

Chapter - VIII

Concluding Observations

1. Reasons for Extending the Period of Study:

Despite spectacular events of a number of experiments under different Five-Year Plans, it was realized during the Fourth Plan that the fruits of overall economic growth could hardly percolate to the poorest sections of the rural community. Though the Fourth Plan showed its adherence in the direction to economic development through certain area-specific and group-specific rural development programmes. Ever since the Fifth Plan, the special attention on the significant reduction and ultimate alleviation of poverty has become the key-issues for accomplishment. Towards the end of the Fifth Plan, the objectives got momentum with the introduction of Integrated Rural Development Programme and, thereby, 'the basic strategy of combining the minimum needs Programme with Programmes for employment and income generation took concrete shape'.

However, in realization of its aspects, IRDP was a ambitious effort and as a strategy, it was a credit-based multi-variant development Programme for rural economy. And, most strikingly, it was 'the single largest anti-poverty Programme' which came into operation in 1978-79 in the country.

In addition to this, during the Sixth Plan period, in a significant development in the rural areas, a sub-scheme of IRD Programme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was introduced in September 1982 in the country. Virtually, it was also the single largest gender specific anti-poverty programme implemented for the development of status of poor rural women. This Programme differed from the largest anti-poverty Programme, i.e., IRDP in the sense that it aimed at ensuring self-reliance among poor rural women through the formation of groups by providing subsidies for income generating activities.

Significantly, in the late nineties, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India found that despite many efforts, 'rural poverty in India continues to be significant'. Despite poverty reduction (from 56.44% in 1973-74

to 37.27% in 1993-94), 'the number of rural poor has more or less remain static and is estimated to be about 244 million persons'. However, the Government of India expressed its concern once again for the quick redressal of the situation. Consequently, the self-employment programmes are assumed significant as 'they alone can provide income to the rural poor on a sustainable basis'.¹

In this context, the Ministry of Rural Development found several leakages in the prevailing multiplicity of Programmes, i.e., IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA and GKY. Of which the major leakage has been that 'the implementation being more concerned with achieving individual Programme targets rather than focussing on the substantive issue of sustainable income generation'.² However, with a view to restructuring the existing self-employment programmes, a new programme called "Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana" has been launched from April 1999. With this new development, the above programmes including MWS 'are no longer in operation'.

It deserves mention that more importantly, the base year of our period of study has been 1988-89 and the special reason of its consideration is the Consecutive Panchayat Election of 1988 in the State of West Bengal. The attempt is, however, to stress on the specific objective to study the impact of the Programme in the light of decentralized development process and the role of Panchayat members at the grassroots level.

In the changed circumstances, we have found adequate reasons for extending the period of our present study from 1988-89 to 1998-99 (including the terminal year of the Programme, i.e., IRDP and DWCRA). Here, we have also had an ample scope to cover the third and fourth phases of Panchayats and to assess the experiences of newly elected Panchayat members in the 1998 election in the Left Front regime. However, the present selected study period (1988-89 to 1998-99) has supposedly allowed sufficient scope for a concrete and coherent evaluation of the Programme undertaken for the present study.

2. The Summary of the Study:

It deserves mention that the 'poor' specially the rural poor who are analyzed as 'actors' by many scholars "are not passive victims...but try to get the best out of their opportunities that emerge and to respond actively to changing

conditions".³ In this sense, the poor are not unproductive or economically inactive in the process of socio-economic development. But, in many cases, the opportunities are felt inadequate and the conditions are found even detrimental towards the development of the rural poor.

Likewise, even though the varied strategies of development have been generated from a high degree of good intention of the government, these could hardly reach the poor and attack on the rigid base of inequality in India. And, in the 1990s, the situation became much more complex with the economic reform policy (Chapter-I). In the prevailing situation of high incidence of poverty in the District of Cooch Behar (of which some areas are selected for our present scrutiny), the District machinery took effort to implement IRDP and DWCRA with the objectives of planned development for integrating 'economic growth' with 'social justice' (Chapter-II). In fact, the Programmes (i.e., IRDP and DWCRA) had been the outcome of the need of the hour through which it was intended to identify the poor families and to assist them with care (Chapter-III).

In case of West Bengal, our detailed analytical discussion (Chapter-IV) shows that the Left Front Government has been able to establish a coordinated development process for poverty alleviation. In this process, the decentralized and democratized local institutions and the involvement of local people in the process ensured a political change through popular participation which would ultimately lead to the economic change of the society. Despite the fact, West Bengal does not show any glaring instance in terms of the implementation of IRDP and DWCRA when compared to the performance of All India Level (Chapter-IV and VI). Whereas, the official records of the District of Cooch Behar (i.e. DRDA) depict mixed results: while the District level performance in terms of IRDP had not been far away from satisfaction (Chapter-V), the performance of DWCRA shows some glaring deficiencies (Chapter-VI).

But, while our present study has been carried out with the objectives of analyzing the progress of IRDP and DWCRA in some selected areas of Cooch Behar District, the two relevant case studies reveal that the overall achievement of the Programmes, implemented in the decentralized alternative development process in West Bengal do not present an encouraging picture in terms of the

creation of employment and generation of income. Even though the sampled IRDP beneficiaries and DWCRA group members were not found inactive rather, the responsive 'actors' in the overall process of development (Chapter-VI and VII).

3. The Shortcomings of the Programmes, the Major Findings and Relevant Suggestions/Recommendations:

A number of relevant conclusions can be reached and summed up in regard to the problems and difficulties at different stages in implementing the Programmes and, also, the major findings as revealed in the present study. Also, relevant suggestions/recommendations are presented based on the viewpoints of the respondents and the experiences gained by the investigator during the course of the present study. As the study demonstrate, these can be understood from the following facts. The relevant chapter and page numbers where further details could be sought are indicated in the brackets.

3. (A) Major Constraints:

3. (a) (i) On Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA):

The detailed analyses of our present study indicate the problematic nature of development discourse of DWCRA Programme. The first and foremost issue of problem can be stated on the participation and control of women as Gina Koczberski explains the remark of Boulding – how women of the developing countries can be 'integrated into development...' that "women had little say in the way of development initiatives... It is somewhat disturbing that Boulding's comments continues to ring true today".⁴ Perhaps, it is because social attitudes are not changed adequately towards women even today. As it was found 7.69 percent of respondents in Cooch Behar-I and cent percent (i.e. 100%) of respondents in Dinhata-II reported that their products were always sold below the market price due to the fact that these were made by 'women' (Chapter-VI, pp- 333-36).

(ii) The wrong identification in many cases and lack of training facilities to the group members in most cases initially made constraints in the way to the proper implementation of the Programme. It was found in Cooch Behar-I that wrong identification had been made in 46.15 percent cases (Chapter-VI, pp- 312-

13). And, while in Cooch Behar-I, 7.69 percent of respondent beneficiaries took skill training first and then took up the economic activity and 92.31 percent of DWCRA members gained the special skills for fine craft activities from the training programme, none of the group members of Dinahata-II had been imparted training to extend their new knowledge (Chapter-VI, *pp- 318-320*). Obviously, these were the prima facie inconsistent.

(iii) Even though identification of trade was found potentially viable in a case (in Cooch Behar-I), it was found mostly traditional and severely irrelevant in the other case (in Dinahata-II). However, it appears that the effective measures were seemingly absent for the identification of suitable and viable trade and the project was inappropriately designed and implemented (Chapter-VI, *pp- 318-19*).

(iv) Insufficient assets (in case of both sample groups – Chapter-VI, *pp- 333-34*), inadequate/no infrastructure (in case of both sample groups – Chapter-VI, *pp- 321-22*), non-availability of adequate quantity of raw materials and its high cost (Chapter-VI, *pp- 318-20*) reportedly constrained the DWCRA groups towards their development of group activity.

(v) During the course of our survey study while efficient working and cooperative zeal was observed among the group members, the functional coordination was hardly prevailing among the various agencies. Rather, a major gap was found between the agencies and participants and the distrust was reportedly expressed by the authorities (Chapter-VI, *pp-343-44 & 318*). However, it was largely restrained with the communication gap between the participants and the government officials – the officials failed to become ‘the man of the people’ and remain mostly ‘outsiders’ or ‘professionals’ and the participants remain under the straight-jacket of disadvantaged and economically inactive (Chapter-VI, *pp- 343-49*).

(vi) The Programme was simply tried out for implementation but without having adequate provision of forward and backward linkages, depending largely on the traditional means (Chapter-VI, *pp-318-23*). Also, to our surprise, 66.67 percent of official respondents expressed that necessary forward and backward linkages were not established at all for the implementation of the DWCRA Programme (Chapter-VI, *pp-347-48*).

(vii) While the 'disadvantaged women' needed onward 'tiny pushes' and long-term basis supportive measures, all the functionaries did ensure ineffective, unsystematic and even very poor monitoring system. The over-burden of work, reportedly inadequacy of sufficient staff, non-expertised and largely non-committed officials had been the important constraints in the way to managing the effectiveness of the programme (Chapter-VI, pp- 318-24 and 337-49).

(viii) Even the local constitutional and extra-constitutional leaderships failed to ensure a strong vigil and supervision despite their strong political will and a positive role towards social change and their interrelation with the social life. Strikingly, while the leaderships showed much supports in the sanctioning process, their attention in the overall development process of the Programme was hardly praiseworthy (Chapter-VI, pp-337-43).

(ix) Another worrying issue which coupled with the poverty of the group members was the vicious circle of oppressive conditionalities in the society as well as in the market system. However, the situation to which the DWCRA members of Cooch Behar-I had to face soon after the stopping of group activity, degenerated to the situation to be far from being liberated. Because, women labour is fairly attractive and, by definition, it is 'overtime' (Chapter-VI, pp- 325-329).

Finally, it was revealed from the close observation that it was not caste structure or tradition or culture but the variation of economic condition and educational status of the respondents within the group which created complexities, made constraints in the way to the improvement of the group activity (Chapter-VI, pp- 308-09 and 324-29).

3. (A) (b) On Integrated Rural Development Programme:

Likewise, the problematic issues involved in the development discourse of IRD Programme as found in our study, can be summed up in the following way:

- (i) If not significant, the wrong identification of beneficiaries (i.e. 5.83% cases in Sahebganj; 5.00% cases in Burirhat-I and 15.00% cases in Bamanhat-I) and the lack of direct involvement of the banking institutions and the block functionaries in the selection process proved to be prima facie inconsistent. In regard to this, no satisfactory

explanation was forthcoming from the Cooch Behar DRDA (Chapter-VII, *pp- 371-74.; pp-396-401 and 430-32*). Further, the classification of non-beneficiary respondents on the basis of annual income and their perception and satisfaction on the selection process reveal the cases of exclusion and deprivation from assets to the people of deserving classes. These major lacunae were not only found in the selection process but also in the identification of target groups (Chapter-VII, *pp- 369-74*). Here, the prominent political consideration as found in our present study in each Gram Panchayat (Sahebganj, Burirhat-I and Bamanhat-I) was not also conducive for effectiveness of the Programme (Chapter-VII, *pp- 371-74*). As the 'political Panchayat' members have been used more for political gains rather than development activities.

- (ii) The study showed that in Sahebganj G.P. -- 95.00 percent, in Burirhat-I G.P. -- 98.33 percent and in Bamanhat-I G.P. -- 96.67 percent of respondents reported the time lag involved in the sanction and disbursement process of loans under IRDP. Generally, it augmented the undue suffering of the poor beneficiaries (Chapter-VII, *pp- 375-76*).
- (iii) Another factor which reduced the assets and caused the situation to be degenerated was the cases of malpractices and corruptions found in the IRDP development process. As, on overall basis, 12.22 percent of respondents reportedly required to grease the palm of the functionaries (Chapter-VII, *pp- 376-77*).
- (iv) On the overall basis, 58.61 percent of beneficiary respondents and the overwhelming majority of 83.33 percent of non-beneficiary respondents expressed dissatisfaction in terms of cooperation of the respective bank branch. They pointed out either the difficulties they experienced or the ill treatment they endured or the terms and conditions which made constraints in the way to carrying out economic activity under IRDP. Because, in most cases, the bank officials were pursued by their proverbial assumption of wastage of money towards IRDP beneficiaries (Chapter-VII, *pp- 377-79*).

- (v) While the distribution of beneficiaries covered under different schemes showed almost identical results in the selected three G.P.s, there had been a negligible coverage of beneficiaries in Minor Irrigation Scheme (6.67% cases in Sahebganj, 5.83% cases in Burirhat-I and only 1.67% cases in Bamanhat-I) in spite of ever-growing demand for irrigational facilities in the District. Further, of the total beneficiaries, it was found that heavy concentration was given only on the Business and Service sector (in Sahebganj – 52.50%, in Burirhat-I – 45.83% and in Bamanhat-I – 48.33%). Perhaps, heavy concentration on the particular sector/project negated the basic philosophy of the Programme i.e., RDP (Chapter-VII, *pp* –382-85).
- (vi) The glaring deficiencies which were found in the present study that on overall basis, the selected schemes of 197 persons of the total 360 respondents were not related to the subsequent primary or secondary occupations. It indicates that the schemes were selected either haphazardly or without having viability of assets or, assets had been grossly misutilized (Chapter-VII, *pp*- 385-86).
- (vii) The study showed that the Working Capital or assets provided had not been reportedly sufficient for carrying out economic activity (as on overall basis, 53.05% of respondents felt the inadequacy of assets). In addition, the assets whether provided in cash or kind created many problems. It was also revealed that the procedure as followed by the functionaries was cumbersome and was supposedly wrong (Chapter-VII, *pp*- 386-88).
- (viii) Further, one of the major leakages as revealed in the study that as many as 261 of the total 360 persons (i.e., 72.50%) did not utilize their assets properly and, the remaining 27.50 percent failed to carry out their economic activity on the long-term basis and, their assets were not found intact (Chapter-VII, *pp*-389-91). Consequently, the cases of maximum over dues outstanding against the beneficiaries were found (Chapter-VII, *pp*- 391-93).

- (ix) A very glaring deficiency as revealed in our present study that almost in all cases the functionaries i.e., DRDA officials, bankers, Panchayat members, extra-constitutional leaderships and the NGOs did not pay necessary visits to enquire the problems faced by the poor beneficiaries. Though Burirhat-I and Bamanhat-I showed some positive indications in this regard, these G.P.s could not suggest a people-centred development process in terms of IRDP implementation (Chapter-VII, pp- 393-96).
- (x) The study further showed and proved our hypothesis that a significant majority of respondents either could not create additional employment in the family or it was not created on sustained basis. As it was found that a majority of 55.56 percent of total respondents reported that the scheme did not help them to create subsidiary activity in the family and, only a meagre 43 of the total 360 persons (i.e., 11.94%) reported about their subsidiary activity for a long-term basis (Chapter-VII, pp- 396-98). Here, Burirhat-I and Bamanhat-I G.P.s showed relatively a better result than that of Sahebganj G.P.
- (xi) A real insight in terms of the generation of the additional income and its extent as revealed in our present study was the inadequacy of incremental income of the overwhelming majority of respondents. It was observed that only a meagre 4.72 percent (or 17 persons of the total respondents) had their high level of incremental income (Chapter-VII, pp- 398-401).
- (xii) It is revealed in the response pattern of both beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents that while an overwhelming majority of respondents expressed a remarkable degree of satisfaction on the panchayat system, a number of respondents indicated a varying degree of limitations of panchayats' activities. The question of widespread corruption reportedly prevalent in the panchayats' activities is a serious problem, indeed. Due to its possible multi-farious negative effect, we suggest for checking the limitations in time. Otherwise, it would affect bi-directionally the democratization process of the Left Front Government as well the poorer's interest. (Chapter-VII, pp-402-406)

- (xiii) It appears from our present study that the major factor underlying the failure of the specific programme in the selected area was the narrow focus on achieving only the targets by the constitutional and extra-constitutional leaderships. In a 'people-centred' and 'party-inspired' development system neither the constitutional nor the extra-constitutional leaderships could ensure properly the committed 'continuous vigil and supervision' to the potential beneficiaries of IRD Programme. (Chapter-VII, *pp- 406-08*)
- (xiv) More significantly, 100 percent of panchayat leaderships in each G.P. under study viewed that the schemes and the economic activities under IRDP alone could never help the rural poor because these were inseparably linked up with the common development programmes. But, our present study indicates that these had been hardly linked up with the other development programmes. Rather, the gross failure is supposedly indicative that it was scatteredly implemented with the 'narrow focus' of achieving 'targets' only. (Chapter-VII, *pp-415-17*).
- (xv) Our study showed that to our surprise even the 'pro-poor' panchayat members, a 'main pillar' of alternative development approach overwhelmingly expressed the dissatisfaction about the performance of IRD Programme. As 90.00 percent of total respondents expressed dissatisfaction on the performance. Of these: as many as 75.00 percent expressed 'Not satisfactory' and the remaining 15.00 percent replied 'Not at all'. (Chapter-VII, *pp-420-21*). Similarly, none of the official respondents and bank officials expressed satisfaction on the issue. (Chapter VII, *pp-428-35*).
- (xvi) More interestingly, the government official and bank official respondents surveyed were found much reluctant and mostly defensive on some issues but very open-minded and frank on some other issues. Besides, the official respondents expressed divided opinions and sometimes expressed very negative views against other agencies. These issues can be summed up as follows: (a) the government official respondents over-emphasized the issue that the DRDA was fully

equipped for supporting the beneficiaries. And, in case of time lag involved in the process, they were found reluctant to admit any leakage of the DRDA but argued that in most cases the bank branches delayed during the disbursement of loans. On the contrary, a significant majority of 70.00 percent of bank-official respondents established the view that the initiatives of the DRDA had been 'target oriented' rather than 'growth oriented'. Both the government and bank official respondents over-emphasized the fact that the Panchayat members involved themselves only to achieve the 'target oriented activities' without caring for the effectiveness of the Programme. (b) It also reveals in our study that the official respondents were not found hesitant but more open-minded and frank in admitting their deficiencies on the issue of follow-up action. Contrarily, 100 percent of government official respondents reported that they found a wide-ranging limitation of working zeal among the beneficiaries. Likewise, 100 percent of bank officials reported that the beneficiaries under IRDP did not utilize their assets for the stipulated purposes. (c) Our present analysis further showed that there had been the divided opinions of the government official respondents in respect of the role of local political leaderships in the IRDP development process. While some of the respondents (33.33%) ascertained their positive attitudes to the local leaders, majority (66.67%) of them found reasons of corruption in it. On the contrary, while the system of politicization of rural development recognizes the direct and regular contact among the people and the constitutional and extra-constitutional leaderships, the bank official respondents expressed tremendous negative views and reported that they did not favour them in the process of development (Chapter-VII, pp- 423-37).

Finally, however, the main lacuna as revealed in our study was the wide ranging gap of functional coordination among the agencies involved in the process of IRDP implementation. While 91.67 percent of government official respondents expressed the lack of functional coordination, 100 percent of bank officials did not find harmony and reported that it was of 'very poor' quality. To

our opinion this important constraint elucidated by our study calls for a desirable and possible future line of research to reveal an intellectual clarity (Chapter-VII, pp- 424-25 and 432).

3. B. Major Findings:

The major findings of our study are summarized to give at a glance view, these are as follows:

3. (B). (a). General Findings:

- i) It appears from the analytical discussion that in India the rural development programmes still remain in the experimental level as success is noticeably low and there has been an ever-changing dimensions of developmental programmes. A fairly large amount is spent mechanically but the poor remained poor or became poorer. In addition, the confusion about the 'redundant people' has been compounded in the 1990s with the reform policy as the NRF (National Renewal Fund) or the 'designed safety net' would have little/no role to play in reality. (Chapter-I, pp- 40-41).
- ii) Our analytical discussion further indicates the scale of participation of the people in the political process in West Bengal which may presumably shows the political empowerment to the rural people. Their participation in the electoral process, their involvement in the local bodies and in the decision making process as well as in the implementation of development programmes are all significant ingredients towards decentralized and democratized development process. It got momentum when the participative institutions at the grass roots level i.e., 'Gram Sabha' and 'Gram Sansad' have been brought about to their doorsteps. These policies undertaken for the poverty amelioration measures are considered conducive for empowering the people of the hinterlands. (Chapter-IV, pp-204-36).
- iii) The political scenario of the selected three G.P.s reveals that in Sahebganj, the Congress (I) is the dominant party and in Burirhat-I the CPI (M) is maintaining its authority since 1988 with the fluctuation of narrow margin in 1998. But, in Bamnahat-I, even though the AIFB had been dominant upto 1993, since then it has lost its massive support and, whether the split is

administered by the CPI (M) or not or any kind of aberration in which the party involved, an undesirable change of political power has come into being in December 1999 (Chapter-VII, pp-355-59).

3. (B). (b) *On Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA):*

- (i) Even though the respondent families of the sampled two DWCRA groups were found male-headed, the DWCRA women not only worked for remuneration but also they had significant economic enterprises and their rôle in health care and education specially to their children. However, it is totally a misconception that women are 'unproductive' or 'economically inactive'. (Chapter-VI, pp – 318-21 and 330-33).
- (ii) It appears from the study that the DWCRA group members in Dinhata-II were properly identified and thereby the benefits were received by the target groups but a number of participants were found relatively economically better off and less deserving in Cooch Behar-I. (Chapter VI, pp- 312-13). Interestingly, the DWCRA members of the better off families were found more capable in carrying out income generating activities whereas the members of 'destitute', 'very very poor' or 'very poor' families, in particular, were found less capable in using their talents independently (Chapter VI, pp- 313-24)
- (iii) More importantly, IGA or any group activity can never be the separable economic phenomena denying favourable environment for suitable economic activity. As it was observed, while the performance of the group of Dinhata-II was found far from expectation in fulfilling the necessary conditions i.e., the promotion of the thrift, maintenance of the bank account, etc., the sampled group of Cooch Behar-I fulfilled all the preconditions for IGA (Chapter VI, pp- 320-23).
- (iv) The project undertaken by the group member of Cooch Behar-I was an established local small scale craft industry and largely caste-based with high potentiality and a major source of livelihood of the local people. Consequently the group activity got momentum during its effective years of working and caused a considerable positive effect on the occupational and socio-economic

status of the members. On the contrary, the project of the group of Dinhata-II is extremely local, purely traditional not a fine craft and not a potentially viable scheme. Consequently, it could not survive more than one year. Noticeably, the members found something better when they worked as agricultural labourer instead of group activity. (Chapter-VI, *pp-317-18 and 323-29*)

(v) The study brings about the fact that the assistance reportedly utilized properly by the members of the Cooch Behar-I and it was found better networked and high-positioned with strong team spirit, and they were capable of improving the living condition through additional income and employment. More significantly, they had become more self-reliant in the decision taking and empowered for social protection security and realization of rights through collectivization. – These were clearly commendable indications but hardly could survive. But, the awareness gained, survives with positive effect. (Chapter-VI, *pp- 320-33*)

(vi) The availability of forward and backward linkages were somewhat found in Cooch Behar-I, whereas it was completely an unheard phenomena in Dinhata-II. As it was portrayed by the respondents of Dinhata-II that the officials who were primarily responsible, failed to ensure the mobilization of resources, arrangements for training facilities, marketing of products and necessary monitoring. But, in reality the disadvantaged group needs direfully the 'reversal'. (Chapter-VI, *pp- 320-23 and 347-49*)

(vii) The effective working life of the respondents of Cooch Behar –I as it was illustrated that: (a) so far as the direct impact of the Programme is concerned they enabled to create subsidiary activities, felt confidence in their group activity and found opportunities for personal growth through employment opportunities. The programme had reportedly brought about a significant change of income level which caused in the improvement of the level of consumption and a positive change in asset holdings. In Dinhata-II, although the group was highly short-lived, their participation was not endured and the possibility of higher earnings and better lives had been far from expectation, the members enabled to improve their personal growth, security, realization of rights, healthcare, literacy, etc. at the time when group activity

was being carried out. (b) Likewise, the asset holdings and the indicators used for measuring the status of women (Table No. 12.1 and 12.2) in terms of indirect impact of the programme show also significant level of improvement but could not endure and, these declined with the changing perspectives. (Chapter-VI, pp- 324-33)

(viii) It emerges from the useful analyses that while economic activity (when we met the respondents) was not running: (a) in Cooch Behar-I, the impact of the Programme was such that there had been a revolutionary change and the uniformity of occupational status and the diversity of occupational structure were diminished; (b) but, in Dinhata-II, the occupational status of the participants in the post assistance period was found almost similar to the pre-assistance period. (Chapter-VI, pp-323-24)

(ix) It appears from the study that the sampled DWCRA group members had a popular and positive attitude towards the constitutional and extra-constitutional leaderships. But, by contrast, 100 percent of sampled respondents strongly established the statement that the government officials show 'official' attitudes and they are less responsive to local needs. (Chapter-VI, pp- 337-44)

Finally, most strikingly, if not women were empowered fully and their participation was not readily developed, some of the many issues vividly indicate – women are really the 'agents' or 'actors' of socio-economic development (Chapter-VI, pp-330-32). It is worthnoting that when we met the respondents, all women comprehensively expressed their views that they felt more comfortability at the time when DWCRA was in operation. Hence, they need for such a gender specific programme.

3. (B). (c). *On Integrated Rural Development Programme:*

(i) Our study reveals that the assets under IRDP were provided to the significant majority of lower income groups. As it was found 94.17 percent in Congress (I) led Sahebganj G.P., 95.00 percent in CPI(M) led Burirhat-I G.P., and 85.00 percent in (mainly) Forward Bloc led Bamanhat-I G.P. had been correctly identified/selected for IRDP assets. (Chapter-VII, pp- 398-99)

- (ii) As it is revealed, even though a majority of respondents expressed about political consideration as an important factor in getting or arrogating the benefits, a majority of total respondents supported the selection process in Sahebganj and Burirhat-I, whereas in Bamanhat-I 84.17 percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction on the process of selection. (chapter-VII, pp- 371-73)
- (iii) The study showed that even though the cases of mal-practices or corruptions had not been absent and found with varying degrees, on overall basis, 83.06 percent of respondents did not spend (much) money to get the assets sanctioned. (Chapter-VII, pp- 376-79).
- (iv) The study revealed an interesting feature that even though the uniformity of performance in terms of physical and financial achievement (Chapter-VII, pp-359-61) was not found among the G.P.s under study, the distribution of beneficiaries covered under different schemes showed almost identical results. (Chapter-VII, pp-382-85.)
- (v) Our study points out that on overall basis, 99 persons of the total 360 respondents (i.e., 27.50 percent) properly utilized their assets. It was only 14.17 percent in Sahebganj, 36.67 percent in Burirhat-I, and 31.68 percent in Bamanhat-I. The main reasons for the mis-utilization of assets as revealed in the study that most of the beneficiaries were more interested and were compelled to spend the assets for 'survival' and to meet acute family problems temporarily. (Chapter-VII, pp- 389-91)
- (vi) It reveals that an overall basis, only 15.00 percent of respondents either cleared up or were making repayments of bank dues whereas the remaining 85.00 percent of respondents were not able to make repayments, 65.56 percent made partial repayments but stopped altogether and, 19.44 percent did not make any of it (Chapter-VII, pp- 391-93)
- (vii) It is worthnoting that the three major findings revealed in our present study are: (a) the IRD Programme did not cause a commendable result in the way to generating incremental income to the overwhelming majority of the beneficiaries; (b) nevertheless, an increase in the level of income of the beneficiaries was found in almost every category of income level in each G.P.;

and (c) if not significant, on overall basis, 10.83 percent of beneficiary respondents enabled to cross the poverty line of Rs. 11,000. However, the study revealed the findings, are significant and lucid indeed. Our opinion is that it would be a desirable and possible future line of research to elicit the reasons of incremental income (Chapter-VII, pp- 398-401).

(viii) The study revealed a positive indication that the meetings of the 'Gram Samsad' were held regularly and the list of beneficiaries were being placed duly in it. (As 100 percent of panchayat members in each G.P. reported it). Though a large number of beneficiary respondents specially in CPI (M) panchayats' constituencies, reported that the decisions were taken actually by the party units. (Chapter-VII, pp- 371-73 and 412-15) Further, it was strongly established by the constitutional leaderships that the local political leaders involved in the process of IRDP implementation. (Chapter-VII, pp- 418-19)

Finally, there emerged a worrying consensus from the opinions of the constitutional leaderships, government and bank officials that IRD Programme could not ensure a positive impact on sustained basis in the rural areas.

Other two issues emerge out of the above –

- (i) while the study on DWCRA reveals mixed results, the study on IRDP shows mostly a meagre performance; and
- (ii) although the government of West Bengal pursued the policy of redistribution -- the key strategy of 'alternative development approach', the development programmes like IRDP and DWCRA had not progressed in all West Bengal uniformly. This would support our proposed hypothesis, so far.

3. (C) Relevant Suggestions/Recommendations:

In the changed perspectives when 'the single largest anti-poverty programme' i.e. IRDP and the single largest gender specific programme i.e. DWCRA are no longer in operation, we suggest not simply some measures to be taken but a 'reversals' in the broader perspective. The emerging issues coupled in our detailed study presumably call for such a good alternative within the 'alternative' for the accomplishment of identified tasks in West Bengal in which

the existing anti-poverty programmes, specially, the 'holistic programme' i.e. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) can have its sustainability.

The 'reversals' should be restarted and ushered in through a very people-centred planned economy both in the National and State Level. It is worth noting that the 'reversals' is 'simply' the committed process of learning 'from below', a process which may ensure the 'alternative development approach' of Left Front Government in West Bengal more and more effective based on real decentralized process of development. This can be backed up through the re-orientation of our values only: as the 'professionals' should have 'new values' of development so that the 'wave of development' would start in their minds. And, the remaining tasks should be steered by the 'committed leaderships with very special qualities' so that we can ensure our 'greater movement' with 'innumerable small steps and tiny pushes...not once but again and again and again'⁵ for peoples' empowerment.

Notes and References

- 1 “Guidelines” - Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 1999, p(Preamble)-i.
- 2 *ibid.* p-i.
- 3 Engberg-Pedersen, Lars: “Studying Poverty – Concepts and Approach” in Webster Neil (ed.): *In Search of Alternatives: Poverty, the Poor and Local Organizations- Local Organizations and Rural Poverty Alleviation*, LORPA, (Revised Papers from the Workshop on the CDR Research Programme *Local Organizations and Rural Poverty Alleviation (LORPA)*, Tune, Denmark, 28-30 August, 1996) CDR Working Paper, 98.10, Nov. 1998, p-15.
- 4 Boulding, E: “Integration into What? Reflections on Development Planning for Women”, in *Convergence*, 13(1-2), 1980, pp-50-59; quoted and analysed in Koczberski, Gina: “Women in Development: A Critical Analysis” in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.3, 1998, p-406.
- 5 Vide, Chapter VII, Note 30, p- 394.