

Weekly Livelihoods Update

29 January 2019

- ✚ **Farming The Future** – The Modi government has apparently decided not to fall prey to temptation and outdo the Congress in announcing and initiating even bigger loan waivers. (Strictly speaking, it also cannot do so because agriculture is a state subject). Farmer loan waivers are no solution. Apart from the moral hazard it creates - people may not repay if they expect a loan waiver announcement, and people who have paid dutifully may feel cheated - it is also no solution. Besides burdening state budgets and banks, loan waivers don't solve the farmer's root problem. One idea for farmer distress the government is toying with currently is to offer some sort of minimum income guarantee to the poor farmers or compensating those who have not managed to sell at the minimum support price (MSP) with cash transfers for the difference. [For further reading: <https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/the-buzz/farming-the-future/story/307513.html>]
- ✚ **Who is Bearing the Burden of India's Rising Unemployment?** – Latest employment data once again reinforces the distress about the job situation in India. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy reported a loss of 1.1 crore jobs in 2018 and estimated that the unemployment rate reached a 15-month high of 7.4% in December 2018. The Labour Bureau also recorded a continuous rise in unemployment from 3.4% in 2014 to 3.7% in 2015 and 3.9% in 2016-17. Rising unemployment poses a serious challenge, even more so because the brunt of joblessness falls more heavily on some groups. [For further reading: <https://thewire.in/labour/who-is-bearing-the-burden-of-indias-rising-unemployment>]
- ✚ **Wealth Of 10 Richest Indians Combined Equal To 4 State Economies & 6 Ministries** – The fortunes of the 10 richest Indians combined are equal to the gross state domestic product (GSDP) of four states and six government ministries, according to an IndiaSpend analysis of government data. The nine richest Indians now own wealth equivalent to bottom 50% of the country. While the top 1% owns 52% of national wealth, the bottom 60% own only 5%, according to the January 2019 Oxfam report on global inequality. [For further reading: <https://www.indiaspend.com/wealth-of-10-richest-indians-combined-equal-to-4-state-economies-6-ministries/>]
- ✚ **India's Missing Middle: 24,000 'Villages' With Populations Greater Than Towns Lose Out On Policies For Urban Areas** – The village of Rarhi in north Bihar's Darbhanga district has a population of over 36,000, with 7,500 households according to the last Census in 2011. That's more than Adoor in Kerala, which is classified three steps above in the size hierarchy as a class 3 town with a population close to 29,000.

Rarhi is one of 24,000 such settlements in India with populations larger than towns (a town has a minimum population of 5,000 according to census criteria), but are not classified as urban because less than 25% of the population is engaged in non-agricultural work. [For further reading: <https://www.indiaspend.com/indias-missing-middle-24000-villages-with-populations-greater-than-towns-lose-out-on-policies-for-urban-areas/#>]

✚ **Equality over faith: India bats for women's rights on Sabarimala, triple talaq in Mood of the Nation poll** – A Supreme Court order allowing women, irrespective of age, to enter and pray at the Sabarimala temple in Kerala contravening the established temple traditions has triggered a contentious debate on two equally strong constitutional principles -- Article 14 guaranteeing equality and Article 25 guaranteeing freedom of religion. Freedom of religion means the right to practice one's own religion, not the freedom to undermine the fundamental rights of others. Nor does freedom of religion warrant contravening the writ of the Supreme Court which grants explicitly to women the right to worship at Sabarimala. Blinkered and diehard conservatism has failed to perceive the role of inspiring figures, particularly in south India, who challenged the bounds of orthodoxy, broke the rules of caste and gender, and triggered popular movements of reform and renaissance over centuries. [For further reading: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/web-exclusive/story/20190204-motn-sabarimala-triple-talaq-1439541-2019-01-25>]

✚ **Delivering Essential Nutrition: Interventions for Women in Tribal Pockets of Eastern India** – In India, despite provisions for tribal development, 32% of tribal women are chronically undernourished, as opposed to 23% among those not belonging to tribal households. Large-scale surveys and routine monitoring are currently deficient in measuring the nutrition status of women, especially tribal women. This study was undertaken to analyse the reach of various health-related schemes for tribal women in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. In the light of its findings, it is recommended that all national schemes should be reviewed through a tribal lens, as tribes remain outside the ambit of most nutrition safety nets. Proven measures like strengthening tribal development nodal agencies, motivational incentives to fieldworkers and organised community involvement, need to be scaled up. [For further reading: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2019/4/special-articles/delivering-essential-nutrition.html>]

✚ **Market Awareness and Profitability** – A case study of mango farmers in Kolar district of Karnataka analyses the determinants of profitability and constraints faced by the horticulture industry in India in general. The mango value chain is explored in-depth to understand the market choices of farmers and the role of market intermediaries.

The study is based on data collected from a primary survey of 131 farmers and uses an instrumental variable approach to model the profitability of farmers as a function of market awareness, distance from markets, farming practices, and control variables. It finds that in addition to age and education, distance to markets and farming practices are significant factors influencing the profitability of mango cultivators. [For further reading: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2019/4/special-articles/market-awareness-and-profitability.html>]

✚ **Gender Norms, Lack Of New Age Skills Threaten To Derail Teenage Indian Girls' Aspirations** – Every fifth teenage Indian girl is currently not studying, dropouts increase with increase in age, nearly every second teenage Indian girl believes boys have better opportunities to pursue education and work, and only one in five believes that boys can do as much household work as themselves. These are some of the findings of a new survey report, the Teen Age Girls report (or the TAG report), released by Nanhi Kali, a project by the Naandi Foundation, which works with adolescent girls. [For further reading: <https://educationcheck.indiaspend.com/gender-norms-lack-of-new-age-skills-threaten-to-derail-teenage-indian-girls-aspirations/>]

✚ **7 In 10 Teenage Indian Girls Want To Graduate, 3 In 4 Have Career Plan: New Survey** – Seven in 10 teenage Indian girls want to finish graduation, three in four have a specific career path in mind, and nearly three in four do not want to marry before the age of 21. These are some of the findings of a new survey conducted by Nanhi Kali, a project by the Naandi Foundation, which works with adolescent girls. [For further reading: <https://educationcheck.indiaspend.com/7-in-10-teenage-indian-girls-want-to-graduate-3-in-4-have-career-plan-new-survey/>]