

M.Sc. Economics Programme
27 February–4 March 2017 | Dhar District, M.P.

Socio-Economic Survey Report

About 18 students of MSc Economics, Department of Policy Studies, TERI University on invitation from the Madhya Pradesh Government visited Dhar District, Madhya Pradesh from 27th Feb, 2017 to 4th March, 2017 as part of study tour to assess the impact of the ongoing Narmada Seva Yatra. The study trip included a survey at Mandu, followed by two surveys—a survey each in two villages Gulati and Pipaldagadi—in the Dharampuri block. The students participated in the Narmada Seva Yatra which was passing through Gulati, and Pipaldagadi. The students along with the accompanying faculty also got the privilege of meeting the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shree Shivraj Singh Chouhan at his residence in Bhopal at the end of this visit and shared certain basic observations regarding the impact of this Yatra on the local populace.



“*Namami Devi Narmade*” - Narmada Seva Yatra started on December 11, 2016 from the place of origin River Narmada at Amarkantak. The Yatra will cover 1831 kilometres on southern bank comprising of 548 villages/towns and 1513 kilometres on northern bank comprising of 556 village/towns, thus covering 3344 kilometres in 144 days. The Yatra will be completed on May 11, 2017.

Narmada Seva Yatra is the world's biggest river conservation campaign and is being coordinated by the Government of Madhya Pradesh as a people's movement to protect an important natural resource which in some senses the lifeline of Madhya Pradesh.



Various programmes like folk dance performance by school children, awareness campaigns by the local influential people and a *Jan Bhoj Aayojan* that were a part of the Yatra, had induced participation from the local population. The Yatra witnessed massive mobilisation of people, including significant participation of women, in different villages.

To assess the impact of the Yatra, students participated in household surveys; in all about 167 households were surveyed in to villages. While in Mandav which was away from the course of the Yatra it was observed that there was little awareness of the campaign but in the villages Gulati and Pipaldagadi, it was found that people could reasonated with the purpose of Yatra and showed optimism regarding expected benefits from such a campaign, but not all residents of these villages knew of how they could contribute to the preservation of the River Narmada. This gap is what the speakers at various village gatherings looked to bridge where they communicated the responsibilities that all the stakeholders have towards conservation of the River. The speakers tried to make it as clear as possible for the locals to be able to comprehend the responsibilities and the tasks that they needed to perform in for sustainable usage of River Narmada.



Based on interactions with local officials and people who were part of the Narmada Seva Yatra Task Force, it was stressed that creating awareness is one of the critical aspects of the Yatra and plays an important role in tapping the benefits that accrue from such an initiative. The Yatra incorporates other relevant socio-economic issues like Saving Girl Child, anti-liquor campaign, Swach Bharat Mission, Skill India which is crucial to sustain the developments that result from this initiative of the government so that the benefits derived are passed over generations. To bestow the people with a sense of responsibility and collective authority to contribute to the initiative, a Narmada Seva Samiti is being formed based on voluntary membership in each of the villages through which the Yatra had passed.

The main observations from the survey are given below:

Mandav Village (Mandu)

About 70 households were surveyed in this village. Mandav can be characterized as a backward village with a daily wage rate at around Rs. 150-Rs. 200 and about 6-7 months of yearly employment. In other words, for almost half of the year, resident households did not receive gainful employment opportunities. The area did not have proper source of irrigation that had adversely affected livelihood security of resident households in the village. Prolonged agrarian distress had made agriculture unviable and, over the years,

tourism had gained prominence as an important economic activity. However, the number of people displaced out of agriculture has not been absorbed into tourism. The village did not have a primary school and thus children had to travel to neighbouring villages to obtain primary education. There was little awareness about the Narmada Seva Yatra in Mandav as the village was located away from the banks of the River Narmada and the Narmada Seva Yatra did not pass through it. However, people did realise that cleanliness of a River is essential as they could associate this with the Rewa Kund, an artificial reservoir in Mandu, which is in a dismal state due to the *Asti-Visarjan* and other practices like washing of clothes and open defecation that has contaminated water and made it unusable. They indicated that given an opportunity, they will try to make a positive contribution in this type of campaigns that promotes cleanliness of rivers.



Gulati

About 84 households were surveyed in this village. The daily wage rate in the village was about Rs. 100- Rs. 150 and about 7-8 months of yearly employment as received, on average, by members of resident households in the village. There were out-migrations to Gujarat and Maharashtra that was witnessed in this village in search of livelihood opportunities. It was a reflection of lack of year round employment opportunities in the village. The village had few big landowners and most of the resident households were agricultural labourers

with no access to land. Wheat, Cotton and Maize were the principal agricultural crops in the village. The village had adequate sources of water for irrigation such as tube wells as it was in the vicinity of the banks of River Narmada. The level and quality of education in this village was poor. However, most of them were aware of the Narmada Seva Yatra. The Yatra did pass through this village and most of the households were deeply sensitive towards the cause as they acknowledged the need to change age old practices that were damaging the River. The River is their lifeline due to their reliance on agriculture as an economic activity. Majority of households were extremely optimistic about the efforts that were taken by the government in the form of Narmada Seva Yatra. The Yatra had indeed affected their attitude and habits with respect to River Narmada. Most households did commit to changing their habits vis-a vis the River for its preservation. This village witnessed major participations by women members; they were actively engaged with other members of the village in order to bring about a shift in living habits. Most of the women had agreed to not use soap or detergents while washing clothes or taking a bath in the river and they were actively encouraging others to do the same. The village at a generic level expects that with the focus on preserving the river, it would result in cleanliness, lesser occurrences of water borne diseases and overall improvement in sanitation facilities.

Pipaldagadi

About 83 households were surveyed in this village. This village too was located in the Dharampuri block at the bank of the river Namada. The daily wage rate of this village was about Rs. 150- Rs. 200 with yearly employment being close to 10 months. The people in this village were depended mostly on agriculture for their source of livelihood. Wheat, Sugarcane and Maize were the principal crops that were cultivated in this village. The proportion of landowners and the average land holdings in this village was considerably higher compared to the other village covered. The major chunk of the land though was in possession of the upper caste people and most of the Dalits and Scheduled Tribes were either agricultural labourers or construction workers who received employment in neighbouring towns. It was also observed that the village also possessed a better infrastructure as compared to Gulati in terms of rural electrification and irrigation. A noticeable feature in the village is immigration from other villages during sowing and harvesting seasons. Except for the seasonal immigrants, most of the people were aware of the Narmada Seva Yatra and actively participated in it. For majority of households, expectations from the Yatra were high and it was hoped that such an initiative is necessary for sustaining the quality of the river Narmada. An Arti was held in this village as a part of the Narmada Seva Yatra which had witnessed participation from the local priests and this encouraged people to alter religious rituals that contributed

to the degradation of the water quality. In general, as a result of the Yatra there were expectations that it would result in improved cleanliness and sanitation in the region.



Conclusion

Narmada Seva Yatra required great deal of administrative effort. While administrative effort is necessary, it is by no means sufficient. It has to be followed up with continuous mass awareness campaigns. Also, implementation of suitable policies like construction of toilets, controlling industrial effluents, to name only a few, is urgently needed. Thus, it is extremely important in the near future to frame and implement suitable policies for sustainable development. The awareness that has been created from the Seva Yatra should be passed across generation to ensure overall well being for a substantial sections of the population in Madhya Pradesh.