

## POLICY BRIEF

# Agrarian crisis in rural India: Underestimating numbers do not save lives.

### Executive Summary

After the Green Revolution, India have been suffering with the lost of its farmers by exodus and death. Only in 2013, at least 3,146 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra and more than 2000 left the rural areas every year since the nineties.

However, the States have been declaring a decrease in the numbers since 2010, even though it is due to a vamped up in the categories of work. With this policy of silencing numbers, the past governments have just been abstaining themselves and the problem is only is escalating. Therefore, the rural workers are showing theirs grievances in street's protests.

The National Commission for Minorities recommends that the Head of the State intercedes with new policies of **health** (with mental health support and food system distribution), **economy** (from changing costs of patta to waiving off loans), **diversity** (including tenants, women and dalits as farmers) and of **environment** (about water management).

*I, Nara Perobelli de Moraes, write on the behalf of **The National Human Rights Commission of India** due to my position as the chairperson of the **National Commission for Minorities**. This policy brief is directed to the president of the country, **Mr. Ram Nath Kovind** whose function plays an important role in the rural India's future.*



## Problem's context

Due to indebtedness (Mishra, 2012) - in more than eighty percent of the cases - since 1995, at least 270,940 farmers have committed suicide in India (Sanaith, 2014). The root causes of this Indian Agrarian Crisis, take place in the middle of the twenty-century with the Green Revolution: when the rural India changed dramatically to an open market system without adequate land, market and social policies (Das, 2017). Besides that, recent episodes of intense drought aggravate the distress of farmers (Sanaith, 2014).

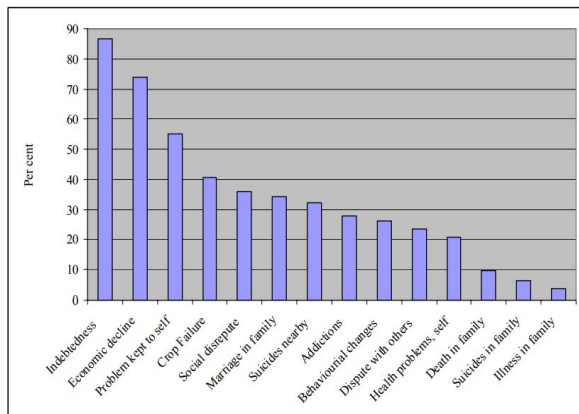


Figure 1: "Distribution of risk factors identified with suicide households in Western Vidarbha, Maharashtra: 2004" (Mishra, 2012).

By analyzing the graphics, it is possible to note that the number of farmers is meaning when compared with the total number of suicides, and that the risk factors are tightly related

with the Agrarian Crisis. (Mishra, 2012)



Figure 2: "Suicide Mortality Rate (SMR) for male and female non-farmers in India: 1996-2005" (Mishra, 2012).

However, some provinces, as Maharashtra, Puducherry and Chhattisgarh are declaring falls or even eradication of those suicides since the year of 2010. Unfortunately, the numbers did not diminish in reality, but the data were framed by reallocating these percentages into other categories of occupation (Sanaith, 2013).

Even worse than only mask the data, the way it was made represents a deep-settled capitalist and patriarchal oppression in the current India. Tenant farmers, women, and *Dalit* people are not considered farmers and do not count in the statistics, contributing to this decrease in the in the numbers (Sanaith, 2014). For

example, instead of being considered “farmers”, women that kill themselves, even though working in the fields, may be considered “housewives” or another category of non-farmers.

Besides the loss of its citizens, India must consider that this state of discontentment, derived from hunger, poverty, insecurity, and fear, may result in conflict in a not too far scenery. On average, India loses more than 2000 farmers per day in the last 20 years. Not only as a result of deaths but also because of a rural exodus originated by the lack of opportunities in the field. (Sanaith, 2014).

From a latent issue in the early twenty-first-century, those suicides started to emerge by virtue of

numerous researches in the mid of the first decade and now are a major debate, escalating in its size due to the policy of suppressing and hiding numbers. Only in 2017, there were two big protests in New Delhi claiming for policies to alleviate the pressure over small-scale farmers. In the first one, the protesters were biting dead rats and using skulls (that they said to be from suicides farmers) as a way of questioning the role of the State. (La Via Campesina, 2017).

#### **SUMMARY OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS**

- *Farmers’ suicides*
- *Less number of farmers*
- *Food insecurity*
- *Possibility of violent conflict*

***“We know you have police on your side. We know that the police have guns. We know that those guns have bullets, never hesitating to pierce through the flesh of innocent farmers. But you must know that if the 750 million farmers of this country decide to hit the streets, your bullets will not be enough and your governments will vanish in no time. Do not test our patience”. - Chamarasa Patil (La Via Campesina, 2017).***

## Current approach

The approach of past presidents was continuing discussing politics based on the analysis of numbers from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), even though they have been contested by scientists. When the data is wrong and no movements are done for changing it, but in the contrary, it is easy to have bad political decisions. The current economic policy favors more those who want to buy luxury goods than farmers that need a loan for buying inputs (Sanaith, 2014).

This strategy does not only impacts directly the pockets of farmers, but also the food availability and access, creating an environment of food insecurity, going in the contrary direction of what India has committed itself with, when signed the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

Besides that, many farmers are living the rural areas and starting to work in an “agrarian urban class”, that is, several non-formal jobs in the fields and in the cities without adequate infrastructure or perspective of improvement. Due to all those complications, the country may be in the eminence of a conflict between the rural population and loan banks and the Government, what may cost more lives and money.

*While a loan for buying a farm truck is approximately 13%, buying a Mercedes-benz would cost only 7%. (Sanaith, 2014).*

## Policy Recommendations

Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, a *Dalit* man from the province of Uttar Pradesh, which economy is mostly based on agriculture, emphasized, in his parliamentary tenure, that his target would be the development of education in rural areas. The National Human Rights Commission believes that this investment will contribute for de-escalating the problem and reinforces that, for achieving that goal in addition to a fair India, the President should be aware of the following policy recommendations.

### Proposal:

- ❖ To offer **mental health** support in the communities, as a way of preventing new cases;
- ❖ To create **Farmers' Associations** in all States, so then farmers could support themselves;
- ❖ To **waive off loans** for those whom can not pay, whereas it is one of the most important demands for them, to continue planting without needing to worry about last crops that did not succeed;
- ❖ To **compensate farmers** for damaged crops, in a way of showing commitment with the production of food in the country;
- ❖ To include an adequate **drought management plan** in the National Agricultural Policy, to prevent restrictions on water offer in the future;
- ❖ To **encourage women to register the land in their name**, by expanding the policy of lowering the cost of registration (*patta*) for them, as the States of Maharashtra and Rajasthan did;
- ❖ To **include tenants, Dalits and women that work on the land as farmers**, by changing the way in which the census collects data to provide a more fair and trustable statistic for further policies;
- ❖ To **implement an universal public distribution food system**, as a way of diminish food insecurity.

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