VOICE

TAXATION: Exploring the link between extreme inequality and tax justice

Less than 3% of India’s population earns more than a quarter of the country’s wealth. The richest 5% earn 54% of the country’s wealth. By contrast, the top 0.1% earn 20% of India’s wealth.

Today, India is home to the third largest number of children illiterate in the world. The maldistribution of wealth, and income of $3.2 billion, is not even 1.3% of India’s GDP. The illiteracy rate is 34.3%. Thus, India has 670 million illiterate people, 40% of whom are women.

The loss of money from tax dodging is felt most in countries like India where 60 Lakhs children are out of school.
CEO’S NOTE

To me, this edition is special in more ways than one. While we are bringing out our first issue on the subject of taxation, this is going to be the final installment of VOICE. This sixth edition of VOICE is insightful as well as exciting as it helps us link the myriad-faceted concept of inequality with tax justice.

In January this year, Oxfam’s report on inequality titled ‘An Economy for the 1%’ was launched during the World Economic Forum 2016. It gained massive traction globally as people and media around the world stood up and took notice. It was a proud moment for Oxfam as we have been advocating for policy measures to tackle inequality since a long time now.

The report noted that 82 individuals globally hold as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion people in the world. It is shocking how the gap between rich and poor is widening as, just five years ago, the number of individuals was 388.

Oxfam India has been working to address the root causes of inequality and poverty. The approach has been to push for quality, free and reliable essential services such as healthcare and education and also advocating for fair and progressive tax policies.

The most recent Panama Leaks highlight the magnitude of the problem. It is estimated that poor countries lose taxes worth US$ 170 billion annually due to the use of tax havens by individuals and MNCs. When we realise that 400 million people lack access to life-saving health services globally (WHO estimated), the contrast gets sharper.

Nisha Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer,
Oxfam India

Voices: Why Is Inequality Important for Us?

Globally, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. In 2010, there were 388 individuals who owned wealth equivalent to the poorest half (50%) of the world. In 2016, this number is a shocking 82 individuals. Widening inequality fuels crime, violent conflict and the impact is most felt by the poorest as they live shorter lives, robbed of basic rights like primary healthcare and education. As Oxfam’s ‘Enough is Enough!’ report noted, inequality was checked in India. 90 million more people would be out of extreme poverty by 2019.

2. How Does Taxation Have an Impact on Inequality?

Skewed tax policies widen inequality. In India, indirect taxes such as sales tax, excise duty, customs duty and service tax, are disproportionately higher as a share of total taxes. This is problematic as what it implies is a rich-throw-a-pusher and an industrialist will pay the same tax for a matchbox. Progressive taxation policies rely more on bringing greater balance in the share of direct and indirect taxes, making tax structures more progressive. By having the rich pay more tax as compared to the poor, and ensuring that the corporates and private businesses pay their tax. These are some steps to reduce inequality.

3. Can You Cite One Instance of Flawed Tax Policy and One Welcoming Policy and Their Implications?

(a) The Union Budget 2016-17 introduced a slew of cesses to boost revenue collection is an example of a flawed policy. Unlike other central taxes, these are not shared with the states in accordance with the principle of fiscal federalism. Thus, it is not in the interest of the states and does not promote fiscal devolution in spirit.

(b) The Union Budget 2015-16 announcement to increase the share of tax revenue shared by Centre with states by 10% is welcome. The Centre’s transfers to states are either conditional (tied grants) or unconditional (unfunded grants). The transfers made by the Finance Commission (FC) are prefered by the states as they are untied and the states can use these for whatever purpose that is most vital for them instead of having to conform to conditionsality of specific schemes or programmes.

4. Is Fiscal Decentralisation a Good or A Bad Thing?

Fiscal decentralisation refers to shifting of decision-making on finances from the Centre to the state governments. This is a good thing as it checks undue centralisation of financial powers at the Centre and allows the states to decide their spending priorities. In this regard, it would be useful to understand whether the increased Central tax revenue shared with the states in 2015-16 has had positive implications by way of increased spending on essential services such as health and education. Although it is too early to tell, some preliminary analysis done by Accountability Initiative finds that while some states have been able to step up their spending, this is not the case for all.

5. What Role Does Civil Society Play in This Discourse?

Civil society organisations and networks have been globally engaged in advocating for more progressive tax policies. These include: more direct and less indirect taxes, reducing tax losses due to exemptions available by corporates and private businesses, and ensuring tax evasion and tax avoidance are checked. As reported by the recent Panama leaks, tax havens are an easy route for individuals and corporations to funnel much-needed resources (that could have financed education, healthcare and other basic entitlements) from the poor countries. According to a report in The Indian Express, 500 Indians are on the list. The role of civil society organizations in demanding accountability from their governments in this regard remains critical.

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BUDGET 2016-17: SIGNS OF PARALYSIS

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When the numbers underlying Budget 2016-17 are unpacked the unavoidable conclusion is that any claims of direction in the budget, let alone of a redirection of policy, was just empty rhetoric.

The government had clearly failed to put any money where its mouth was. This was especially true of the Finance Minister’s claim that his Budget provides “additional resources for vulnerable sections, rural areas and social and physical infrastructure.”

As part of this new thrust, the Budget speech reiterated a recent promise by the Prime Minister that it would double the income of farmers by 2022.

In pursuit of that goal, the Finance Minister has provided a total allocation for Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers’ Welfare (ACFW) of Rs. 35,984 crore for 2016-17. On the surface this seems to be a huge increase in the allocation for this sector when compared to the revised estimate of Rs. 35,809.16 crore for 2015-16. But it emerges that this increase is the result of a change in classification. The budget estimate [BE] for 2016-17 includes Rs. 15,000 crore under the head “Interest subsidy for short term credit to farmers.”

This head earlier appeared as part of the demand for grants of the Finance Ministry, and its inclusion hugely inflates the ACFW figure for 2016-17. Adjusting for that, the nominal increase in allocation to “farmers”, even if realized, is far smaller than the impressive 12.8 per cent implied by the Finance Minister’s claim. This dichotomy between rhetoric and intent as reflected in even budgeted allocations is visible in other areas that impact on India’s precarious one is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which the NDA government has had to reluctantly declare as being a “flagship” programme for the poor, despite its origins and expansion under the UPA.

Even before Budget 2016-17, it was clear that in practice the NDA government was starving this programme of funds, though it was legally a demand-driven programme with the government committed to providing employment claimed irrespective of the allocation required. This neglect had resulted in a fall in the average number of person-days of work per year provided to households under the programme to 40, as opposed to the promised 100. The Finance Minister’s Budget Speech declares that “the allocation for the programme has been set at Rs. 36,500 crore and there have been attempts made to portray this as substantial.”

As activist Nikhil Dey has pointed out, the fact is that even by the time the Budget was presented, actual spending on the programme in 2015-16 had touched Rs. 37,000 crore and there were areas to the tune of Rs. 6,000 crore that needed to be cleared. By the end of March this Rs. 45,000 crore is likely to have risen even more. So the allocation proposed in the budget is a huge decline even in nominal terms, without accounting for inflation. Such examples can be multiplied as has been done by different commentators on the Budget. The relevant question is why there is this divergence between the rhetoric of the NDA and its actual allocations.

Numerically, the explanation is obvious. The Finance Minister has chosen not to increase government expenditure when measured as a ratio of GDP. The ratio of total expenditure to GDP is in fact projected to fall marginally from 32.2 per cent in 2015-16 to 31.1 per cent in 2016-17. This is in a year when the government has to make substantially increased allocations for its wage and salary bill, given its obligation to implement the award of the 7th Pay Commission. This paralysis with respect to spending has its roots in two tendencies that have come to characterise the fiscal stance adopted by successive governments since the mid-1990s, and has intensified under the current NDA regime. The first is conscious forbearance when it comes to imposing corporate, wealth and capital gains taxes in the name of strengthening privatisation initiatives.

The second is an increased emphasis on realizing the revised fiscal and revenue deficit targets that are expected to brought down to 3 and zero per cent respectively even if with a lag relative to dates set in the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act. This pursuit with renewed vigour of self-imposed targets has meant that the fiscal deficit for 2015-16 has been brought down to 3.9 per cent and that for 2016-17 have been set at 3.5 per cent of GDP. With the government having decided to restrict itself on both the direct tax and borrowing fronts, what happens to expenditure depends on what happens to any residual direct tax initiatives, indirect tax revenues, non-tax revenues and what are called “non-debt capital receipts”, which really is the sale of assets to finance current expenditures. Budget 2016-17 makes an effort to push the boundaries on all of these fronts. It has chosen to fare the retirement savings of middle and lower-middle class households, by making 60 per cent of those withdrawals from Provident Funds of those under the older pre-PSUs system taxable.

That is while corporations are to be given the benefit of reduced rates in the coming years, workers in different categories are to be subject to a new tax on savings. Second there are a variety of surcharges and cesses that the government has chosen to impose, which are in the nature of inflationary indirect tax revenues from which need not be shared with the states. One area in which this strategy has yielded the government large revenues even in 2015-16, is petroleum and products, enhanced indirect taxes on which have been used to skim off much of the benefits of the sharp decline in international oil prices that would have otherwise accrued to the consumer. Against the budgeted figure of Rs. 186,767 crore from duties on petroleum and products, the government actually collected Rs. 263,772 crore in 2015-16.

Expecting that oil prices will remain low and continuing with this practice the government is expecting to mobilise an additional Rs. 2,904.66 from this source 2016-17, depriving the population of the benefits of this windfall gain. Given the fact that oil products are universal intermediaries, all sections will have to share this burden, making it regressive. Third, the government has chosen to flag to the very end the benefits to be derived from the use of spectrum, which is a limited resource. “According to the budget, receipts from other communication services” rose from Rs. 36,674 crore in 2014-15 to Rs. 56,041.35 in 2015-16, and are estimated at Rs. 96,995 crore in the budget for 2016-17. According to the detailed receipts budget, these resources are derived from one-time spectrum charges, auction of 1,800 MHz and 900 MHz spectrum and receipts from 800 MHz spectrum. And finally, despite repeated disappointments, the government is hoping to sell large volumes of equity in public sector corporations and undertake strategic sales of some units to garner substantial receipts from privatization. Given the state of the market, for asset sales this is not a fail-free source. In the budget for the financial year 2015-16, for example, receipts from disinvestment and strategic sale were set at Rs. 68,500 crore.

The realised estimate indicates that the government managed to mobilize only Rs. 25,312 crore. Yet the receipts from this source in 2016-17 have been set at a still ambitious Rs. 56,500 crore. Even if an odd and regressive set of interventions to mobilize additional resources, it could be expected that these measures should give the Finance Minister some space for manoeuvre. Surprisingly, it does not seem to have delivered that. As opposed to expectations that the budget would raise expenditures to close the slowing economy a much-needed stimulus, projected spending in 2016-17 is just about keeping pace with nominal GDP growth.

“What the government has chosen to do is to reorient expenditures a bit so that it can devote more to infrastructure spending, especially on roads and the railways.”

Even this may not materialise since revenues may fall short of the optimistic projections in the budget. As it happened in 2015-16, in any case, with aggregate expenditure not buoyant, the marginal infrastructure thrust has meant that the Finance Minister has had to make tall claims of what he intends to do for farmers and the poor, without allocating the resources needed to realize them. In sum, despite the pressures created by impending elections in a number of states, which possibly explains the Finance Minister’s rhetoric, the ruling party has not been able to use the fiscal lever to push for growth and some improvement in welfare.

The source of this paralysis is the adherence to the twin pillars of direct tax forbearance and fiscal deficit reduction. These principles are clearly meant to appease domestic and foreign investors, especially the latter. But they are unlikely to enthuse the majority of voters. That possibly explains why a party and government weighing foreign capital is trying to create a new discourse on nationalism to build a vote bank.

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HITS & MISSSES

While there has been a significant focus on bettering government programmes by allotting more budgets, little attention has been paid to education. Take a look at the hits and misses of this year’s budget.

1

The Jan Aushadi Scheme with its promise of setting up 3000 generic medicine stores.

It is heartening to see that the government acknowledges the increasing out of pocket expenditure towards healthcare as a critical vulnerability.

2

Budget for the national right to work programme (the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) increased by about Rs. 3,800 Crores, (US $564 Million).

The scheme provides right to work to about 5.2 crore people in India. This is good news that the amount allotted is close to what was demanded by the Ministry as well as by the activists on the ground.

3

An additional tax at the rate of 10% on dividends earned by High Net-worth Individuals (HNIs).

There is welcome increase in the surcharge by 7% on HNIs with an income above Rs. 1 crore (US $ 150,000) and a proposed 1% tax deduction on purchase of luxury cars priced over Rs. 10 lakhs (US $ 15,000) and goods and services paid in cash over Rs. 2 lakhs (US $ 3,000).

THREE “HITS”

1

There is a push to promote insurance-based mode of healthcare provision as the new health protection scheme provides a Rs. 1 lakh (US $ 1500) cover per family with an additional top-up package of Rs. 30,000 (US $ 450) for senior citizens.

This only looks at the demand side and fails to address existing supply side constraints. This includes the basics such as better physical infrastructure (beds per 1000), number of doctors per 1000 population, or the challenge of having an effective governance framework to manage the quality of healthcare delivery.

2

There is hardly any focus towards education sector.

The proposals pertaining to education are flawed as they promote skills and job creation. The focus only on digital literacy and Skill India Mission belies our hopes of having in place an education system that is of intrinsic and instrumental.

3

On the tax policy front, indirect taxes continue to be a disproportionately higher share of total taxes.

These taxes negatively impact the vulnerable and most marginalised sections disproportionately. To add to this, a slew of cesses have been introduced to boost revenue collection that even conservative economists object to given that they are not shared with the states.

THREE “MISSSES”

INCREASED FISCAL DEVOLUTION FROM CENTRE TO STATES: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

A welcome policy change that has come about through the national budget in 2015-16 and continued in this year’s budget (2016-17) has been greater fiscal decentralisation from Centre to state governments. Fiscal decentralisation refers to shifting of decision-making on finances from the Centre to the state governments. This is a good thing as it check undue centralisation of financial powers at the Centre and allows the states to decide their spending priorities.

To give some backdrop on this policy change, the Union Budget 2015-16 accepted the recommendation made by a Constitutional body called the Finance Commission (FC). The FC is appointed every five years with a mandate to define the centre-state fiscal relations. It also recommends the division of tax revenues collected by the Centre (excluding certain items such as cess) called the “divisible pool” between the Centre and states and the share to be allocated to each state.

But it also made recommendations on other tax-related issues as per the terms of references. The Fourteenth Finance Commission (14th FC) recommendations covering a period of five years beginning 2015-16 to 2020-21 sought to devolve a significantly higher share of 42% of the divisible pool to states compared to the 17% share recommended by the 13th FC.

Accordingly, the total devolution to the states in 2015-16 came to Rs. 5.28 lakh crores, which is Rs. 1.78 lakh crores more than in 2014-15. The increased transfers were also in response to the demand by states for increased flow of untied fiscal resources in place of tied resources that come with Central Sponsored Schemes. The devolution formula recommended by the 14th FC incorporates two new variables: the 2011 population and forest cover. At the same time, it does not take into account fiscal discipline, a criterion included by the 13th FC in its formula.

Another area of concern has been the focus on local bodies and the 14th FC has recommended that grants to local bodies should only be for basic services and functions assigned to them under relevant legislation. The Commission has recommended grants to the tune of Rs. 2.87 lakh crores over five years.

What remains to be seen is whether the states are spending more on basic essential services such as healthcare, education and nutrition, now that they have increased resources available to them for these purposes. So far, this has remained more state-specific and it is difficult to comment on a general trend with some states spending more as compared to others.
‘BUDGET’ING PEOPLE

Oxfam India’s partners are key to our work. They are working with people on the ground ensuring participation in budgetary processes. Every day they are working towards bridging the gap.

CENTRE FOR BUDGET AND GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY (CBGA)

WHERE: Nationwide Initiative

WHAT: People’s Budget Initiative (PBI) is a network of 500 civil society organizations representing 20 states in India, facilitated by CBGA. It works to promote people’s voice in the discourse on budgetary priorities in India.

WHY: The year 2014 witnessed landmark changes in India in development planning and policy processes. Fiscal federalism was introduced and it was still at a nascent stage. The budget process needed to be made fully open and democratized for more active citizen engagement.

HOW: After the compositional shifts introduced in budgets in 2015, CBGA was approached by several organizations to shed light on the impact of these changes on different sectors. CBGA, and some core PBI partners discussed these nuances on several forums; organized consultations and press meets to help different stakeholders understand the new resource sharing and current expenditures. These presentations have benefited advocacy organizations to plan their efforts, sharpen their advocacy messages for funding critical social sectors, and recommend policy measures to help affect policy change.

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC FINANCE AND POLICY (IPFP)

WHERE: Bhubaneswar, Odisha

WHAT: Social Sector Expenditure & Growth

WHY: Investment in social sector creates human capital which further contributes to the growth process.

The human capital approach entails that investment in health and education creates capacity to build human capital and this leads to enhance productivity, encouraging higher economic growth. Over the last one decade and more, Indian states have witnessed rapid economic growth. The critical question here is whether the higher growth has translated in reducing inequality.

HOW: This has been investigated by examining the social sector expenditure and corresponding development outcomes across states. The evidence from the study suggests that some of the states where the rate of growth of per capita income was more, social service expenditure did not increase adequately. For instance, the per capita real income growth was 8 percent in Gujarat (2001-02 to 2011-12), and 7 percent in Maharashtra, in comparison to 4 and 5 percent growth in real per capita social service expenditure in the two states respectively. This to a large extent validates the fact that higher growth has not translated in higher growth of social service expenditure.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS

WHERE: Nationwide

WHAT: Addressing Inequalities through Equity Budgeting

WHY: India adopts targeted budgeting (by way of initiatives such as Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan) that has been designed precisely to bridge the gap between the general communities and the marginalized like Dalits and Adivasis. However, these policies are fraught with evasion and the funds are not utilized effectively. The policies should be looked more as budgetary entitlements that are payable to the tax-paying community, not as charity.

HOW: Engagement with the Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability and Participation (GMATAP) and Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFTI) has opened up avenues to look at international processes of accountability and participation. They have also provided the opportunity to bring Dalit concerns of participation in budget planning and monitoring as drivers of economic and social inequalities and rights violations. The need is to replicate a similar process in South Asia region and call for adequate participation in the fiscal policy planning for the marginalized. It has helped to strengthen the movement with specific tools and techniques and made our demands at the national level more concrete.

INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE (ISDG)

WHERE: Advocacy at Regional Level

WHAT: The Study report India’s Development Cooperation – Challenges and Opportunities in Addressing Global Poverty and Inequality analyses how to make India’s development cooperation initiatives more effective in addressing poverty and inequality among developing nations.

WHY: India has been playing a proactive role in strengthening the socio-economic infrastructure, human resource development and capacity building in other developing countries. While more than three-fourths of India’s foreign grants and loans were received by South Asian countries, almost two-thirds of India’s lines of credit (LoC) have gone to African nations. India’s development cooperation in areas like education, health, infrastructure and community development has the potential to bring about huge improvement in the capabilities and living conditions of the poor and the marginalized.

HOW: In order to be a major player in the field of development cooperation, India needs to revamp its development assistance programmes. More transparency and accountability, greater opportunity for Parliamentary and public discussion and greater accountability to the Parliament, larger involvement of civil society organizations, better availability of disaggregated data and availability of more resources are required to enhance the effectiveness of India’s development cooperation initiatives. By making its development cooperation efforts more efficient and effective, India can play a positive role in reducing poverty and inequality thereby enabling the partner countries to achieve their Sustainable Development Goals.
MAJOR MILESTONES IN THE INDIAN TAX SYSTEM

3500 BC
Charaka, an astrologer, economist and strategist in Chandragupta Maurya's reign, writes Ayurveda which is a Hindu law that seeks an equitable tax policy redistribution of income, de-centralized tax policies.

1335 AD
A disciple of Jaina [silk tax] that was paid by Pishva who ruled India in the 13th century. It was introduced by Akbar.

1835
The British East India Company levied a tax on police, administration, and recovery of income tax.

1911
The government of India Act 1911, which transferred some legislative powers to the provinces.

1940
The Indian Independence Act 1940, which provided for the creation of a new country of India.

1965
The Indian Independence Act 1965, which provided for the creation of a new country of India.

1994
Education cess of 2% on primary education introduced in Union Budget 1994–95 to supplement resources for primary education, proceeds put in Paramaparam Shiksha Nidhi.

2004–05
VAT introduced in April 2005.

2013
Direct Tax Code (DTC) proposed to replace VAT with a value-added tax (VAT) and replace indirect taxes like excise duty, customs duty, luxury tax, service tax, and state levies like VAT, octroi, entry tax. The latest amendment was introduced in 2014.

TAX JUSTICE NETWORK

Origin: Britain
ABOU: T: An independent international network launched in 2003 was founded by John Christensen. They conduct high-level research, analysis, and advocacy on international tax; on the international aspects of financial regulation; on the role of tax in society; and on the impacts of tax evasion, tax avoidance, tax competition, and tax havens.

WORTH A READ: Financial Secrecy Index 2015. It is the biggest ever survey of global financial secrecy. A unique index that combines a secrecy score with a weighting to create a ranking of the secrecy jurisdictions and countries that most actively promote secrecy in global finance.

INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP

Origin: United States of America
ABOU: The International Budget Partnership (IBP) collaborates with civil society around the world to analyze and influence public budgets in order to reduce poverty and improve the quality of government. IBP believes that budgets are the government’s most powerful tool to meet the needs of its people, especially those who are poor and marginalized.

WORTH A READ: Open Budget Survey 2015. It reveals that the vast majority of people live in countries that have inadequate systems for ensuring accountable budgets. Most countries surveyed provide insufficient information for civil society and the public to understand or monitor budgets.

“With the amount of funds likely to be mobilized through the new international development goals alone, and potentially through climate change agreements, the world has an unprecedented opportunity to address poverty, inequality, and other global challenges—but this will only happen if these resources are managed transparently and accountable.”

WARREN KRAFCHIK, IBP Executive Director

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR TAX JUSTICE

Origin: Regional Networks across Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australia, North America, and Europe
ABOU: It is a growing movement of civil society organizations and activists, including trade unions, united in campaigning for greater transparency, democratic oversight, and redistribution of wealth in national and global tax systems. It comprises over 120 organizations across Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australia, North America, and Europe, which collectively represent hundreds of millions of people.

WORTH A READ: Making Tax Fair. It is a unique evidence-based advocacy tool that identifies the main bottlenecks within tax systems. The tool allows for a comparison of tax policies and practices in different countries, using a standard methodology and unified research approach thanks to the joint development of a common research framework.

“Some of the biggest companies have been participating in an unhealthy tax competition, a race to the bottom. They push governments to lower taxes or to give them tax holidays and other benefits so that they can compete for companies to come to invest.”

WINNIE BAYANYIMA, Oxfam International Executive Director
GENDER JUSTICE
16 Days of Activism, Nov 25th – Dec 10th, 2015
This year the campaign focussed on social norms devaluing women and girls. As part of the campaign freedom walks, walkathons, solidarity marches and runs were organised in Delhi, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kishisha, and Uttar Pradesh. The aim was to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women.

Uttar Pradesh – A first of its kind walkathon took place in collaboration with Women Powerline ‘1096’ and Inner Wheel. 500 people participated and pledged to neither indulge nor supporting violence against women and gender based discrimination.

Chhattisgarh – Freedom walk in partnership with the Raipur Municipal Corporation was organised. It was attended by dignitaries such as the Vice Chancellor of Raipur University, the Mayor of Raipur city and the ASI from Delhi Police Department.

Odisha – Over 150 auto rickshaws carried educational posters on the issue to create awareness.

Bihar – ACD sent gender sensitive messages to its customers throughout the 16 days

Delhi – We collaborated with CYC to create awareness on gender norms. We used Delhi metro as a medium to spread the word during 16 Days

HUMANITARIAN AND DRR (DISASTER RISK REDUCTION)

Tamil Nadu Floods, December 1st, 2015
India’s fourth largest and most populous city, Chennai, faced the worst floods in over hundred years. More than 300 people lost their lives in the torrential downpour. Besides

ECONOMIC JUSTICE
Billi Vikalp Sangam at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, March 4-6th, 2016
A large group of civil society organizations including experts, energy practitioners, think tanks, peoples’ movements, academics, and entrepreneurs came together as part of Billi Vikalp Sangam at Bodh Gaya, between 4th to 6th March 2016, We reflected upon and explored sustainable and equitable practices on energy with a focus on electricity. This was aimed at building a continuing critical dialogue with the state and other stakeholders in order to build a just and equitable energy future.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Oxfam Trailwalker
Oxfam India conducted Mumbai Trailwalker on 20-22 Nov 2015, 133 teams (106 for 100km and 27 for 50km) walked the Mumbai Trail. Total Fundraising from Mumbai Trailwalker was Rs. 1.75 Crore. The Bengaluru Trailwalker was conducted on 22-24 Jan 2016, 192 teams (161 for 100km and 31 for 50km) walked the Bengaluru Trail. Total Fundraising from Bengaluru Trailwalker was Rs. 3.05 Crore. 500 volunteers from various corporate organisations and colleges helped in conducting each of the events.

OXYGEN FOR THE 1%-
In 2013, 62 billionaires from around the world held as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion people in the world. The wealth owned by the bottom half of humanity has fallen by a trillion dollars in the past five years.

A report by Oxfam revealed the growing gap between rich and poor and opened conversation during the World Economic Forum at Davos this year. The report pointed out how power and privilege is being used to skew the economic system to increase this gap. Meanwhile, a global network of tax havens is further enabling the richest individuals to hide $7.6 trillion.

“An Economy for the 1% looks at how and why of it all as it sets out shocking evidence of an inequality crisis that is out of control.

As of April 2016, the report has been featured in all leading offline as well online media such as Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, Mashable, BBC, NDTV, Forbes, Business Standard, Hindustan Times, The Times of India, India Today, CNN Money, The Guardian and more. The report was also widely debated and discussed by news channels world over.