

## Closing the gap

The gradual improvement in India's social statistics shows that the rapid economic growth in recent decades has begun to make an impact on indicators such as malnutrition and fertility. A new study on child mortality published by medical journal *Lancet* is the latest example. The study shows that the annual rate at which child mortality declined over 2005-15 was much quicker than the comparable number in 2000-05. This alone could have saved a million lives.

There is a problem as well. Three states led the change—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. A further 2 million deaths could have been avoided if other states had matched these three states. The authors of the *Lancet* study say India could have met its millennium development goals as far as health is concerned if the national average had matched what the outperformers achieved. The growing distance between states in terms of various development indicators of income as well as social progress is a political economy challenge. There is a crying need to reduce the gap between the advanced states and the laggards.

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