
Foreword

We are living in times of unprecedented change. Forces of economic reforms promise to change the face of our nation. These forces also present unprecedented opportunities, which can significantly raise the level of living of our people within our lifetime and ensure that all our people can look forward to leading useful, healthy, and productive lives. For a state, such as Madhya Pradesh, the task at hand today is to seize these opportunities, and ensure that the poor have equal access to them in order to realize the latent promises therein. Strong political commitment and focused action are needed to ensure that the poor and less privileged are empowered to derive benefits from the reforms.

In this context, we see human development as a priority that must be vigorously pursued. Human development is recognized both as an end and as a means of progress. On the one hand, it meets the present needs of human beings, while on the other, it enables the society to achieve higher levels of growth in the future. The idea of human development is particularly relevant for Madhya Pradesh, which has historically been seen as lagging behind other better-endowed states in terms of social indicators. For the people of the state, these low social indicators translate into such things as a lack of opportunities to be educated, lack of access to quality health care, and low levels of living. It, therefore, makes good sense to prioritize and focus attention on human development in the state, which is what our Human Development Reports have been seeking to achieve.

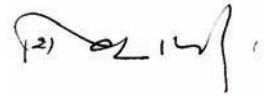
Madhya Pradesh has shown consistent improvement in terms of human development with the human development index going up from 0.245 in 1981 to 0.394 in 2001. The latest figures are not available, however, our efforts in the social and economic sectors since 2001 have increased significantly. We have concentrated more on improving the quality of education and have laid special emphasis on creating enabling environment for girls. We have initiated programmes that directly tackle the issues of high infant and maternal mortality and high out-of-pocket expenditure on health care. To mitigate the problems of poverty and low per capita income, the state has increased the investments on infrastructure and poverty alleviation programmes significantly. Organization of rural women into self-help groups is taking place on a large scale so that the strength of community can be used as a resource for development. I am confident that these developments are bound to reflect in future human development assessments and Madhya Pradesh will surge ahead of many states in the country.

Earlier reports had advocated and set in motion a social sector-oriented state policy, almost to the exclusion of critical drivers of economic infrastructure. This may have been the need of the time. Our assessment is that much more needs to be done in the areas of economic infrastructure. Greater attention needs to be accorded to the key building blocks of infrastructure, in order to ensure that: (i) the opportunities thrown up by the forces of reform are seized; (ii) the pace of progress accelerates; and (iii) the human development potential of the state is fully realized. Building infrastructure—including water, electricity, transport, and communication—supports the processes of growth that are necessary for the eradication of poverty. It also helps the poor to access basic social services that can improve their lives and enhance income earning opportunities.

Realizing the importance of the impact of infrastructure on human development, we have, in our development priorities, focused on *bijli, sadak, pani* (electricity, roads & water resources) as important prerequisites for all-round development of the state, as well as to specifically accelerate and strengthen human

development. The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report, 2007 touches upon this generally neglected theme of infrastructure and human development, and seeks to provide the analytical thrust to help reinforce these development priorities that are so important for the livelihood of the people of our state.

I trust that the Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report, 2007 will keep our attention focused on the unfinished agenda of human development in Madhya Pradesh, and help guide us to take such action as necessary to effectively tackle this agenda, for the benefit of all the people of our state.



SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN
Chief Minister
Madhya Pradesh