

# 100 DAYS

Review of NDA Government

2014



## 100 DAYS REVIEW OF NDA GOVERNMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) has reviewed government performance ever since 2009. In the months leading up to the General Elections 2014, more than 16,00,000 citizens, from 250 parliamentary constituencies across 24 states, scripted the People's Manifesto - a national agenda for development, rights, services, governance and accountability, through direct and indirect consultations. The demands, aspirations and needs of the people were shared with all political parties as inputs for their upcoming election manifestoes. When the pledges of various parties were published, WNTA undertook a comparative review of the commitments.

On the occasion of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government's completion of 100 days in power, WNTA presents the civil society and people's review of the government's performance.

We recognize the fact that 100 days is too short a span to judge a government's performance and often this exercise runs the risk of being symbolic. As observers of governance accountability and political will, we have noted that the first few days in office often set trends that determine the remaining term and reveal priorities of the government, particularly regarding its approach

to people and social well being. The purpose of this document is to:

- ◆ analyze those early trends
- ◆ celebrate key reasons for the people to be optimistic
- ◆ highlight areas in which urgent action is required
- ◆ compile a governance aid with citizens and civil society providing real time inputs

Several groups and campaigns have been consulted for this paper. At a preparatory meeting, the priorities of people were determined across areas of governance, issues, constituencies and rights. Campaigners and experts in respective areas were invited to contribute their analysis and comments. This report is based on secondary research using public announcements, statements of ministers, department plans, special reports by the government, media reports, budget, parliamentary proceedings etc. We used the People's Manifesto as the baseline for people's aspirations and urgent concerns. Due to paucity of time, challenges of coordination with a large group of campaigns and organizations, and often lack of information in the public domain, this review may not be a comprehensive one.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the occasion of the BJP led NDA II government's completion of 100 days in power, WNTA presents the civil society and people's review of the government's performance.

The review took cognizance of the pressing challenges that this government has inherited – a result of historic deprivation, newer challenges such as the global economic and resource crisis, a changing social order and the cascading effect of deeply entrenched corruption. Despite innovative, pro-poor and progressive reforms significantly and positively impacting the country's income and poverty levels, deep seated inequalities exist and national emergencies such as infant and maternal health and mortality, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, poor sanitation, unsafe drinking water remain unaddressed.

Various efforts of the NDA II government are laudable – such as India's robust position regarding food security on the global stage, a mission mode attempt to end financial exclusion, plethora of schemes announced for women and girls and continued focus on flagship schemes such as MGNREGA. The government took a proactive approach to foreign policy by inviting the heads of SAARC nations to the swearing-in ceremony. Clearly regional cooperations is a priority for the government with the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister paying visits to and welcoming dignitaries from neighbouring countries of strategic importance. It is also to be noted that the cabinet has responded to the prediction of weak monsoon with great alacrity.

A conservative budget with a clear focus on consolidation has resulted in cutting corners for social sector allocation. Hence despite various announcements of schemes, implementation will face roadblock due to insufficient funds.

Expectedly, functioning of the parliament has improved. It is unfortunate however that the productive hours of parliamentary business were not utilised to pass pending legislations such as the Women's Reservation Bill, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill 2014. Politicisation of the governor's appointment, abrupt abolition of the planning commission without an effort to preserve its institutional wealth, use of a self serving ordinance in the TRAI Act are causes for great concern and indicate a top down approach to governance. There has been little deliberation on child rights other than the passage of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2014 which criminalises children instead of urging reform and rehabilitation.

The government's attempt to ease the environment laws apparently to promote business is worrying. There is an apprehension particularly in light of the undermining of consent from the communities that land acquisitions would be solely in the interests of business. In agriculture as well, the focus is clearly on productivity and does not take into account sustainable methods, protection of natural resources and promotion of small scale farming. There has been no response so far on the critical emergency of farmer suicides.

On price rise, even though the government has taken some short term measures, the escalation continues unabated. The interventions proposed for health, education, sanitation such as 50 medicines available free of cost or a commitment to attain universal sanitation in three years, are to be commended for their intent. However they either lack strategic direction or are sweeping directives that would mean little without the matching resources. A strong position is lacking on the critical issue of social exclusion.



# GOVERNANCE

## LARGE FOOTPRINTS, SWEEPING DECISIONS BUT STRATEGIC DIRECTION UNCLEAR

### REPEAL OF OUTDATED LAWS, COMMITTEE FORMED

For the first time since 2001, the NDA government has initiated a move to repeal or amend archaic acts and rules. A bill has been introduced and a panel formed to undertake this exercise. So far 36 acts have been identified which will undergo amendments. This move to scrap archaic laws will build on the previous NDA government's recommendation to repeal 1382 central laws of which 415 have been repealed. The new committee will rely on the previous review and submit its report within three months.

The government has undertaken some early moves towards efficient governance by merging different ministries bearing similarity of function. Pro-activeness of the government was evident when the union cabinet met to discuss on the possible fallout of a weak monsoon. There has been an overall improvement in work discipline as evident in better attendance and punctuality, besides attempts to streamline the bureaucratic procedures.

### GOVERNORS UNDER THE NDA REGIME

One of the earliest administrative priorities of the NDA government was to seek the resignation of governors appointed in the previous regime. The governor's office has always been politicised but the alacrity with which the current government sought replacements has drawn attention. Another alarming trend that has surfaced in the new regime is "hardship posting" meted out as punishment. More troubling is the fact that awarding a posting in the North-East is interpreted as hardship demonstrating the regime's contemptuous approach towards this region. Governors 'not favoured' by the government are being transferred to the North Eastern states. The centre is churning all gubernatorial

appointees, coercing some to resign, transferring others to replace them with preferred candidates.<sup>1</sup>

TRAI (Amendment) Bill –Disappointing use of Ordinance  
An ordinance restricts the scope of debate and discussion and hence it was envisaged to be used rarely. It was never the objective of the ordinance to serve a particular and personalized situational exigency. On 28th May 2014, it has been used to appoint Nripendra Mishra, chairman of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) as principal secretary to the Prime Minister. The TRAI (Amendment) Bill sought to replace the clause in the original TRAI Act that bars any chairperson or any other member from taking up any government appointment thereafter has been dropped.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically the TRAI Act 1997 was amended by the earlier NDA government in 2000 to prevent the chairperson and members of TRAI from taking up a government office. The ordinance route foreclosed any scope of deliberation especially since the name of the concerned official was already announced and was performing the duty informally.

### HASTY DISSOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi has put an end to the planning commission and seeks to replace it with a dynamic organization that would be more connected and populist. In effect he proposes an entity that would be under the full control of the union government, integral to resource planning and governance and also enable greater role of the regional governments for effective decentralization. This could have been achieved by seeking representation of the states in the planning commission. Abandoning sixty years of accumulated knowledge and institutional wealth without deliberation or attempt at reform might prove to be a hasty act with little impact on actual improvement of governance.

## VERDICT

- Performance indicators include pro-active and expedited action, improved attendance and frequent planning meetings
- Hasty, non consultative approach to decision making such as in case of abrogating the planning commission
- Compromise on constitutional propriety

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater accountability in governance
- Financial and operational details of all government programs to be made readily and regularly available in the public domain
- Strengthen mechanisms for public participation and monitoring such as through Right to Information, Social Audit and Vigilance Committees
- Separate Grievance Redressal Law to strengthen grievance redressal on public services
- Enforce accountability of the gram panchayats, hold regular gram sabhas and committee meetings with proper maintenance of reports
- Make it mandatory to constitute well functioning panchayats and block level vigilance committee to monitor progress of welfare schemes
- Institutionalize the role of civil society organisations in flagship programmes of the government on basic services such as education, health and livelihood etc

## SOURCE

1. The Indian Express, 11 July, TRAI Bill to clear legal hurdles in appointment of principal secretary to PM Modi, Accessed from: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/bill-to-clear-legal-hurdles-in-appointment-of-principal-secretary-to-pm-modi/>
2. The Times of India, 14 July 2014, Five states get new governors, accessed from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Five-states-get-new-governors/articleshow/38370607.cms>



# INFLATION

## QUICK FIX REMEDIES, LACK OF GAME CHANGING REFORMS

Inflation continues unabated. The scourge of price rise which was generally believed to have brought down the UPA government plagues the current government no less. Being one of the key promises behind its electoral sweep, it is imperative therefore to analyse the government's response to spiralling costs. As per the data released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI), retail inflation across all groups in July 2014 was as high as 7.96 per cent while the consumer food price inflation was 9.36 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Some of the food items that witnessed high inflation included fruits (22.48 per cent), vegetables (16.88 per cent) and milk and milk products (11.26 per cent). To add to the woes of the new government, volatile crude oil prices in the international market and weak monsoon in north, central and west India has increased the inflationary risk of the country.

## CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Some of the short-term steps taken by the government to reign in sky-rocketing inflation include imposition of exports restrictions on certain farm items, instructing state governments to amend laws and handle hoarding with tough actions. The government has also indicated that it has been considering many long-term measures to fix inflation and would announce the action plan at an appropriate time. In his budget speech<sup>2</sup> the union finance minister Mr. Arun Jaitley announced a price stabilisation fund and commitment by the centre to work closely with the states to reorient their respective APMCs (Agriculture Produce Market Committee) in

order to provide for establishment of private market yards along with the introduction of soil health cards, setting up of agro-tech infrastructure fund, launch of a technology driven second green revolution and greater focus on irrigation.

No provisions were made for setting up of special courts to stop hoarders and black marketing. None of the remedial measures proposed by the government seem to be game changing or drastically different compared to the steps taken by the UPA government. There has been not been any immediate or visible impact to check inflation and provide much needed relief to the people from price rise.

## VERDICT

- Political rhetoric has not yet translated to political will.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bold policy decisions and structural reforms to curb price rise
- It is early days yet to judge performance on inflation as considerable investments are required in logistics and transportation, storage of perishable products, streamlining of the archaic distribution system, making the supply chain clean, responsive and efficient. Success in controlling price rise will depend on internal factors like production, distribution, pilferage, wastage due to lack of storage facilities, and external factors like monsoon, global oil prices etc.

## SOURCE

1. [http://mospi.nic.in/mospi\\_new/upload/cpi\\_pr\\_12aug14d.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/cpi_pr_12aug14d.pdf)
2. <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2014/jul/gbEngSpeech.pdf>

# FUNCTIONING OF THE PARLIAMENT

## LESS INTERRUPTIONS, BETTER ATTENDANCE EVEN AS BILLS REMAIN PENDING

### EXPECTATIONS, URGENT CONCERNS

Beset by disruptions, the last Parliament failed to conduct productive business to a large extent, leaving in abeyance several crucial legislations. It was also the symptom of a fledgling coalition. With the seat of democracy undermined significantly, the civil society has urgently called for constructive sessions, better accountability and participation of the legislators.

### PERFORMANCE SO FAR

The initial sessions of the present Parliament (16th Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha) have seen an overall improvement in attendance and conduct. Twenty eight per cent Rajya Sabha and 33 percent Lok Sabha members clocked 100 per cent attendance. There were fewer interruptions to the business hour. Sessions, particularly the budget debate saw a strong participation of women MPs who spoke 4.6 times compared to their male counterparts. Rajya Sabha sat for 142 hours excluding intervals and made up for 38 hours through late discussions and skipping lunch hour. The second session of the 16th Lok Sabha sat for 27 days and 167

hours. Business hours lost clocked to about 13 hours which was compensated through late sittings.

Absolute majority of NDA and a weak opposition seem to have ensured a smooth and productive functioning of the Parliament. It continues to be a matter of concern however that several key legislations are still pending. These include the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill 2014, The National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, 2014, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2014.

“Parliament is certainly performing better than the UPA government. There are occasional disturbances but those are part of the parliamentary life” –opines PDT Acharya, former Secretary General of Lok Sabha

### VERDICT

- Improved performance and conduct.
- Difficult to ascertain quality of debates.
- Key legislations safeguarding the most vulnerable still pending or are lapsed.

### SOURCE

1. [http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/modi-government-stretches-every-muscle-for-lok-sabha-s-smooth-functioning\\_952351.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/modi-government-stretches-every-muscle-for-lok-sabha-s-smooth-functioning_952351.html), accessed on 12th August 2014
2. The Hindu report accessed on 9th August 2014 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/they-have-politics-in-their-dna/article6095560.ece>
3. Compiled from PRS Legislative Research
4. Lok Sabha ([http://164.100.47.134/committee/Committee\\_Home\\_Page.aspx](http://164.100.47.134/committee/Committee_Home_Page.aspx))

# THE UNION BUDGET

## FISCAL CONSOLIDATION, EXPENDITURE COMPRESSION, INADEQUATE PROVISIONING FOR THE SOCIAL SECTOR

The Union Budget 2014-15 mentions a number of challenges facing the Indian economy such as high inflation, low GDP growth and social inequalities that restrict access to basic amenities. However, the policy direction adopted in this budget is also one of fiscal consolidation. In the wake of the government's inability to step up the tax-GDP ratio, the approach is marked by expenditure compression policies eventually resulting in inadequate provisioning for the social sectors.

### OVERALL MAGNITUDE

The total size of the Union Budget in 2014-15 has been pegged at Rs. 17.94 lakh crore as compared to Rs. 17.63 lakh crore in the Interim Budget (IB). Of this increase of Rs. 31000 crore, between the IB and the main budget, two-third is for Plan Expenditure while the remaining one third has been accounted for by Non-Plan Expenditure. The total expenditure in the Union Budget, 2014-15 is 13.9 percent of GDP, compared to 13.7 percent of GDP in the IB.<sup>1</sup>

### RESOURCE MOBILIZATION POLICIES

On the resources side, the budget projects a total receipt of Rs. 2.12 lakh crore from Non-Tax Revenue while the tax revenue has been estimated at Rs. 977,258 crore. A 'stable and predictable tax regime' to spur growth and ensure an investor-friendly environment was one of the top priorities for this government. In this regard, the primary focus should have been on efforts to step up the country's tax-GDP ratio which is much lower than that in most developed countries and several developing countries. At around 17 percent of GDP, India's tax-GDP ratio is one of the lowest among the developing countries especially the BRICS.

The budget proposals do need to have stronger measures towards reducing the amount of tax revenue forgone due to the plethora of exemptions in the central tax system. The government has announced the retention of retrospective amendments which would help in curbing of tax evasion. The budget speech of the Finance Minister did make substantive references to the proposed transition to Goods and Services Tax and the Direct Taxes Code. These proposed reforms would bring in stability in the tax laws as demanded by the private investors but in its present form, these would not be enough for the government to augment the country's tax-GDP ratio.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE PRIORITIES

On the expenditure side, it was most important for the government to step up the coverage and quality of public provisioning of essential services and social protection measures. While the allocations for most of the development sectors in this budget have either been retained at the same level as those proposed in the IB or have been marginally increased, the high allocations for Defence and Road and Transport reflect policy priorities of the current government. Major increases in allocations have been observed for Ministries of Defence and Road Transport and Highways –Rs. 6000 crore and Rs. 3000 crore respectively. Most social sector ministries such as the Urban Development, Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development show meagre increases by Rs. 500 crore; Agriculture and Human Resources by a little more than Rs. 1000 crore. The allocation for MGNREGA is pegged at Rs. 34000 crore and that for Food Subsidy at Rs. 1.15 lakh crore<sup>2</sup>. In healthcare, the budget proposes free medicines for all and long term interventions for improved health infrastructure. The intention of setting up new institutions under healthcare, such as the four new

AIIMS, rural health research centres and new medical colleges, expressed in the budget, is certainly a welcome step. The increases in excise duties for tobacco and related products and aerated colas would also have a positive impact. The budget does acknowledge the shortage of specialized staff in health and education sectors but is yet to make adequate provision to this respect.

A number of new schemes and pilot projects for safety of women and gender sensitization have been listed out in the budget speech, but most of these have small allocations. There have been few initiatives taken by the Union Ministries to seek resources from the 'Nirbhaya Fund' for carrying out substantive interventions for tackling violence against women. A large number of schemes with an allocation of Rs.100 crore or less has been proposed for vulnerable sections of population including senior citizens, tribals, rural youth, girl child, women and minorities, as well as for sectors of concern such as urban transport, good governance, climate change, R&D in agriculture, tourism etc but without any clear guidelines for implementation. While these announcements are a step in the right direction, the allocations are paltry and lack of guidelines would hinder effective implementation.

In agriculture and allied sectors, the emphasis on crop insurance, soil health, agricultural marketing, animal husbandry and fisheries etc. is certainly welcome. However, the issue of income security for farmers has missed the attention of the government. The new proposals for the development of infrastructure and transport in the Union Budget 2014-15 are centred heavily around the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. This approach raises the apprehension of large scale displacements and loss of livelihoods. The budget does not mention any policies or interventions to address these concerns.

## VERDICT

- Budgetary approach is marked by expenditure compression policies resulting in inadequate provisioning for the social sectors.
- Allocations for most of the crucial social sector programmes have been retained.
- A set of new schemes announced for the vulnerable sections of population and areas of pressing concerns show immense promise if implemented with proper guidelines and adequate allocations.

## SOURCES

- 1 Union Budget 2014-2015
- 2 Union Budget 2014-2015

# BLACK MONEY

## SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM (SIT) ON BLACK MONEY CONSTITUTED

One of the first decisions of the new government that took office in May 2014 was to constitute the SIT on black money as per Supreme Court orders. A thirteen member team was formed, chaired by a former Judge of Supreme Court. The mandate of the SIT<sup>1</sup> includes investigation and prosecution of any known instance of monies being stashed in foreign bank accounts, matters related to criminality of activities that have been the source for such money, creation of institutional structures that can strengthen the campaign against black money. An interim report submitted by the SIT in August 2014 reportedly identifies mining and real estate as generating large amounts of black money and has recommended an overhaul of existing bilateral tax treaties to strengthen information sharing<sup>2</sup>. While estimates on quantum of black money has varied, most recent newspaper articles have cited the findings of a confidential report by National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), which noted the black economy to be 75% of GDP<sup>3</sup>.

The Union Budget 2013-14 has allocated Rs. 8.93 crore for managing infrastructure and logistical requirements of the SIT. In addition, the re-introduction of Kisan Vikas Patra, a savings option for small savers, is seen as having potential to address black money. This assumption needs further examination. However, paucity of administrative capacity has not been addressed. Staff shortage across various agencies (such as CBDT, CBEC, ED, FIU etc.) has been estimated to be around 30,000, as per the report on black money by the Central Board

of Direct Taxes (CBDT). A recent report by the Asian Development Bank (April 2014) noted that India has one of the most under-resourced and understaffed revenue bodies, in relation to its population size, among the Asian countries. Strengthening the administrative bodies is crucial to ensure implementation of any reforms to address black money.

The approach of only focusing on recovering of black money is partly misguided as a large part of the money comes back into India through a process called 'round tripping,' i.e. the money that left the country (generally ending up in a tax haven) is invested back into the country as 'white' money. Hence the policy thrust needs to shift towards how the generation of black money and its outflow from the country can be stopped in the first place. The role of tax treaties in aiding this round-tripping needs to be reviewed by the government to understand the extent of public revenue losses being accrued. Reports by SIT and other agencies being submitted to the government or Supreme Court should be made public to better inform public discourse on these issues and ensure transparency in these processes.

### VERDICT

- Political focus on the issue of black money is encouraging.
- Policy thrust needs to shift away from recovery of black money to curtailing generation and outflow.

### SOURCES

- 1 For complete details of the mandate, see- Ministry of Finance, 2014: Gazette of India, Department of Revenue, May.29th
- 2 The Economic Times, 2014: Black Money: SIT has made some progress, says Supreme Court. August 2014. Accessed here:[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-21/news/53073080\\_1\\_the-sit-special-investigation-team-court-order](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-21/news/53073080_1_the-sit-special-investigation-team-court-order)
- 3 The Hindu, 2014: Black Economy now amounts to 75% of GDP, August 2014. Accessed here: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/black-economy-now-amounts-to-75-of-gdp/article6278286.ece>

# FOREIGN POLICY

## LESS INTERRUPTIONS, BETTER ATTENDANCE EVEN AS BILLS REMAIN PENDING

### PROACTIVE DIPLOMACY, REGIONAL COOPERATION

The PM gained substantial ground on diplomacy when he invited neighboring countries at the swearing in ceremony, visiting Bhutan and Nepal, meeting with the Chinese foreign minister etc. He has had an early success at the BRICS meeting and was nominated as the first premier to head the New Development Bank based in Shanghai. The Ministry of External Affairs has met with officials of different countries and participated in various forums. There have been other south-south cooperation such as arrangements between Indo-Brazilian earth stations for receiving and processing data from IRS satellites, accords with China on industrial, hydrological and capacity building of officials<sup>1</sup>.

Robust position against Northern pressures  
Civil society applauds India's stand on food security at the WTO meeting in Bali. Refusal to sign the Trade Facilitation Agreement is a clear signal to the Northern countries that domestic interests particularly that of the poorest will be guarded as a priority.

### NEED FOR CAUTION

However it is still unclear how such diplomacy would impact development priorities of the country as its key focus so far has been commercial and military. Inviting a large corpus of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the defence sector is being perceived as a possible threat to national security. India is already the highest purchaser of their military equipment and 14% of the world's arms importer<sup>2</sup>.

### VERDICT

- Confident participation on the global stage
- Commercialization, defence, infrastructure seem to be the biggest imperative so far
- Peaceful resolution of conflict, protection of human rights and cultural protectionism remain areas of concern

### SOURCES

- 1 Ministry of External Affairs Website
- 2 <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/17/india-still-worldslargestarmsbuyerAsianrivalriesheatup.html>

# EDUCATION

## COMMITMENTS MADE THROUGH BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS, LARGELY OVERLOOKING URGENT NEED FOR STRUCTURAL CORRECTIONS

### ADDITIONAL FUNDS HAVE BEEN EARMARKED FOR EDUCATION IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

- Marginal increase in the school budget for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, from Rs. 27, 758 crore to Rs. 28, 635 crore
- Announcement of the Madan Mohan Malviya Scheme for Teacher Training (Rs. 500 crore)
- Marginal increase of Rs. 1000 crore for Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhijan (secondary education)
- Rs. 500 crore provided for five new IITs and five new IIMs

**RTE Act deadlines missed:** The RTE Act deadlines for adequate infrastructure in terms of Student-Classroom (SCR) ratio, Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), functional toilets, drinking water are yet to be met. The Prime Minister's call to ensure adequate toilets is welcome but highly inadequate given the flaws inherent in the current school infrastructure.

### Worrying trend of large scale closure of schools:

Rajasthan government has announced that 17,000 schools are to be closed down. Similar plans are on the anvil in many states as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Kerala and others. This clearly violates the mandate under the RTE Act of providing elementary schools within 1 km and 3 km. It further deprives children from marginalised communities.

**Teacher training continues to be neglected:** Although there has been an allocation for teacher training in the budget, there has been no drive to recruit more teachers to fill the existing shortage, as promised in the

BJP manifesto. Additionally, there has been no move to regularize contractual teachers and provide them in-service training. The parliamentary standing committee deadline is March 2015.

**Gaps in Skill Development Initiative:** While the PM made a call to enhance the 'Made in India' brand, there is no indication that technical education and skill development programmes are reaching the large numbers of unskilled youth from marginalized communities, nor enhancement in the quality of skills acquired. The high school dropout rate of about 70 per cent is a poor foundation for gaining from the youth dividend of the population.

**Cultural revivalism without recognizing the positive contribution of the subaltern communities:** The dominant class/caste story of cultural revivalism has surfaced in the curriculum reforms. The main concern is a flawed representation of Indian civilization and history with myths and folklore replacing a rational and balanced historical perspective. In these narratives the great contribution made by the excluded castes/classes is neglected. It is an undermining of the very essence of pluralism and equality as enshrined in our constitution. Improving pedagogical quality, expanding universal education from pre-school to secondary education and delivering on the promise of universal education do not seem to have precedence as yet.

## VERDICT

- Lukewarm strategy on education despite promises made in the manifesto
- Urgent concerns side tracked due to politicization

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect education as a fundamental right by effectively implementing the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, arrest dropout 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.
- Extend the purview of RTE Act to 18 years, in line with the internationally recognized definition of childhood.
- Take stringent and closely monitored steps to ensure social inclusion in all schools, including provisions for children with special needs.



# HEALTH

## LONG ROAD TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH, INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO CRITICAL CONCERNS

The NDA government's response to the prevailing crisis of the healthcare system and universal access has been primarily pivoted around making generic medicines available free of cost. While such measures are commendable, the civil society notes with concern that accountability towards health continues to be poor. This government, like those in the past failed to improve the budget outlay. According to the latest Economic Survey, overall public health spending remains as low as 1.4 per cent of GDP, rebuffing years of advocacy and calls to raise allocation to 5 per cent. The much awaited National Health Bill 2009 remains off the burner. There have been no specific references to the national emergencies such as maternal and infant health and mortality.

### POSITIVE MEASURES ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES

Fifty essential generic medicines will be provided free of cost across the country through the public health system. The program will be rolled out in phases, beginning with select hospitals across India. The health ministry has formed a panel to expand the list of essential medicines, all of which would then come under price caps.<sup>1</sup>

A universal health insurance has been announced and the blueprint for what will be the world's largest such programme is in the process of being sharpened.

Four AIIMS like institutions and twelve government medical colleges are to be set up.<sup>2</sup>

A panel of reputed medical practitioners and consumer law experts will be constituted to put a end to the business collusion between doctors and pathological laboratories and diagnostic centres. Greater

transparency and accountability will be instituted in medical practice.

### VERDICT

- Specific interventions without altering the scope and sweep of healthcare – no overarching commitments or budgetary allocations.
- Greater access to life saving medicines, more specialty health facilities and colleges are welcome albeit inadequate measures.
- No measures announced to strengthen the government's primary health system.
- Health insurance being offered as a step towards "health for all" is misleading; focus should be on improving the existing government health system, to keep costs down and assure quality.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact with immediate effect the National Health Bill 2009 with a time bound public financing commitment.
- Increase tax spending on health to meet 5 per cent of GDP in the next 5 years. Commit proportionate health investments for the rural areas.
- 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.
- Reduce under 5 mortality rate to 42 per 1000 live births by 2018 and infant mortality rate to 27 per 1000 live births by 2020.

- Reduce maternal mortality rate to 109 per 100,000 births by 2020.
- 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, and non discriminatory standards for people with various kinds of disabilities.

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# AGRICULTURE

## AGRICULTURE YET TO SEE POLICIES THAT ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES AND PROTECTION OF FARM LIVELIHOODS

Agriculture yet to see policies that ensure sustainable farming practices and protection of farm livelihoods

Indian farming is at a cross roads once again. Gains of agricultural productivity are offset by irresponsible destruction of natural resources putting at peril the farmer and his/her livelihood. The present model of intensive agriculture which depends on external inputs and is premised on the need to “produce more and prosper”, has begun to create soil fatigue and impact the well being and tenacity of natural resources. Increasing commercialization and corporate growth demands have made farming dangerously unsustainable.

### A DISAPPOINTING FIRST BUDGET

The NDA government in the first 100 days has not come up with anything substantive such as a decisive shift in policy directions to address the crisis in farm livelihoods. This belies the promises made by the BJP in its election manifesto. After disappointing the farmers with practically no increase in the Minimum Support Price, there are no provisions to ensure higher incomes for farmers – 50 per cent above cost of cultivation as promised by BJP manifesto.

Much of what has been announced is a continuation of the earlier government’s policies and schemes. These schemes are not synergetic enough to result in any significant improvements in farm livelihoods. The recent NCRB data shows that there were 11,772 farm suicides in 2013. The budget completely overlooks this national emergency. Every government has failed to deliver on the promises of agricultural credit. Instead of the poorest farmers, agri-businesses benefit from

these credit funds. Accountability and efficacy of these interventions are to be questioned as they do not translate to improved net incomes for farm households.

Despite promises made in the BJP Manifesto, this budget has relegated organic farming to the North Eastern states. We hope that the Rs. 100 crore National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change announced recently will be used for promoting and incentivizing agro-ecological approaches and resilient systems will be created to withstand the impact of climate change.

The NDA government has placed major emphasis on soil health cards and soil testing labs but it is important to take into account that this would not ensure adoption of sustainable soil management practices. The emphasis should be on organic farming. There is enough evidence to support this and the government must demonstrate the political will to address soil health issues by directly promoting ecological agriculture and not through superficial schemes such as soil health cards.

The additional support available under PRODUCE for 2000 producer collectives is welcome; similarly, support for landless cultivators is absolutely necessary and has been rightly included in this budget. We call for the price stabilization fund to put in place a price deficiency payment system in place for producers so that consumers do not bear the burden of food inflation and producers get what is due to them.

A policy framework should be put in place to ensure the overall well being of the farmers, food sovereignty and safe, nutritious, diverse and adequate food for all Indians.

## VERDICT

- Agriculture a major issue with the government but no clear roadmap or decisive policy shifts to ensure sustainable farming and revive farming; focus on makeshift schemes such as soil cards that fail to address root causes
- Indifferent towards the tragedy and emergency of 'farmer suicides'
- Proactive response to predictions of a 'weak monsoon' shows concerns for farmers

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sustainable and productive agriculture by ensuring the following:
- Income security for all farm households so that producers are not forced to give up agriculture out of distress
- Ecologically sustainable farming systems to preserve productive natural resources
- People's control over resources such as land, water, forests, seed and knowledge
- Non-toxic, diverse, nutritious and adequate food for all Indians

# GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) CROPS

## **WAVERING, AMBIGUOUS STATEMENTS – NO CLARITY ON GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Genetically Modified (GM) crops have always been a subject of debate with the past 13 state governments taking a position against it. Commercialisation of Bt. Brinjal has been under an indefinite moratorium since February 2010.

In its manifesto the BJP had taken a stand of non-incorporation of GM food without proper field testing. But the government seems unclear on the stand to be taken on this issue. The environment minister was forced to withhold the approvals given by the Genetic Engineering Appraisals Committee in July; the first after the government took office. Yet field trials of many GM crops have already started in states like Maharashtra and Gujarat a contradiction which the government has not clarified. The cabinet minister for agriculture admitted to concerns regarding GM crops but went on to add that those would be resorted to only if necessary. Two months later his ministry issued a written statement in the parliament that there was no valid scientific proof on concerns over GM crops.

## **VERDICT**

- Inconsistent views within the government and the BJP on such a significant issue
- Does not augur well for national interests putting at risk biosafety

# FOOD SECURITY

## SILENCE ON THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF NUTRITION

The UPA's Food Security Act is certainly an important entitlement, but offers at best a partial solution to the problem of food insecurity. The Act is disconcertingly silent on the issue of 'nutrition security'. Food Security is not only about providing adequate cereals to all people, but also ensuring a 'balanced nutritional diet' for all. There has been little discussion in the government about securing 'nutrition security'. Declaring 2014 as the year of family farming, the UN has emphasized that boosting small scale family farming is an important step to ensure food security as well as to combat climate change. Large scale farming as well as rampant use of pesticide and fertilizer results in depleting of natural resources, creating soil fatigue and put a strain on farming. Negating all assurances of sustainable farming made in the manifesto, the NDA government is promoting industrial agriculture. This is also a turnaround for the Prime Minister himself who was a strong critic of the Food Security Act and had voiced his opinion about the limitations of the Act. So far there has been no initiative to fix the inadequacies, with the focus only on improving agricultural output.

### VERDICT

- No initiatives taken to fix the inadequacies of the Food Security Act
- Nutrition has dropped off the radar

# MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT

## GOOD INTENT TO REMEDY SITUATION INADEQUATE IN FACE OF OVERWHELMING ODDS

### DURABLE ASSETS VS EMPLOYMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

In a bid to improve the efficacy of MGNREGA, the NDA government has shifted emphasis on creating durable assets and enhancing agricultural productivity. Poor asset quality has been one of the strongest criticisms of MGNREGA. Altering the material to labor cost will however significantly impact the wages and employment opportunity. This proposed amendment runs contrary to the very spirit of the Act which seeks to create employment for unskilled workers as a buffer against vulnerability shocks in the lean agricultural season. With the current budgetary allocation for MGNREGA, the person days available for unskilled wages will fall about 40 per cent. This decision will adversely affect close to 5 crore households particularly in situations of drought. Increasing the material component will also create inroads for contractors and ensuing pilferage of funds.

### LINKING MNREGA TO AGRICULTURE

The Ministry of Rural Development has amended the Act to ensure “creation of productive assets directly linked to agriculture and allied activities through development of land, water and trees”

### IMPROVING PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

MoRD has recently announced an Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise in 2500 most backward blocks of the country. This effort to deepen participation in the planning process has been welcomed by the civil society. If implemented it can train field functionaries and community volunteers to build a people’s plan for every village in the identified backward blocks.

### SPECIAL SCHEME FOR SOCIAL AUDIT

MoRD has launched a special project to finance the recruitment of minimum personnel for the State Social Audit Units at the State and District Level. This is an important step to ensure social audits and strengthen delivery by providing extra hands.

### SOME CHALLENGES REMAIN UNADDRESSED

#### CHRONIC AND ACUTE DELAYS IN WAGE PAYMENT

As per MoRD’s records, up to 19th August 2014 in the financial year 2014-15, 66% of the total wages disbursed were delayed. While in 2012-13, 61% wages were paid on time, in 2014-15 only 47% timely payments have been made.

Although MoRD has recently introduced a system that automatically calculates delayed payment compensation, this is no assurance of the payment reaching the worker.

### FUND CRUNCH

Allocation for MNREGA has faced drastic cuts since 2012-13, despite expenditure remaining largely consistent. This has led to large scale rationing of the program and denial of the ‘right to work’ to the poorest who are in need of employment when faced with no alternative source of livelihood. Paucity of funds, the result of various other macro factors, is a condition that this government has inherited. So far little has been done to systemically address this situation and the budget outlay has remained unchanged.

## VERDICT

- The government has demonstrated intent for reform and some of those may yield good results if implemented well
- Some measures such as the creation of durable assets may undermine the spirit of “right to work” and open up the program to profiteering
- Response to some overwhelming gaps in delivery, inherited from the UPA regime, is awaited

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve efficacy of the rights based MGNREGA Act through awareness drives, mandatory gram sabhas, corruption free gram panchayat, frequent social audits; ensure that the most vulnerable receive employment and wages.
- Localize 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.



# SANITATION

## AMBITIOUS PROCLAMATIONS NOT BACKED BY CONCRETE PLANS

The NDA government has set ambitious targets for sanitation – it has professed to achieve “Swachha Bharat” by 2019. Such emphasis on the right to sanitation is certainly welcome but whether intent would translate to effective implementation remains to be seen. The start was a slow one. Only 8.4 per cent of the 100 day target of 52,20,006 toilets has been met. At this rate, the target for 2014-15 can be fulfilled only if the construction is paced up to at least 1 toilet every second.

### AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF FINANCES

In this financial year, of the centre allocation for NBA of 3,085 Cr, only 442 Cr has been released and only to eight states. Thus far no money has been released from state coffers this year. This raises questions over to what degree the centre is constraining the other states with regards to achieving the 100 days target.

Utilisation of available resources have been slow and it is feared that if the rates do not improve on 2013-14, the 2014-15 target will be missed by around 75 Lakh latrines. This calculation does not account for the poor performance to date in 2014-15, as such the shortfall may be even greater.

### NO INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND NO ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Thus far, there are no indications of any reforms in the institutional arrangements that are needed to meet these ambitious targets. The NDA government is likely to repeat the failings of the Total Sanitation Campaign by focusing on hardware as the main indicator of success and not including any indicators related to use and behavioral change. It is also not yet clear how the 100 days target has impacted district officials, whether the directive has reached the frontline units.

Recently published Swachh Bharat Abhiyan documents place significantly greater emphasis on IEC and behaviour change. This is a welcome and necessary development yet remains at odds with the current targets and programme delivery.

The MDWS MIS continues not to include any indicators related to use or behaviour change. It is not until these aspects are addressed that India can truly undergo a revolution on sanitation.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

It is not yet clear how the 100 days target has impacted on district officials. It is not clear if the circular issued by the centre actually reached the frontline units that are expected to ensure implementation of the decisions. With no clear mechanism in place to implement the intent in high speed, it was not clear how to ensure accountability.

### MISSING THE TARGET BUT NOT THE OPPORTUNITY

The 100 days target has yet to kick start the bureaucracy as intended by the NDA II government. It remains unclear as to what action the government will take in response to the 100 days target being missed quite so dramatically. The passing of the 100 days target can be an opportunity for the government to bring in appropriate policy reforms. The allocations to NBA in the union budget signal that the NDA II government is largely behind the programme. However, it is yet to be seen is how they will approach accelerating progress. The current hardware driven approach is a cause for concern as only latrines constructed was used as an indicator in the target. This clearly highlights that the central government is not yet sensitized to the need for focus on bringing about sustainable and transformational change through behavior change.

## VERDICT

- The hardware approach is a rehash of past failures and is at odds with the focus on bringing about sustainable and transformational change.
- A slow start without downstream accountability measures, execution plan etc. is likely to derail the ambitious target.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the budget allocations to ensure that it is sufficient to meet the goals.
- Rather than hurriedly pushing targets, the government needs to focus on critical assessment of what is working and what is not in the NBA guidelines and introduce revamped institutional and monitoring mechanisms to accelerate the implementation
- Ensure full utilization of allocations in a timely and appropriate manner
- Execute the program in a mission mode with social audits
- Ensure participation of women, particularly those from the marginalized communities, in all stages from planning to implementation, ensure ownership so that it enhances the privacy, security, hygiene and dignity
- Ensure that sanitation is sensitive to life cycle needs of all sections of society, especially those living with disabilities, senior citizens and sexual minorities.

# HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY

## PROMISES MADE IN THE BJP MANIFESTO

The BJP Manifesto of Lok Sabha 2014 committed to housing for all. It promised to roll out a massive low-cost housing programme to ensure that by the time the nation completes 75 years of its Independence, every family would own a pucca house. It proposed a programme to ensure that these houses are equipped with the basic facilities of toilet, piped water supply, electricity and proper access.

## THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:

- Housing for All by 2022
- Setting up of a Mission on Low-Cost Affordable Housing to be anchored by the National Housing Bank (NHB)
- Big boost for urban areas through 100 smart cities with Wi-Fi connectivity, GIS-based mapping and scientific and strategic town planning and integrated public transport systems
- Create at least 500 habitations with provisions for safe drinking water and sewerage management, use of recycled water for growing organic fruits and vegetables, solid waste management and digital connectivity through public-private partnerships (PPPs)
- Rs. 4000 crore has been earmarked for NHB with a view to increase the flow of cheaper credit for affordable housing to the urban poor
- Slum development has been added to the list of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities to encourage the private sector to contribute more towards this activity.

## VERDICT

- Commendable measures put in place to address the issue of urban housing
- Stronger commitment required for the homeless and illegal settlers

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government should declare moratorium on all forms of evictions and displacements.
- A Housing For All (HFA) Mission across India.
- A loan repayment holiday for the City Makers (homeless urban workers) for up to 30 years.
- Urban development programmes should be in full conformity with the wider policy framework of inclusive cities and urban poverty alleviation.
- The current model of urban development should be given up as it is based on exclusion and profiteering. Specific measures must be taken to regulate land use and check land speculation.

# ENVIRONMENT

## GROWTH TAKING PRECEDENCE OVER ENVIRONMENT

Change of regime has not altered the continuum of hegemony and nexus between the government and business. Last year, during the UPA rule, the Supreme Court's directive to a major corporate house to seek consent from village councils for a mining project had led to a swelling resistance against these village bodies. Within a month of assuming power at the Centre, the NDA government's cabinet minister in charge of rural development has hinted at dilution of the village council authority. The provision of their consent in the Forest Rights and Land Acquisition Act may be withdrawn. Consent from gram sabhas may no longer be required for prospecting of forests.

Expansion projects of coal mines have been exempted from public hearings. Mid-sized polluting industries can now operate within 5 km of national parks and sanctuaries — as opposed to the 10 km limit imposed by the Supreme Court. Similar exemptions are being awarded to various industries such as coal tar processing units, irrigation projects etc. The National Board of Wildlife no longer has any independent wildlife or ecology experts.

The environment minister has declared that the environment ministry is no more the "roadblock ministry" but one where decisions are being taken faster. The civil society is concerned that haste or efficiency could be at the expense of justice and well being of the environment, natural resources and community. Renaming of the Ministry as Environment and Climate Change might result in reprioritization of India's climate change adaptation strategy.

The bid to dilute authority of the gram sabhas is in contradiction with the government's proposal that the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act, 2013 be amended. Under the new law, developers have to get the consent of up to 80 per cent of the people whose land is acquired for private projects and of 70 per cent of the land owners in case of public-private partnership projects.

# LAND RIGHTS

## **CATERING TO THE INDUSTRY, UNDERMINING YEARS OF ADVOCACY, PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT AND RIGHTS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE**

The Modi government has rushed to dilute the LARR Act, 2013, indicating without any ambiguity where government's priorities will lie. It is a dangerous move that seeks to undermine the need to protect natural resources and rights of some of the most marginalised in this country. It is also a legislation that has been the result of widespread people's movements, one that the entire spectrum of political parties lend their support to. The hasty dilution of this Act is an indication of the "pro-industry" position of this government that will subvert all other concerns.

The Act passed by the UPA government fell short of the expectations of the land activists who felt that the provisions and safeguards were not enough to rehabilitate and protect the displaced – smaller land holders in particular. The current government has further lifted the protective cover and seeks to protect the interests of the industry. The Rural Development Ministry has suggested various amendments that dilute provisions such as the mandatory consent of 70 per cent of the Project Affected People. This watering down is with the clear objective of removing obstacles that may delay acquisition of land by the industry.

### **VERDICT**

- Hasty responses and measures completely undermining well being of the local communities, adivasis
- Development at the expense of environment

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# CHILD RIGHTS AT PERIL

## NEW JUVENILE JUSTICE BILL PROPOSES TO CRIMINALISE CHILDREN

The BJP manifesto is prefaced by Nelson Mandela's quote – "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Elsewhere in the document, the party commits to "lay special emphasis on vulnerable children especially those belonging to the vulnerable communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, migrants, slum dwellers, street dwellers and those with disabilities." It is a promise that the NDA government has failed to keep. Within the second month of having assumed office the new government set into motion a move to repeal and re-enact the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000. This was in response to the public outcry after the Nirbhaya gang rape case in December 2012 in which one of the accused was a juvenile. Proposed as a measure towards ensuring the safety of women, the new Bill, titled the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2014, proposes to criminalize children in the 16-18 age groups who commit heinous crimes sending them to adult prisons for periods that can extend for life.

Such an overarching and linear decision does not take into account the globally accepted age definition of childhood nor does it consider that over the years less than 5 per cent of rape crimes have been attributed to juveniles.

Various loopholes exist in the guidelines and their enforcement which further put vulnerable children at risk. Many institutions refuse to get registered under the JJ Act on the pretext that they are already regulated by the provisions of the Women and Children's Institutions (Licensing) Act (WCIL Act) or the Orphanages and Charitable Homes Act (OCH Act). Children in such institutions continued to receive poor services and are subjected to abuse. The JJ Bill 2014 allows children of the poor to be given up by their parents for adoption instead of promoting family based care programs. In effect the proposed Bill closes the possibility of rehabilitation and reform and exposes children,

particularly those from marginalised communities to abuse and manipulation.

### VERDICT

- The JJ Act is a hasty legislation that does not consider the multi layered nature of exploitation and abuse of children
- Response to a populist demand, indifferent to the realities of most vulnerable

### RECOMENDATIONS

- 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 per cent of the total union budget. To combat increasing violence against children increase the union budget allocation from 0.03 per cent to at least 0.15 per cent.
- 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.

# YOUTH

## YOUTH IS A CLEAR PRIORITY WITH A FOCUS ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYABILITY

Several laudable steps have been taken with the objective of creating a vibrant, competitive and skilled workforce. While the focus on reaping the demographic dividend of youth is welcome, the government has missed out on including youth in governance and legislation. There have been no efforts to address the systemic discrimination faced by youth from minority communities or those living in conflict areas.

### KEY INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT INCLUDE:

Skill India, a national multi-skill programme, will be launched for the youth with an emphasis on employability and entrepreneurship. It will also provide training and support for traditional professions like welders, carpenters, cobblers, masons, blacksmiths, weavers etc. Convergence of various schemes to attain this objective is also proposed.

As part of the National Livelihood Mission, a "Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme" will be announced for rural youth who will be encouraged to take up local entrepreneurship programs. Budget allocation is Rs.100 crores.

To strengthen the quality of and access to higher education, Jai Prakash Narayan National Centre for Excellence in Humanities in Madhya Pradesh, five more IITs in the Jammu, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, Five IIMs in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra would be set up. A budget of Rs.500 crores has been allocated.

The Apprenticeship Act will be suitably amended to make it more responsive to industry and youth. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) will be encouraged to avail of the benefits of this scheme.

Employment exchanges will be transformed into career centres. In addition to providing information about job

availability, these centers will also extend counseling facilities to the youth for selecting the jobs best suited to their ability and aptitude. Budget allocation of Rs.100 crores has been made.

To promote leadership skills, "A Young Leaders Programme" with an initial allocation of Rs.100 crore will be set up.

### VISIBLE MOVEMENT IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION FRONT

After the Modi government came into power, following intense student agitation, the Four Year Undergraduate Program was rolled back. Newly appointed HRD minister, Smriti Irani, has already listed infrastructure requirements for new IITs and other institutions as a priority. With 16 IITs already in place, in the next few years there is a promise of more coming up in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Seemandhra, Haryana, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, and the North-Eastern states. Massive spending on technical education can be expected in the next and subsequent budgets of the government.

### VERDICT

Overall, a buoyant approach to youth development. However key concerns regarding youth from conflict areas have fallen off the radar.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- There are strong commitments which should be backed up by a clear roadmap and rules for effective implementation
- Youth opinion should be at the centre of decision making
- Concerns and issues of young people from the LGBT community have not been addressed anywhere.



# WOMEN

## RESOUNDING PROMISES BUT INADEQUATE BUDGET ALLOCATION

### FLAGSHIP COMMITMENTS

The Prime Minister mentioned the urgent need to address discrimination faced by women and girls in his Independence Day speech. A national level campaign – ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’<sup>1</sup> was launched by the government which aimed at generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women with an initial corpus of Rs. 100 crore. This scheme envisages a mix of cash transfers with stringent action against erring medical practitioners and monitoring of health clinics.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) announced that the National Commission for Women (NCW) will now get the status of a civil court. The commission will have authority to issue arrest warrants and to recommend to the appropriate government or authority to initiate prosecution if its own inquiry reveals violation of women’s rights either by a public servant or a private person<sup>2</sup>.

The government announced that 660 One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCC) will be set up in every district of the country. These centres would provide medical, legal and police aid to survivors of rape and sexual assault. Recommendations from public were invited by the MoWCD for the implementation of these OSCCs. A corpus of Rs. 200 crore has been allocated for these centres in the Union Budget 2014-2015 and more money from the Nirbhaya Fund has been promised for the same<sup>3</sup>.

Women’s safety remained a major highlight of the new government’s mandate and an action plan was announced. This included a pilot scheme to improve women’s safety on public transport for which Rs. 50

crore have been allocated. Various other announcements were made regarding future measures to improve safety of women in big cities such as assigning women constables from the Railway Police Force for women’s coaches<sup>4</sup>.

The government proposed to extend the provision of bank loan for women Self Help Groups at 4 per cent in another 100 districts under Ajeevika, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). Currently under this mission, women SHGs are provided bank loans at 4 per cent on prompt repayment in 150 districts and at 7 per cent in all other districts<sup>5</sup>.

### VERDICT

Strong demonstration of political will on women safety and against discrimination against women; however, intent and authenticity of purpose belied by inadequate budgetary allocation

### CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Bill for 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies through a constitutional amendment lapsed due to the lack of political consensus; this is a major setback for the political rights of women.
- Assurances of stricter implementation of laws relating to crimes against women need to be translated on ground through infrastructure, resources and monitoring mechanisms.
- Certain schemes relating to setting up of all women’s mobile bank, providing special skills training and business incubator park for women, setting up special business facilitation centre for women and setting up a dedicated W-SME (Women

Small and Medium Enterprises) cluster in every district failed to receive attention by the new government.

- There is a need to plan concrete actions to ensure women's access to these services and to take into account other socio-cultural-economic factors restricting their development.
- The need for stricter implementation of laws relating to crimes against women and to end gender based discrimination was highlighted in the various announcements and commitments made by the government. In the recent past however, there has been a failure in addressing the gender discriminatory remarks being made in the public forums.

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# DALIT AND ADIVASI RIGHTS

## RESOUNDING PROMISES BUT INADEQUATE BUDGET ALLOCATION

The NDA government's budget failed to deliver on its promise to the Dalits and continued the legacy of caste based deprivation with an allocation of only 8.79 per cent for the Scheduled Caste sub plan which is half of the rightful allocation. Flouting the sub plan guidelines, like every year, funds were diverted to general schemes like the MGNREGA. No efforts have been made to address the economic and physical atrocities faced by Dalit women, rehabilitation of manual scavengers. The SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Bill, 2014 also remain pending. The government has lately referred the Bill to a parliamentary standing committee, an indication that it is clearly not an urgent priority. Meanwhile incidents of caste violence continue unabated.

### FAVORABLE INDICATORS

In 2006 the Supreme Court had said that a state was not bound to make reservation for SCs and STs in matters of promotions. The Supreme Court has now relaxed standards for SC/ST government employees in departmental competitive and promotion examinations, asserting that without these safeguards, the structure of equality of opportunity provided in Article 16 would collapse.

Provisions in the budget such as a credit enhancement facility of Rs 200 crore for young start-up SC entrepreneurs are welcome measures although the scale remains insufficient.

### VERDICT

- The landscape of historic deprivation remain unchanged
- Political will to uplift Dalits and Adivasis continues to be weak

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately introduce and pass the "Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes and Tribal sub-Plan for Scheduled Tribes Bill, 2013"
- Effectively implement the recently passed Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013
- Immediately pass the bill on Amendments to the SC ST PoA Act & its Rules urgently and make it a more comprehensive and powerful deterrent law against any form of atrocity against SCs and STs

### THE LINGERING SOCIAL DEFICIT

There is huge gap in infrastructure development work with all parameters like health, education, irrigation, road electricity etc. in tribal areas.

There is an urgent need to develop a Tribal R & R policy for thousands of tribals who are awaiting relief.

### THE PROMISE OF NEW INITIATIVES

A scheme called 'Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojna' has been introduced for the holistic development of tribals with a budget allocation of Rs. 100 crore. The Ministry has also started various schemes which include hostels for ST girls and boys, establishment of ashram school in Tribal Sub Plan areas, higher secondary scholarships etc. Rs. 32,387 crore has been committed for the welfare under Tribal Sub Plan by the Government.

Besides these schemes, the ministry administers two special area programmes namely grant under Article 275 (1) of Constitution and the Special Central

Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan for upliftment of tribal population including North Eastern states.

Despite the increase in the amount, the share of TSP in the Budget has decreased marginally. In last financial year the share was 5.87% of the Total Budget of 4,53,085 crore but the figure this year is 5.63% of the plan budget of 5,75,000 crore<sup>1</sup>. This is in contradiction to BJP's election manifesto which assures an increase in fund allocation for tribal welfare and development.

There were various other promises made by the government in their manifesto for the tribals such as-<sup>2</sup>

- Electrification of tribal hamlets and provision of all weather roads.
- Ensure that the funds are properly allocated for schemes and programmes for the ST
- Setting up the entire education network for tribals.
- Upgrading housing, water and health facilities.
- Initiating new economic activities.

- Promoting the products associated with the tribal culture by setting tribal haats in tourist towns and other centers.
- Ensure that the tribal land is not alienated.
- Facilitating access to minor forest produce and creating a network of rural haats (markets).
- Enhancing the funds for tribal welfare and development.

The government has introduced several of the above mentioned initiatives for the development of the STs both through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as well as through the TSP approach. Significant gaps remain in the formulation and implementation of the TSP despite some measures adopted recently to improve reporting and monitoring. The overall approach and strategy for the welfare of STs needs to be reviewed and appropriate steps to be taken to make it more responsive to the needs of the STs.

## SOURCES

1. [www.indianbudget.nic.in/](http://www.indianbudget.nic.in/)
2. [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in)

# BONDED LABOR

The NDA government is reviewing 44 labour related legislations administered by the Ministry of Labor and Employment. Since assuming office on 26 May, it has made reform of archaic labor laws one of its top priorities as it attempts to revive economic growth and create more employment in a country where 12 million job aspirants enter the labor market every year.

The mission mode campaign on financial inclusion will increase access to credit and discrimination in the form of delayed or nonpayment of wages will be reduced. Institutional access to credit, saving opportunities etc will reduce the stronghold of labor contractors who offer advance wages for exploitation and bondage.

## VERDICT

Early signs and initiatives undertaken are optimistic for those in vulnerable employment

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a dearth of political will in addressing the matter of bonded labor. With the help of expert inputs, there needs to be an action plan in place at the national and state level. To fix accountability, nodal officers should be appointed to who track and monitor cases relating to bonded labor and ensure their rescue and rehabilitation. The vulnerability of those in oppressive employment was completely overlooked by the BJP in its election manifesto. Since the government is reviewing the labor laws, there is scope yet to put in place remedial measures.

# MUSLIMS

## THREATS OF VIOLENCE AND FURTHER SOCIAL EXCLUSION LOOM LARGE

Muslims who constitute over 13.4 per cent of the Indian population and 73 percent of the minority population (as per 2001 census) are the most backward among all minorities. Apart from facing systemic exclusion from social and economic growth and basic services and amenities, the Muslim community is often at risk of communal violence. Trends emerging from the first 100 days of the NDA government do not appear positive on any of the essential parameters of security, inclusion or prospects for development.

### VIOLENCE AND POLARIZATION

Incidents of violence across the country have been on the rise. Mosques were attacked near Mangalore, Muslims attacked in Pune, Hyderabad and Saharanpur. More than overt violence, it is the series of incitements by radical religious groups and divisive remarks such as calls for a hindurashtra by senior political leaders, that vitiate the solidarity of people. Recently the launch of avirulent campaign around “Love Jihad” – the supposed conversion tactic being used by the Muslim youth, has flared communal tempers. No effort has been made by the government to reign in the ranks or reprimand those responsible for these polarizing tactics. Muslim women are particularly vulnerable during incidents of communal violence as was evident yet again in the recent Muzaffarnagar riots. The NDA government portrays the same indifference as previous governments towards Muslim women and girls who face multiple layers of discrimination but are invisible in the policy framework.

A statement by the minister of Minority Affairs, a woman and a Muslim herself, that Muslims are not a minority, is a symptom of the lack of sensitivity. Also cause for concern for Muslims community is the demand for a Uniform Civil Code raised by some MPs in the parliament.

### NO MAJOR POLICY INSTRUMENTS OR BUDGET ALLOCATIONS ANNOUNCED

Government has so far failed to show commitment towards addressing the urgent development needs of the Muslim community, as demonstrated by an indifferent Union Budget 2014. A meager 0.7 percent of the Total Plan Fund has been earmarked for Muslims. No funds have been allocated for the single new scheme that was announced to promote and preserve the traditional art and craft of this community. The only other increment was an allocation of Rs 100 crore for the Madrasa Modernization Program.

### VERDICT

- An environment has been created where Muslims are facing further polarization
- Indifferent political will as evinced through insufficient budget and lack of policy measures

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion of minority related programs in the budgetary processes through a separate budget statement in the Union Budget as is already being done in the case of women, children, SCs and STs will greatly help in a more robust utilization of the funds and facilitate optimal development of the community.

Some recommendations for greater inclusion of Muslim women and girls:

- Scholarships for girls from economically weaker sections, particularly for higher studies
- Primary and high schools for girls in Muslim neighbourhoods; access to coaching classes
- Financial assistance and social security for home-based women workers
- Training, marketing, credit support for self-employed women
- Clearly stated punitive measures and enforcement of it against perpetrators of communal violence

# CHRISTIANS

## CHRISTIANS EX COMMUNICATED IN BASTAR – THE PROFIT NEXUS

We have witnessed that, across the mineral rich and heavily forested tribal belt that extends from Jharkhand to Madhya Pradesh, including much of Chhattisgarh and Odisha, there has been a rise in communal incidents in last some years. People are being polarized along lines of faith and as a result weakening the possibility of a unified people's movement against exploitative industrial and mining projects. This trend seems to continue as some of the recent incident may suggest.

In May 2014, several village panchayats in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh were prompted by the units of the Sangh Parivarsuch as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, to ban the entry of Christian workers and Christian worship in their areas<sup>1</sup>. According to locals this is a ploy by mining barons to clear the area by stirring dissent. This has resulted in the displacement of some extremely poor Christian tribals who are also being denied access to essential commodities and rations. The *panchayats* passed a resolution that only Hindu religious workers would be allowed into the tribal belt. Perpetuation of such bans, indoctrination and acts of exclusion is a violation of human rights and could result in wide spread communal violence<sup>2</sup>.

## SOURCES

1. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/christians-see-iron-ore-mafia-behind-ban-on-non-hindu-missionaries-in-bastar-villages/>
2. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/in-bastar-50-villages-ban-nonhindu-missionaries/article6180825.ece?ref=relatedNews>

# MEDIA FREEDOM

## SILENCING DISSENT VOICES

### BACKGROUND

According to a recent report (August, 2014) by Freedom House, an American civil liberty organization, "India's score declined by a point, to 39, to reflect increased interference in content by media owners in the run-up to the 2014 elections, which led to the dismissal of key editorial staff in several instances."

There has been a general concern regarding freedom of press and the manner in which political opinion could be influenced by industry. Recently jobs of various high profile editors and journalists have been terminated due to their political inclinations raising grave concerns about freedom of speech. Many of the journalists have subsequently revealed the pressures that they were subjected to by the management controlled by corporations that owned the media houses. Such resignations and terminations were quite widespread and not just limited to the national media.

In the recently concluded round table conference 'Idea of India' held in Mumbai, many social activists, journalists and filmmakers were of the opinion that the space for independent journalism and debates in public sphere was fast shrinking under the NDA led government. Concerns such as market censorship and monopolizing culture and mass media messages for domination have surfaced in many such discussions.

### A RETICENT AND PRIVATE PRIME MINISTER

Restriction on access to information is a major challenge that the journalists are facing. A recent report by the DNA newspaper revealed that the Prime Minister has placed the MPs of his party under an

embargo preventing them from interacting freely with the media, censure for which would be as harsh as much as denying them tickets for the next Lok Sabha election. The Indian media feels it has been left out in the cold with their access to official sources of information blocked. Indian media is also of the opinion that the government is denying journalists the chances to engage on complex subjects like governance beyond official statements and limited briefings.

Breaking tradition, the PM refused to take along a media team for the BRICS summit and his Bhutan visit.

Censorship is another major concern for mainstream media, publishing houses, social media users in India. The disappointing trend was evident in the first quarter report 'Free Speech HubTracker' prepared by [www.thehoo.org](http://www.thehoo.org). It recorded 52 instances of censorship in the first three months of 2014.

### CURB ON CITIZEN'S FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Lately the Internet and social media has been under rigorous policing. Some instances here:

A marine engineer Devu Chodankar of Panaji, Goa was arrested for a comment on a Facebook that seemed to be anti-Narendra Modi and the cyber crime cell is still investigating if "a larger game plan to promote communal and social disharmony" was afoot.

Syed Waqas, an MBA student in Bangalore, Karnataka state was arrested for allegedly circulating offensive messages against Mr Modi on WhatsApp while a film script writer Amaresh Mishra was arrested for posting messages on his Twitter account in Uttar Pradesh.



Kerala police has registered two separate cases against 18 college students and teachers for “defaming” Mr Modi in their respective campus magazines.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Flow of information and content generated by media outlets shall not be determined by the government or a particular partisan interest. An independent body shall be constituted for fair monitoring.
- The government shall ensure that media ownership is transparent. It will allow news consumers to judge the impartiality of the news published in newspapers, magazines.
- Access to official or unofficial sources shall not be controlled by the bureaucrats and politicians.
- The Information Technology Act (2011) shall not be misused by the government to curb freedom of expression on the Internet.

## SOURCES

1. Freedom of Press Index-2014 published by USA based Freedom House organization.
2. thehoo.org’s report on Free Speech Hub Tracker for the first quarter of 2014.
3. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/media-space-shrinking-under-narendra-modi-govt-says-civil-society/article6238466.ece> (The Hindu Website) retrieved on August 3, 2014.
4. Article: NarendraModi’s diktat: No media bytes, <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-narendra-modi-s-diktat-no-media-bytes-2008666> retrieved on August 5, 2014.
5. Interview of Hartosh Singh Bal and Manu Joseph to NewsLaundry website. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwHLdNm4W2g> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noUqqziSbx4> retrieved on August 5, 2014.
6. The Mint Newspaper and Website. [http://www.livemint.com/Companies/rqT20i8fwv4XVjJcHzlcVN/Inside-the-Network18-takeover.html?utm\\_source=copy](http://www.livemint.com/Companies/rqT20i8fwv4XVjJcHzlcVN/Inside-the-Network18-takeover.html?utm_source=copy). Retrived on August 6, 2014.
7. Scroll.in, <http://scroll.in/article/665841/Rajdeep-and-Sagarika-to-resign-as-Reliance-takes-over-Network-18> retrived on August 6, 2014.

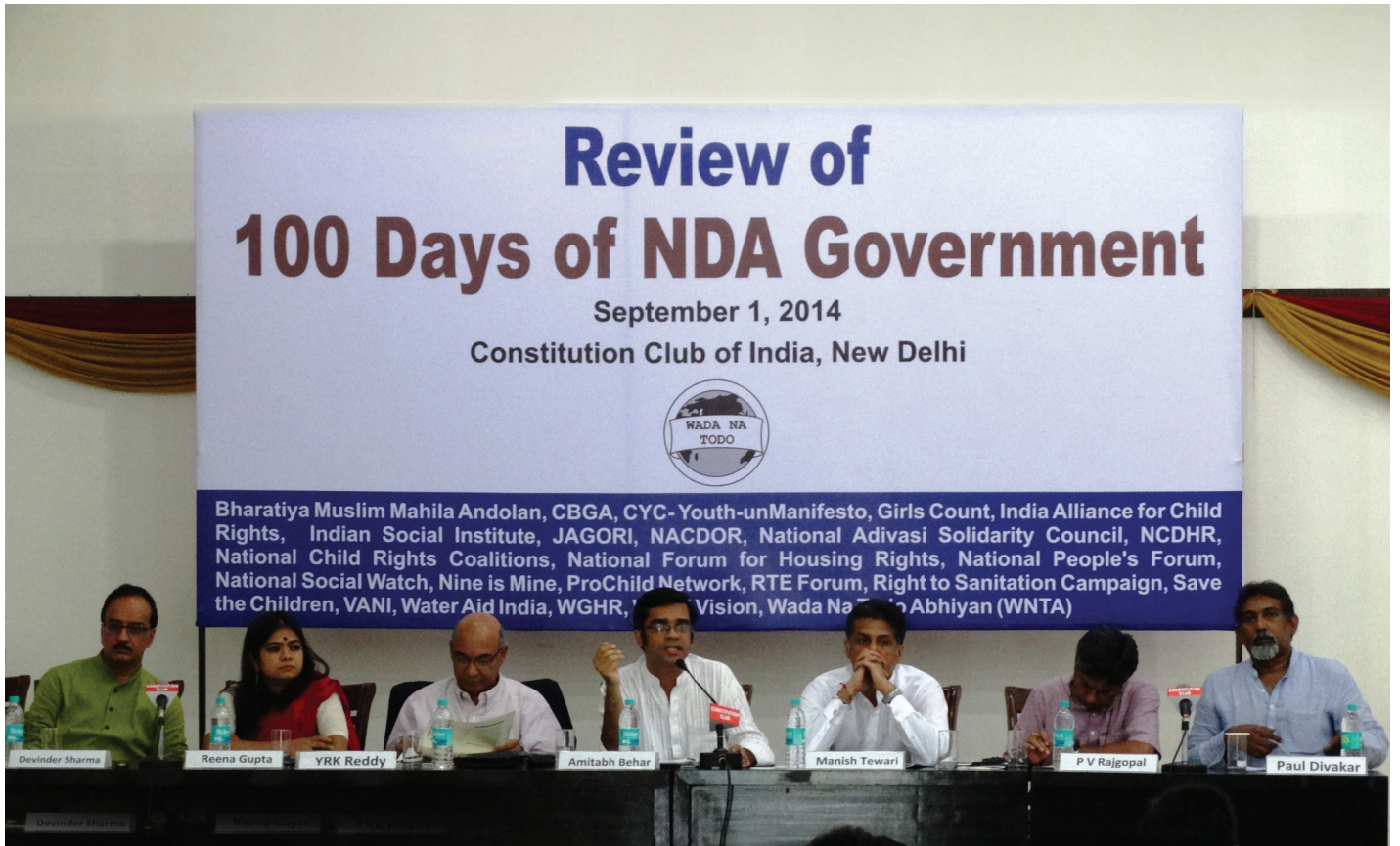
# SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

## MISTRUST OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT CAST A SHADOW

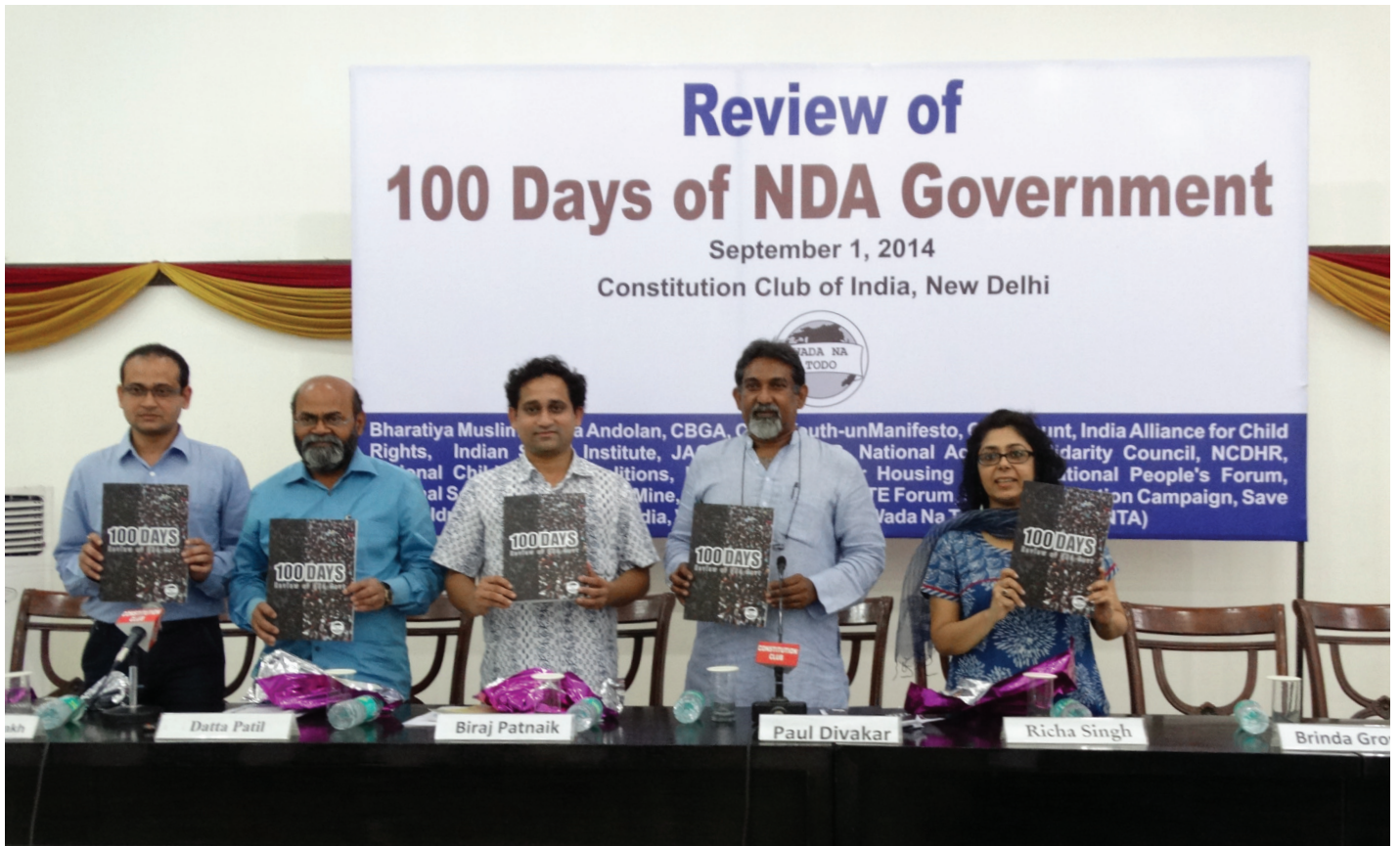
The leak of an Information Bureau report on foreign funded NGOs, soon after the new government took office, has unsettled the civil society greatly. The report indicts voluntary organizations as being anti-development and doubts the allegiance of those funded by foreign entities. While the report is a legacy of the UPA government's divide with the civil society which had led to more stringent FCRA and curtailing of foreign funding, the NDA government was quick to capitalize on this timely leak. The administration ordered Greenpeace, which has been targeted as the prime culprit in delaying if not preventing large scale projects in tribal areas, to take prior permission before it sought any funding from international agencies. Such interventions to constrict civil society space raises a concern that protection of forest and natural resources and land rights runs the risk of being completely undermined by profiteering motives.

## FAVORABLE INDICATORS

In a recent speech, the Prime Minister has upheld the critical role that voluntary organizations can deliver in the arenas of water and sanitation. We also welcome the Finance Minister and Commerce Minister's gesture of meeting with civil society representatives for pre-budget consultations. In the budget presented for 2014, a respite was offered to CSO's where retrospective tax exemption is concerned under 12AA.



Panel graced by Shri. Devinder Sharma (Food Policy Analyst), Ms Reena Gupta (AAP), Shri. YRK Reddy (Senior Corporate Analyst), Mr. Amitabh Behar, (CEO, NFI), Shri Manish Tewari (Spokesperson, Congress), Shri. P.V. Rajagopal (Ekta Parisadh) and Mr. Paul Divakar (WNTA). (From left to right)



The report released by Richa Singh (Co- Convenor WNTA), Paul Divakar (Convenor of WNTA), Biraj Patanaik (Advisor SC Commission on Right to Food), Datta Patil and Pradeep Baisakh (Campaign Coordinator, WNTA).(from Right to left)

## **About Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA)**

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Hindi for 'Don't Break Your Promise Campaign') is a national campaign launched in 2004 as an outcome of World Social Forum in Mumbai. It is a coalition of over 4000 civil society organisations and networks in the country with the aim to hold the government accountable to its promise to end poverty and social exclusion. WNTA is also affiliated to the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP).

For further information, please visit our website [www.wadanatodo.net](http://www.wadanatodo.net)



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