# People's Manifesto

## FOR EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

2014

# People's **Manifesto** for Equality, Justice and Dignity

# Preamble

Even as political parties table their promises and script a roadmap for the next five years in preparation for the Indian General Elections, 2014, the People's Manifesto is an effort to give voice to the demands, concerns and aspirations of the poor and excluded across the country. Through inclusive and localized process of consultation and dialogue more than 6 lakh citizens have come together to create a national agenda for development, rights, services, governance and accountability. In different methodology signature campaigns have been done covering about 10 lakh individuals to give shape to peoples aspirations in form of manifesto. This effort has provided an opportunity for the citizens to directly and indirectly engage with the upcoming elections and voice their demands for the future agenda of the country.

Undertaken by several CSOs through direct consultative process, signature campaign, and engagement through social media more than 250 parliamentary constituencies in 24 states have been covered. Constituencies were selected on the basis of political importance (Amethi and Rae Barelli in UP) and poor performance of development indicators (Kalahandi, Odisha), tribal dominated constituencies etc. A vast network of civil society organisations, people's networks, women's organisations, trade unions, student groups, dalit and tribal groups, youth organisations, organisations working on children and other networks representing various marginalized sections contributed to this massive mobilization and participatory discussion. At the state and national level, the manifesto is being shared with representatives of all political parties, Lok Sabha candidates, Members of Parliament and members of the drafting committee as direct inputs from the citizens to shape their political commitment.



# People's Voices

The People's Manifesto clearly reflects an urgency to address inequalities and calls for a greater commitment to fulfilling the promise of basic services – particularly, health, education, water and sanitation and food security. The poorest and most excluded are systematically deprived of the benefits of development and economic progress. Welfare schemes and policy reforms are not enough. People have demanded structural adjustments that would overthrow deeply entrenched hegemonies and put an end to discrimination. Key emphases emerging from the people include the need for greater regulation of the private sector particularly in health, land rights and in preservation of forest and natural resources, a strong justice delivery system, protection of rights and entitlements across all sections of marginalized and vulnerable groups including women, children, dalits, muslims, adivasis, persons with disability and the LGBT community. Recommendations on governance, decentralized planning and resource allocation are important inputs that could frame the political and social commitment of the forthcoming government in an effective way. The manifesto prioritises upholding national integrity and simultaneously protecting the rights of the excluded, with emphasis on local and specific development needs. On various urgent matters such as health, education, food rights it has called for time bound commitments and effective grievance redressal mechanism.

## Key demands

### 1. Ensure highest standards of healthcare accessible to and affordable by all, upgrade the public health facilities and address as a priority health emergencies such as maternal and infant health and mortality.

- Enact with immediate effect the National Health Bill 2009 with a time bound public financing commitment.
- Increase tax spending on health to meet 5% of GDP in the next 5 years. Commit proportionate health investments for the rural areas.
- Establishment of strong community based accountability mechanisms under programmes such as Rashtriya Swashtya Bima Yojna, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and such.
- Improve with immediate effect infrastructure and resources of all public health facilities by implementing Indian Public Health Standard (IPHS) Guidelines. Fill the massive shortfall in the number of required health workers by ensuring the WHO norm of at least 23 health workers per 10,000 population. Equip every village with minimum health facilities such as mobile health clinics fully equipped to provide primary health care, skilled ASHA workers, facilities for remote medical advice, free medicines, emergency transport facilities particularly for pregnant women.
- Ensure essential medicines available free of cost to all, adequate production and use of generic drugs, free availability of life saving medicines, distribution of free medicines to the remotest public health centres.
- Impose regulations on the private medical sector to mitigate health shocks and financial debts incurred by a vast majority of India. Roll out the Clinical Establishment Act in all states making it mandatory for all private establishments to register and adhere to the regulations which include free beds and treatment for the poor.
- Institutionalize the role of civil society organisations in flagship programmes of government on basic services such as education, health and livelihood etc.
- Improve implementation and eradicate corruption in all maternal and child health related programs. Increase budgetary allocations and provide safeguards and redressal mechanisms to ensure service delivery.
- Uphold and commit towards a broader purview of healthcare that includes social determinants such as access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, mental well being, non discriminatory standards for people with various kinds of disabilities.

### 2. Prevent health conditions from worsening by ensuring universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities

- Ensure water quality by regular maintenance of pipes, availability of testing facilities for arsenic, fluoride and other forms of contamination, prevent outbreak of water borne diseases
- Capacity building of communities for ownership and maintenance of water distribution systems and water bodies.
- Install deep tube wells in drought prone areas with additional responsibility shouldered by local authorities to meet water needs.
- Every village and urban settlement to have household level toilets, effective drainage and sanitation systems and waste disposal and recycling.

### 3. Protect education as a fundamental right by effectively implementing the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, arrest drop-out rates and improve quality of teaching and learning outcomes

- Increase funding for education to a minimum of 6 per cent of GDP and ensure the complete utilization of these resources.
- Fill existing gap of 1.18 million teachers. Enforce measures related to quality of teaching such as teachers per subject, teaching equipment, learning materials, minimum working hours, qualification of teachers, IT based learning environment.
- Initiate a drive including age appropriate admission rules to bring back the millions out-of-school children. Set up separate toilets for girls in all schools; incentivize education for girls through measures such as crèche facilities at schools to support sibling surrogacy, revive the promise of nutritious Mid Day meals, available without discrimination to all and institute mechanisms to monitor safety and quality of the food.
- Extend the purview of RTE Act to 18 years, in line with the internationally recognized definition of childhood. Bring in pre-school children under the purview of RTE.
- Take stringent and closely monitored steps to ensure social inclusion in all schools, including provisions for children with special needs.

### 4. Ensure nutritious food for all through effective implementation of the National Food Security Act

- Universalize coverage of National Food Security Act include pulses and edible oil along with the food grain entitlements to all households. Make clear provisions to cover migrant workers, homeless population, destitute people and out of school children. Set-up community kitchens in urban areas.
- Implement restructured ICDS, set up anganwadi cum crèches and extend coverage of temporary settlement to all migrant and street children; improve delivery of mid-day meal scheme, including nutritional quality of meals.
- Encourage decentralized procurement, especially from small and marginal farmers and adopt strong measure to arrest corruption and profiteering in the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- Awareness drives and legal safeguards to address deeply entrenched social practices such as discriminatory feeding of the girl child and women of the family, child marriage etc which perpetuate malnutrition particularly amongst girls and women.

### 5. Recognise housing as a human right by ensuring decent living conditions for the urban poor and protection of the rights of displaced persons

- Legislate National Housing Policy and National Rehabilitation Policy. Ensure mandatory provisions of 25-40% of land in City Development Plans (CDPs) for housing of the urban poor.
- Amend the Model Property Rights to Slum Dwellers Act 2011 to abolish punitive action against the urban poor, decriminalize settlers and slum dwellers.
- Effectively implement the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 with particular focus on social security measures for the protection of displaced persons, resettlement in areas that are close replications of their original habitat and the consequences on women who are impacted significantly.

### 6. Strengthen implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA (MGNREGA) Act, commit to urban employment, create decent employment opportunities for all across sectors

- Improve efficacy of the rights based MGNREGRA Act through awareness drives, mandatory gram sabhas, corruption free Gram Panchayat, frequent social audits; ensure that the most vulnerable receive employment and wages.
- Localise planning and implementation by investing the Panchayat with more technical and human resource support.

- Promote entrepreneurship, enhance the scope and budgetary allocation of the National Livelihood Mission, revive traditional livelihood, artisan skills, and provide technical and financial support to improve farming practices.
- Strengthen the Inter-state Migration Act to ensure safety, minimum wages, housing and social security for all migrant workers in the country.

### 7. Defend people's rights to land and forest as pledged in the recent legislations, safeguard agricultural productivity, forest and other natural resources from the profiteering interests of private land developers and extractive industries.

- Safeguard land rights of the adivasis by strong implementation the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006.
- Promote adivasi self rule, local planning and ownership of governance by implementing the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996
- Empower forest dwellers through awareness drives on their rights and entitlements under the FRA. Conduct frequent social audits on implementation of the FRA and resolve all issues immediately. Maintain a database of pattas (land titles).
- Protect the dalits from forceful evictions, allocate especially reserved land to the landless dalits, and create fast track courts for speedy resolution of land disputes.

### 8. Ensure equal opportunities for women by protecting their economic, social and political rights, ensuring political participation and adopting a zero tolerance policy for violence.

- Pass the Women's Reservation Bill with immediate effect.
- Ensure fair and equal resource distribution, employment and income opportunities for women. Mandate equal employment opportunities in all sectors, enforce safe employment conditions and a strong implementation of Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2013. Allocate 50% of all funds from the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan for SC and ST women.
- Protect women and girls from all forms of violence by rigorous implementation of legal safeguards such as the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, 498A of the Indian Penal Code, Dowry Prohibition Act. Sensitise and reform enforcement, ensure faster delivery of justice.
- Create awareness about rights and entitlements under MGNREGA, ensure safe and equal employment opportunities. Provide support such as on-site crèche and childcare facilities, work to home transport, universal maternity benefits (minimum six months wages).
- Protect land, forest and property rights of women through stronger enactment of existing laws. Promote women's control over natural resources and adopt a gender sensitive climate

### 9. Protect the right of every child to survive, be healthy and safe

- Increase investment for child protection, education, health and nutrition. The budget for children should be increased up to 10% of the total union budget. Raise the public expenditure on health to 5% of GDP, as per WHO standard, on education to 6% of GDP and to combat increasing violence against children increase the union budget allocation from 0.03% to at least 0.15%.
- Rigorous and effective implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 to prohibit gender based selection. Establish a dedicated cell with appropriate budgetary allocation within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to for stricter enforcement of the law.
- Amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and regulation) Act to ensure all children avail of RTE provisions and harmonize the age definition of all child related legislations in line with the National Policy for Children 2013, where every individual below 18 years is recognized as a child.
- Establish an independent, convergent body that will anchor nutrition at the national level, develop a national nutrition policy, and issue orders for conducting a comprehensive periodic survey on nutrition to track progress in eliminating malnutrition. Establish Nutrition Missions in all states with high levels of malnutrition.
- Elevate the Ministry of Women and Child Development to the status of the Cabinet Ministry to strengthen the focus for child development and protection.
- Ensure children's voices and participation in the democratic process through neighbourhood children's parliament, children gram sabhas across India, participation in developing and auditing all policy, program and legislative matters relevant to them.

### 10. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and social exclusion against dalits, adivasis, muslims and persons with disabilities.

- Bring a legislation on SCP and TSP to give legal sanction to the plan allocation to SCs and STs.
- Ensure non-discriminatory access to rights and entitlement for socially excluded groups.
- Close the development gap by effectively implementing Special Component Plan for dalits and the Tribal Sub Plan with a particular focus on education, income generation and access to basic amenities. Set up an institution at the centre and state level to allocate funds to various ministries, ensure timely disbursement and oversee implementation and monitoring.
- Allocate and utilize budget to Ministry of Minority Affairs and other such focused efforts to address exclusion of muslim communities in keeping with community needs and aspirations, employing mechanisms that ensure their engagement.
- End discrimination against children of dalits, adivasis, muslims and other minorities in schools and institutions of higher education by stringently adopting the Right to Education Act and enforcing structural corrections that challenge the elite order perpetuating exclusion.
- Guarantee access to employment opportunities by enacting equal opportunity laws that prohibit discrimination in capital markets, hiring decisions and processes at the work place and by ensuring a reservation in the private sector. Protect labour rights of those engaged in vulnerable employment.
- Enforce Bonded Labour System Abolition Act 1976 to rescue millions of dalits and adivasis in bondage and protect communities vulnerable to bondage. Establish strong and effective measures for rehabilitation through convergence of central and state schemes.
- Defend the rights of the socially excluded by addressing disparities in access to healthcare, particularly maternal health, access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities; ensuring access to and non discrimination in food entitlement, housing and a decent standard of living.
- Protect women and children of the marginalised groups as they are the most vulnerable. Enforce without exception the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and other laws to end impunity for violence against dalit women, prosecute and punish perpetrators.
- Pass the Prevention of Communal Violence and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparation) Bill, 2011. Ensure that victims of communal violence receive timely compensation, are allowed to return safely and with dignity to their previous residence and jobs, receive care and protection from the state.
- Pass the Disability Bill (2009) and enforce its recommendations immediately.
- Declare all the people of fishermen community as sea tribes or water tribes and give them their rights over fishing in water and sea.

### 11. Repeal with immediate effect, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalises homosexuality, create policies and legal safeguards to protect the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community from cruelty and ensure they lead a life of dignity, equal opportunity.

- Legal, social and economic recognition to the 'third sex'. Bring back the significant population of transgenders into the social fold, by ensuring economic entitlements, employment, access to education and health, skill development and legalising sex change operation.

### 12. Pledge to invest in the young, create an enabling and aspirational environment to unleash their fullest potential.

- Place youth at the heart of politics, legislation and governance. Mandate 35 % reservation of youth representation in legislative assemblies and cabinet equivalent bodies of which 50 % reservation will be for women.
- Make education relevant and impactful.
- Create viable employment options for all. Guarantee respectable and rewarding employment at the home town; create special job opportunities for rural youth from class 10 onwards; provide an unemployment allowance for the unemployed youth

### 13. Commit to accountable governance

- Financial and operational details of all government programs are to be made readily and regularly available in the public domain.
- Strengthen mechanisms for public participation and monitoring such as through the Right to Information, Social Audit and Vigilance Committees.
- Separate Grievance Redressal Law to strengthen grievance redressal on public services.
- Resource mobilization through progressive taxation to fund public spending for social sectors. Increase direct tax rates and reducing the indirect tax rates which have adverse impact on poor and marginalised.
- Improve the functioning of statutory institutions such as commissions for women, dalits, adivasis, minorities and Person with Disabilities particularly at state level; establish clear and transparent set of criteria for appointment of Chairperson and Members of the Commission and mandate the commissions to prepare a five year plan with deliverables and budgets.

### 14. Prioritise and strengthen human rights and access to justice

- Abolish all anti-people, anti-democratic laws such as AFPSA, engage politically with conflict regions and initiate police and judicial reforms to uphold peace and human rights.
- Police and judicial reforms to be undertaken with focus on responsiveness to marginalized groups and speedy redress of appeals. The D K Basu Guidelines to be implemented to ensure prevention of unlawful arrest and torture.
- Prioritise national integration and communal harmony.
- Revoke Armed Forces (Special Power) Act, effectively implement the Whistle-blowers Act and put in place a witness protection program.

## Supporting Organsiations

Alliance for Right to Early Childhood Development | Campaign Against Declining Child Sex Ratio | Child Rights Coalition | CASA | CRY | Indian Social Institute | National Adivasi Solidarity Council | NCDHR | Nine is Mine | OXFAM India | PACS | RTE Forum | Save the Children | Youth-unManifesto | Wada Na Todo Abhiyan | World Vision.

People's **Manifesto** for Equality, Justice and Dignity

**RSVP:**
**Pradeep Baisakh, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan**
C-1/E, Second floor, Green Park Extension, New Delhi
E-mail: pradeep.wnta@gmail.com, info.wadanatodo@gmail.com
Tel: +91-11-46082371/73/74