



Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN)

Press Release

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Diversion of Funds from the Special Component Plan for the Commonwealth Games Results in Denial of Development Funds for Scheduled Caste Community of Delhi

The Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) was shocked to find in the budget analysis of the Delhi Government that Rs. 571 crore from the Special Component Plan (SCP) of the Delhi state budget from 2006-07 to 2009-2010 has been allocated to Commonwealth Games¹. In a response to an RTI request, HLRN has now received official confirmation of the diversion of funds. The Delhi State Government's **Department for the Welfare of SC/ST/OBC/Minorities reveals that the money diverted from the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan of Delhi between the years 2006-07 to 2010-11 amounts to Rs. 744.354² crore** (see attachment). An analysis of this new information by HLRN and the National Dalit Campaign for Human Rights (NCDHR) reveals that the departments of the Delhi Government which have diverted funds are Transport (NDMC), Transport (MCD), Sports and Youth, Delhi Jal Board (Urban Water Supply) and Urban Development.

Diversion to Commonwealth Games Denies Access to Development for Poor Dalits

Delhi State has a Scheduled Caste (SC) population of 2.34 million. This does not take into account the many who are living in Delhi for generations but have no documents to prove their residence. A rough estimate would have at least one million poor SCs in Delhi towards whom Delhi Government has a responsibility to ensure their access to decent living. This non-allocation of over Rs. 700 crore for Dalits results in denial of access to their development. Had the Delhi government allocated and utilized these funds as per the norms set by the Planning Commission, it would have resulted in provision of civic amenities, infrastructure development, the creation of community centres, primary schools, higher education facilities, health centres, coaching Dalit children for sports excellence, entrepreneurial development and income generation schemes and elimination of the practice of manual scavenging.

Norms Set by Planning Commission Violated: As per the norms of Special Component Plan set by the National Development Council and the Planning Commission, this amount should have targeted micro development of SCs. Government of India rules have repeatedly emphasized that the funds allocated under the SCP have to be disbursed to exclusively benefit individuals and families belonging to Scheduled Caste communities and are not to be diverted for any other purpose.

¹ This was revealed in the HLRN report: The Commonwealth Games: Whose Wealth? Whose Commons? and subsequent press release dated June 15, 2010 available at: www.hic-sarp.org

² The figure of Rs. 744.354 Crores is the sum total (in Rs. Crores) of the year wise breakdown (in Rs. Lakhs) given by the Delhi Government Department of Welfare in the response to the RTI

Denial and Silence from the Government

High-level officials in the Delhi Government continue to be silent or in a state of denial, in spite of all the evidence that points to the diversion of funds. On May 14, following the release of the HLRN report Delhi Finance Minister A.K. Walia had promised to look into the records and respond.³ No response has been received to date. In a recent interview, the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit, said “No doubt CWG is an expensive affair, but let me assure you that not a single welfare programme has been compromised - be it education, health or women's empowerment. So nothing that we have spent is out of the welfare schemes or out of any other fund”.⁴

Similarly and most alarmingly, in spite of being aware of this, the Planning Commission has continued to sanction the Delhi government department budgets without questioning or challenging the diversion of SCP funds for the preparation of the Commonwealth Games.

Flouting Government Rules

“The routine practice of the diversion of funds shows a serious lapse in the functioning of the Delhi State government and exposes the complete lack of the monitoring function that central governmental bodies are supposed to play. Such open flouting of government rules meant to improve the lives of the poor indicates the embracing of illegality on the part of various departments of the Delhi State government”, says Miloon Kothari, Former UN Special Rapporteur and Executive Director of HLRN.

In addition to the serious issue of the diversion of funds, the preparations for the Games are resulting in multiple violations of human rights, including forced evictions of people from their homes, violations of labour rights, and undue police harassment of beggars and the homeless. These human rights violations continue on almost a daily basis in the run-up to the Games.

HLRN Demands

In light of the serious implications arising from the diversion of funds and the clear privileging of expenditure for a 2-week event over the fulfillment of the fundamental rights and entitlements of Delhi's poor, HLRN demands the following immediate action:

- Prompt public disclosure by the relevant government authorities on who these diverted funds have actually benefited, and an impartial and independent inquiry to establish the full details of all aspects of the decision to divert SCP funds for the Commonwealth Games
- Consideration by the relevant authorities of prosecution of officials who took the decision to divert the funds
- An audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General(CAG) of India into the exact expenditure on the Commonwealth Games to date, and the diversion of funds from the SCP (a letter with this request has already been sent by HLRN to the CAG)
- An inquiry by the relevant Parliamentary sub-committee, such as finance, into the scale of funds being diverted
- An explanation to the nation by the Prime Minister on the exact expenditure on the Commonwealth Games, highlighting the impact on social welfare programme budgets.

³ “Reserved category fund being used for the CWG”, Hindustan Times, May 14, 2010

⁴ www.hardnewsmedia.com/2010/07/3613

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