXI of 1960 in June 1999. HAQ believes that there is a need for realisation of human rights of children through policy, law and action. It aims to look at the child in an integrated manner within the framework of the Constitution of India, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and contribute to building a child rights movement, where every child has a right to survival, childhood and equal opportunity.

HAQ is committed to serve as a resource base as well as a support group on child rights issues. Its programmes include Research, Documentation, Public Education and Advocacy.

HAQ is an active member of several child rights campaigns and networks such as the Campaign Against Child Labour, the Forum for Creches & Child Care Services (FORCES), National Alliance for Fundamental Right to Education (NAFRE). It is also a part of the People's Budgetary Information and Analysis Service (People's BIAS).

**JOIN US TO ENSURE A JUST  
BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR  
CHILDREN**

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