

## CHAPTER - VI

# CONCLUSION

### 7.0 The Quality of Life Perspective :

The Government of India and state governments have been implementing several programmes (e.g. IRDP, JRY) for eradication of poverty in India. While the objectives of these programmes may be commendable, they are based on a belief that spending of money is in itself a necessary and sufficient condition for poverty alleviation. This belief under plays the role of non-monetary policies and the impact they have on the lives of the people. It has been the experience of many grassroots workers that often certain government policies harm the poor much more than the benefit that accrues to them through money-oriented schemes like the IRDP.

While the weak (and unfortunately declining) capacity of the delivery machinery is not disputed, often the policies are in themselves defective and need to be amended if these are to be beneficial to the poor. The anti-poor bias in many sectors stems from the belief that economic development and reduction of poverty require two different strategies. It is believed that whereas the former set of policies have to be geared to increase the production and need not take in to account the interests of the poor, the latter is the responsibility of the Ministry of Rural Development which has no control over the anti-poor policies followed by other Ministries and which are justified in the name of economic development. How existing policies of other departments impact on the poor is hardly analysed by the rural development departments of Central and state governments. **What is need is 'mainstream of poverty concerns' through overhauling the policies of all government departments, under close supervision of the Planning Commission.**

The ultimate goal should be to achieve rural prosperity through the participatory development process. This will be possible only if the individual and the community become the focal point of development. No such development is possible without

bestowing the real decision making power on the community. Such empowerment has to be an essential ingredient in all our planning and implementation of programmes. This will call for large scale promotion of strong and viable self-help groups, community-based interest groups, user groups and genuinely strengthening the civil society movement. Merely devolving more functions to the PRIs without involving the community at the grassroots level will be looked upon only as a means to achieve the ultimate end of empowerment of people.

Analysis of poverty at micro level identified the key indicators both causal and consequence or process oriented. The causal indicators are per capital income and employment days while the consequence indicators are hungry days, expenditure on food, illiteracy etc. The causal indicator like income is related to income perspective of poverty which is the root cause of poverty in the rural areas. The consequence of low per capital income and unemployment leads to low expenditure on food and hungry days and in the process turns into ill-health and illiteracy. This concept of deprivation goes beyond the sense of meagre income and includes the basic needs package like food, health, education and sanitation which in turn is known as basic services perspective. The consequence indicators, unlike income and employment, are reflected not in the inputs but as the end products of the basic services. The Quality of life perspective starts with per capital income, employment days, food security, health, literacy, sanitation etc. which encompasses both income and basic services perspective are the basis for micro perspective. If hunger is the worst consequence of poverty, and malnutrition is the worst consequence of hunger, then the fight against poverty is first and foremost a fight against nutritional risks. Escaping out of poverty within the family and checking its movement from one family to another and one generation to another generation requires an integrated policy and programme package both at macro and micro level.

## **7.1 Policy Suggestions :**

The alleviation of poverty can not be effective through anti-poverty programmes alone but will require democratic participation on the one hand and changes in economic structures on the other to ensure access to all the resources, opportunities and basic services. Therefore, policies to alleviate poverty which is based on quality

of life perspective will obviously be achieved through access to food security, access to resources, access to basic services, access to institutional facilities, access to employment opportunities and finally access to nutritional programmes. The poverty, thus can only be effectively attacked if an integrated approach highlighting on.

### **7.1.1 Access to food security :**

Food security at macro level continues to be influenced by an interplay of factors affecting food production, food supplies, food price, food subsidies, food aid and food research. This will require specific measures at macro level to improve the capacity of the state and people to produce and purchase food. The policies and programmes are thus focused on :

- \* Increasing food production by expanding the net cropped area.
- \* Increasing the intensity of cropping through transfer of technology in the fields of irrigation, soil conservation, soil capability raising and agronomic practices.
- \* Raising yields through introduction of improved farming practices and inputs.
- \* Transfer of improved technologies from lab-to-land.,
- \* Provision of marketing services, credit and supply of inputs.
- \* Introducing more drought resistant varieties particularly for drought prone and similar handicapped areas.
- \* Special emphasis should be given for growing minor grain, pulses and vegetable crops as those contribute to food security.

### **7.1.2 Access to Resources :**

The access to existing productive resources like land forest and water resources are needed to increase productivity, employment and income of the rural poor.

Land Reforms and Development :

As land is the major means of production in rural areas, a suggested remedy to the problem of poverty is to provide land rights to all those who depend upon it.

- a) let the land be owned by the community and self-help groups in the rural areas may be formed to cultivate the land.
- b) On the other hand, greater emphasis on labour intensive agricultural growth seems the only feasible alternative for the poor families. These policies for labour intensive growth are :
  - \* Diversification of agricultural product-mixed with value added products like dairying, livestock products, horticulture and floriculture.
  - \* The production of these produces and processing and marketing are highly labour intensive.

Training and skill upgradation :

People's access to productive employment further requires :

- \* Defining educational priorities and investment in vocational education and training system.
- \* Ensuring broad basic education with vocational expertise which is essential for specialisation and upgradation of skills.
- \* promoting and strengthening of training programmes for the employment of job seekers.
- \* Creating more employment opportunities through restricting entry of organised sector into certain activities in which skill formation has reached a standard to produce the products competitive in the open market.
- \* Facilitating the entry of women in to workforce by developing adequate child care, for old persons and other support services and facilities.

### **7.1.3. Access to Special Nutrition Programme :**

- i) Identification of vulnerable groups who require intervention for nutritional improvements, must be considered on priority basis.

- ii) Since market forces do not necessarily provide for food and nutrition requirements of those most in need, complementary programmes for the hungry and malnourished people should be taken up as an essential service.
- iii) Realising the importance of nutritional programme, the State Nutrition Policy should be prepared in order to articulate nutritional considerations in all major policy spheres of the Government.
- iv) Definite action programmes must be drawn to deal with droughts and other disasters that can lead to food scarcity, the root cause of malnutrition.
- v) Actions should be launched to provide essential nutrients such as vitamin A and iodine and to impart nutrition education to make people aware of the need for these vital elements in diet.
- vi) Actions to increase access to food need to be revamped through strengthening the public distribution system that increase entitlements to food.
- vii) Coverage should be expanded in rural areas to reach all the rural poor and if so necessary, the share of better off sections of the population may be reduced.

#### **7.1.4 Access to Basic Services and Healthy Environment :**

Poverty is not merely a problem of food security, rather it is multi-dimensional problem that includes low access to basic opportunities to education, health, water supply and sanitation.

- \* Efforts at all levels shall be made to ensure 100 percent attendance in schools and schooling has to be made compulsory for assured access to basic services.
- a) The poor are susceptible to ill health. Therefore, provision for safe drinking water, sanitation and immunization seems to be the priority tasks for improving

the health of the poor.

- b) In remote areas, even though the primary health centres are in existence, the quality of services extended is quite poor. This indicates that necessary attention must be paid to strengthen the rural health care delivery system.
- c) Necessary steps should be taken for ensuring universal access to basic services particularly for the people living below the poverty level and the other vulnerable groups.
- d) Creating public awareness about interrelated options like nutrition, health, water, sanitation, education, employment etc. should be taken up as a social responsibility of the Government, NGO etc.
- e) Since the problem of poverty is closely linked with that of malnutrition, the programme of eliminating poverty has to be taken up in an integrated manner with other underlying factors like frequent illness, delay in introducing solid food, child care, feeding practices etc.

#### **7.1.5 Access to Population Education :**

- \* Disseminating of accurate information to the common mass about various family planning methods inducing health risks and their benefits.
- \* Ensuring that men and women have information and access to safe and effective family planning methods.
- \* Social as well as economic restriction should be imposed on families with more than two children such as debarring to contest in general election, getting family rations and availing health facilities in government hospitals.
- \* Expanding training in reproductive health care and family planning for health educators and managers.

- \* Finally, Family planning and reproductive health programmes should focus on breast feeding education, support services etc. which simultaneously contribute to birth spacing, better maternal and child health.

#### **7.1.6 Access to Legal and Constitutional Rights :**

- i) It requires a larger consciousness and acceptance on the part of politicians, administrators and law makers for inclusion of the rights such as : Right to Work, Right to Food, Right to Credit, Right to Education, Right to Health, Right to Shelter, Right Sanitation, Right to Common Property Resources and Right to Participation in the process of development as human rights.
- ii) Special priority must be given to the needs and rights of women and children who often bear the greatest burden of poverty.
- iii) Removing the conservative attitudes and restrictions on women's right to own land, inherit property, borrow money and equal right to work.

#### **7.2 Micro programmes :**

The two long term objectives of the micro programme are to narrow down the gap between the developed and under developed or less developed villages and to improve the quality of life of the poor people. However, speeding up of process of socio-economic development, elimination of exploitation in all forms and building the inner strength of the poor and marginal people shall be some of the immediate objectives of any micro programme directed for poverty alleviation.

Utmost care has to be taken not to lure the poor people with manifold ultra modern practices in the name of technical change. Through a large number of development programmes, the in-built employment potential must be harnessed for those who go without engagement for more than six months a year in the resource poor regions. The primary objectives shall be to alleviate poverty through transfer of assets, provision of wage employment and formation of skills through training in economic pursuits.

### 7.2.1 Household Food Security :

Adequate supplies of food at the state level should provide every one with enough to eat. However, such supplies offer no guarantee of individual household food security. In a household food security exists when all its members, regardless of age or sex are assured of access to food that they need for a healthy living. In order to assure this at the household level, two criteria must be met. Firstly, Food has to be available in local or community market. Secondly, Food has to be accessible i.e. affordable by those with an extremely modest income or available to those who lack even that, may be subsidisation or even by free distribution. There is ample evidence of higher even when food is locally available. The search for household food security must start, therefore, by making food more accessible to the poor. This can be achieved by increasing production or by ownership of assets or by providing a safety net of social security for the poor.

Thus the steps that are to be taken for food security at the household level are as follows :

- \* Promotion of small scale community based agriculture with a combination of cash crops, food crops and livestock for providing opportunities for non-agricultural employment.
- \* Labour-intensive public works shall provide employment through food-for-work or other crash programmes. Infrastructural improvements such as roads and irrigation work should aim at increasing the assets of the community and help to promote food security.
- \* Feeding programmes, food subsidies and rationing must be oriented towards household food security. Making credit available to the poor like the Grameen Bank support programme of Bangladesh, must aim at creating sources of income to improve household food security.



### **7.2.2 Pilot Programmes and Dissemination :**

Pilot programmes for poverty alleviation by government initiative, non-government and international endeavour provides opportunities for testing the applicability of new programmes in different situation. The major programmes include :

- (a) Actions, technology and approaches of such pilot programmes should be transmitted to those who are concerned with poverty alleviation programmes.
- (b) Disseminating the achievements of poverty alleviation including changes in income, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition etc. in other areas stricken with adverses of poverty.
- (c) Promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences of sub-regional, regional and national efforts of developing countries in poverty alleviation encouraging access to all on wide range of development information though mass media.

### **7.2.3 Motivation and Training :**

Poor people need to be motivated and imparted training for their capacity building. Important actions may be :

- a) Sensitise to adopt the changing economic situations and technologies.
- b) Promote equal access to education and training for women.
- c) Strengthen the educational system for training, skill, knowledge and expertise at faster rates.

### **7.2.4 People's Participation :**

The organisations of the rural poor such as Small Farmer's Cooperatives, Self-help Groups, Women's Groups, Water Users Association etc. are powerful force

for poverty alleviation programmes.

Thus, the programmes to be taken are :

- a) Full participation of women in rural local organisations may assured definite success in alleviating poverty as women constitute one-half of the agricultural labour force.
- b) Encouraging decentralisation of public institutions and services with overall responsibilities to respond properly to local needs and to facilitate people's participation.
- c) Building capacities of common people and their organisations to participate in the development process.

#### **7.2.5 Participatory Poverty Alleviation :**

The participatory poverty alleviation at micro level should ensure direct and full involvement of the poor including poor women. This includes :

- (a) Identifying the poor by themselves, prioritising their needs, implementing the schemes for poverty alleviation and monitoring poverty at village level.
- (b) To involve poor people through participatory approach to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes necessary for their development at the micro level.
- (c) Strengthening the abilities of local communities and groups to develop their own organisation to identify the poor, implement and monitor the poverty alleviation programmes.

### 7.3 CONCLUSION :

The eradication of poverty requires universal access to economic opportunities that will promote sustainable livelihood and basic social services. The broad alleviation efforts include provision of food security, land rights, education, employment, primary health care services including reproductive health care, safe drinking water and sanitation.

Unless until, the quality of life of the poor are improved, social development can not be achieved in state. The goal is not a reality rather a myth. This is only possible through participatory poverty alleviation where the poor have to involve themselves in identifying the poor, prioritise their needs and monitor poverty at micro level. The participatory micro level poverty alleviation is probably the stepping stone towards achieving the goal of poverty alleviation in the state. Quality of life which is the basis for Poverty perspective, encompasses both rights and duties of the poor. Legislation may have to be taken at the national level in order to ensure the basic human rights to be fulfilled. These are rights to land, common property resources, work, food, credit, education, health, shelter and sanitation. The provision of rights for the growing million of population may not be realised at the initial years. There comes the bunch of duties where population control may have to be considered as family right or individual duty to have two children family. Therefore, families with two children may be ensured of the quality of life rights so as to pave the way for sustainable development with control of population. It may probably take not less than 20 years to eradicate poverty from West Bengal provided quality of life rights are assured with family rights to control birth with participatory poverty alleviation adopted through micro plan concept.