

8.0 PARTICIPATION, PROCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 8.01 This chapter attempts to identify the processes and efforts made in making use of the resources in improving the living conditions of the rural poor and promote socio-economic development in the rural area.
- 8.02 As mentioned earlier, elections were held for the three levels of Panchayat bodies and they are in office effectively from July 2000. However, prior to this, there was an elected body - for its full term and several programmes have been carried out in the past. Apart from collecting information from the selected beneficiary households, information were also collected through interviews, discussions with the members of Panchayats (Present and the Past), officials etc., which are presented below :
- The working of Grama Sabhas in the Panchayats reveals that by and large the Village Panchayat calls meetings to discuss various issues relating to the development of villages.
 - Generally, the meetings are presided over by the President of the respective Gram Panchayat and attended by the Panchayat members, officials from the Taluk Panchayats, Bank and the Public. The meetings discusses mainly about the
 - (a) Identification of beneficiaries for various rural development programmes like IRDP, IAY, Ashraya etc.,
 - (b) Identify the development works like construction and repair works to road, school buildings, drainage, anganwadi buildings, community centres, bus shelters, water supply.
 - (c) Preparation of list of works, as suggested in the meetings, to be taken up under JRY.
- 8.03 The Grama Panchayats of the six selected villages were found to be closest to the norms, such as calling two Grama Sabha meetings in a given year. In all the meetings called, the above mentioned activities were carried out.
- 8.04 Seen in terms of participation, an accurate picture is difficult in the absence of information on active participation of members. However, the proceedings of the meetings indicate that Panchayat members, officials from the Bank and Taluk Panchayats attended meetings. As far as villagers are concerned, on an average 25 to 30 percent of electorate take active part in the meetings. It should be noted that this was the trend in the first Gram Sabha meetings, but the subsequent meetings were marginally attended (Ex- GP President's remarks). The villagers who did not get any benefits under the poverty alleviation programmes, hardly showed any interest in attending the meetings. With regard to the deliberations of the Grama Sabha meetings, some local people commented that the Grama Sabha meetings are held at the behest of Panchayat President / Secretary and influential members. The process of identification was found to be very partial and routine in nature. In identifying the

beneficiaries, the President's decision is final. As a result, many villagers (eligible beneficiaries) felt that they were left uncared for. This means that though the formality of calling a meeting is being observed, in reality the decision making process appears to be unilateral and centralised.

- 8.05 One important aspect of the meetings were identification of the needs of villages / people and resolutions were passed to meet such needs. Discussions with Panchayat Secretaries, Ex-Presidents of the respective Panchayats reveal that the list of beneficiaries identified, JRY Action Plan and list of works to be undertaken, by and large, had the concurrence of both the Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayat.
- 8.06 Under the IRD programme, the beneficiaries contacted during the field work were all identified during the Grama Sabha meetings. As explained by the Secretaries of Gram panchayats, generally after the identification of beneficiaries, the list was discussed and approved in the Panchayat meeting and was sent to Taluk Panchayats. The Taluk Panchayats in turn scrutinised the list and forwarded the same to the Zilla Panchayat for its final approval. After this process, the beneficiaries were asked to submit their application along with the required documents (such as Caste Certificate, residence certificate, income certificate....). The selected beneficiaries reported that they have taken the help of Panchayat members / Secretaries for fulfilling these conditions. They also reported that they had problems during the initial stages and they could overcome these problems with the active support of Panchayat members.

Perceptions of IRD Programme Beneficiaries

- 8.07 The selected beneficiaries report that they were given only one milch animal (cow or buffalo) and the subsidy component was not released by the Banks. On the otherhand, discussions with bank officials reveal that the beneficiaries are entitled to the subsidy provided, they repay atleast half of the loan amount, and also eligible for the second unit of milch animal. Quite a large number of beneficiaries have not paid the loan installments !
- 8.08 Beneficiaries, who have taken loan for starting petty shops, have paid part of the loan and eager to clear the loan along with interest. By this they feel they can avail loan for the second time and expand their activities.
- 8.09 Another point to be noted is, most of the beneficiaries express that there is an increase in their household income and has better living conditions. Since 1999-2000 the IRDP programme has been discontinued and is replaced by SGSY in the District. The progress made under SGSY is already mentioned under the Chapter 5.
- 8.10 In one of the surveyed villages (Agara in Yelandur taluk), the activity by the SHGs has already started and progress in other Taluks is varying. Discussions with the group revealed that there is scope for promoting the intended programmes under SHGs. It has been perceived that the SHGs have established their identity and have become a viable institution in promoting self-employment and income generating activity.

Housing Programmes

8.11 Gram Panchayats prepare beneficiary lists under different programmes for approval by Zilla Panchayat and is followed by the execution of the programme. It has been observed that, there is no uniform procedure in the implementation of the housing programme by the executing agency across the Taluks. In some cases payments are made in three installments after completion of each of the stages (foundation, lintel, roof). And in some cases, payments are made in five installments. Further, photographs of the different stages of completion of the house are required to be taken each time, as a proof for the release of financial assistance. Beneficiaries feel that the non-availability of such facilities in the villages and also cost to be incurred by the beneficiaries are some of the points for delay in the execution of the housing programmes. Beneficiaries, who have already started living in such houses, express their satisfaction, that they are living in a better atmosphere, inspite of such procedural delays.

Other programmes by line departments :

8.12 As mentioned earlier, programmes relating to horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry etc. are being implemented by the respective line departments. Our surveyed sample households also include, who have been covered under these programmes. It was noted that the line departments prepare beneficiary list in consultation with Gram Panchayats and the list is sent for approval by the Zilla Panchayat. After getting the approval, the line departments have executed the programmes. It was noted that, some of the Gram Panchayat members expressed their non-awareness of such programmes and beneficiaries covered. Some of these programmes are also not very successful, for example, the programme of raising coconut plantation (under Special Component Plan) - reveal that eight to ten coconut plants have survived (out of 30 distributed and planted). Beneficiaries are not aware of the reasons for such low survival. On the other hand, the concerned official report that they are not able to monitor the progress of the programme, because lack of mobility (they do not have jeep etc. for field inspection). Another point they make is funds are released during November - December after the season is over. As they have to meet the yearly target, they have implemented the programmes. The maintenance cost due for the second year (1999/2000), for the beneficiaries of 1998/99, was received at the department only during July 2000. Officials, feel the funds earmarked for this purpose, should be released before the expiry of the season. The concerned personnel feel that with proper infrastuctural facilities for follow-up of the beneficiaries are required for the success of the programme.