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RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

ON

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES FOR WEAKER SECTIONS AS A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING INCOME DISTRIBUTION

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Papers under the subject "Special Programmes for Weaker Sections as a Strategy for Improving Income Distribution" were invited for this Conference so as to cover the following themes: (i) definition of the concept of the weaker sections of society, the target group, in order to examine the possibility of adopting some uniformity in concepts, definitions, etc., particularly from the operational points of view; (ii) assessment of economic viability of special schemes already initiated by Government, *viz.*, SFDA/MFAL, Crash Scheme for Rural Employment, Food for Work Programme, Antyodaya Programme, Rural Industries Projects, etc. In this respect special reference was made to (a) the problem of identification of persons forming the target groups/areas, (b) supply of inputs/credit, etc., including the time lag between identification and the actual flow of benefits and the availability of technical advice for improving the skills, adequacy, etc., (c) quality and adequacy of organizational support covering aspects such as the efficiency of the machinery of planning, implementation, financial administration, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation, (d) impact of the programme in respect of employment, income, consumption pattern, savings and the building up of productive assets, redemption of debts, etc. Lastly, the papers were expected to comment on the impact of subsidies given to weaker sections, based on field studies.

In all, 42 papers have been accepted for discussion under this topic in the Conference. If anything, the large number of contributions on the subject reflects the concern of research workers on the subject. There are as many as 12 papers dealing alone with various aspects of SFDA Programme. These papers are an important contribution towards the understanding of the organizational deficiencies of the various special programmes for weaker sections.

DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF WEAKER SECTIONS

The synopsis circulated to members had highlighted the need for a precise definition of the concept of the weaker sections of the society both from the conceptual and operational points of view. However, only a few papers have touched this aspect. According to B. N. Asthana and P. C. Shukla, the term 'weaker sections of the society' relates to socially and economically handicapped classes of population who are deprived of full socio-economic benefits of the society, like food, cloth, recreation, health, housing, etc. These sections comprise mainly the small and marginal farmers, landless labourers

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and (traditional) artisans, besides the scheduled castes/tribes and other backward classes. Those cultivators having land below five acres of land are termed as weaker sections. Another approach for defining the weaker sections adopts per capita income and level of living. Asthana and Shukla have suggested a third criterion, *viz.*; energy criterion—comprising three variables: (a) human energy (men, women and children of a farm family), (b) livestock energy (bullock and milch cattle) and (c) mechanical energy (equipment used in agriculture or non-agricultural pursuits of farm family either driven by bullock, oil or electric power). Based on this criterion, they have estimated that the weaker sections formed 44.6 per cent of the total farm families in the rural sector at an aggregate level. According to them, energy endowment is the only crucial element of income generation and best exploitation of land available to the farmers or occupations followed. Macro economic measurements are thus adopted for micro economic studies to test their relevance in the field.

ASSESSMENT OF ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF SPECIAL SCHEMES

The contributions under this section are the largest in number. The authors of these papers have attempted to assess the impact of various programmes initiated both by the Government of India as well as by the State Governments, *viz.*, Antyodaya, SFDA, DPAP, Food for Work, Intensive Tribal Development Programme, etc. B. K. Sikka *et al.* have in their paper evaluated the impact and performance of the Antyodaya (poorest of the poor) Programme in Himachal Pradesh by undertaking a sample survey of 50 Antyodaya beneficiaries in Simla district. They examine the time lag between identification and disbursement of loans/grants and the types of benefits given to the identified families, based on their previous background and the existing skills. They indicate the extent of increase in income, problem of marketing of produce, etc. Some of the families, according to the study, had been repaying their loan instalments regularly to the Banks. The authors advocate the linkage of beneficiaries with technical agencies to develop so that full income effects (or the assets given) are realised in a short period.

L. K. Mohana Rao in his paper has dealt with the performance of a Rural Bank covering three districts in Andhra Pradesh and has assessed the impact of Bank finance on (a) distribution of gains, (b) cropping pattern (c) assets of different categories of beneficiaries engaged in diverse activities. His sample has 37 beneficiaries from the irrigated area and 40 from the dry region. They bring out that the rate of return on investment is relatively high in the irrigated region, particularly in respect of activities like agriculture, dairying and trading. It is revealed that even among the target groups, distributions of gains are positively associated with assets owned by them (or created by the loans given to them.) Besides, there is considerable shift from traditional varieties to high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of crop and an increase in the intensity of cropping from 1.00 to 1.39 and 1.51 respectively in the case of marginal and small farmers of the irrigated area. R. P. Kurulkar and A. B. Deogirikar in their paper have evaluated the role of Marathwada Regional

Rural Bank, Nanded in seeking to improve the economic conditions of weaker sections. Based on the definitions given by the Banking Commission (1972), the Bank has provided credit and other facilities to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas. During 1976-78 the Bank increased its loan activities from Rs. 4 lakhs to Rs. 120 lakhs. The study, however, shows that the proportionate share received by the small farmers' group had in fact declined. Similarly, the share in the loans received by the agricultural labourers too was reduced from 46 per cent to 22 per cent. The share of artisans and other weaker sections shows similar declining trend from 12 per cent to one per cent (artisans) and from 33 per cent to 10 per cent (other weaker sections).

G. Dasaradha Rama Rao and C. Samba Murty have evaluated the programme for distribution of Government lands to the rural poor in the Coastal Andhra Pradesh. Their findings are based on data collected in eight Coastal districts, and a sample of 254 beneficiaries spread over 15 villages. The rural poor are defined to include those owning not more than 2.5 acres of wet land or five acres of dry land, besides the landless category. In almost all the districts, the majority of beneficiaries belonged to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and Harijans. Most of them, except in East Godavari, were not landowners prior to land distribution. There are reports of time lag between the actual occupation and actual cultivation of the assigned lands, for, these needed certain land improvements. Some of the districts are facing the problems like waterlogging, salinity or non-availability of water in adequate quantity for irrigation. Households reporting ownership of ploughs and carts are those who have lands of their own and are economically in a better position to invest on farm equipment. A large number of assignees need financial support for digging of wells and improvements of lands. The co-operatives, commercial banks and other institutions have not come forward to assist them as yet. Who would prepare 'bankable' projects for them to attract bank finance ?

A. F. Mabawonku has attempted to discuss the development programmes and policies in regard to fisheries in Nigeria. He particularly examines over a million 'artisanal fishermen' who operate along the Nigeria's coastal waters, lagoons, lakes, rivers and springs. The study brings out that about 10 per cent of these artisanal fishermen have had no formal education. Their family size ranges from 5 to 8. Nearly 40 per cent of them are engaged fully in fishing; and the rest often supplement their incomes with farming or trading. He has tried to analyse the reasons for the low earnings in artisanal as compared to commercial fisheries, the prominent amongst them being (a) antiquated fishing equipments, (b) outmoded methods of fish preservation, and (c) low level of technology in use. Another fall out of economic development is work attention. With exploitation of oil, the traditional fishermen have been neglected to make way for the new industries. In Nigeria's Third National Five Year Plan (1975-80), there is a programme for the development of artisanal fisheries, but this is confined mainly to investment in fish storage, processing, marketing, infrastructure supply and manpower training. The

amount thus earmarked comprised only about 4 per cent of total investment in agriculture. This amount would enable the purchase of 106,000 out-board engines. The policy includes formation of co-operatives to be provided with credits, boats, engines and gear at 50 per cent subsidy to induce fishermen to acquire these inputs. It is found that only a handful of fishing population could benefit from it and this programme has made little or no impact in improving the economic conditions of the traditional fishermen. The author suggests a combination of input subsidy and guaranteed minimum support price for fish in order to raise the level of earnings of these fishermen.

S. P. Sinha and Jagdish Prasad have in their paper assessed the impact of special programmes on the rural poor from the standpoint of rise in income and employment. The study is based on a survey of 102 beneficiary households of Musahari block in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar which is covered under special programmes launched by Government as well as voluntary agencies like AVARD and CARTE. These programmes refer to irrigation, input plan, co-operative plan, consolidation, land shaping and the various schemes of self-employment. Different criteria have been adopted for defining the rural poor, *i.e.*, (i) those having family income of less than Rs. 4,000 per year; (ii) those having land holdings below 2.5 acres and (iii) those having assets of value of less than Rs. 2,500. The authors have attempted to test with the help of data, three different hypotheses, *viz.*, (a) the special schemes have benefited the really poor in the rural areas, (b) these have resulted in generating additional gainful employment opportunities and in increasing their incomes and earnings, and (c) the programmes have benefited the rural elite. The study, in order to make it representative and purposeful, included 40 households covered under the programmes carried out by voluntary agencies and 62 households covered under various Government programmes like IRDP, Antyodaya, Food for Work, etc. The analysis reveals that the large bulk of beneficiary households belong to the richer sections of the community, and not the poorer sections. As against 'subsidy' oriented programmes, programmes of direct employment generation such as Food for Work have resulted in creating a positive impact on generating employment and increasing the earnings of the poorest sections of the society. This conclusion has important policy implications. Their paper also brings out that both the Government and voluntary agencies have failed to identify clearly the poor households seeking assistance. A significant proportion of beneficiary households surprisingly belongs to the income category between Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 10,000. It recommends that the Food for Work Programme need to be continued with vigour. There should also be timely and proper appraisal and evaluation of the programmes.

The paper of Hanumant Yadav and C. S. Mishra is based on an empirical study of 50 families, all selected from the size-group of holdings below four hectares from five villages from Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh. The 'non-beneficiary' families have also been selected from the same selected villages from the list of holdings obtained from *patwari* records. The study brings out that out of the fruit plants worth Rs. 2,500 distributed to sample

beneficiaries, barely 20 survived. The Tribal Development Agency (TDA) had spent Rs. 13,142 for the establishment of poultry units but not a single unit was found in operation at the time of the survey. The study reveals that the beneficiary families on the whole experienced much higher gains in terms of employment (26.17 per cent), income (36.87 per cent) and asset formation (8.70 per cent) compared to the non-participating families. The farm sector accounted for a sizable increase, since most of the expenditure was incurred in this sector. The elasticities for subsidies and grants in relation to the increase in employment, income and value of assets of the sample beneficiaries were .1896, .2725 and .2758 respectively, which though statistically significant, were of rather low magnitude. The authors suggest modification in the priorities of the programme to enlarge the income and employment opportunities. Besides, completion of irrigation projects in time and availability of sufficient funds are recommended.

P.T. Joseph's paper is based on a socio-economic survey of tribals conducted in 1976-78 by the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Kerala. A comparison of the 'project' area with a 'control' region is made using crucial indicators, *viz.*, income, employment, land holdings, literacy, general health, occupation and level of monetization. It is also mentioned that the benefits of the programmes have not always percolated to the weaker sections on account of the relatively poor accessibility, gap in communication and ineffective extension. The findings need reiteration.

Nakshatra Kumar Roy has attempted to deal with the special programme for the development of selected tribal areas in Singhbhum in Bihar. The study gives the extent to which the programme like TDA has been successful in bringing about a change particularly in the economic life of the tribal people inhabiting there and the new crops grown after implementation of such programmes. From four blocks in Singhbhum, two villages from each block were selected for the study. The field work was conducted by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bharati. The participant and non-participant farmers have been compared. The TDA has improved the economic condition of the participant cultivators mainly by providing assured irrigation facilities. This has further led them to adopt HYV crops. On the other hand, due to the meagre irrigation facility, the non-participant farmers had to remain satisfied by adopting ordinary variety of crops. The standard of living among the participant farmers had improved. These farmers had invested on improved implements and tools, wells and tanks.

SCHEMES FOR SMALL FARMERS

There are 12 papers dealing with various aspects of Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) Programme. What is important is that they refer to different States giving an overview of its working in the country. U. K. Pandey and S. S. Khanna in their paper have examined (a) the impact of SFDA on income, employment, consumption, and credit-worthiness of the weaker sections; and (b) the implications from the point of view of distribution of gains among the various target groups in the observed districts of Am-

bala and Hissar. For their study, 100 beneficiaries from 15 villages, *i.e.*, ten villages in two blocks of Ambala district and five villages in two blocks in Hissar district have been selected, besides 65 non-beneficiaries from each district. The study brings out that the highest amount of subsidy was received by the landless agricultural labourers and marginal farmers in both the districts. Although the coverage of the beneficiary farmers among the weaker sections was high in Hissar district as compared to Ambala district, yet a large number of weaker sections was not able to receive the subsidy from the SFDA scheme in both the districts. The subsidy was mainly disbursed for buffaloes, pumpsets and tubewells. The scheme had made positive and significant impact on income and consumption of the beneficiaries and also in the acquisition of assets by the weaker sections which had improved their credit-worthiness. The pattern of income distribution amongst the weaker sections had been narrowed down in the case of beneficiaries compared to the non-beneficiaries: An important conclusion. They have recommended that Reserve Bank of India should increase its financial assistance in the form of subsidy to all credit institutions engaged in the disbursement of subsidy to the weaker sections.

A. Peter and M. Sebastian have studied the impact of SFDA in Thuraiyur block of Tiruchirapalli district of Tamil Nadu. The analysis has revealed that there is significant increase in the levels of all economic variables and different efficiency indicators such as cropping intensity, input-output ratio, net profit per acre, etc., owing to SFDA assistance. M. G. Ghosh has studied the impact of MFALDA on the conditions of marginal farmers in terms of income and benefits emerging from development programmes sponsored by the agency in Bankura district of West Bengal. The study has revealed that the coverage of the marginal farmers and agricultural labourers under different schemes of the project was extremely limited and confined to only less than 5 per cent of the intended beneficiaries. Of the two major programmes taken up by the agency in the project areas, dairy programme was ill-conceived with exotic variety of cows which were practically thrust upon persons who were barely equipped to receive them. Moreover, adequate infrastructure, including veterinary services, feed supply and marketing facilities are not in existence. Similarly, the dug-well irrigation programme covered only a tiny portion of the operative area and the total benefits to the farmers were not sufficient to bring them above the poverty line.

M. V. Kapde has studied the impact of the special programmes like SFDA, MFAL, etc., in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. The study is based on extensive field work involving 250 beneficiaries and 50 non-beneficiaries. There are positive results in terms of the effect of credit received on asset formation and increase in income. In the case of 197 beneficiaries under dairy development and 53 beneficiaries under minor irrigation schemes, the total value of assets increased by 31 per cent and 52 per cent respectively. The elasticities of agricultural income for the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are low, while those of livestock income are high.

P. L. and Asha Sablok have studied the strategy for improving the income

distribution of the weaker sections in Chambal command area of Madhya Pradesh. The survey has revealed that in the Chambal command area, the various special schemes are complementary in character but in practice they are not so co-ordinated. The programmes are still ad hoc in character and suffer from wide dispersal and fragmentation, resulting in overlapping of organization and financial resources. The Programme Evaluation Organisation in their evaluation study of Small Farmers, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Projects (1974-75) have made similar observations.

N. L. Agarwal and Gir Raj Prasad have studied the impact of SFDA programme on cropping pattern, farm income and employment in Alwar district of Rajasthan. The study has revealed that there is a significant difference in the area under various HYV crops in the case of the beneficiary and non-beneficiary farms. The cropping intensity was much more in the case of the beneficiary farmers than was noticed for the non-beneficiary farmers. The employment per acre of operational holding was also more in the case of the former. The programme had encouraged the beneficiary farmers to purchase milch cattle to supplement their income.

E. C. Rajayan has studied the impact of small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers development programmes in Quilon district of Kerala. The selection of small and marginal farmers under the programme was based on the extent of land owned. There was considerable delay in the implementation of the programme initially because the credit institutions were reluctant to relax the procedure to advance loans liberally to the weaker sections. Production function analysis has shown that current production investment and medium-term loans significantly affect the total value of output. The regression coefficient in respect of the factor medium-term loan is significant at one per cent level. The elasticity of production is also the highest for the same factor. The medium-term loans given for minor irrigation thus were productive which should be extended to other areas.

V. E. Kannathal has studied the impact of SFDA on income distribution of the weaker sections in one of the villages of South Arcot district (Tamil Nadu). Nearly 50 per cent of the households belong to the category of marginal farmers. The study has revealed that even though there is increase in their income and employment level, their standard of living has not improved. The deviation of actual curves from the line of equal distribution indicates the magnitude of inequality present in the distribution. This can be rectified somehow by some modification in the pattern of facilities and quantum of investment provided to the marginal farmers and agricultural labourers.

Vishwa Ballabh and J. S. Sharma have studied the impact of minor irrigation scheme on small and marginal farmers in Sandila and Bharawan blocks of Hardoi district in Uttar Pradesh. According to them, the investments on pumpset and Persian wheel are profitable in the case of small and marginal farmers. Their study has revealed that the cropping intensity had increased on farms having pumpset and Persian wheel by about 41 and 44 per cent respectively. The cropping pattern had changed in favour of the more remunerative crops due to assured irrigation facilities. This had an

impact on employment and income of the beneficiary farmers.

S. M. Dingar and R. B. Singh have studied the income viability of the farmers benefited from SFDA project in Fatehpur (Uttar Pradesh). The amount of borrowings made and subsidies given to the sample farmers were studied for the period 1975-76 to 1978-79. The study has revealed that the marginal and small farmers' groups borrowed more amount of money than the non-participating farmers and received increased net returns from crops as well as milk production. The study has also revealed that the marginal and small farm participants have higher consumption expenditure than the non-participant group. Comparing the level of agricultural income and consumption, it was observed that the participants had substantial surpluses over consumption expenditure.

S. R. Yadav *et al.* have studied the small farmers' response to economic incentives given under the SFDA programme in Pratapgarh district in Uttar Pradesh. The study has revealed that there is increase in investment in irrigation structure and farm machinery with the financial help provided by the SFDA. The per hectare average values of input, output, net income, family labour income and farm income have increased substantially for the beneficiary farmers over the non-beneficiaries.

Daulat Singh *et al.* have examined the effect of subsidy on income generation among the scheduled tribes, marginal and small farmers in Kanpur district, Uttar Pradesh. The study reveals that the scheduled tribe farmers had a low rate of investment as compared to the marginal and small farmers. The study of economic returns due to subsidies on fertilizers and pesticides indicates highest returns in favour of the small farmers. It contributed more towards the additional productivity. The diversion of input by the marginal and scheduled tribe farmers was more in the case of paddy than in wheat crop which in turn was made use of by the big and progressive farmers.

SCHEMES OF DPAP

Four papers have been contributed on the subject 'Drought-Prone Area Programme'. Shiv Ram Dass has studied the impact of the programme since its inception in 13 States. This is based on official data. The per hectare cost of development is estimated to be around Rs. 9,692 on all-India basis. A total of 1,780 lakh man-days of employment are reported to have been created during 1974-79. The study has revealed that agriculture, forestry, pasture and irrigation sectors are comparatively more employment oriented. The cost per man-day of employment generation is lesser in these sectors in comparison to other sectors. The study has also revealed that yield gaps have been reduced and production in DPAP districts has increased as compared to other districts. Shifting of areas to more remunerative crops has also been noticed.

Nandagopal Raju has made a comparative study of the impact of DPAP in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu covering the period 1974-75 (derived from DPAP evaluation study) and 1978-79 information collected by him. In all, 94 respondents were studied by the DPAP evaluation survey in

1974-75 and 80 respondents for 1978-79 in order to assess the changes that occurred in assets position of the farmers. The study has revealed that the marginal farmers have benefited more by the project than the small farmers owning upto five acres. There is a change in the farm assets position of the beneficiaries due to credit facilities provided. The investment on livestock is very high in the case of marginal farmers whereas the same has registered a limited increase in the case of small farmers. The increase in non-farm assets position indicates a potential that could be diverted to profitable agricultural uses.

S. D. Chamola *et al.* in their paper have made a critical appraisal of the organizational set-up and its impact on fulfilling the objective of the DPAP in Bhiwani district of Haryana. It is noted that the existing set-up is not much suitable for planning, formulation and implementation of the programme due to lack of cohesion among the different agencies associated with the DPAP programme. Frequent transfers of the project officers have also affected the proper functioning of the programme. Tej Bahadur *et al.* in their paper have examined the resource productivity and allocative efficiency of various inputs by the participant and non-participant small farmers having less than five acres of holdings. The data pertain to a sample of 90 farmers in Markapur block of Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh. The analysis has revealed that the participants had their entire operational holdings 'irrigated dry' type as compared to rainfed dry of the non-participating farmers. The value of farm assets is comparatively higher in the case of beneficiaries than others. The farm production per acre has also shown increase from pre-to-post-project periods. There exists scope for reorganization of resources for better returns on all types of farms.

OTHER PROGRAMMES: FOOD FOR WORK

Three papers have been contributed on the topic 'Food for Work Programme'. Saroj Chaudhuri has surveyed two villages in Birbhum district of West Bengal. The study has found that the participants of the scheme were mainly from the depressed castes of the rural society and worked under the scheme for one to two days and a maximum of 12 to 14 days. The work consisted mainly of removing sands from the agricultural lands and village roads damaged by the flood. The impact of the scheme on generating additional gainful employment was rather marginal in view of the shorter duration of the scheme. Most of the respondents did not feel that the scheme had helped in increasing the income or efficiency. The author recommends improvements in the organizational arrangements and area planning at the block level. P. K. Chatterjee has studied the impact of the programme in Hooghly district, West Bengal. The study has revealed that the daily earnings (both cash and kind) of the unskilled worker under the programme came to about Rs. 5.45 against the statutory minimum of Rs. 8.10 in the State. Not much tangible assets have been created. According to him, the expenditure incurred under the programme was 'relief-oriented' rather than 'development-oriented'. The supervisory organization at the Gram Panchayat

level was almost non-existent and devoid of technical competence for the purpose of properly assessing the work done. A. Francis Devaraj and D. Sita Ramaprasad in their paper have referred to a study made by them in respect of ten villages in Tiruvarur block of Thanjavur covering 70 male workers under the Food for Work Programme. About 80 per cent of the rural workers covered were scheduled castes. Most of them preferred to work under the programme for one reason or the other. The aggregate income of each family ranged from Rs. 390 to Rs. 8,640 per month. About 15 per cent of the participants who received their wage as rice utilized it both for consumption and sale. They have suggested that the Food for Work Programme should result in the self-sufficiency of the village economy and basically provide jobs to all under-employed and unemployed village poor.

H. G. Goswami has in his paper referred to organizational inadequacies and deficiencies of the special programmes for weaker sections, such as SFDA and MFAL Programme, identification of beneficiaries, formulation of credit plans and programme financing. The paper is too general and is claimed to be based on the experience gained from the field work, meetings attended by him and discussions with concerned field officers from time to time. Continued shortage of trained staff has delayed the process of identification of the beneficiaries and the preparation of credit and production plans. The procedure followed by Commercial Banks was cumbersome and dilatory.

MISCELLANEOUS PROGRAMMES

On the basis of detailed interviews with the staff of a selected Farmers' Service Society (FSS) sponsored by a nationalised bank in Andhra Pradesh and scrutiny of records, R. M. Mohan Rao and D. S. Prasad have examined its performance with reference to administrative machinery, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and co-ordination. The services offered by the FSSs are more or less similar to that of the primary agricultural credit societies. The lapses of FSS are mainly organizational and administrative. C. L. Dadhich highlights the plight of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes vis-a-vis upper castes at the primary level of the pyramid type three-tier co-operative credit structure and inter-State variation in financing these backward classes, based on the analysis of secondary data relating to 13 States and 2 Union Territories.

N. Subba Rao has examined the impact of mechanization programme on the incomes of various groups of fishermen and the inequalities in the distribution of income in one marine fishing village near Visakhapatnam harbour. The study shows that the difference of fishing income between mechanized and traditional sectors was only marginal. The impact of mechanization had not been realised by the lower rungs of the fishermen community.

A. C. Sarma *et al.* have made an attempt to identify the impact of four purposively selected Agricultural Farming Corporations in Assam on the economic life of its member farmers during the period 1973-74 to 1975-76. The major findings are given under two heads, *viz.*, at the management level with particular relation to the growth complex and at the level of shareholders.

The various activities in the growth complex covers overall land distribution system, provision of funds under different heads for future development, amounts of various loans sanctioned to the shareholders and cultivation in the growth complex. The shareholders had received assistance from the corporation for land reclamation, machinery services, irrigation facilities, fertilizers, seeds, plant protection measures, technical guidance, etc.

Alexander Varghese has focused attention on evolving an income distribution strategy through rural works programme. G. B. Veluri has tried to analyse and compare the consumption patterns of cultivators and landless agricultural labourers in an agriculturally advanced taluk of East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, based on the analysis of family budget data collected by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Waltair for a period of three years (1969-70 to 1971-72). The author has mentioned the problems of the choice of the forms of the Engel function, and the basic differences in the levels of living of cultivators and agricultural labourers. He has estimated both income and expenditure elasticities. In the findings it is noted that any re-distribution of income in favour of the weaker sections of agricultural families, agricultural labourers, will lead to considerable increase in expenditure on essential items of consumption such as cereals. Unless there is an increase in the production of these commodities, it may cause a further rise in the prices of these commodities. On the basis of a study conducted in two villages (irrigated and unirrigated) in the Union Territory of Delhi and analysing the data using Lorenz curve and Gini ratio techniques, A. A. Rane finds that 61 per cent of the cultivator families from the unirrigated village and about 23.34 per cent from the irrigated village were below the poverty line. It is suggested that safe measures, such as differential pricing policy, differential interest rate, subsidies, reservations for jobs, concessional medical facilities should be adopted to reduce inequality in income distribution and for removal of poverty.

Ganesh Kawadia has studied the change in wage rates for unskilled labourers in Madhya Pradesh during the period 1960-61 to 1976-77, *i.e.*, pre-green revolution and post-green revolution periods. The real wages have not shown any growth during this period. It is stated that the wheat-jowar zone has shown the highest rate of increase and the rice zone has shown the lowest increase in money wages during the period. It brings out the fact that the green revolution had increased the regional disparity in wages for the weaker sections.

A. G. Prasad has examined the impact of well irrigation scheme financed by the Girijan Development Agency, Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. From the list of beneficiaries, 25 tribals for whom loans were sanctioned, wells sunk and in use were selected at random. Another 20 non-beneficiaries were selected to serve as control group. He does not take into consideration the 'before and after' situation of the beneficiaries but compares them with non-beneficiaries in the reference year 1976-77. The study shows that the beneficiary holdings had 42 per cent of the net area sown under irrigated conditions. The intensity of cropping had reached 114 per cent compared to 98 per cent in the case of non-beneficiary holdings. They were also able to raise crops

in the *rabi* season, adopt diversified cropping pattern and modern farming methods. There was increase in output as well as in the value of the land.

S. L. Deshpande *et al.* have made an attempt to analyse the changes in gross income and its potential level due to participation of small farmers in the Integrated Area Development Project introduced in Balapur *Panchayat Samiti* of Akola district in Maharashtra during 1977-78. With the introduction of HYV crops, the yields of cotton and wheat, gross income and employment of hired and family labour are reported to have increased substantially for the beneficiaries. Besides, there is a further potential of increase in income by over 50 per cent through subsidiary occupations like milch cattle and poultry, etc.

D. V. Kasar and J. M. Pardeshi have presented the results of their study of the mode of cultivation of allotted land, farm business economy and problems faced by landless agricultural labourers in the cultivation of allotted land. This is based on information collected from 80 new allottees benefited under the latest land Ceiling Amendment of 1972, randomly selected from eight villages of Ahmednagar district in Western Maharashtra for the year 1977-78. It stresses the need for supporting measures aimed at providing farm power, exploring irrigation possibilities on allotted lands, modern inputs, cheap credit and technical guidance to the new allottees. The scope for developing livestock is also indicated.

Ratan Ghosh has dealt with the impact of the Comprehensive Area Development Corporation amongst the target groups in the rural areas of West Bengal. He has highlighted the activities undertaken by the project, *viz.*, provision of irrigation facilities, arrangement of bank credit, provision of inputs and arrangement for marketing of produce. It is observed that the corporation is presently working under two structural constraints: (a) existing pattern of ownership of land and savings, and (b) prevailing pattern of availability of non-agricultural goods and services. This had resulted in quantitative increase in the production potential of the region but hardly any qualitative impact was noted. He is of the opinion that a very firm policy to eliminate the above constraints and political determination are required.

ISSUES

On the basis of the review of the papers submitted to the Conference, the following key issues emerge for discussion:

1. There is varying emphasis on the norms to be adopted for defining the 'weaker sections'. Whereas some authors follow a single definition, *i.e.*, income limit, several of them consider one or a combination of more than one criterion for defining the 'weaker section'. Furthermore, there is ambiguity in considering members of society as weaker segment of the population from the standpoint of economic and/or social status. For example, the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and Harijans often follow the occupations on the lower rungs of the agricultural ladder, *i.e.*, agricultural labour. The Group may want to discuss and redefine its approach to the understanding of the 'Weaker Sections'.

2. The definition of 'weaker sections' is basic to the approach providing solution to the target groups. Usually, the target groups are defined by the village officials such as the Block Development Officer, Village Level Worker, etc. Should not the identification of the target groups be done by a village assembly to safeguard against wrong identification?

3. From the contributions presented, it appears that the programme of 'subsidy' has been able to help, by and large, the better off sections among the target groups. As against this, the benefits of direct employment generation under programmes like the 'Food for Work' have percolated to the agricultural labourers and the weaker sections substantially. The question before the Group is whether the Government policy be reoriented towards providing direct employment to the weaker sections as against the programmes of 'subsidy' which is availed of by persons possessing some assets and are better off among the community.

4. In view of the above, it is for consideration whether the 'Antyodaya' approach should be followed in identifying the target groups requiring immediate assistance. Under the 'Antyodaya' approach, the poorest of the poor are given the benefit of assistance first.

5. The inadequacies in the organization, co-ordination and conduct of several special programmes have come to the notice. Often, programmes are pushed in habitations which are not 'prepared' to absorb such programmes (as also their likely benefits). It has also been observed that the Steering Committees at various levels, *viz.*, State, district, block have not been working satisfactorily. Their meetings are few and far between and these are held often in a perfunctory manner. The Group may deliberate on the manner in which such Steering Committees could be made more effective from the standpoint of their effectiveness in implementing the programmes.

6. Another aspect, ancillary to the above, is the organization of the rural poor. Unless efforts are made to organize local action groups to manage the local affairs themselves in a co-operative way, these groups would not be able to derive fuller benefits of the programme.

7. The basic reason why the weaker sections are not able to derive their due share in the benefits of several well-intended programmes is mainly on account of lack of 'access' to (a) information, (b) extension and (c) credit. Furthermore, social scientists have observed that those who are nearer to the governmental machinery derive the benefits of programmes most. The problem is one of 'equal accessibility' in an unequal society. What measures should be adopted to enable the weaker sections to have equal access to all the facilities is important.

8. Lastly, besides the conceptual issues involved in assessing the special programmes for weaker sections as a strategy for improving income distribution, larger issues of organization and implementation as referred to above are important. Adequate arrangements need to be made in respect of all special programmes for effective monitoring and independent evaluation so that it can provide the necessary feed-back mechanism to the policy makers and the planners.