

# Empowering Young Professionals To Be the Leaders That Public Health Needs Tomorrow



## Reflecting on the Pioneering Leadership and Public Health Experiments of Dr. T. S. Soundaram

Oration by Dr. Kezevino Aram  
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International Center for Child and Public Health



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# Multi-dimensional Problem Analysis and IMPACT

## Women and Children of India



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# Allow me to....

- Revisit the context of this oration with focus on the COVID 19 Pandemic
- Reflect on Dr. T. S. Soundaram's
  - Pioneering Leadership and
  - Public Health Experiments
- Empower Young Professionals to be the Leaders that Public Health Needs Tomorrow
- Celebrate the inspiring human being I had the honour to call Patti!



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# EVER IMAGINED?



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## Making sense of the big picture :

### INDIA :

**9,735,850 people have tested COVID-19 positive**

**Johns Hopkins Global Dashboard**

**68,226,810 people have tested COVID-19 positive worldwide**

**9<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

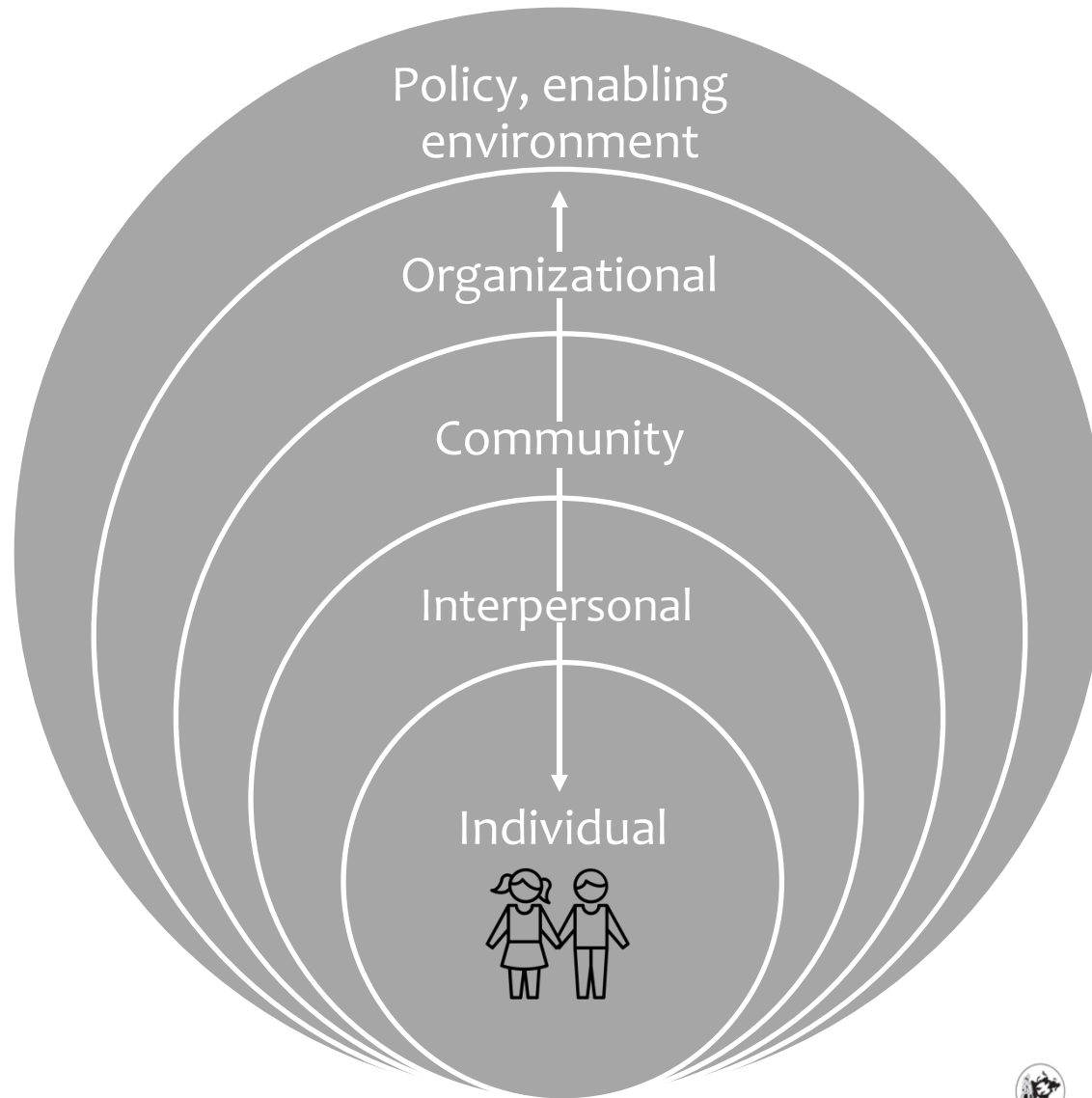


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# Socio Epidemiological Approach



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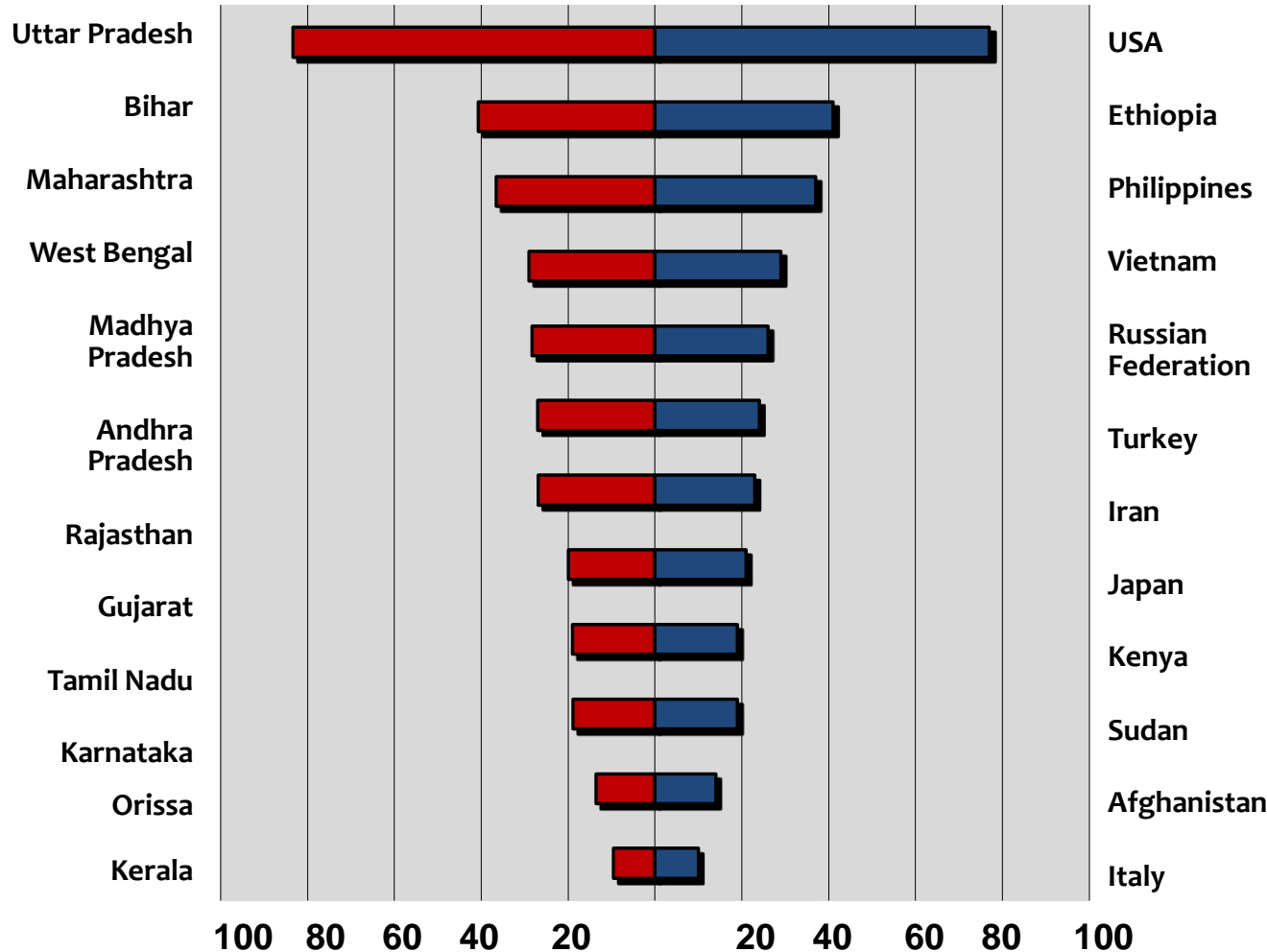


# India: The scale of things

Population: 1,156 million (under 18 years): 424 million (37%)

Population: 1210 million (census 2011 P)

Many states have child populations similar to the  
child population of large countries



Children



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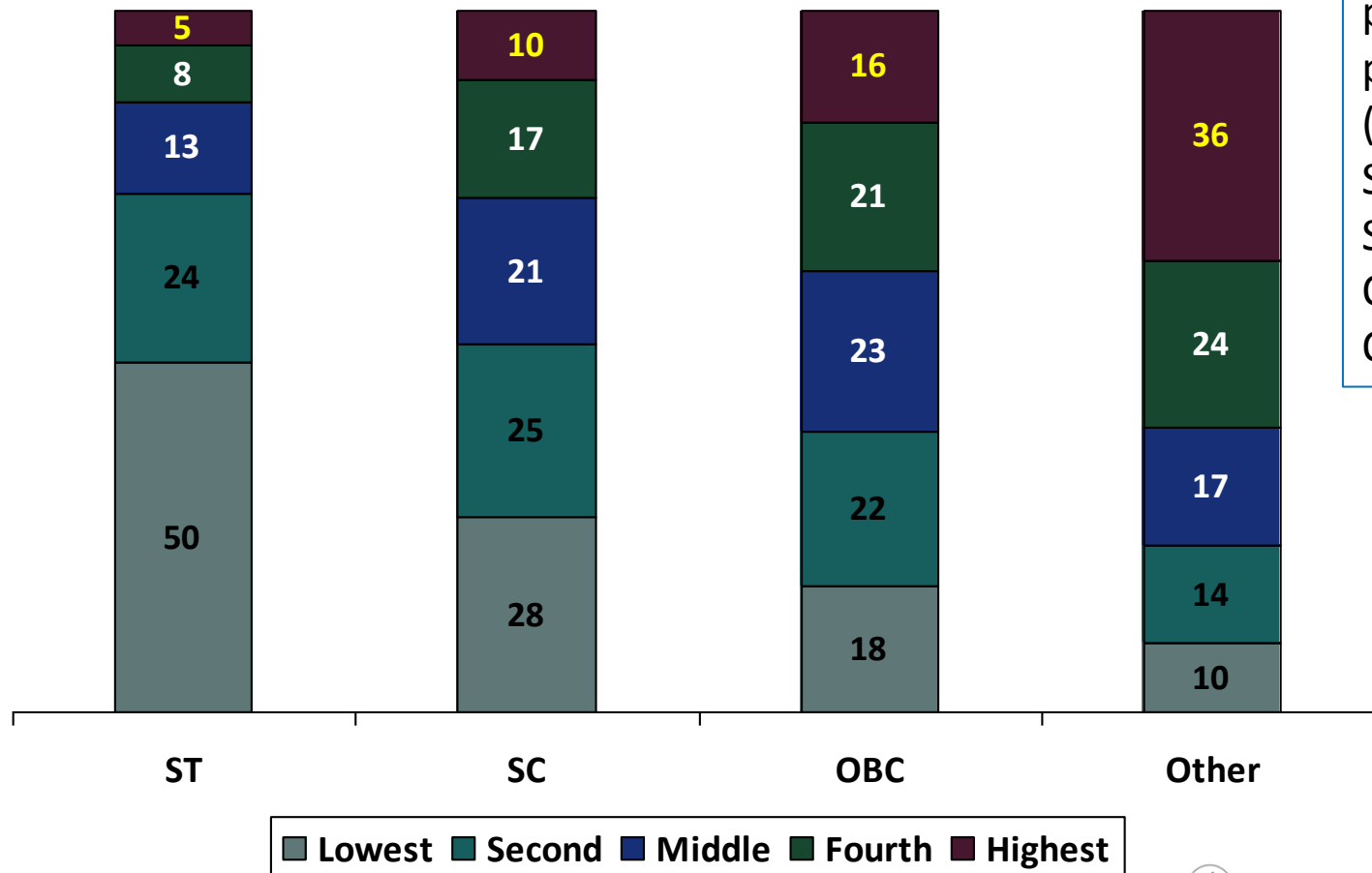
# India has registered impressive economic growth rate between 5 - 8.5 per cent between 2010 and 2020

**Yet about 13.4 per cent of the population live below the official poverty line**

 30 percent in rural areas

 9 percent in urban areas

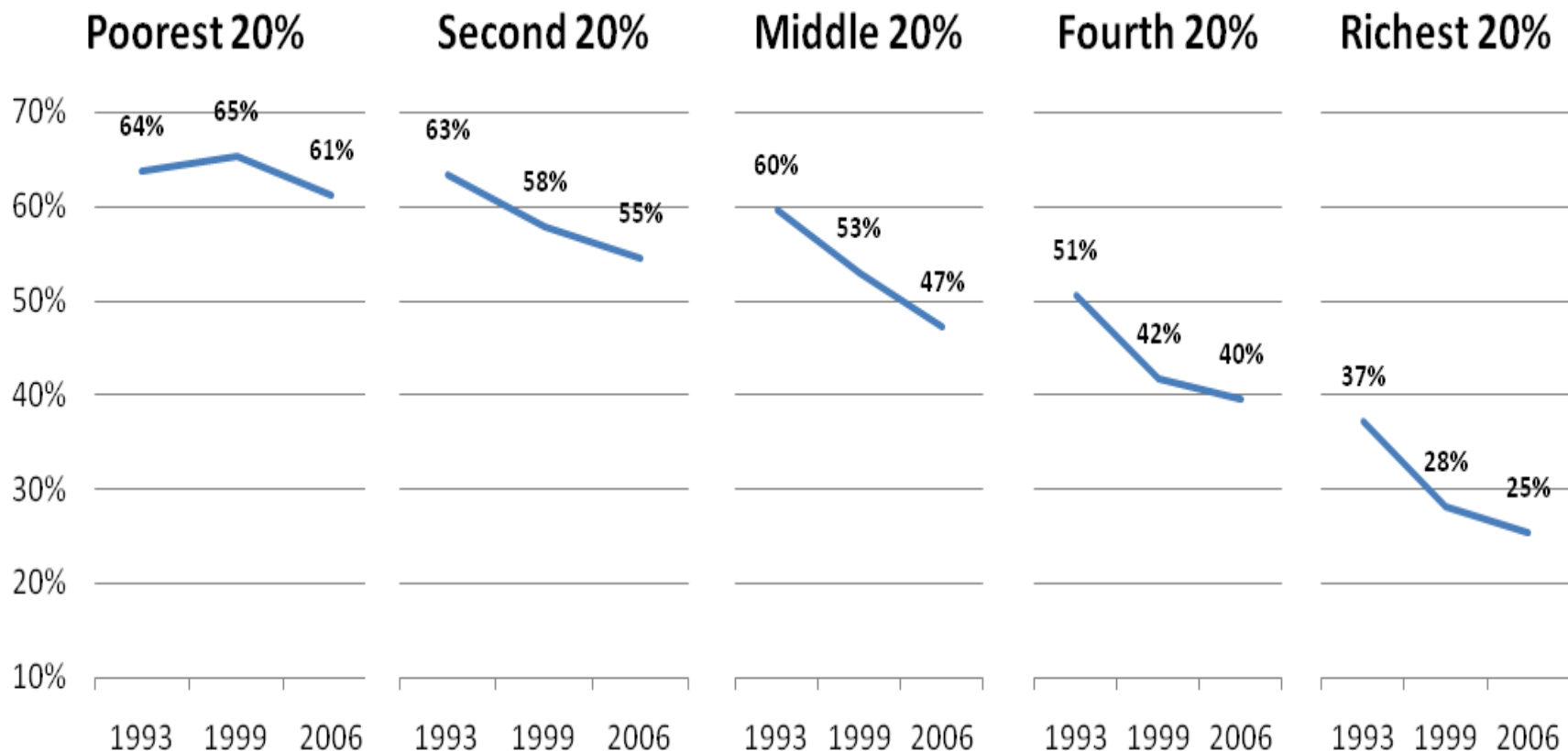
# Distribution of Households by Wealth Index and Caste



As per 2006 projected population (in Million):  
 SC: 214  
 ST: 93  
 OBC: 440  
 Others: 355

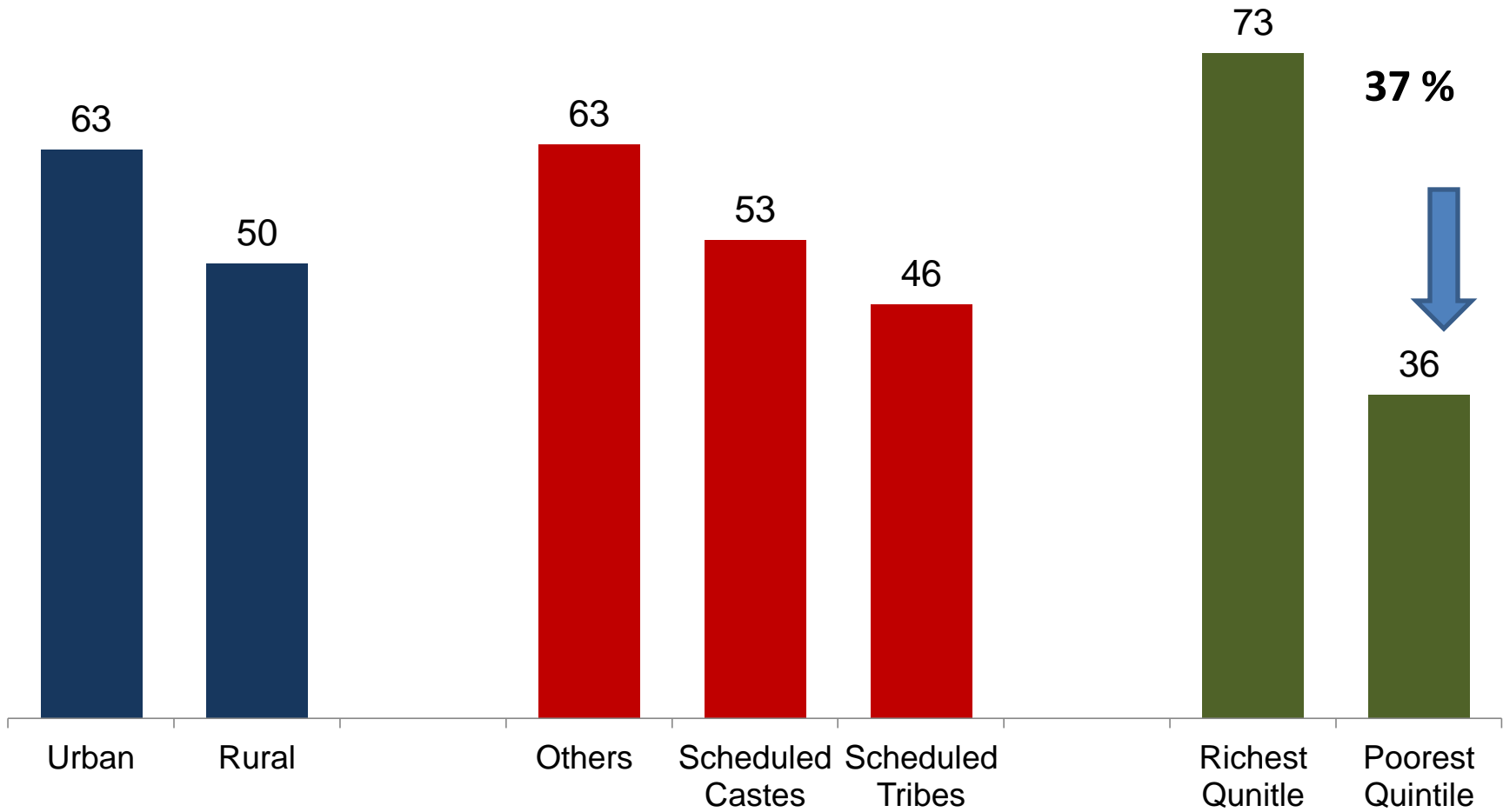
# Level of under-nutrition in children belonging to the poorest households has remained stagnant in more than a decade

Proportion of children under 5 years who are underweight, by household wealth quintile



# Immunization coverage varies significantly among different population categories

Percentage of children age 12-23 fully immunized : 54 %

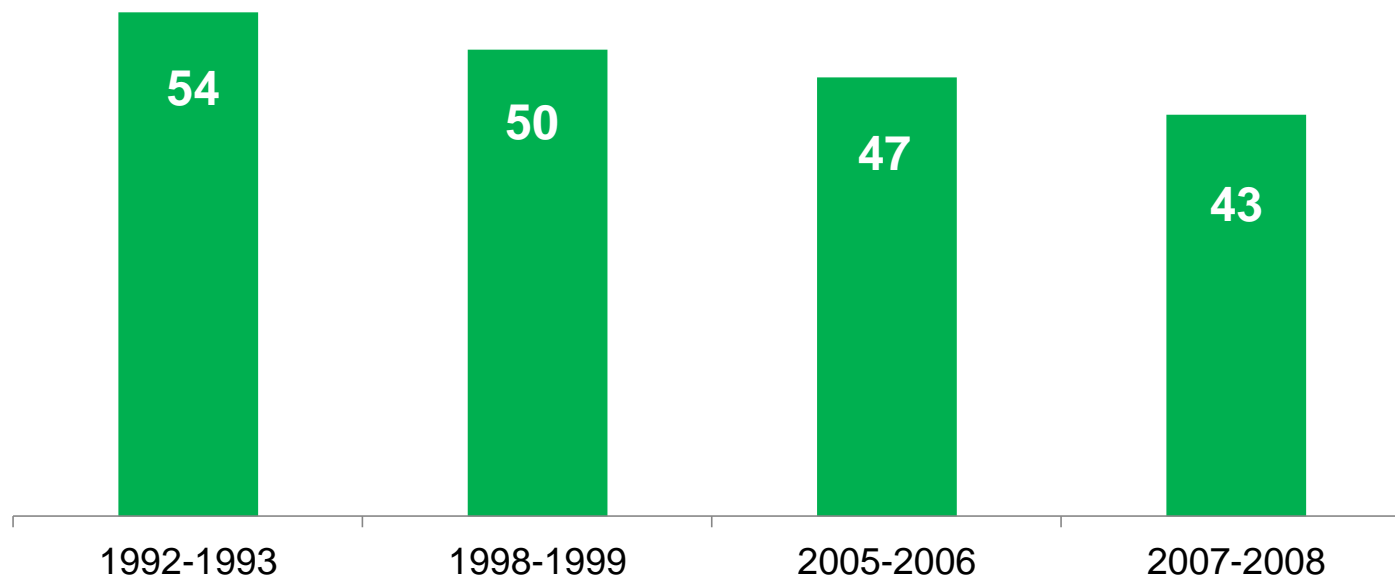


District Level Household Survey 2007-2008



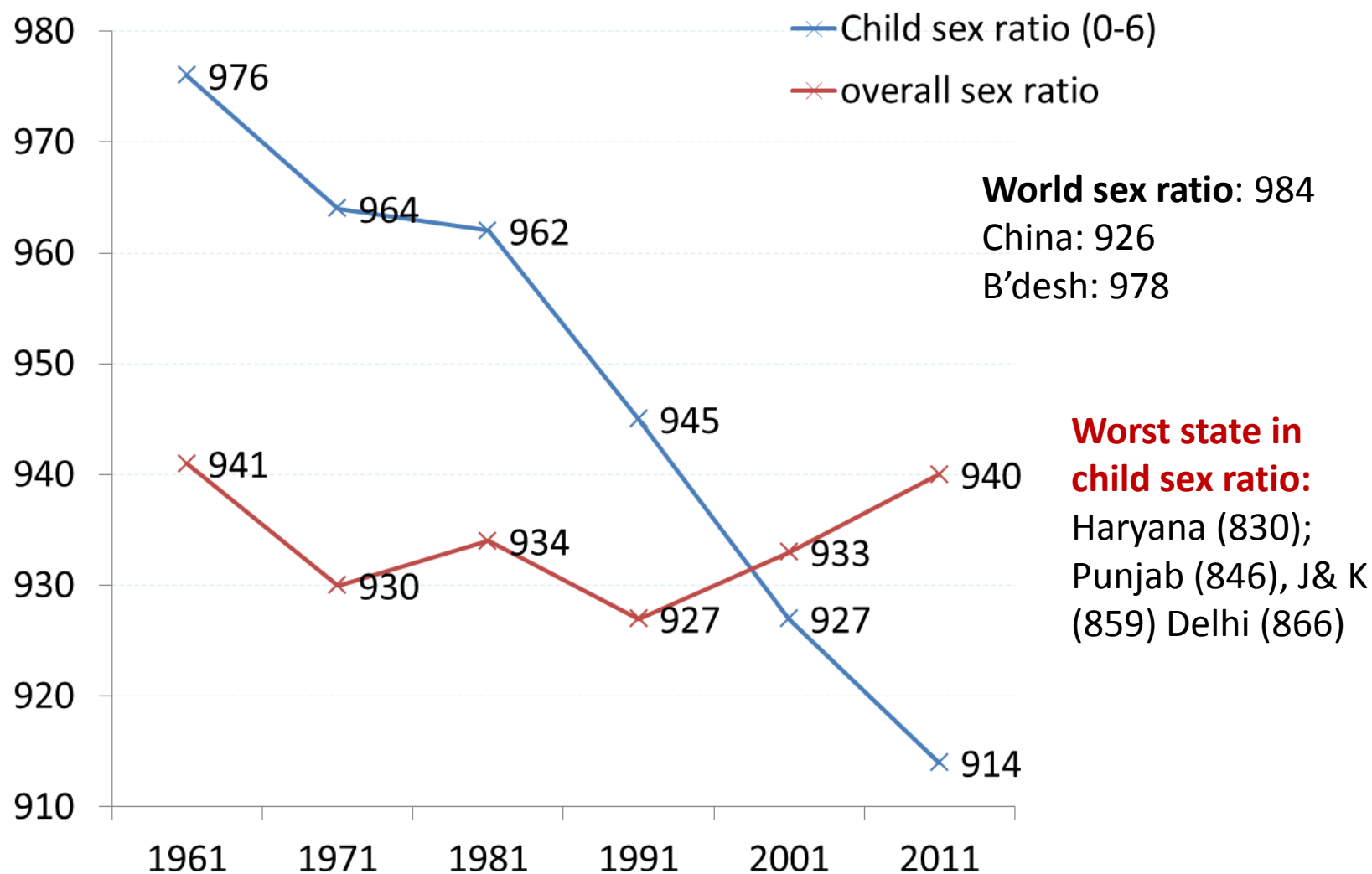
**Although there has been a steady decline in proportion of girls marriage before the legal age of 18 years the levels still remain high**

**Percentage of women age 20 –24 married before age 18**



**In Bihar more than 65 per cent and in Rajasthan 58 per cent girls marry before reaching the legal age at marriage**

## Alarming declining trend in Child Sex Ratio – Gender imbalance



Source: Census of India 2011, paper 1 of 2011

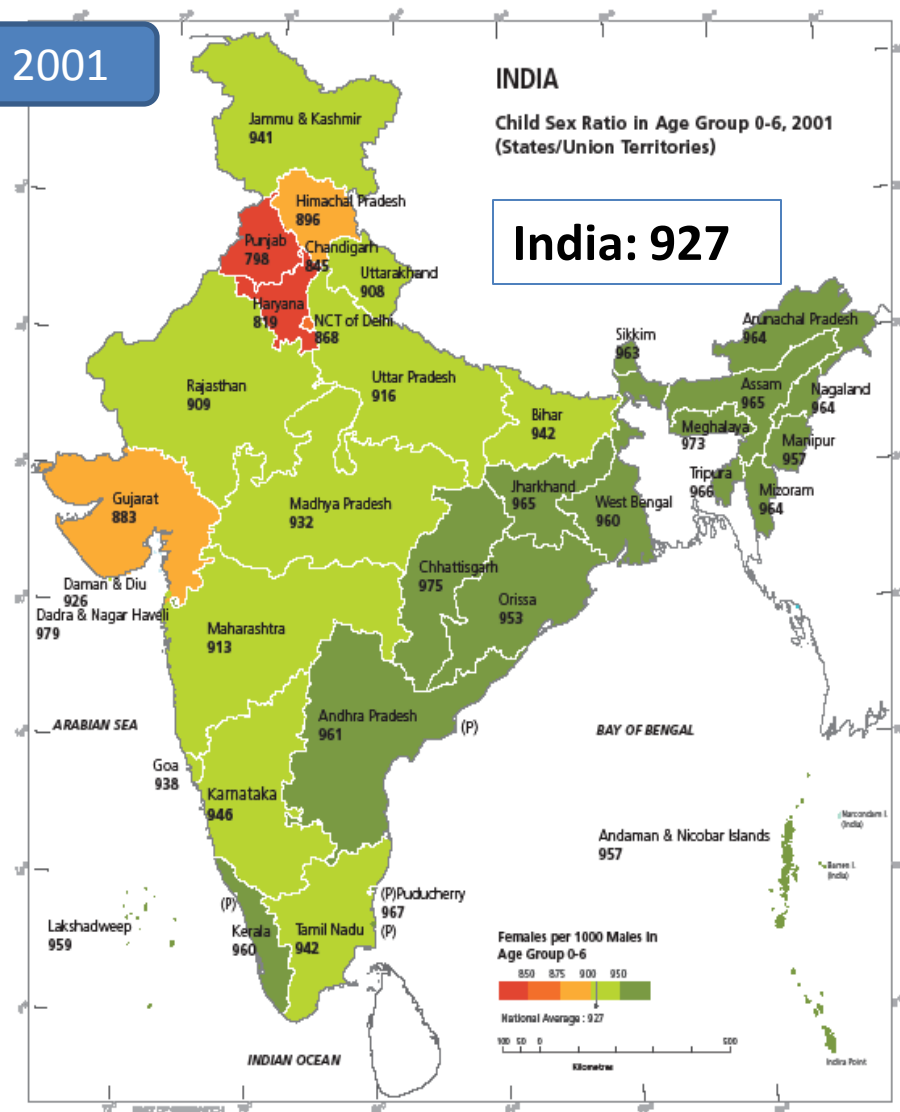
# Child Sex Ratio in Age Group 0-6 Census 2001 and 2011 (p)

2001

INDIA

Child Sex Ratio in Age Group 0-6, 2001  
(States/Union Territories)

India: 927

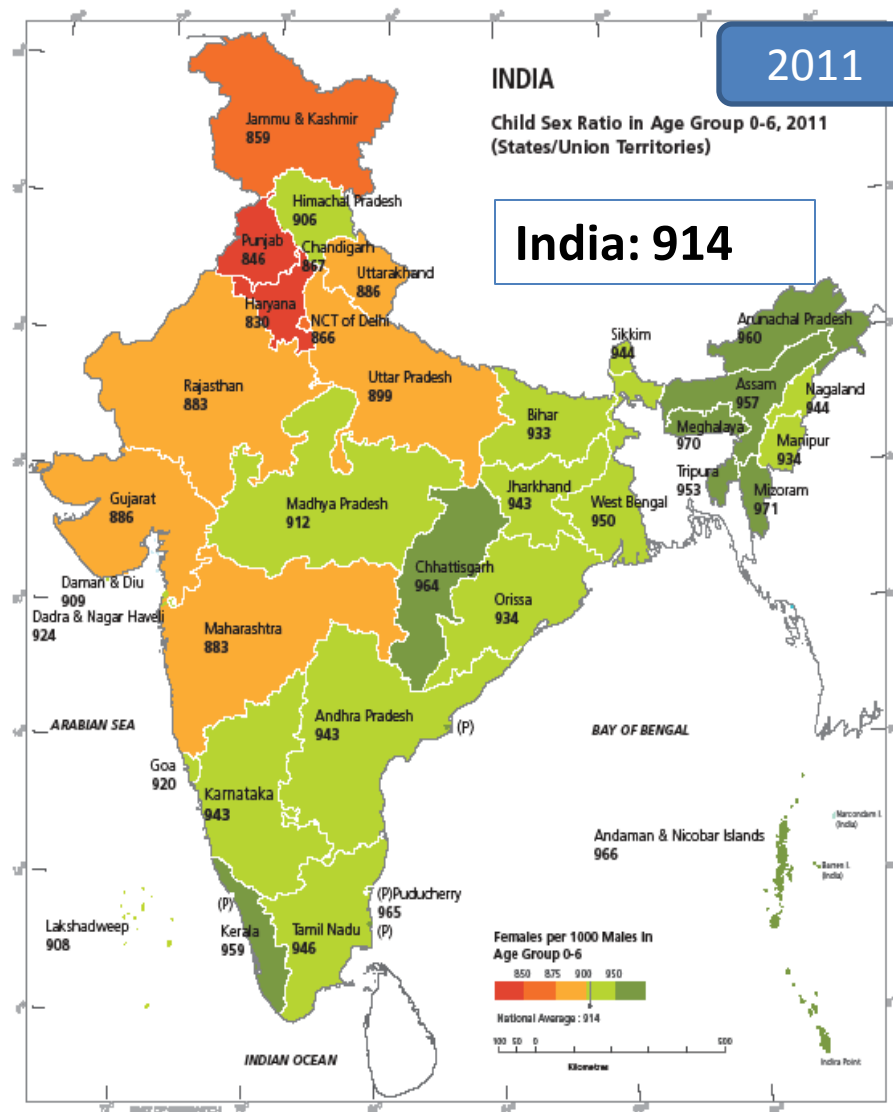


2011

INDIA

Child Sex Ratio in Age Group 0-6, 2011  
(States/Union Territories)

India: 914



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# Impact at a Glance

- Public Health Crisis
- Learning Crisis
- Nutritional Crisis
- Economic Crisis
- Mental Health Crisis



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# Dimension of Impact

## a) Falling into Poverty:

- Collapse of income and livelihood of households.
- IMF projects global income contract by 3% in 2020
- IFPRI forecasts 84 to 132 million people slip into poverty. 50% will be children
- Disproportionate Gender Burden on
- Women & Girls



## b) Survival and Health Crisis:

- GDP and infant mortality
- Reduced income and Reduction on health and food expenses.
- Suspension of immunization camp- reduced access to health care
- Child nutrition- 368.5million children in 143 Countries relied on School meal
- Disruption of water, sanitation and hygiene services
- Impact on children mental health.

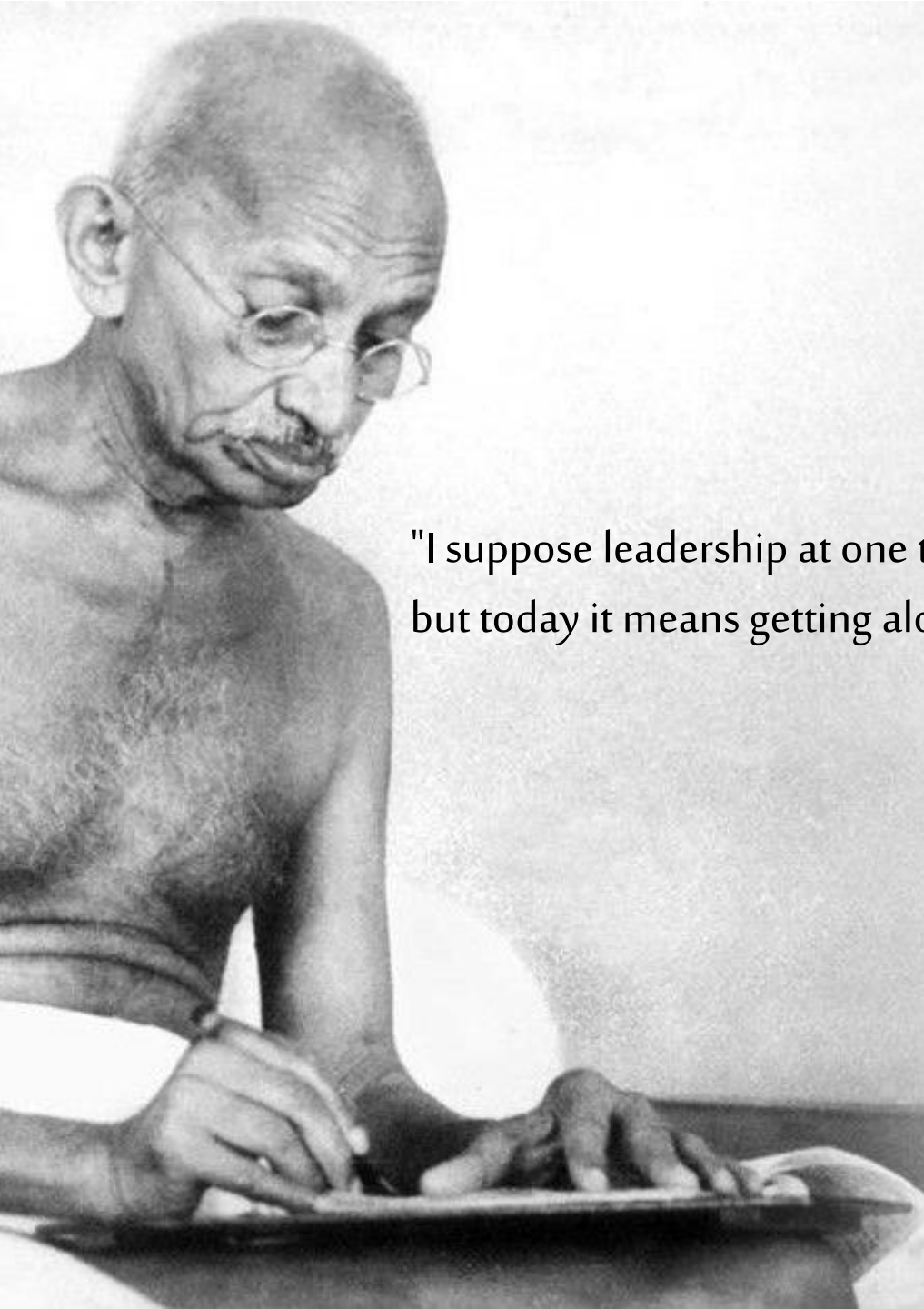


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"I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles;  
but today it means getting along with people."

# Rewind to 1904

- **1904**: A baby girl was born in Madurai as a loved daughter in the TVS Family
- **1918**: As was the custom of the day she was married at 14 to a medical doctor
- **1925**: Plague had a direct impact on her family, she lost her husband to the disease
- **1930**: Join the freedom struggle and met **Mahatma Gandhi**
- **1935**: She graduated as a young medical doctor
- **1947**: **India became a free nation.**

The foundation for Gandhigram was laid at the request of Mahatma Gandhi

- **1962**: Union Minister for Education



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# Influencing India's Future

- **1962**: Pt. Nehru appointed her as the Union Deputy Minister for Education in his cabinet
- She was instrumental in making **primary education free** all over the country.
- She also **helped start the National Service Scheme (NSS)** that still has a strong rural service element to it. Today, in 2020, 3.86 million young people benefit from the NSS.
- **Dr. Soundaram was awarded Padma Bhushan** in 1962 and Tamil Nadu government released a postage stamp in her honour in 2005.



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# Rewind to 1980

- 1980 – 1986 'Appa'

Dr. M. Aram becomes the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram university. He introduces my brother Ashok & me to 'Patti'.

- 1980 - 1984

As a young girl I **observed** her,  
**absorbed** from her example and  
**integrated** into my life the love for India,  
her people, her diversity, the belief that  
**India's problem's can be solved** with  
leadership that is re-imagined  
and impact that is concrete and life transforming!



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# Let me explain a little further on Dr. T. S. Soundaram's

- Pioneering Leadership and
- Public Health Experiments

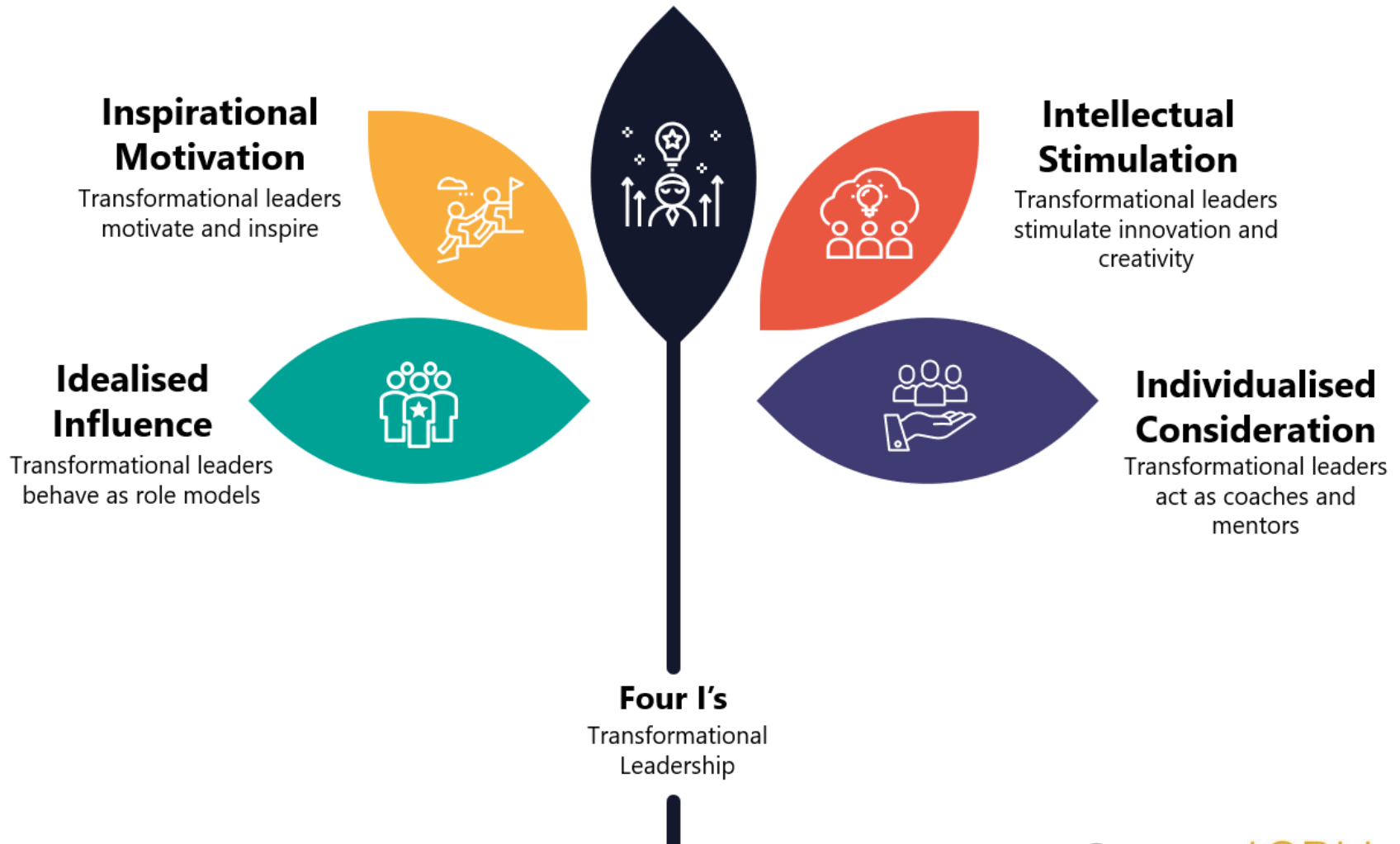


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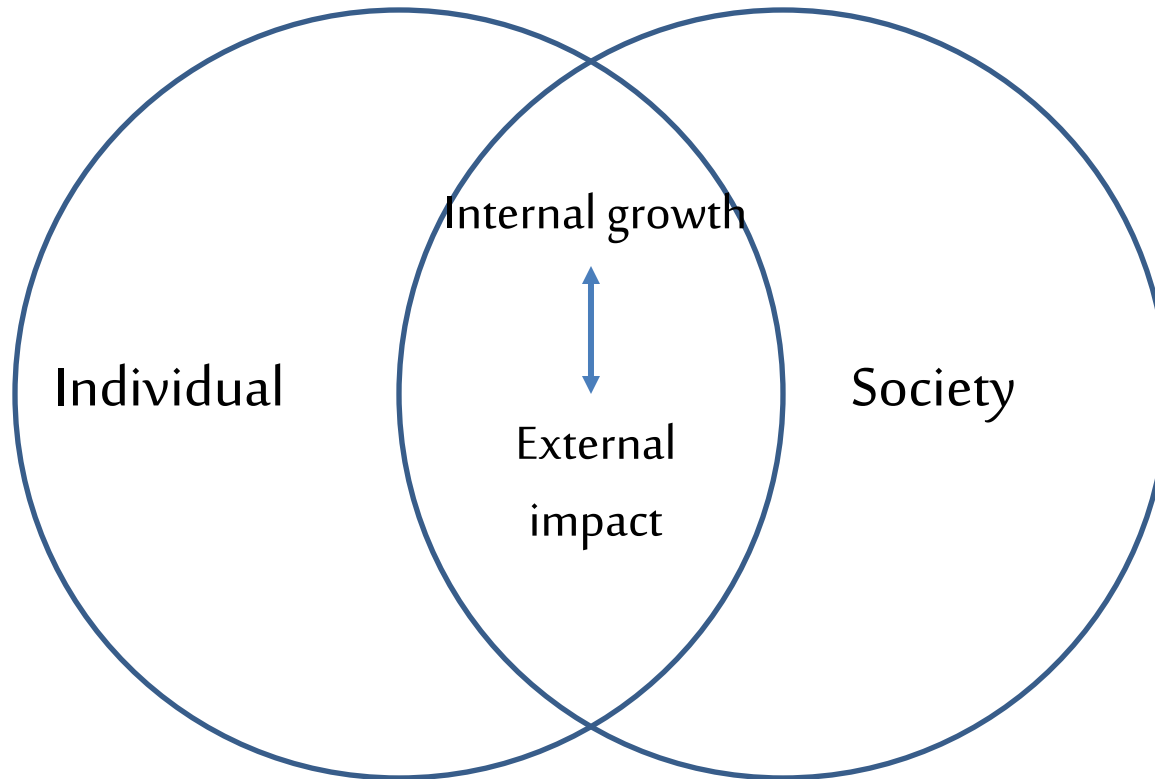
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# Transformational Leadership







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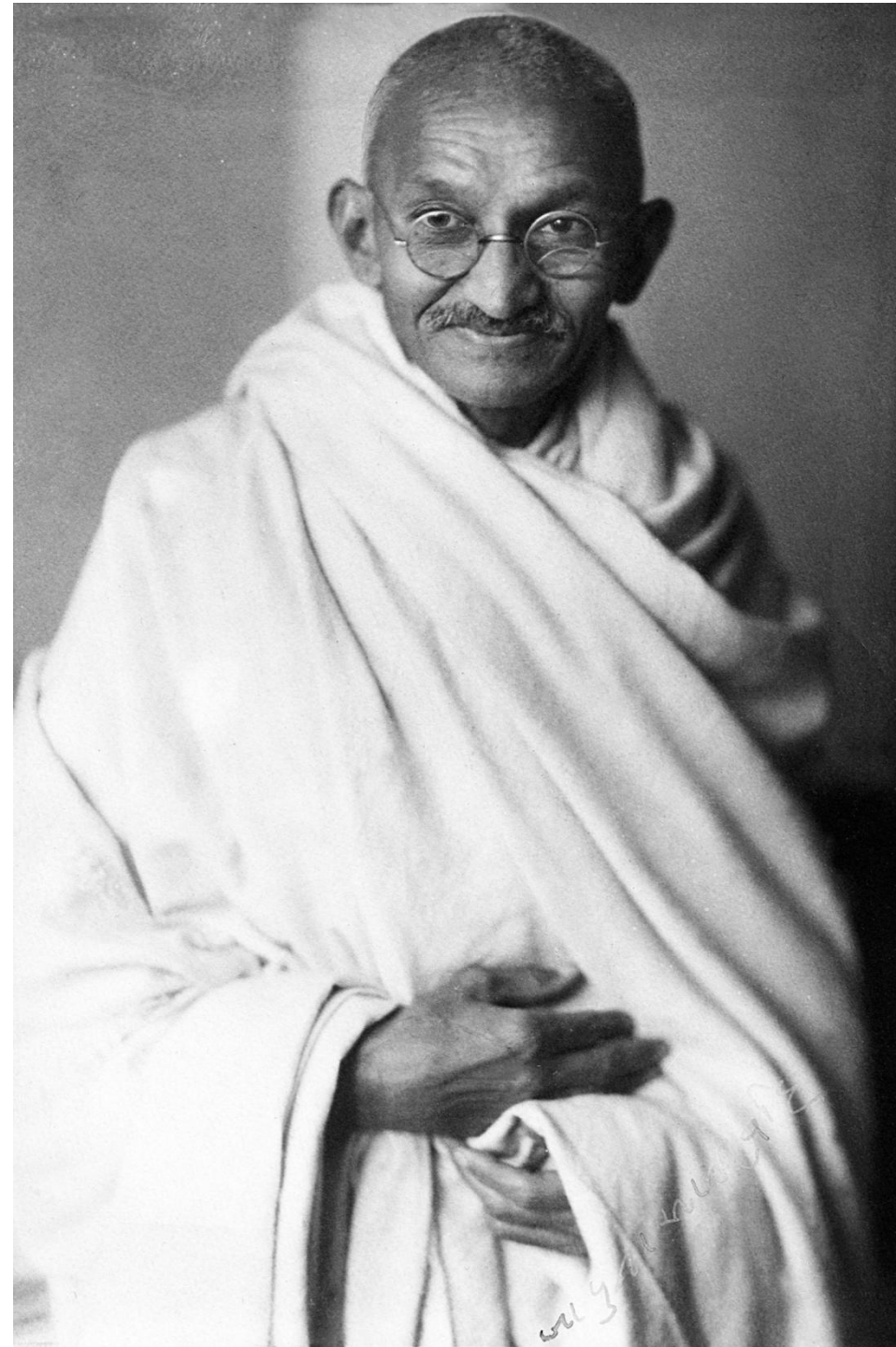
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"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away."



- Public Health experiments at Gandhigram
- There are many pioneering initiatives. But let me focus on:
  - Maternal & Child Health
  - Public Health Modeling



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# HEALTH FOR ALL



(Image: Hanna Barczyk)



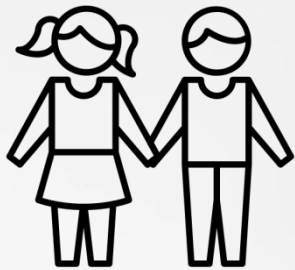
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# Leadership by the Chair



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# Empowering Young Professionals to be the **Leaders**

**that Public Health Needs Tomorrow ?**

- Presenting a problem solving model of integrated development
- Linking Policy and Practice
- Creating expanded classrooms, inclusive communities and nurturing critical thinking
- Influencing individuals and institutions
- Bringing alive the vision of 'Sarvodaya'
- Leading by EXAMPLE!
- Becoming the inspiration to the next generation.



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**One important response to the grave human crisis should undoubtedly come from the field of education, using the word education in the large sense of the term.**

Everyone needs to be educated – the leaders, the public, the children, the youth, the elite and the masses.

Formal education as well as non-formal education has a great role to play in bringing about peace and disarmament in the present day world.

We are all members of one human family.

United we stand and divided we fall.

This sense of common destiny will have to be instilled in all schools and educational institutions around the world.



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# **Dr. T. S. Soundaram Oration**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2020

