

## NEWSLETTER N°46

1<sup>st</sup> semester 2023

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[www.adivasis.org](http://www.adivasis.org)



### *India and its population*

April last, we read in the press that the population of India had already surpassed that of China and had become **the most populated country in the world, with more than 1,420 million inhabitants**, out of a total of 8,000 million in the whole planet. After this news we thought that dedicating this *Bulletin* to the demographic issue could be of interest to all of us. Fede told us that one of the most interesting books published in India is the Census.

How has demography evolved in India since independence? What birth control policies are in place? What is its fertility rate and how many children does each woman have? How has mortality evolved? What is its population pyramid like? And what about if we compare it with other countries, such as China, Russia, USA or Spain?

It has not been very difficult to find answers to these questions, which give rise to a lot of reflections on the debate about the positive and negative influences between demography and social and economic development. Questions that we will try to answer from the point of view of experts in this and the next editions of the *Bulletin*. It is more complicated when we try to see the same data referring to the Adivasi population (80 million) and compare them with the country as a whole. In this case, we have no answers, only the observational, subjective answers of the people who interact with them. However, we may ask ourselves whether birth control policies are being applied among the Adivasi.

Do educational work include sex education and birth control? What measures are being applied? Is abortion permitted in India and under what circumstances? Is there divorce?

Under what conditions do separated women and widows have to live? What is the attitude of the NGOs that provide support on these issues? We all know that the debates around family, divorce, contraception, abortion and sexual diversity generate a lot of controversy in all societies and probably also among all of us. But we believe that it is important to have information available about the reality they live in.

Once again, we have women as the main protagonists and education as a means to make progress in their socio-economic development and the recognition of their rights. This is the driving force for change that we, at the ADA-Mòn Adivasi Foundation, wish to continue to promote and working towards this goal, you a VERY GOOD

publicise. We will continue but in the meantime, we wish SUMMER!



# India will soon surpass China



*This article was published in THE GLOBE AND MAIL last 4<sup>th</sup> of March*

India is poised to overtake China as the world's most populous country next month, with the latter experiencing a demographic retreat for the first time in decades.

The milestone is more than just symbolic. With the largest cohort of people in the world, there will likely be noteworthy socioeconomic consequences for India, with opportunities and challenges at hand, such as a large population of young people aspiring to get a good education, acquire valuable skills and become gainfully employed. To navigate this future, India must look at China's successes and missteps to learn what to do and what not to do.

As predicted by demographers, the Chinese population is growing old. The proportion of people 60 and older was 17.84 per cent in 2020, up from 12.76 per cent in 2010. This may be attributed to the long-established evidence that as socio-economic development takes place, death and birth rates go down

and stabilize at a reasonably low level, to the point that society is simply maintaining an acceptable net replacement rate.

In recent decades, China relied largely on coercive measures to restrict population growth. It introduced the one-child policy in the late 1970s, before scrapping it in 2016 to allow families to have two children. In 2021, it relaxed its child policy yet again to allow couples to have as many as three children.

India must keep in mind the inefficacy of coercive population\*\* control measures while it looks to address demographic challenges in a few states of its own. The populations of Sikkim, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Puducherry, Punjab, Ladakh, West Bengal and Lakshadweep are all becoming increasingly elderly, with total fertility rates (TFR) below the replacement level. (TFR is the average number of children a woman is likely

to give birth to.) This will result in an age-structural transformation wherein states will reap demographic dividends at first but will be left with an aging population in the long run. Going forward, these states will have to dedicate an enormous amount of resources to address the financial and health care needs of the elderly.

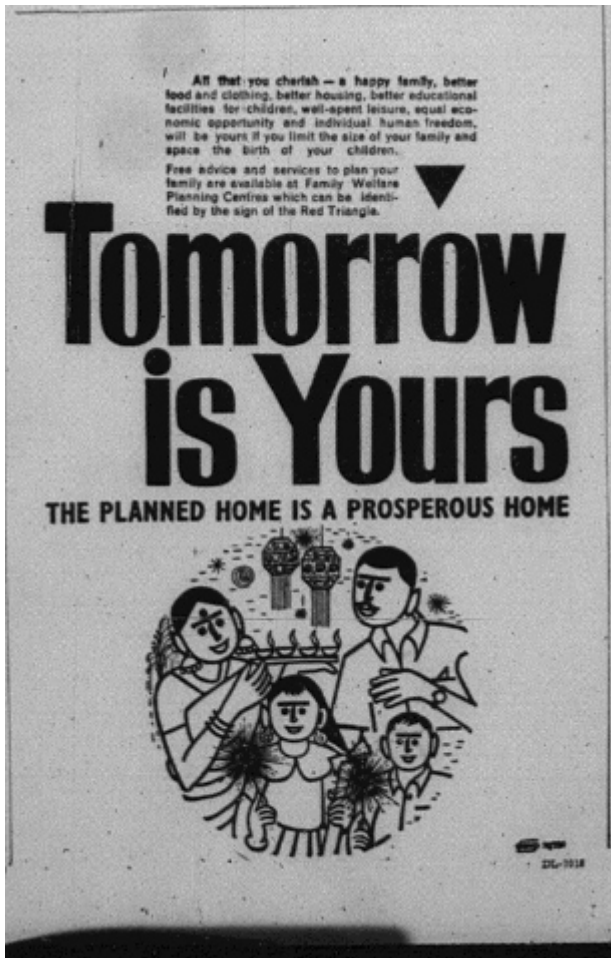
A different approach will be needed for states such as Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, where the TFR is higher than the national average. Here, India must remember the downsides of China's coercive policies and the benefits of its aggressive human development investments.

The link between higher development and a decline in TFR is clearly borne out by India's southern states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Widespread deprivation, inequality and social and gender discrimination adversely affect population stabilization. With increased access to education, economic and other development opportunities, fertility decline is a natural demographic phenomenon that those southern states have achieved without coercive policies.

Today, India enjoys the advantage of having a large population of young people. Every fifth person is an adolescent (10 to 19 years old), and every third person is young (10 to 24). Their potential to contribute to India's development and economic growth is profound. Investing in them is the best way to leverage the country's competitive advantage – its demographic dividend.

# as the world's most populous country

= Poonam Mutreja\* =



Skilled Indian youth can also support countries with negative growth rates. India has already made such an arrangement with Japan. It could replicate and refine the model with other countries, map job demands, undertake skills gap analysis, mutually recognize vocational degrees and address the legal issues surrounding employment and immigration. To do this on a larger scale, India will have to place young people at the centre of its policies, investments and programs, aligning them with the demographic shifts both at home and elsewhere in the world. This is an opportunity India must take full advantage of.

Considering the size of the population and its demographic diversity, a differential planning approach

is essential. For states that are lagging in the demographic transition, ensuring universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health information and services is important, as are providing education and vocational skills for young people and addressing discriminatory practices against women, girls and gender minorities. In the demographically advanced states in the south, policies and programs should focus on helping the aging population and creating a good work environment for migrant workers.

Finally, we should not be concerned about a population "explosion" in India.

The country is on course to achieve population stabilization by the middle of the century (2048), close to the long-term objective of its national population policy to achieve a stable population by 2045. (The picture should become clearer next year, when India conducts a new census; its last one was done in 2011.)

India can bask in its success of having reduced population growth on the strength of development-based policies, not coercion. The country now has the opportunity to expedite the provision of universal family planning coverage. This will further empower women and help them realize their reproductive and sexual rights. A large proportion of girls and women lack autonomy over their bodies when it

comes to making choices about marriage and reproduction. This has to change.

*\*\*India was one of the first countries to have its own national natality policy in the seventies. Firstly, it was based on forced vasectomies (policy used to surround small villages and bring its male inhabitants), but this triggered massive protests. During the nineties' informed consent was introduced and the focus shifted towards women. Nonetheless, female sterilization practices have been surrounded by huge controversy due to the poor sanitary conditions under which they are performed, and the poorly qualified healthcare professionals; circumstances that have triggered high female associated mortality rates.*

**POONAM MUTTREJA**  
is the executive director  
of the *Population*  
*Foundation of India*

# Projects 2021-2023

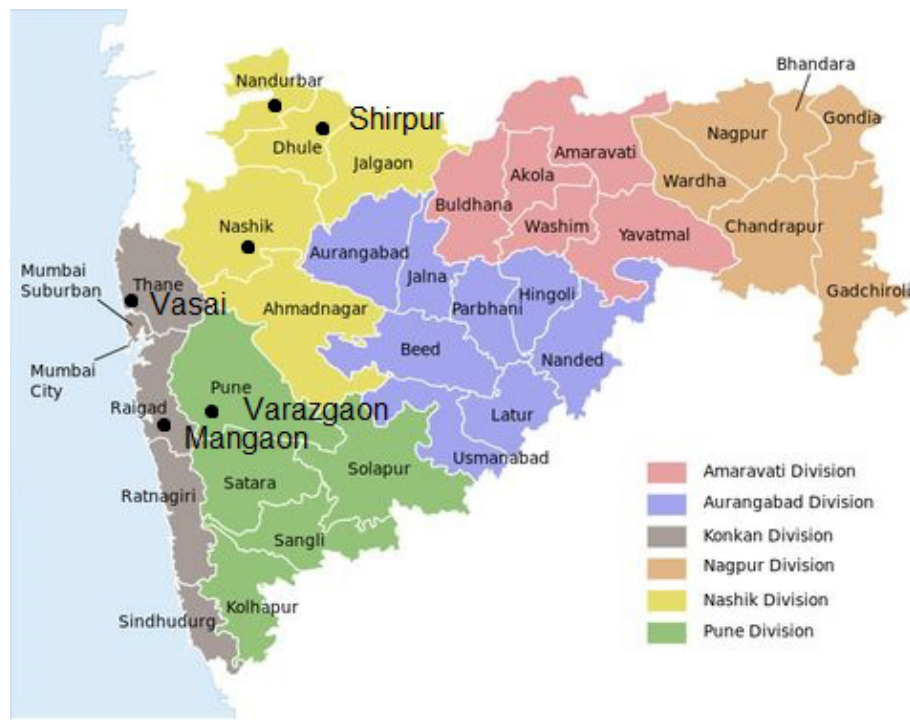
**E**n aquesta edició número 46 del butlletí us volem fer un petit esbós dels projectes que ADA-Món Adivasi ha finançat durant aquests darrers tres anys i que finalitzen aquest 2023.

**Holistic and sustainable development of Adivasis through educational and empowerment programmes, Vasai**

**NGO:** Jivhalla Assumption Social Center (JASC)  
[www.assumpta.org/en/news/jivhalla-assumption-social-centre-india](http://www.assumpta.org/en/news/jivhalla-assumption-social-centre-india). **Beneficiaries:** Start 1,000, end 2,000 people in microcredit groups.  
**Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023).  
**Amount:** 9,800 euros/year.

The main protagonists of this project are Adivasi children and women. The work with women is carried out through the creation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHG). These are groups of women who organise themselves together for a clever management of their finances. SHGs promote savings and encourage lending among SHG members in order to foster their independence from major financial agents. JASC also carries out other specific trainings addressed to the SHG in the field of health, nutrition, rights awareness and leadership, and encourages participation in the *Gram Sabha* (village council).

On the other hand, the work is focused on developing their personal skills, the joy of learning and creating awareness of the importance of the Adivasi culture within the Indian culture, with the aim of reducing school dropout and accompanying the children in their education. Over the last three years, different activities have been carried out, such as English lessons in summer,



supplementary classes during the school year, drawing, poetry and dance competitions, etc.

**T.E.A.C.H. Educating Adivasi teenagers at home, Nandurbar**

**NGO:** Jan Seva Mandal.  
[www.jansevamandal.org](http://www.jansevamandal.org). **Beneficiaries:** 750 children and young people. **Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023). **Amount:** 7,000 euros/year.

This project was born because of the 2020 confinement, the closure of schools and the lack of education for teenagers, who have neither electricity nor computers/tablets to make an online school. The project includes a school support programme for 400 children in 20 different villages. In each village, a tutor (mostly women from the same village) is appointed and trained to support the pupils and who

has a laptop computer to make the learning of the contents in English easier. Each child will work from home on material specifically designed for them. They work on basic subjects such as maths, Marathi and English. The tutors are supported by three supervisors who solve doubts and guide the tutors. They run a monthly workshop for parents on topics such as education, ecological agriculture, etc.

You can find more information in the article "Digitalisation and multimedia, the Adivasi educational revolution" in *Bulletin* nr. 45.

**Improving the quality of life of the elderly and the widows, Mangaon**

**NGO:** Amardeep Charitable Trust.  
**Beneficiaries:** 50 widows/elderly, rising to 150 in the third year.

**Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023).  
**Amount:** 7,500 euros/year.

This project is aimed at the most marginalised people in the Adivasi communities: the elderly and the widows. Currently, in the Adivasi communities, when a person marries, she leaves the family home, so that the elderly and the widows will live the future alone. Moreover, the widows are suffering from a great social stigma, they are looked down upon and are considered to be a source of bad omen. This project includes several areas: a) improving the health of widows and the elderly; b) improving their social life; c) helping them to live with respect and dignity; d) empowering them financially, and e) raising awareness about government programmes.

You may find more information in the article that we devoted to this project in *Bulletin* nr. 42, "Mangaon... from a closer distance".

### Sustainable Living for Adivasi Women, Nashik

**NGO:** Maharashtra Prabodhan Seva Mandal [www.mpsm.in](http://www.mpsm.in).  
**Beneficiaries:** 200 women members of different self-help groups (SHG). **Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023). **Amount:** 7,500 euros/year.

This project again targets Adivasi women from the Kokna, Warli, Mahadev Koli, Katkari and Thakur tribes with the aim of strengthening their key role as the economic driving force of the community. This is why, over the last three years, workshops have been set up to promote ecological agriculture

(poultry and goat breeding and dairy products), to promote the revaluation of non-timber forest products (NTPF), to improve health (revaluing indigenous knowledge and medicine plants), to raise awareness of governmental programmes for local development and welfare, microcredits, etc.

You may find more information in the article that we have devoted to this issue in *Bulletin* nr. 43, "Nashik women from the point of view of the MPSM".

### Internship for children between 11-14 years old, Shirpur

**NGO:** Shirpur Vishwa Mandal Sevashram  
[www.bombayjesuits.org/rural-missions/shirpur](http://www.bombayjesuits.org/rural-missions/shirpur). **Beneficiaries:** 18 boys. **Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023). **Amount:** 2,270 euros/year.

The Adivasi from the Pawra tribe who live in the most mountainous areas are the inhabitants of Shirpur. This project finances the stay at the Shirpur boarding school (run by the Jesuits) of 18 boys between 11 and 14 years of age providing them secondary education (students from 5th to 10th grade) so that they may continue their training. Education is the basis for empowerment and social transformation. Later, some of these students will go to university or specialised training centres in the big cities and will be able to compete with students from higher castes.

### Social empowerment initiatives and sustainable livelihoods for Katkari tribals, Varasgaon

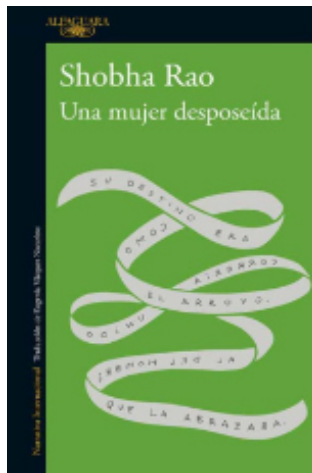
**NGO:** Institute of Social Service (Jeevan Dhara). **Beneficiaries:** 500->1,500 people in micro-credit groups (SHG). **Duration:** 3 years (2021-2023). **Amount:** 7,700 euros/year.

The main aim of this project is to promote self-sufficiency among the Adivasi of Varasgaon and, more specifically, among the Kathkaris. The Kathkaris, as well as other Adivasi tribes in the region, have an employment rate of 45.2%; and those who work are mainly engaged in agricultural work. Over these three years, different initiatives have been carried out: a credit society has been established, a small farm of 10 goats has been given to five different families, the initial investment for a brick factory has been made and seeds have been distributed among 25 families, so that each one of them can grow their own vegetable garden.

You can find more information in the article that we devoted to this project in *Bulletin* nr. 44, "Jeevan Dhara: the transformation".

# An unrestored women, Shobha Rao

= Lila Thomàs i Andreu =



**A**n Unrestored Woman is a book of twelve paired stories by Shobha Rao, a writer of Indian origin, raised in the United States since she was seven years old. She won the Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction awarded by the Nimrod International Journal. She has written novels such as *Girls Burn Brighter* (2018) and a collection of short stories, *An Unrestored Woman* (2016). She lives currently in San Francisco,

and this is her first book of short stories, published by Alfaguara in 2017.

These are impressive stories, the protagonists of which are Indian women and girls. They are mostly set at the time of the end of British colonial rule, in 1947, with the partition of India and the establishment of the states of Pakistan and India on the basis of the majority religious beliefs of the population.

These stories are moving, from the first to the last. It tells of the selling of girls and their purchase to turn them into prostitutes. The infanticide of mothers to their daughters, the brutality of marriages arranged with fourteen-year-old brides. Stories of women who must survive, such as that of a rebellious thirteen-year-old widow surrounded by other widows in a refugee camp, a prostitute who plans her revenge in silence...

Violent, hard, tearjerking stories that show the reality of this large country, India, of the harshness and injustice of the partition carried out by the imperialist British, with borders drawn in a hurry, like the protagonist of one of the stories, a partition that caused death and destruction among families, among neighbours, according to the policy "divide and rule" that the British encouraged among the leaders of the main independence parties before abandoning their dominions.

The main characters gradually develop relationships with each other, which are to be found in later stories.

We recommend reading these narratives, hard but also moving, which take us to this large country of contrasts, with very rich people and very poor people, with a great diversity of beliefs and ethnicities. A country that both enraptures and at the same time impresses and stirs emotion.

In these twelve short stories, the author portrays the injustice that women experience because of their gender, from birth, throughout their lives, in India, Pakistan, and in so many countries around the world. Universal stories that reassert the urgent need to transform the patriarchal system in order to survive as human beings.

## *Chaos recipe (buttermilk), by Reyes Rigo*

Chaos or buttermilk is a popular summer drink made with yogurt and spices that, apart from being very refreshing, aids digestion and is very good for the intestinal microbiota.

**INGREDIENTS:** -1 and a half cups of unsweetened natural Greek yogurt. -1 teaspoon of ground cumin, previously toasted in a pan without oil. -1 tablespoon of fresh mint leaves. -1/2 teaspoon of black salt. If you don't like the sulfurous taste of black salt, you can add fleur de sel. -1 cup of cold or room temperature water.

Combine all the ingredients in the blender and beat until all the ingredients have been mixed well. Serve in a glass with ice cubes and garnish with a pinch of cumin and some mint leaves.



# First impressions India

= Maria Forès =

I was very curious, but it was not at the top of my list. I knew India through the people who from here work with endless energy to help and accompany the persons who, 7,000 km away, give their time for the Adivasis to have a better future. Year 2023 was the moment for me to visit India, only a few days, but an eternity when I remember all we did there. I was lucky to be able to go with Claudio, for he knows India very well, he has a deep command of it. The date was not random either, it was the anniversary of Fede's death and it was important to be there.

As soon as we arrived in Mumbai, we went straight to Vinayalaya to meet the Vedruns. Hugs, questions, as if I were one of them. We went back to Vinayalaya several times. On Independence Day, to the cemetery on the 25th to commemorate the anniversary of Fede's death, to meet friends from SADA..., always the same, every person I met made me feel like I was at home there.

The two most interesting days were in Nashik. 160 km away, 5 hours by car, that's India and I was getting to know it little by little. We went there with Father Joel, Sister Sadaya and Reyes Rigo. It was a real immersion in the reality of the work of ADA, Fede, the Jesuits and so many other people. There, everything

really came together. I had the good fortune to visit four Adivasi villages. In the first village we got to know the empowerment project of the Adivasi women; they are given help to become entrepreneurs: goat breeding, a mill to make rice flour and to set

the village and invited the whole group for a meal.

During the hours at MPSM with Fr Joel, I was able to get to know many of the projects they have done and the ones they want to carry out. It is wonderful to see the energy they have and convey. And how, little by little, they want to change and improve the lives of so many people. But accompanying them, and not trying to change their very nature or their way of life.

The day we left, we were able to do a bit of sightseeing with Ayesha and Amit. Afterwards, Claudio wanted to show me Juhu Beach, Fede's favourite beach.

We tried to have a coffee "quietly" in the Indian way, in the calm, with a lot of people not knowing what to do, with uncertainty, a lot of orders, and in the end almost without coffee. I suppose that anyone who has been in India will understand it.

I didn't like Mumbai, but the people I met during that week impressed me, and it left me wanting more. The reality is what I knew through ADA, but the way of seeing and approaching it changes radically once you have been there. I can only encourage anyone who has the chance to go there.

I would like to thank Fede, ADA and Claudio Sopena. I haven't fallen in love with India (for the moment), but with the people I've met there I have.



up the first kiosk in the village to sell basic products. They were pure energy. In the second village, we symbolically inaugurated the water supply, but above all, we saw through what the women had had to go through for years with the water charged on their heads. We reached the third village along a path through the middle of the forest. We learned that it was only six months since it was possible to reach it with a vehicle; it was there that they explained us how during the Covid Sister Sadaya and the medical aid team had to reach the village on foot across the river. In the last village we were able to see the water well and the improvement that had been made to prevent the water from becoming undrinkable in times of flooding. We also enjoyed the magical hospitality of these people. They offered us one of the houses in

## PAST

This year's additional campaign for **funding in Ambatha has been a success!** Thanks to your donations we have transfer 8.000 euros for the well's construction and for the improvement of sanitary facilities in the girls boarding school. We are most grateful for your support!



## FUTURE



**ADA's CYCLING DAY** this coming October in Emporda region. Do not miss it! We will be sending you more information about this event by email or WhatsApp!

*"Salvation is in loving one another. If I am able to really love, love will not die, and it is our salvation because it makes us change, it transforms us. I believe in the eternity of love, love is indestructible", said Federico Sopeña.*

## ADA-Món Adivasi

**Discovery travel** of the projects in India. Would you like to get to know adivasi life? Have you thought about it before, but never dare? We are organizing a trip to the projects in Maharashtra for the coming month of January.



Reyes Rigo, vice-president of the Foundation, will be our guide. Reyes lived in India for 5 years and currently visits every year. It will be a small group, maximum **15 persons**, and we will be travelling by **private minibus**. If you are interested you can contact us at [contacta@adivasis.org](mailto:contacta@adivasis.org)

*His life evolution and the impact of his work in India were explained in the documentary **Father Sopeña: 60 anys aprenent hindi (Father Sopeña: sixty years learning Hindi)**, released in 2013 on TV3, which includes reflections on faith, friendship, love and death.*



# Happy summer!!

*Every new join gives continuity to the projects and regenerates this big family.*

*Let your friends know about ADA-Món Adivasi!*

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