



VISION

"Where there is justice in the land, fields and forest every living being will dance and sing"



MISSION

In the spirit of service and sacrifice of Christ, CNI-SBSS would like to accompany DBSS and its partners to engage with the reference communities, so that they will develop the capacity (skills and assets) to negotiate with the policy makers and to realize their rights and emerge as an alternative political force. To move towards this direction, communities would be sensitized socially, politically, economically and culturally to organize themselves and claim their rights over livelihood means while protecting their identity.



SYNODICAL BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA

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VOICES OF RESISTANCE AND HOPE

"My sermons used to legitimize the comfort and privilege of a few. I changed my sermons, calling for justice and equality. The people in power did not like it and I was not allowed to preach any more".

— REV. TIMOTHY JALAM,
COORDINATOR DBSS, KOLHAPUR.

"Ab Dar Kahe Ka" (Why should I fear any more?)

— MOHAMED RAZAK,
LEADER OF KEKRI CLUSTER, RAJASTHAN DBSS

"SBSS Amar Mukha Sabdho Diyache" (SBSS has put words in my mouth)

— BINODINI PRAMANIK, PANCHAYAT LEADER,
KESTOPUR CLUSTER, KOLKATA DBSS



Policy on Development and Justice of CNI-SBSS

Presented and adopted as a resolution by

The Church of North India Synod

held in

Ranchi, October 16-21 2005



MANDATE

*"Spirit of the Lord is on me
He has anointed me
To tell the good news to poor people
He has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners
He has sent me so that the blind will see again
He wants me to free those who are beaten down
And he has sent me to announce the year when he will set his people free"*

-Luke 4: 18

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**Policy on Development and Justice of CNI-SBSS
presented and adopted as a resolution by The Church of North India Synod
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The current process of structural reforms combined with unjust trade practices is generating imbalanced outcomes between people and countries. The undemocratic economic, social and cultural systems that monopolise the control over natural resources, employment opportunities, identity and the decision-making process have de-humanised the condition of tribals, dalits, women and children and people across the world in general. Democracy and the autonomy of the state are being eroded; new politics of hatred and intolerance is arising from growing economic insecurity and shrinking space for survival.

The Context

This general global trend is reflected in the context of India also. If one looks at the condition of Indian poor, it is depressing. India hosts more than three hundred millions of poor. There is a very high incidence of starvation deaths when there is a plenty of food grain stocked in government godowns. With the new economic policies in place, the Indian government has begun to cut back its allocation on health services. Education, which enhances the capabilities of the people, is in a dismal state especially in the rural areas. Gradual withdrawal of state has resulted in burgeoning of private educational institutions. These factors are only aggravating the already existing social problems which are unique to India. The distribution of land among the Indian mass is always lopsided. Dalits account 1/6 of India's population, but not of its land. Indeed most of the Indian states cannot provide reliable data on lands owned or distributed to Dalits. The fact is, they are mainly

landless and where they own land at all, it is marginal and usually of low quality. Thus in India, we see important factors that cause and maintain oppression and poverty as permanent features of its socio-political and economic history. Caste system, a socially institutionalized system of Indian society is detrimental and its oppressive trait generates unemployment, underemployment and dehumanizing of people. Within this Indian social structure, the case of women is despicable as they are forced to meet with oppression of the highest level. The oppressive traits of Indian society combined with the consequences of structural reforms relegate Indian women to the periphery resulting in feminization of poverty.

This means the major reason



for poverty is structural and historical. In short, the degradation of the democratic institutions have further marginalized the oppressed communities and pushed them to the periphery where first, the existence of poverty is not counted now the existence of poor themselves is denied. Such unremitting oppression and constant denial of poor and poverty have resulted in unprecedented erosion of livelihood means, curtailment of right over resources leading to starvation and death. Failure to identify the marginalised communities has caused exclusion of different kinds.

CNI-SBSS

CNI-SBSS is the development and justice wing of the Church of North India. This is the Church's expression of love of Christ towards the poor and marginalised. Though formed in 1970, the much required thrust, direction, vision and set value systems of SBSS were articulated only in the historical Calcutta Consultation held in 1978 on 'Church's Role in Social Service and Development'. The *Nazareth Manifesto* (Luke 4: 16-19) was the source of inspiration and mandate for the 1978 Consultation. Its message of social transformation through liberation and deliverance was the calling of the whole church that went beyond the concept of personal salvation and individualistic spirituality.

Then in the year 1992, the synod of CNI held in Delhi further approved a policy on development, authorizing SBSS to wage a struggle against poverty and injustice. *Towards Holistic Understanding of Mission* (THUM) provided new framework for the mission engagement. (1993-95). During Forward Plan (1996-1998), there was a shift in programme approach 'from social service and economic development' to 'empowerment through rights based approach'.

*This resolution was adopted by the CNI-SBSS in its Board Meeting held in September 16, 2005 at Delhi. The Board appointed and empowered the sub committee to pursue further. The sub committee of the Board held in October 6, 2005 pursued and finalised the contention of the resolution and forwarded to the CNI Synod. In its XII ordinary meeting the CNI Synod received the resolution and approved it.



Having empowered with a mandate from the CNI Synod, SBSS with the unstinting support of its stakeholders resolves to:

- Build *communities of resistance and hope* through **rights based approach (RBA)**. Synergise RBA with *Transformative Justice*. Develop a theological understanding and basis of Church Mission Engagement to make SBSS work holistic. Be in solidarity with poor to enhance people centred advocacy as a core strategy there by carving a space for the poor in the change process. Influence the policy making process by sharing the learning and experience of the poor people.
- Work on food security and livelihood issues.
- Engage with issues related to tribal identity, indigenous rights and exclusion. Wage a struggle against the unequal distribution of land and natural resources to restore the rights of the dalits, tribals, women and children. Ensure that the gender concerns are addressed in all spheres of life.
- Observe and celebrate a diaconia Sunday in the Church of North India as an expression of commitment of work towards establishing just, peaceful and equitable communities.



Purpose and Basis

The Church's concern for development is an amalgam of both social and theological attributes. The development we are concerned about is centered on the creative and redemptive purpose of God for all human kind where people can live in peace and righteousness with each other and with all creation. This rejects the view from the top that sees human beings as passive and imperative receptacles for fulfilling consumer need. This promotes the 'view from below' where the economic nature of human beings is

a part of their wider existential dimensions. It involves a vision of an alternative society of counter culture i.e. a **Church for Resistance and Hope** where all participate in the ongoing salvation history of the Old and the New Testaments. Such a collective participation towards a realization of full human potential, the Kingdom of God (KOG), ipso- facto postulates a stand against social discrimination, powerlessness and material disadvantage. Thus, such a vision of development gives a clear agenda for freeing the human potential from all that inhibits, deprives and enslaves.

Towards this, SBSS commits herself to:

- Build the capacity of DBSS as a faith based organisation and arm of the Church to respond to people's need. Encourage, empower and deliver appropriate platform for the congregations to be in mission and solidarity with poor.
- People's Organisations and Movements working for justice and peace to realise Economic Cultural Social and Political rights.
- Join the struggles of the dispossessed tribal and landless dalits to restore their dignity, identity and livelihood with gender justice.
- Create resource centres on Land Rights, Dalit Rights, Food Security and Livelihood Issues, Identity and Exclusion and Action Research.
- To develop children centred community advocacy programmes, enabling the potential of the children to bring in larger changes.
- Develop resource base and partnership with various new



mission agencies for the fulfillment of the Gospel and extension of His Kingdom.

- To develop SBSS and DBSS to respond to disasters as a community building effort.

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