Editorial

In view of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta’s (CSSSC) long-standing involvement with research on poverty, inequality, gender and marginality, UNICEF chose to assist CSSSC to set up a research and documentation hub on social exclusion. However, our interest in exclusion is not only to ascertain deprivation but also to fathom relative deprivation. In other words, our focus is also to examine the marginals amidst the included sections. The project has commenced from May 2009 and several of its activities have also been underway. First, a web portal has been installed as part of CSSSC’s website. On our website we have already uploaded a rolling annotated bibliography on different aspects of social exclusion. The bibliography will be periodically updated. We are engaged in a pilot survey on the deprived sections of SC/STs in Purulia. We hope to upload the preliminary report shortly. Information of our network partners are also being put on the website.

As part of our efforts to disseminate our research and engage with policy matters, a workshop on ‘Mapping Marginality’ has been scheduled for October 21st, 2009. It will afford us a venue for initiating a dialogue on social exclusion with members of the academia and civil society. We propose to report on the proceedings of the workshop in future issues of the newsletter.

Where to Begin with the Excluded?

Social exclusion is both a process and a condition. Taking this into account a study was conducted among a sample from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Purulia to understand their process of exclusion, especially in regard to the conditions of their children. Out of 47 Scheduled Castes and 28 Scheduled Tribes in the district, 4 and 3 of the respective communities were selected. Dispersed in 54 villages, a 20% sample was
drawn, comprising 443 respondents to whom a questionnaire was canvassed. The responses along with that of 9 focus group discussions with them have yielded a comprehensive picture of their dismal living condition, marginality from the process of development and the extreme deprivation of their children.

We found that 9 out of 10 children either do not go to school or visit it occasionally. Beyond this, there is no contact with education! Consequently even the idea of ‘mid-day meal’ remains remote. Yet, children abound in the villages and every family has about 4-6 surviving children but little record of dead ones. After all, in the villages where voter identity cards are scarce, BPL (Below Poverty Line) listing a cruel joke, who would bother to register a dead child?

Beyond the numbers lie the life stories of poverty, impoverishment and destitution. The members of these communities attach little significance to what the outside world terms primary education. In a situation where survival is at stake, education is of little significance. As the data collected suggest and other state government sources confirm, there is enormous apathy on the part of the government departments responsible for improving the condition of the marginalised. Reports on the West Bengal Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (WBTDC) indicate the tardiness of support and welfare delivered to the tribals.

The UNICEF sponsored pilot project on the socially excluded in Purulia is a small step towards locating the priorities of development in the region. If it leads to further intensive enquiries into the state of the deprived then our purpose would be served.

Dhrubajyoti Ghosh

Social Exclusion beyond Poverty Measurement

Despite six decades of constant development efforts, many communities in India still remain excluded from its benefits. Some of these communities are not the result of relatively new liberal economic policies which are believed to have exacerbated economic and social disparity in the last decade. Thus investigation of the cases of socially and economically excluded communities would provide an adequate benchmark for comparison vis-à-vis a case study of other communities where exclusion may simply be a function of geography. By this we mean, spatial isolation leading to socio-economic deprivation and extreme marginalization.

The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta in collaboration with UNICEF, India has recently launched a research cell for undertaking detailed analysis of conditions behind and implications of social exclusion in India. The cell started its initial activities by studying the extent of social exclusion in West Bengal through primary surveys. The methodology adopted has wider reach beyond specific case studies. We use field surveys based on random sampling of households under Gram Panchayats. They are chosen by a prior random sampling of Blocks in respective districts and generate primary data on a subject for which secondary data is unavailable. Indices of poverty and deprivation serve as the first indicators for selecting districts and subsequently blocks vis-à-
vis the provincial averages. The cross-section data thus accumulated is applied in the well known Principal Component Analysis to generate aggregate ranks for different villages in terms of their degree of social exclusion. Social Exclusion is defined according to several categories covering access to basic household amenities, conditions of children, the level of healthcare, schooling, future opportunities and many more aspects. Our initial conjectures regarding the extent of social exclusion in West Bengal despite geographic, ethnic, cultural proximities to mainstream economic and social activities are overwhelmingly supported by the primary data. There are still large sections of the rural population existing far below any acceptable degree of social and economic participation in the province. We propose to include the generalized index of social exclusion, thus constructed into the famous HDI and observe evolving changes initially at the provincial level, and subsequently extend it to serve wider purposes.

Saibal Kar

Drawing Attention to Recent Publications…

This book provides an in depth and comprehensive account of the status of Dalits in contemporary India. It delineates their economic and social status and charts the changes since 1947 with respect to important indicators of human development.

A collection of research papers written by eminent economists and social scientists, this volume presents the contributions made at an international conference on the “Perspectives on Equitable Development,” organized by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies–Hyderabad. Focusing on different aspects of equitable development, the articles discuss six interrelated themes: macroeconomic performance and policies; employment, food security, and poverty; physical and social infrastructure; agriculture and rural industrialization; foreign direct investment in manufacturing and services; and sociopolitical issues in the reform process. An objective and invaluable compilation, these papers underscore the need for inclusive growth in India and around the world.

Social exclusion and inclusion remain issues of fundamental importance to democracy. Both exclusion and inclusion relate to the access to participation in the public realm, public goods and services for certain groups of people who are minorities, marginalized and deprived. Democratization has led to the inclusion of the previously excluded in the political process. While the problems of exclusion remain even in advanced Western countries in respect of the minorities of sorts,
and the underprivileged, the problem of deep-rooted social and cultural exclusions is acute in post-colonial countries, including India. This book analyses social exclusions in India, which remain the most solid challenges to Indian democracy and development. Communal clashes, ethnic riots, political secessionist movements and extremist violence take place almost routinely, and are the outward manifestations of the entrenched culture of social exclusion in India. With its interdisciplinary approach, the book looks at the multidimensional problems of social exclusion and inclusion, providing a critical, comprehensive analysis of the problem and of potential solutions. Overall, the book offers an innovative theoretical perspective of the long-term issues facing contemporary Indian democracy.

**d. Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field studies from Rural India**
*by B. S. Baviskar, 2008, Sage Publications.*

This book brings together rich field studies from 42 panchayats in 12 states, to show how decentralization is working in Indian villages. It analyzes the social, political, and economic forces influencing variations in the degree of empowerment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women and looks at likely future developments. The research methodology used brings insights from a micro approach instead of macro-level generalities.

**e. B. R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies by Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar, 2008, Oxford University Press**

The contribution of social activist and thinker Ambedkar in the development of inclusive policies during the British rule and its culmination into the reservation policy in the Constituent Assembly is immense. In this volume original documents, memorandums, and writings by Ambedkar are put together to highlight the process of development in these policies and his thinking. A comprehensive Introduction discusses both the historical context and the present controversy regarding reservations in a proper perspective.

http://www.cssscal.org/social-inclusion-cell.html