

Chapter VIII

Short Summary, Overall Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

8.1: Introduction

We have achieved our long dream of independence 65 years back and since then our successive governments have been spelling out innumerable schemes and programmes to combat poverty and hunger. In every budget, allocations have been made specifically for these programmes. But all such programmes have not been successful in achieving the desired results.

In this research investigation we have tried to identify the socio-economic bottlenecks of the existing poverty alleviation measures. Also we have discussed the overall poverty analysis in the developing country context. This chapter is structured as short summary, overall conclusions and policy recommendations.

8.2: Short Summary

Most of the poor of the world belong to the developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia who are in fact not capable of keeping them up with the economic levels of the West. In any analysis of poverty we very often discuss the issue of human development. Human development, broadly speaking, calls for the progress of human lives and the well-being of every citizen of the country. Many reasons have been identified for the prevalence of poverty. One such example identified is that some countries may have small amount of arable lands with an excessive large number of populations. This creates poverty to a greater extent. The UNDP published (published by the Oxford University Press, 2000) Human Development Report 2000, suggests that expanding human capabilities and ensuring human rights can empower people to remove poverty. In this report a number of steps have

been suggested such as to adopt pro-poor growth process, remove discrimination against the poor to ultimately improve the conditions of poverty. It is also suggested that poor people especially the women should be given right to participate in the decision making process. More access need to be provided to the poor, the landless in particular, on natural resources for their survival. Regarding the definition of 'poor' or the 'poverty line' in particular innumerable definitions have been provided. But the common definition of poverty relates to the situation in which poor people do have less access over resources like, land, food, shelter, cloth, education, health, natural resources etc. for sustainable livelihood. In this context, human poverty in some developing countries such as India, Sri Lanka, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been considered and their HDI rank and value have been compared.

Poverty aspects in India and West Bengal have been analytically discussed with a detailed analysis of major poverty alleviation measures adopted since independence. Many of such programmes suffered from a number of drawbacks. The poverty dimension changed with the introduction of new economic policy since 1991. Globalization allows free movement of capital, labour, knowledge and Technology due to which there has been marked escalation in the volumes of trade and investment. This in fact the globalisers believe, has helped to reduce Poverty globally, benefiting all the countries and people, although not equally.

In our research study we have tested some hypotheses like the reduction in poverty over time and that has been proved to be true. This we have noticed while analyzing both primary as well as secondary data. The next important hypothesis we have tested is that anti-poverty measures have not reached to all the poor equally. These we have also tested. We have also found that due to change in the market structure and that of the demand pattern of consumers and the rising pattern of standard of living price indices have raised which may have negative

effect on the poor on their standard of living.

The core of our investigation is the analysis of the survey data, cross-section data for the year 2007-2008, on socio-economic issues, such as literacy, government aid, food for work, mid-day meal, meal status, etc. Dakshin Dinajpur district has been chosen for our detailed investigation. The data collected, presented in tabular and graphical forms have been presented in chapters six and seven where we have presented the village level study and compared our results with official results.

8.3:Overall Conclusions

This study narrates especially the impact of anti-poverty programmes of India since independence. In the discussion of poverty in India we have reviewed existing literature related to poverty in India and West Bengal. We have reviewed literature relating to poverty analysis in general. We have analyzed the data of Draft 9th five year plan (1993), Government of India and found that rural poverty presented in terms of 'poverty line' had gone down from 45.7 percent in 1983 to 39.1 percent in 1987-88 and again to 37.3 percent in 1993-94. Following calorie norm i.e., 2440 Kcal it was found that poverty ratio was 66.6 percent in 1983. It came down to 65.8 percent in 1987-88. But this went up to 70 percent in 1993-94. Comparing these two norms we notice an increasing gap (in 1983 the gap was 21.1 percent, in 1987-88 it was 26.7 and in 1993-94 it rose to 32.7 percent). As a measure to eradicating poverty Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty (1987) opined that the landless and marginal farmers would be given access to land and other productive assets along with a programme of well-conceived public works. We have noticed a sharp decline in the poverty in India especially since opening up of the economy in favour of a more open and market oriented economy and also possible due to unprecedented average growth rate of over 8 percent from

1995-2007. The data on meal status have been collected on the basis of 'two square meals in three months', 'two square meals in six months', 'two square meals in nine months' and 'two square meals throughout the year'. On the basis of food intake (two square meals a day), we have estimated BPL population in Balurghat and Gangarampur rural areas. We have also calculated proportion of poor for both the areas. The proportion of poor is extremely high i.e., it is 0.803 in rural Balurghat and in rural Gangarampur it is 0.675. This may perhaps be due to the fact that there are more job opportunities in rural Gangarampur than Balurghat. The rural Gangarampur is agriculturally developed with the vast expansion of multiple cropping (three crops in a year) and larger productivity rate than agriculture in rural Balurghat. We have noticed a huge illiteracy among the rural masses, more than 45 percent. This is more among the women and girl children. A large number of child labour we have noticed in agricultural activities especially during the sowing and harvesting seasons. While comparing BPL population data (our data with official data) we particularly found a huge gap. Huge variation in poverty is found in Chakvarigu and Patiram, while the gap has been minimum in Uday and Sukdevpur GPs. Overall poverty gap is about 25 percent (our results : 67.54 percent, official results: 42.23 percent).

8.4: Policy Recommendations

On the basis of our observations we may make the following recommendations.

- a) The major issue in the analysis of poverty today is with the identification of 'poor' or identifying people below the poverty line. The identification suffers from two basic problems, i.e., 'inclusion problem' or 'exclusion problem'. In the first case, some people may be included in the list of BPL who are in fact not the poor. Naturally their names should not be in the list of BPL population. Also there might be 'exclusion

problem 'which states that some people have been excluded, i.e., their names should have been there in the BPL category. But unfortunately they have not been included in the list. These problems specifically create misuse of government aid aimed at to be spent on anti-poverty programmes. It is thus of utmost necessity to make the solid BPL population list which will be free from all sorts biasness (social, political, religious, racial etc).

- b) Many people living in the rural areas do not possess valid ration cards or voter identity cards. There are two concepts on census: one is the population census and the other one is the M.R. census. Here, we can see two different numbers of BPL populations. In West Bengal as a whole, a news came in a daily a few days back stating that there are more than 74 lakh excess ration cards issued in West Bengal and in Darjeeling district alone this number touches more than 4 lakh. This should be stopped and all the fake ration cards should be withdrawn.
- c) Impact of mid-day meal has been found encouraging especially in the rural areas. But the quality and the quantity need to be improved and enhanced to attract children more to the school. For this, additional allocation of funds is very much required.
- d) Vested land distribution and the registration of bargadars and pattaholders were thought of improving the economic conditions of the poor (landless day labourers, marginal farmers and workers engaged in informal sector). About 11 lakh people received vested land up to November, 2011. But the average size of the plots of agricultural land is very tiny which is not economically viable. Naturally, a tendency has been seen among the holders of small plots of land. They are either selling the land

or leasing it out. This system is known as 'reverse tenancy'. Thus, the system of distribution of vested agricultural land or registering the bargadars under 'Operation Barga' system could not improve the economic status of the poor in a substantial way.

- e) We plead for proper identification of poor and pooling them according to their socio-economic status. We also plead for distribution of funds to the poor through direct cash transfer from only one source. This means that all the channels through which poor people are targeted for improving their conditions should come under one umbrella. If that be done, this can reduce the leakage of funds to the minimum possible level. If everything goes on smoothly we can only then expect a '**World without Poor**' by 2025.
