



Republic of India

*Diane Elson
Monica Costa
Rhonda Sharp
Sanjugta Vas Dev*

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(This country profile is available online at www.unisa.edu.au/genderbudgets)

1 Background

Socio-economic indicators	
Population in 2008	1,149.3 million
Projected population change 2008–50	53%
Percent urban (% of total population) 2008	28%
GDP per capita, (PPP \$US) 2005	\$3,452
Human Development Index 2007-08	0.619
Human Development Index rank 2007-08	128 th of 177
Proportion (percent) of population below the Poverty Line (\$1 PPP a day) 2004	35.1%

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; Population Reference Bureau (2008) *World Population Data Sheet*; Asian Development Bank (2008) *Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2008*. (See Explanatory Notes for details).

India is home to 16.7% of the world's population and the second most populous country in the world (Government of India 2008). Hinduism is practiced by 80% of the population and 14% of the population is Muslim (Government of India 2008). However, India is a secular state. The caste system – comprising of four main castes and thousands of sub-castes - structures Indian society. Lower castes, scheduled castes and dalit communities representing 15% of the population, experience many disadvantages (Bhan 2001: 4). While Hindi, spoken in most urban centres, has official status at the All-India level, an additional 21 languages are recognised in the Constitution and 844 dialects have been recorded across the country (Government of India 2008).

After independence from British colonial rule in 1947, India has become the world's largest democracy (Bhan 2001: 2). It currently comprises a federation of seven union territories, twenty-eight states and 604 districts, which are further sub-divided into municipalities and villages (National Information Centre (NIC) date unspecified; Government of India 2008). The first general elections took place in 1952, resulting in the election to government of the strongly secular Congress party led by Nehru. In the late 1990s the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gained popularity to become an important political force in national politics (The Economist 2009). Since 2004 (re-elected in 2009) the Congress Party Prime-Minister Manmohan Singh has led a coalition government (The Economist 2009).

Following decades of socialist-inspired economic policies, in 1991 India adopted the New Economic Policy, which was aligned with neoliberal policies including privatisation, liberalisation, and downsizing in the public sector (Upadhyay 2000: 1; Bhan 2001). This represented a marked a shift from earlier policies based on public ownership of the key economic sectors and grounded on principles of self-reliance and import substitution (Government of India 1999: 6). However, controls were retained on capital movements which reduced India's vulnerability to the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis (Stiglitz 1999). The New Economic Policy has been accompanied by high rates of economic growth, increased per capita national income and rapid expansion of exports, but it also has entailed constraints on public expenditure and a squeeze on credit for farmers and small businesses (Chandrasekhar 2008: 1). The New Economic Policy has led to increased inequality, particularly between rural and urban areas, which has been reinforced by the fact that most investments were located in urban centres. The focus on industry and technology has been perceived as reinforcing religious, regional, gender and caste-based divides (Bhan 2001).

India is still a lower middle income economy in terms of World Bank classifications with a per capita GDP of US\$3,452. If growth continues at current rates it will soon be a middle income country (see table). However, per capita GDP figures mask large inequalities: The World Bank has noted that India's richest states now have incomes that are five times higher than those of

2 India

the poorest state (World Bank 2009:1) and the 2007-08 Human Development Report ranks India at 128th of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (see table).

Nevertheless, India's progress on several MDG targets is on track, including in relation to the goals of reducing extreme poverty and hunger and improving access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in urban areas. The government claims that that current policy efforts make it possible to achieve all MDG goals before 2015 (Government of India Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2005: i). The MDG Monitor (2008) reports that achieving the goals relating to literacy, nutrition, maternal mortality and child mortality requires greater efforts, particularly from the provincial governments who have responsibility for social sector programs related to the MDGs.

Poverty remains a major challenge for India. While the number of poor with an income of a dollar a day was reduced from 296 million in 1981 to 267 million people in 2005, recent estimates using the new poverty line of \$1.25 a day shown an increase in the number of Indians living in poverty from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005 (Chen and Ravallion 2008; World Bank 2009). The 2001 census reported that the population living in urban slums with a population of 50,000 and above was 42.6 million, representing 22.6% of the population in urban centres. These slums are acknowledged by government to be overcrowded and polluted, and have poor services and infrastructure (Government of India, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MHUPA) 2009). A citizens' report on the MDGs claims that only 120 million among 200 million children in the age group 6-14 years are enrolled in school (and that a mere 60% of those enrolled attend) and that health has not improved since early the nineties (Duggal, Govinda and Swain et al. 2005).

2 Gender equality

Gender equality indicators	
Gender Development Index (GDI) value 2005	0.600
Gender Development Index (GDI) rank 2005	112 th of 157
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) value 2007/2008	Not ranked
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) rank 2007/2008	Not ranked
Gender Gap Index (GGI) value 2007	0.5936
Gender Gap Index (GGI) rank 2007	114 th of 128
Seats in parliament held by women (% of total) 2007	8.3%
Population Sex Ratio (males per 100 females) 2005	107.46
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) 2005	450
Adult literacy rate, females (aged 15 and older) 2005	47.8%
Adult literacy rate, males (aged 15 and older) 2005	73.4%
Gross secondary enrolment: Ratio of female rate to male rate 2005	0.8
Gross secondary enrolment: Female ratio (% of the female secondary school aged population) 2005	50%
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (% of total employment in the sector) 2006	18.1%
Ratification to CEDAW (year)	1993

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; World Economic Forum (2007) *The Global Gender Gap Report*; UN Statistics Division (2008) *Millennium Development Goal Indicators*; United Nations Population Division (2008) *World Population Prospects*. (See Explanatory Notes for details).

The principles of gender equality are embedded in the Indian Constitution, yet the status of women in India remains vulnerable in the context of economic liberalisation and the escalation of caste and religious intolerance (Kannabiran 2006: 1). In 1999, the India CEDAW Report (Government of India 1999: 6) highlighted the gap between policy commitments and laws and the reality of the status of women in India.

While there has been progress in promoting gender equality with India ranked 112th of 177 on the GDI index, serious challenges remain. In many parts of India, preference for sons remains strong. The ratio of girls to boys in the population has been declining and fell from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 (Government of India Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) 2006: 9). While the female labour participation rate has increased (from 22.5% in 1991 to 25.7% in 2001), women tend to be concentrated in the informal sector (Government of India 1999 and 2005; Government of India MWCD 2009:9). The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector remains low at 18.1% (see table).

Between 2000 and 2004, the average wage differential between men and women has worsened (Government of India MWCD 2006). More than half of all women suffer from anemia, contributing to continuing high maternal morbidity rates, despite some improvements (Government of India MWCD 2006). Bhan (2001) has noted that girls are less likely than boys to be taken to hospital. Kannabiran (2006) has argued that the erosion of the public health system has contributed to worsening the condition of women in India.

Education is one of the areas where both government and civil society acknowledge that progress has been made (Kannabiran 2006: 4; Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2005: 19). The government's MDG report highlighted increases in female literacy at a higher rate than that of men, so that the ratio of literate women to men rose from 0.61 in 1991 to 0.71 in 2001. By 2005 47.8% of adult females were literate compared to 73.4% of adult men (see table). There have also been rises in female enrolments at all levels of education, assisted by efforts in most states to ensure that basic to higher secondary education levels were effectively free of official fees (Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2005: 42). The MDG target for gender equality and women's empowerment of parity in primary school enrolment of boys and girls has been achieved (UNDP 2009). Women's representation in local government has increased following the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments which reserve one-third of local government seats to women. This reserved seats target has been exceeded in Kerala, reaching 36.4%, and in Uttar Pradesh, where 54% of the presidents of Zila Parishad (local government) are women (Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2005: 44). However women hold only 8.3% of seats in the national parliament (UNDP 2009).

[A National Commission for Women \(NCW\)](#) was established in 1992 with the mandate to review and provide recommendations on legislative measures and advise on all policy matters affecting women (Indian NCW date unspecified). State Commissions for Women have been constituted in 20 states (Government of India 2005: 13). In 2006 the [Department of Women and Child Development](#), established in 1985, was upgraded to [the Ministry of Women and Child Development](#). The Ministry, with assistance from civil society organisations, implements initiatives to promote women's economic and social empowerment, covering welfare and support services, training for employment self-employment, and gender awareness-raising (Government of India MWCD 2009). To support the Ministry's efforts, several measures have been adopted:

A National Policy for Women's Empowerment was approved in 2001 (Government of India MWCD 2006). [The National Resource Centre for Women \(NRCW\)](#) located in the Ministry, was established to build an information base and disseminate information (NRCW date unspecified).

A [Committee on the Empowerment of Women](#) has been established in both houses of the Parliament, the Council of States and House of the People (Indian Parliament 2008).

Civil society has been important in promoting gender equality in India. The 1970s saw the emergence of a women's movement grounded in mass and popular politics (Sen 2000). Violence against women was one of the first issues to generate national mobilisation, often through street protests. Other examples include women's mobilisation on issues such as alcohol, trafficking of drugs, gambling or theft (Butalia 1997). A coalition of 40 poor community-based organisations of women in the city of Mumbai mobilised in the 1990s 'to make the government's network of fair-price shops – the Public Distribution System (PDS) – more responsive to the poor' through vigilance committees in the shops that sold subsidised commodities (Goetz and Jenkins 2001: 3). The government has acknowledged that civil society organisations have played a pivotal role in monitoring compliance to commitment with gender equality; in campaigning for the elimination of discriminatory laws through advocacy, lobbying, and networking; and in drafting new laws on women's rights (Government of India 2005).

3 India's budgetary context

India's budgetary processes and budget priorities are strongly influenced by its national development plans. Since the early 1950s, India has adopted a series of five year development plans that outline goals, programs and budgetary allocations for socio-economic development (Das 2007). The Plan is prepared on the basis of consultations with Ministries, experts and civil society organisations. The Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance are the key players in preparing the budget (Mooij and Dev 2002: 15). The Ministry of Finance determines what resources are available for spending and the Planning Commission determines the allocation of expenditure between Ministries, guided by the Five Year Plan, and in consultation with Ministries. Through this process, a statement of Budget Estimates is prepared and incorporated into the *Budget Statement* which is presented to Parliament by the Minister of Finance in February each year (Sharma and Kanchi 2009).

As an aid to monitoring implementation of the budget, each Ministry is subsequently required to prepare a Performance and Outcome Budget, which is submitted by March 20 and used by the Parliamentary Standing Committees to scrutinize the Budget Estimate in the succeeding year. The Performance and Outcome Budget links financial outlays to outputs and outcomes, presenting targets and achievements (Sharma and Kanchi 2009).

In November-December each year, Ministries review their expenditure and submit Revised Estimates for the remainder of the financial year. There is very often a large gap between the initial Budget Estimates and the (lower) Revised Estimates, reflecting delays in the release of funds for spending due to complex bureaucratic procedures. At the end of the financial year, the budget is audited and actual expenditure is determined. Each budget estimate contains three sets of expenditure figures: the Budget Estimates of proposed expenditure in the coming year; the Revised Estimates for spending in the past year; and the audited data for Actual Expenditure two years ago (Sharma and Kanchi 2009). Much of the expenditure allocated in the national budget is devolved to lower tiers of government (state, municipal and village) for utilisation and there are many challenges in keeping track of it.

The Open Budget Index has classified India at 60th out of 100, signifying that the government provides 'some information' in its budget documents, and has highlighted opportunities for expanded citizen participation in the budget process (International Budget Partnership 2008). While there is a practice of wide consultation around the development of the five-year plan, preparation of the budget involves only limited consultations with key interest groups outside the government (Mooij and Dev 2002: 21). Bhanu (2007: 2) argues that in the Parliament the

