

# AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN INDIA

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*India continues to be one of the poorest nations of the world despite the conscious efforts of the government, for the past four and a half decades, to alleviate poverty. Hence, this paper summarises India's poverty alleviation strategies at the macro level as an illustration to indicate how the philosophy behind the approach and the policy framework were responsible for partial success of these strategies. Besides, sectoral strategies had limited success because inter-sectoral linkages were not sufficiently recognised. This paper concludes that a multisectoral and multidimensional approach to poverty with proper emphasis on backward and forward linkages of needs may be followed in the spirit of human needs model coupled with good governance approach.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different approaches to poverty (Gupta and Kumar, 1997) emphasise different aspects of deprivation leading to different policy implications (Table 1). It is further argued that the policy framework for each approach will be different (Table 2). Moreover, even if an appropriate approach to poverty and a corresponding policy framework is adopted, policy formulation and implementation may not always achieve the expected results due to existence of various types of constraints.

Since India continues to be one of the poorest nations of the world despite the conscious efforts of the government, for the past four and a half decades, to alleviate poverty, the objective of this paper is to analyse India's poverty alleviation policies and programmes (PAPs) in terms of the 'Human Needs Model' (Doyal and Gough, 1991) with policy framework like 'Good Governance' and 'Interactive Model'.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section II gives a brief account of the poverty alleviation policies followed in the post-independent India. Section III discusses an alternative mechanism at macro level consistent with the human needs model, and Section IV deals with sectoral policies with specific emphasis on education. Finally, Section V concludes the discussion.

## II. INDIA'S POVERTY ALLEVIATION POLICIES

In India, the concerted efforts to alleviate poverty began immediately after independence. The entire period may be divided into three distinct phases depending on different approaches to poverty alleviation.

In the *first phase* (1950-1960s) the major emphasis was on redistribution of land, abolition of functionless intermediaries and tenancy reforms. Land reforms failed due

**Table 1 : Policy Implications of Different Approaches to Poverty**

Approach	Policy Implications
I. Income/consumption approach	a) Growth oriented strategy b) Redistribution with growth
II. Sen's entitlement approach	a) Growth mediated security b) Support led security  ( Both recognise 'Public Action' as a strong force)
III. Deprivation trap approach	Integrated approach with emphasis on people's participation and empowerment.
IV. Human needs model	a) Dual strategy with strong center and decentralisation; Growth with provision of securities (at macro level)  b) Sectoral balance and forward and backward linkages among needs (at micro level)

**Table 2 : Policy Framework Consistent with Different Approaches to Poverty**

Approaches to poverty	Dominant strategy/policy	Policy framework
Income/Consumption	Growth oriented	Top down
Deprivation trap	Participatory	Bottom up
Sen's approach	a) Growth led security b) Support led security	Synthesised model Thomas and Grindle's (1991) interactive framework
Human needs	Dual strategy	Good governance & interactive framework

to strong opposition from the various interest groups and lack of political will. The dominant development strategy followed during this period was industrialisation oriented growth based on the 'Harrod - Domar Model'.

The experience of a large number of countries shows that the impact of economic

growth on reducing the inequalities is mixed, but its impact on poverty alleviation is unambiguous (World Bank, 1990). The benefits of growth reach different economic groups approximately in proportion to their initial income/assets. Industrialisation oriented growth strategy could not improve the plight of the poor in India as they did not

have the capacity to respond to the growth stimuli and utilise the opportunities created by the development process (Vyas and Bhargava, 1995). The conditions which facilitate the response of the poor to such opportunities include a provision of public services, participatory decision making and right to self-determination in a democracy with strong state. A top-down policy framework cannot create such conditions and, therefore, necessitates change both in approach and policy framework.

By the late 1960s, the *second phase* of PAPs started with measures that were aimed at the poor in rural areas. This *target oriented* approach initiated at the level of central government, started with the programmes for the backward regions and then graduated to Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and National Rural Employment Programme (NREP). The distinguishing feature during this phase was the emphasis on creating employment opportunities and distributing renewable assets among the poor as compared to redistribution of land in the first phase.

The contribution of PAPs to the observed reduction in rural poverty has been significant in certain areas. The performance of IRDP was found to be distinctly better in the infrastructurally developed regions where the awareness levels and bargaining power of the beneficiaries were also higher (Subbarao, 1985). Even in these relatively progressive areas, IRDP benefited those of the poor who were nearer the poverty line (Vyas and Bhargava, 1995), though with substantial leakages (Hirway, 1991). Weak integration of self-employment activities and wage-employment programmes with the overall development strategy has led to the inefficient use of the large chunk of resources allocated to PAPs, low potential for sustainable employment generation and

insufficient impact on social development and protection of environment (Rao, 1992). IRDP and other programmes have not been able to evolve a strategy that ensures the sustained livelihood to the poor as well as the sustainability of the credit institutions.

In the *third phase*, starting from the beginning of the 1990s, emphasis shifted to measures aimed at accelerating economic growth through market oriented strategies and economic liberalisation. The target group oriented programmes are continuing but the dominant thought is to create more wealth through growth oriented strategies and then to enable the poor to benefit from the secondary effects of growth (Vyas and Bhargava, 1995).

Ravallion and Subbarao (1992) argue that in the short run the adjustment process associated with economic reforms is likely to affect the poor adversely because the costs will be felt quickly whereas, the benefits may take time to materialise. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to take care of the poor by maintaining the social sector expenditure during the adjustment period. Tendulkar and Jain (1995) argued that economic reform related decisions contributed indirectly rather than being the only or even the major cause of the sharp accentuation of rural poverty during the post-reform period, i.e. July 1991 to December 1992. During the post-reform period the rate of growth of economy has been 5 per cent per annum and expenditure on social sector has been maintained in real terms (GOI, 1995). Since the benefits of growth may not reach the poor due to various socio-economic factors, the target group oriented programmes are also being continued.

Thus, in the post independence period income/consumption approach has played a dominant role in identifying, measuring

and analysing poverty. The policies emphasised increase in incomes of the poor or the income earning capacity of the poor, rather than sustainable livelihoods. The linkage of income earning capacity to social infrastructure, human development and socio-political environment was not emphasised adequately. The main architect of these policies is the central government which apart from setting targets and allocating resources, issues guidelines about how to implement the schemes as well as the monitoring and evaluation criteria. Any default results in stoppage of release of funds. This top-down structure (Table 3) has little scope for incorporating the views of target groups and implementing agencies and, hence, can be seen as one of the causes of partial success of the poverty alleviation schemes.

A comparison of some of the social indicators for India with South Asia excluding

India and all the developing countries reveals that the performance of India is far from satisfactory (Table 4). As compared to all developing countries, India fares rather poorly in terms of per capita GDP, calorie availability, maternal mortality rates, etc.. India's performance appears to be better in provision of safe water and health services as compared to the other countries. But these services actually may not be available to the poor due to socio-economic or locational reasons. Krishnan (1992) reported that only 17.7 per cent of hospital beds are in rural areas in India whereas, 80 per cent of India's population is rural.

These sectoral and regional imbalances could be corrected by using a broad based approach to poverty like the human needs model which goes beyond the simple measure of income as an index of poverty and uses a number of indicators to measure human welfare.

**Table 3 : Top Down Policy Framework for PAPs in India**

Central government	Decides the policy, targets, resource allocation, implementation structure, and criteria for beneficiaries.
State government	Receives the allocation from central government subject to fulfillment of monitoring and evaluation criteria and releases funds to district authorities.
District	Receives the grants from state government subject to fulfillment of monitoring and evaluation criteria and releases the funds to village authorities.
Villages	Implementing agencies
Target group	

Table 4 : Social Indicators

S. No.	Indicator	India	South Asia excluding India	All Developing Countries
1	Daily calorie supply per capita, 1992	2135	2259	2546
2	Population with access to adequate safe water(%) 1988-93	79	77	69
3	Population with access to safe sanitation facilities (%)1988-93	27	31	36
4	Population with access to health services (%) 1988-93	85	77	79
5	Population per doctor(1988-91)	2439	7652	—
6	Population per nurse(1988-91)	3333	12098	—
7	Low birth weight babies (%) 1990	33	32	19
8	One year olds fully immunised against			
	a) Tuberculosis (1990-93) (%)	92	89	85
	b) Measles (1990-93) (%)	82	73	77
9	Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births 1980-92)	460	486	351
10	Lack of access to safe contraception and abortion (contraceptive prevalence rate, any method)	43	35	56
11	Life expectancy at birth (years) (1992)	60.4	59.3	63.2
12	Adult literacy ratio	49.9	43.1	68.4
13	Combined first, second and third level gross enrollment ratio (%), 1992	55	40	54
14	% in absolute poverty			
	a) Urban 1990	38	—	—
	b) Rural 1990	49	41	
15	Real GDP per capita (PPP\$,1992)	1,230	2,605	2,591
16	Human Development Index	0.439	0.489	0.570

Source : UNDP (1995).

### III. HUMAN NEEDS MODEL

The human needs model (Doyal and Gough, 1991) emphasises optimum satisfaction of universal needs for all human beings through central planning and democratic participation. People must have the right to self-determination. But individuals are not always the best judges of their own needs, and hence, a variety of public services have to be collectively planned and organised. Laws have to be enforced to ensure secure and safe access to need satisfiers. This approach advocates provision of basic satisfiers for all plus a macro economic strategy which then maximises the resources of the worse-off.

Applying the human needs model to the Indian context will, therefore, suggest a policy with strong development orientation as well as meeting the needs of specific target groups in a democratic set-up. The integration of PAPs with overall development strategy is a step in this direction. There are three major potential areas for integration of PAPs with the overall strategy (Rao, 1992):

*First*, stepping up the existing *wage employment programmes* in rural areas for capital construction in agriculture and for ecological development. Wage employment programmes like JRY, NREP, EGS, etc., are expected to provide relief to the unemployed poor, provide social infrastructure and help in creating public goods and externalities, e.g. through social forestry. Vyas and Bhargava (1995) reported that the primary objective of employment generation got neglected in most states as focus was on assets that require more capital like construction of *panchayat ghar*. These works benefit the rich more than the poor. Works like minor irrigation and afforestation which create more employment now and better opportunities for employment

in the future were neglected. The major drawback of the wage employment programme is weak linkages among different development programmes.

Integration of wage employment programmes with overall development strategy through sectoral programmes for capital construction, ecological development and measures for social development will lead to a more efficient resource base, create sustainable livelihoods and contribute to human development. This calls for a strong state to co-ordinate among various implementing agencies and a participatory target-group. Mere involvement of local level elected bodies in the planning and execution of programmes cannot ensure better choice of activities and more effective implementation.

In spite of reservation of seats for weaker sections of society including women, SCs and STs, the elected bodies are dominated by the rural elite, whose priorities are different from that of the rural poor. An institutional set-up needs to be evolved wherein the awareness among the poor improves and they are actually involved in the decision making process.

*Secondly*, stimulating the growth of household and small scale rural industries by integrating them with the existing *self employment programmes* like IRDP. Self employment programmes like IRDP are found to be weakly linked with the overall development strategy resulting in lack of flexibility both in selection of activities suiting local resource endowments and in devising methods for implementation (Rao, 1992). Lack of infrastructure, linkages, input supplies and marketing of outputs resulted in inefficiencies and wastages in the operation of IRDP. The Government of India recognised the need for strengthening and bringing about qualitative improvements

in the programmes through better targeting and better dovetailing of these programmes (GOI, 1995). For making these programmes successful, individuals need to be given the right to choose the activities, rather than activities being thrust upon them by the administration. Creation or enhancement of resource base of the poorest through better linkage of land reforms and credit expansion will then be consistent with the human needs model which advocates maximisation of the resources of the worse-off. Of course, involvement of NGOs with overall co-ordinating responsibility of the government for cost effective implementation of various programmes will continue to be the prerequisite for achieving the desired results.

*Thirdly*, acceleration in the pace of *social development* in rural areas. This will improve provision of basic needs like medical facilities, literacy, nutrition, etc., for all, resulting in improved quality of life on the one hand and increased employment on the other. It may maximise the resources of the worse-off through investment in human beings.

All these integration strategies advocate better choice of activities and effective implementation by devising appropriate institutional mechanisms. This may be achieved by adopting the 'good governance' as policy framework. India does have some elements of the good governance like a democratic set-up, sound judicial system, a strong bureaucracy and a powerful media to disseminate information. What it lacks is democracy at the grassroots level, the participatory decision making in true sense, a transparent bureaucracy and the effective institutional capacity.

One of the major criticisms of all the PAPs is lack of access to the poor and policies being designed by the outsiders with an

outsider's perspective and implemented by the local bureaucrats without actually considering the real requirements of the poor. Integration of PAPs with the overall development strategy will necessitate democratisation at the grassroots level through empowerment of the poor, so that they can voice their opinion and stake a claim for their genuine rights.

Another requirement is capacity building. Capacity building refers to promotion of institutional pluralism by fostering local government, NGOs and grassroots organisations with the objective of mobilising local human and financial resources and provision of community services (Landell-Mills and Serageldin, 1991). In India, there is a shortage of competent public agencies like NGOs to take the challenges of implementing the PAPs even with government support. Partly the massive bureaucracy is responsible as it overshadows development of any agency outside the government. As the bureaucracy is not always the best agency for welfare programmes due to leakages involved, inhuman attitudes, red tapism, lack of flexibility, etc., strong and time tested NGOs may have to be assigned a dominant role in a typical democratic set-up with sound judiciary and bureaucratic accountability. The existing district and village level bodies like DRDA and village panchayats need to be strengthened and given more autonomy to encourage self determination by people rather than being only an instrument of achieving the targets fixed by the central government. This kind of policy framework will automatically address the major constraints to policy making like mobilisation of resources, political will, attitudes of elite, etc., as the autonomous local bodies will be in a better position to take decisions compatible with desires and requirements of local people.

#### IV. SECTORAL POLICIES

India has generally low level of social development coupled with an acute inter-regional and inter-state disparity (Table 5). The literature has emphasised various types of linkages between three groups of factors determining social development, namely (i) demographic factors, (ii) literacy and (iii) income and other economic indicators. No clearcut pattern emerges from the records of various Indian states regarding these linkages. But certain trends are unmistakable, e.g. tangible reductions in birth and death rates are not possible without a significant improvement in literacy rate; and initial push to literacy and demographic achievement is a necessary condition for social development as is evident in the case of Kerala (EPW Research Foundation, 1994). A simple analysis of Table 5 clearly indicates that the poorest states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh also have a very low rate of literacy, high birth rate and high infant mortality rate.

Thus, health, literacy and poverty appear to be linked and any attempt to increase the incomes alone will not lead to improvement in sustainable livelihoods as illiterate and undernourished people cannot take advantage of the economic opportunities. The forward and backward linkages among the various sectors must be recognised and utilised for effective formulation and implementation of policies. To illustrate this point we will examine the case of education in India. To begin with we will discuss link of education with other sectors, followed by features of primary education in terms of coverage and disparities and finally reasons thereof.

##### Role of Education

Education is a valuable component of human capital and an important instrument

of economic development. It changes the habits of the people, makes people ready for change and to adopt new methods of farm practices and production (Raza and Ramchandran, 1990). Primary education particularly among women, contributes to reduction in fertility rates thereby reducing population growth (Nair, 1981). It is also found to significantly improve the rates of child survival and life expectancy. Effective elementary education also contributes to reduction in child labour and exploitation of children. It may be considered as a basic need, fulfillment of which helps in fulfilling other basic needs. It is also seen as an effective instrument of reduction of poverty, upward social and occupational mobility, empowerment of people and income redistribution (Tilak, 1996a).

"Access to appropriate formal education is universal prerequisite for the enhancement of individual autonomy" (Doyal and Gough, 1991, p. 215). Appropriate education entails learning basic skills which are common to all cultures such as literacy, general social skills and vocational abilities (Wetherly, 1996). Applying the principle that all people have the right to optimal need satisfaction may imply that individuals have the right to the highest level of education. In view of resources and other constraints, nations to begin with may choose only elementary or primary education as their goal.

The Constitution of India makes provision for free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14 years. The National Policy on Education (1986) reiterated emphasis on (i) universal enrolment and universal retention of children upto 14 years of age and (ii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education (Acharya, 1994a).



Table 5 : Comparison of Indian States in terms of Socio Economic Variables

S.No.State	HDI (1987)	Per capita at 70-71 in Rs.	SDP prices (1987) Rank	LEB 1986-90	Literacy ratio(1991)			IMR	DR per thousand	BR 1993	Population below poverty line (87-88)	
					Total	Male	Female				(%)	in lakhs
1 Uttar Pradesh	0.292	607	5	53.4	41.60	55.73	25.31	93	11.4	36.0	35.1	448.3
2 Bihar	0.306	482	1	54.9	38.48	52.49	22.89	70	10.6	32.1	40.8	336.4
3 Madhya Pradesh	0.344	583	3	53.0	44.20	58.42	28.85	106	12.6	33.4	36.7	224.9
4 Rajasthan	0.347	666	7	55.2	38.35	54.99	20.44	82	9.0	33.6	24.4	99.5
5 Orissa	0.348	535	2	54.4	49.09	63.09	34.68	110	12.2	27.2	44.7	135.1
6 Assam	0.372	605	4	53.6	52.89	61.87	43.03	81	10.2	29.5	22.8	52.9
7 Jammu and Kashmir	0.381	684	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8 Andhra Pradesh	0.397	758	9	59.1	44.09	55.13	32.72	64	8.4	24.1	31.7	195.7
9 Himachal Pradesh	0.462	855	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10 Gujrat	0.465	860	13	57.7	61.29	73.13	48.64	58	8.1	28.0	18.4	73.3
11 West Bengal	0.467	860	13	60.08	57.70	67.81	56.56	58	7.3	25.6	27.6	173.5
12 Karnataka	0.475	799	10	61.1	56.04	67.26	44.34	67	8.0	25.5	32.1	136.5
13 Tamil Nadu	0.483	828	11	60.5	62.66	73.75	51.33	56	8.0	19.2	32.8	176.9
14 Haryana	0.514	1233	16	62.2	55.85	69.10	40.47	65	7.8	30.6	11.6	18.2
15 Maharashtra	0.532	1039	15	62.6	64.87	76.56	52.32	50	7.2	25.0	29.2	214.1
16 Punjab	0.586	1612	17	65.2	58.51	65.66	50.41	55	7.9	26.3	7.2	13.9
17 Kerala	0.651	639	6	69.5	89.81	93.62	86.17	13	6.0	17.3	17.0	49.0

Source : Shiv Kumar (1991); GOI (1995).

### **Primary Education: Coverage and Disparities**

Important features of developments in education are enumerated below :

- (a) All children in the age group of 6-11 and 60 per cent of children in the age group of 11-14 in India are enrolled in primary and upper primary education as per the Government of India statistics. Generally, it was found that official enrollment ratios are about 25 per cent higher than the actual enrollment in primary education (Tilak, 1996a). Compared to the official figures of around 115 million children enrolled in elementary education in 1986-87, the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) estimates only 95 million in 1986-87.
- (b) According to the NSSO (1991), as many as 73 million children of the age group 6-14 were not currently enrolled in schools and 60.70 million children were never enrolled (Table 6). The proportion of rural children and that of
- girls who were currently not enrolled or never enrolled was higher as compared to that of the urban children/boys. This is a clear example of gender bias and urban bias.
- (c) There are inter-state variations (Table 7) in literacy and enrollment ratios. Drop-out rates are the highest for Bihar and Rajasthan which also happen to be the poorest states with high birth rate and low literacy. This indicates a vicious cycle where poverty and illiteracy further perpetuate each other.
- (d) Stark variations exist in literacy rates for principal social categories, namely, the general population, SCs, STs and women within each category. The percentage of literate among SCs and STs is much lower than that of the general population. Besides, the percentage of literate women is lower in all categories (Table 8). This indicates unequal 'access' to education for different groups in society.

**Table 6 : Number of Children Currently Not Enrolled and Never Enrolled in Schools, 1986-87**

(in millions)

	Age Group 6-11			Age Group 12-14		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
<i>Currently Not Enrolled</i>						
Rural	18.4	24.6	43.0	8.8	12.6	21.4
Urban	2.4	2.8	5.2	1.6	2.0	3.6
Total	20.8	27.4	48.2	10.4	14.6	25.0
<i>Never Enrolled</i>						
Rural	16.4	22.7	39.1	5.9	9.4	15.3
Urban	2.0	2.5	4.5	0.7	1.1	1.8
Total	18.4	25.2	43.6	6.6	10.5	17.1

Source : Tilak (1996a).

**Table 7 : Gender-wise and State-wise Percentage of Children (Age Group: 6-14) Never Enrolled, 1986-87**

State	Rural Areas			Urban Areas		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Andhra Pradesh	29.0	50.9	39.6	14.9	17.9	16.2
Assam	30.0	40.3	34.7	11.4	17.7	14.2
Bihar	52.9	74.7	62.4	30.9	46.7	38.4
Gujarat	23.3	45.8	30.3	10.4	17.3	13.7
Haryana	14.7	38.4	25.2	3.6	15.0	10.2
Jammu and Kashmir	26.1	53.5	39.4	19.3	28.4	23.7
Karnataka	25.5	44.5	34.6	12.2	16.5	14.3
Kerala	2.0	2.7	2.3	0.9	1.3	1.1
Madhya Pradesh	36.7	68.3	52.6	9.5	22.1	15.4
Maharashtra	16.6	30.2	23.1	7.6	12.7	9.9
Orissa	38.8	56.3	47.3	19.1	29.1	13.9
Punjab	24.5	34.1	29.2	9.0	10.1	9.5
Rajasthan	35.0	77.2	54.0	19.9	35.9	27.3
Tamil Nadu	7.8	19.8	13.8	2.7	7.4	5.0
Uttar Pradesh	36.8	69.9	51.8	26.5	40.3	32.7
West Bengal	38.7	53.2	45.5	15.2	21.2	18.0
All India	32.5	53.5	42.3	14.2	21.6	17.7

Source : Tilak (1996a).

**Table 8 : Enrollment By Stages and Social Groups, 1989-90**

(in millions)

Stage	SCs	STs	Others
<i>Primary</i>			
Male	9.523	4.948	43.261
Female	5.878	2.850	30.859
<i>Middle</i>			
Male	2.623	1.075	16.670
Female	1.298	0.494	10.028
<i>Secondary</i>			
Male	1.800	0.552	11.171
Female	0.644	0.244	5.560
<i>Higher Education</i>			
Male	0.238	0.057	2.444
Female	0.065	0.019	1.234
<i>Total</i>			
Male	14.184	6.631	73.547
Female	7.884	3.607	47.681

Source : Radhakrishnan and Akila (1993).

### **Causes**

Major reasons for drop-out and non enrollment of children are (i) economic factors, (ii) lack of interest, (iii) social reasons and (iv) educational reasons. As the child is an economic asset to the family because he can work at home or on the family farm and contributes to household income he is either not enrolled in school or withdrawn (Acharya, 1994b). Thus, poverty contributes to illiteracy as poor parents are forced to depend on child labour for supplementing their low incomes. Lack of interest on the part of students appears as the curriculum is not designed keeping in view the local requirements and so the students find contents unfamiliar and irrelevant.

Social reasons include caste barrier, unwillingness on the part of the parents to send grown up girls to a far off school or mixed school or pressure to get the daughters married early. Due to poor literacy among females the birth rate continues to be high and the elder girl child is expected to stay home to look after young siblings, again leading to another vicious cycle.

Educational reasons include poor buildings, absent teachers, absence of ancillary services like school meals and health care and so on. Sen (1968) referred to internal and external factors responsible for the drop-outs. The internal factors include proportion of trained teachers, walking distance from school, school curriculum, etc.. The external factors include urbanisation, poverty, literacy in the state, caste system, etc..

The explanation for different social categories not having adequate access may be found in (a) the continuing dominance of the traditionally well entrenched upper castes and males, for

whom one way of ensuring their dominance is by keeping the underprivileged in perpetual ignorance; and (b) structural problems of educational system like poor schooling facilities in rural and remote areas (Radhakrishnan and Akila, 1993).

Another factor which explains both the 'access' aspect and inter-state variations is the concept of "compulsory education" and "free education". Education being a state subject, not all states have declared education a compulsory subject (e.g. Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim). The perceptions regarding free education seem to be particularly confusing in practice. While the Constitution has made universalisation of elementary education a state responsibility, the National Policy on Education, 1986 states that the government and the community in general will find funds for such programmes as the universalisation of elementary education and liquidation of illiteracy. Accordingly, in recent years in some states it was made practically mandatory on the part of the villagers to finance partly or fully construction of primary school buildings, salaries of teachers, etc., particularly when new schools are to be opened in rural, tribal and remote areas (Tilak, 1996a), and hence, making access to education to weaker sections more difficult.

The myth of free education is further highlighted by the fact that primary education in India is not free even in government schools. Nearly 15 per cent of the students in rural areas and half the students in government schools in urban areas pay tuition fee in addition to payment of several other kinds of fees (Tilak, 1996b). This acts as a further deterrent to the poor parents. In a study conducted on migrant labour from Madhya Pradesh, Saxena (1994) concluded that after having passed intermediate and in some cases even

graduation most of them did not get any job and they were no longer suitable or mentally prepared for physical labour. The education in India is designed for upper strata of society with emphasis on academics. Even where the students are trained for some vocations they do not get jobs due to various imperfections in the labour market. The missing link between education and job opportunities acts as a deterrent.

Hence, we have a situation where a well meaning policy has not been able to meet its targets and objectives because of ambiguous policy making, attitudes of the elite and implementing bureaucrats, and the perceptions of the target group itself. It has also failed because of a top-down policy framework and non recognition of sectoral linkages.

This calls for reorientation in philosophy behind poverty alleviation programmes as well as the framework in which policies are formulated. Accordingly, the centralised approach needs to be blended with decentralised participation of masses in decision making and implementation of policy in the framework of 'interactive model'. The model specifically recognises financial, manpower and other constraints which impede the success of the best of the policies. Besides, it allows implementing bureaucrats and target groups to play a creative role in decision making process. Table 9 presents a bird's eye-view of the present PAPs, suggested reforms, constraints and mechanisms to deal with them.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In India, most of the criteria of good governance like democracy, sound judiciary and accountable bureaucracy do exist, yet the performance on social indicators is

rather poor. This reflects existence of socio-cultural, religious and many times historical barriers that no theory can fully anticipate and capture.

The limited success of anti-poverty policies is due to, among other things, the approaches to poverty followed and the corresponding framework. In India, the poverty alleviation strategies are decided at the apex level by the Planning Commission with instructions flowing in a top-down structure, following an income-consumption approach and identifying the beneficiaries in terms of poverty line. This mechanism with multiplicity of competing agencies for implementation of PAPs is one of the causes of continued deprivation.

At sectoral level, the education policy has not been successful due to low incomes, poor health and inadequate infrastructure, reflecting inappropriate policy framework, non-recognition of inter-sectoral linkages and policies influenced by outsiders' perspective. In the spirit of human needs model, self determination coupled with collective provision of certain basic needs may improve the level of welfare.

It calls for a multisectoral and multidimensional approach to poverty with proper emphasis on backward and forward linkages of needs along with good governance and good co-ordination among various government departments. The centralised approach needs to be blended with decentralised participation of masses in decision making and implementation of policy to maximise human welfare. This, of course, need not be taken as the panacea; for, no theoretical framework can fully capture the complex nature of human and societal behaviours that are at the root of deprivation as well as the success or otherwise of any policy.

Table 9 : An Overview of Present PAPs and Alternative Approach

Present Features and Drawbacks	Suggested Reforms	Constraints to Reforms	Mechanism
Poor enrollment ratio coupled with high drop out rates and variation across regions and social groups due to :	To improve enrollment ratio and to ensure uniformity of access across regions and to different sections of Society :	1) Attitude of the elite 2) Reactions	Constant interaction among policy makers, implementors target group and elite may lead to better co-ordination and consensus approach.
a) Economic reasons (like low family incomes)	a) integrate social development with poverty alleviation programmes so that incomes go up.	a) Elite b) Implementors c) Target group	
b) Social Reasons (like attitude of the parents)	b) emphasise on adult literacy programmes and social awakening through mass media.	3) Resources a) Financial	Dynamic interactive
c) Lack of interest on the part of the student	c) Design school curriculum as per local requirements, employ local teachers	b) Manpower	procedure will help in achieving the desired results
d) Educational reasons (like School building, teacher etc.)	d) Wage employment programmes may improve school building and other infrastructure, mid day meals, free books etc.		
e) Dominance of elite (particularly upper caste)	e) transparent bureaucracy, grassroots democracy and empowerment of poor		
f) Federal structure of state	f) uniform legislation all over the country by Union and state govt. with specific provision for deprived lot		

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