
UNIT 13 POVERTY AND ITS SOCIAL DYNAMICS

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you should be able to :

- describe poverty as a social problem;
- define poverty;
- explain the causes of poverty;
- discuss poverty and its consequences; and
- explain some poverty alleviation programmes.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last block we talked about social problems pertaining to different types of labour, viz. industrial, rural, women and children. In this block we are going to talk about the problems related to patterns of deprivation and alienation. The first unit of this block has to do with poverty and its social dynamics. In

this unit we define poverty and indicate categories for its measurement. Next we look into the causes of poverty, the vicious circle theory and geographical factors. Next we deal with the consequences of poverty . This includes a coverage of the culture of poverty, poverty in India, and inequality of income distribution. Finally we deal with poverty alleviation programmes which include the IRDP, employment programmes, women and youth area development programmes and urban areas.

13.2 POVERTY AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

There has been poverty in all societies over a long period. However the ‘extent’ of poverty is more in some countries than others. Every society, however, affluent, has people who are poor. In the USA more than 25 million are said to live in poverty (12-15%). It was only in the 60s that there was recognition of the prevalence of poverty. A programme of ‘War on Poverty’ was then started in USA. In England, the Poor Law was passed in 1601 A.D. The law provided for the establishment of a work-house to provide work to those who were without any means to meet their basic needs. The conditions and the pay in the work-house were depressing. However, this can be said to be the beginning of the idea of public assistance to the poor. For example USA an affluent society has poverty too. But by and large these countries prosperous. In India however poverty is a major problem. Thus the concept of poverty is relative. It has been so much with us that not much attention has been paid to it. It was considered a normal aspect of any society. Till recently there has been little sense of social responsibility for dealing with poverty. On the other hand there has been a rationalisation of poverty. The poor were believed to be responsible for their own plight. Unemployment was considered a sign of laziness. The Karma theory suggested poverty was a consequence of wrongs or sins committed in earlier births. When poverty has been voluntary it has been praised by society. In such a case one cannot call it poverty per se because it is part of a saint’s life style. Mahatma Gandhi lived in ‘voluntary poverty’. So did the Buddha. This is different from involuntary poverty where the necessities of life are in very short supply.

In recent times there has been an acceptance of poverty as a social problem. India with the coming of independence has made some efforts to raise the level of income of people living in poverty. In 1960 the concept of poverty line was emphasised by Dandekar and Rath (1971). Specific programmes of poverty alleviation were initiated in the 4th plan.

Systematic study of the poverty is a recent phenomenon. It has been suggested that there were four questions that need to be answered to understand poverty.

- i) What is poverty ?
- ii) What is the extent of poverty ?
- iii) What are the causes of poverty?
- iv) What are the solutions ?

To (iii) one may also add what are the consequences of poverty? This unit will look at poverty using these questions as a framework. The effort will be to look at the sociological aspects.

13.3 DEFINITION AND APPROACHES TO POVERTY

In this section we shall be discussing various definitions and approaches to poverty. Let us define poverty first.

13.3.1 Definition

The approach to defining poverty has usually been in economic term – the levels of income, property and living standards. People are said to be poor when their income is such that it does not enable them to meet the basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. The concept of “poverty line” used both in India and USA fixed an income. If people fall below this line, they are considered to be poor. The poverty line is arbitrarily fixed, hence there can be questions about it. Nevertheless, it does provide one way of determining who the poor are. Sometimes, the word “pauperism” is used to denote extreme poverty. It describes a category of people who are unable to maintain themselves. In recent times there are many dimensions that are considered in looking at poverty. It is no longer seen as purely an economic phenomenon. It is now realised that there are sociological, political, psychological and geographical reasons as well as attitudes or value systems that need to be considered to understand poverty.

We suggest that a minimum approach by government in any society which has significant inequality must provide for raising minimum levels not only of incomes but also self-respect and opportunities for social mobility and participation in many forms of decision-making. What is being stated here is that in dealing with poverty one is not only concerned with the income but also with the individual’s political role, opportunities for his children and self-respect. Poverty is not only a condition of economic insufficiency; it is also social and political exclusion. Poverty is therefore to be seen not only merely in economic terms but also in its social and political aspects. The concepts and approaches to poverty have been dealt with in detail in Unit 12 of ESO-02. There we have viewed poverty as a level of living that is so low that it inhibits the physical, mental and social development of human personality. There it has been pointed out that poverty has been with human culture and civilisation since ages. In the beginning of the development of human society human beings were at a low level of social organisation and technological development and that the state of poverty was general in nature, faced by all members of society. In the process of evolution of human society there have been enormous developments in social organisation and technology. However the fruits of this progress have not been equally shared by all sections of society. There have been the rich and there have been the poor.

Thus poverty has been related to the prevailing socio-economic structure of the society. Experts on poverty have broadly used two approaches. First the nutritional approach. Here poverty is measured on the basis of minimum food requirements. Second, the relative deprivation approach. Here poverty is seen in terms of relative deprivation of a section of population against the predeveloped sections. We shall be discussing these matters in detail in our section on the measurement of poverty.

13.3.2 Approaches

There are various approaches for the measurement of poverty. The major factor considered in measuring poverty is income. The question that is asked is, what resources can a particular income command? Does the income allow for obtaining the basic necessities? Consequently, it has also been suggested that the actual intake of food should be the criteria. If an adult person is unable to have a certain number of calories (2,250) a day he is considered to be poor. The economic aspect usually involves the judgment of basic needs and is mentioned in terms of resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency. Such an approach is now being questioned. Among the basic needs are also include, education, security, leisure, recreation. When the resources commanded by average individuals are so low that they are in effect excluded from living patterns, customs and activities of the society, they are said to be living in poverty. Among the ideas which have an objective and dependable measurement of poverty is a concept of PQLI — (Physical quality of live index). The three indicators used in PQLI are life expectancy at age one, infant mortality and literacy. An index number is to be calculated for all countries based on the performance of each country in these areas. The worst performance would be designated by the in index number zero and the best performance by 100. In the 70s, the PQLI index for India was 43. Various important studies have been conducted in India for the measurement of poverty. For example Ojha in his study has used the average calorie intake as the basis for defining poverty. To him persons who are below the poverty line have an intake of less than, 2,250 calories per capita per day. Dandekar and Rath (1971) have estimated the value of the calories (2,250) in terms of 1960-61 prices. They observe that there would be variation in the extent of rural and urban poverty in terms of financial index. Here they suggested that whereas the Planning Commission accepts Rs.20/- per capita per month or Rs.240/- per annum as the minimum desirable standard, it would not be fair to use this figure both for rural and urban areas. They suggested a lower minimum of rupees 180/- for the rural population and a higher amount of Rupees 270/- per annum at 1960-61 prices.

i) **Absolute Poverty**

Absolute poverty refers to the inability of a person or a household to provide even the basic necessities of life. It refers to conditions of acute physical wants, starvation, malnutrition, want of clothing, want of shelter, total lack of medical care. At times “absolute poverty” is also called “subsistence poverty”, since it is based on an assessment of minimum subsistenc requirement. Nutrition is measured by intake of calories and proteins, shelter by quality of dwelling and degree of over-crowding, and the rate of infant mortality and the quality of medical facility. With the broadcasting of the definition of poverty it is also suggested that one should go beyond the physical need and also include cultural needs—education, security, leisure and recreation.

It is difficult to fully accept the argument. The nourishment needs of a farm labourer would be different from those of a clerk in an office. Similarly clothing requirements will also differ. If cultural needs are also included then measurements become more complex.

Box 13.01

The growth experienced after 1947 in India has been unparalleled in its own history. However compared to other developing countries it has been a slow and painful process. In the past 40 years mass poverty has also grown. It is not a question of pockets of poverty, but a very large number of people living below the poverty line throughout the country.

The poverty line is often defined as a minimum intake of calories (about 2400) to live and work per day. This measure therefore does not include other subsistence needs such as housing, clothing health and education. It is thus a real minimum.

ii) **Relative Poverty**

As there are difficulties in accepting “absolute poverty” fully, another term “relative poverty” has been developed. Poverty according to this concept is to be measured according to standards of life at a given time and place. The idea is that standards of society can be changing standards. Definition of poverty should therefore be related to the needs and demands of changing societies. In 1960 those who had a per capita income of Rs.20/- or less per month in rural areas were considered to be below the poverty line. In 1990 those who have an income of less than Rs.122/- per month are considered to be below the poverty line.

The term “relative poverty” also refers to the fact that different societies have different standards, hence it is not possible to have a universal measurement of poverty. Those who are considered poor in USA by their standards, may not be considered so in India.

Check Your Progress 1

i) How do we define poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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ii) What is the minimum approach to poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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13.4 CAUSES OF POVERTY

The Human Development in South Asia 1999 reveals situation of glaring poverty, inequality and deprivation in South Asia in general and India in particular. According to this report South Asia, with 23% of the world population is the planet's poorest region. About 540 million people, or 45% of the region's population, are living below poverty line, with daily income of less than one US dollar. India has the greatest number of the poor people with 53% people living below the poverty in 1999 (i.e. earning less than one US dollar a day). This report also points out that there are dramatic desperation and concentration of wealth and power among the richest members. The highest income earning layer of 20% own 40% of total income in the region while the lowest 20% owns only 10%. In India the richest 10% earns 6 times higher than the poorest 10% earns 6 times higher than the poorest 10% of the country.

Poverty has direct linkages with social and economic deprivations. Some indicators of these deprivations are highlighted below :

Indicators	South Asia	India
– Deprived to proper sanitary facilities	879 million	661 million
– Deprived of safe drinking water	278 million	178 million
– Child Birth death rate per 1,00,000 live birth	480	437
– Children under 5 years suffering from acute malnutrition	79 million	59 million
– Children not enrolled in Primary Education	50 million	35 million

There are many causes of poverty and we intend to discuss these in this section and subsequent subsections. First is the nexus between inequality and poverty. Then the vicious circle theory and finally geographical factors.

13.4.1 Inequality and Poverty

Earlier the effort was to study poverty by itself, that is, not relating it to the total conditions of the society. It has been suggested by a British social welfare expert that poverty should not be defined as income insufficiency, but the focus ought to be on the degree in inequality in the distribution of wealth in a society. Inequality is generated by the capitalist economy where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few according to Marx. These few gain control of the means of producing wealth such as slaves, land and capital. They are able to influence the political process, by which social inequality is managed. Essentially poverty boils down to this fact that some people are poor because others are rich. Since the rich have greater political power than the poor, the government policy tends to favour them. The rich therefore tend to remain rich and the poor tend to remain poor. Marx claimed that all history is a history of class conflict; hence the situation can change only when the poor have greater political influence.

There are others who believe that there are different roles to be performed by members of a society. Some roles required long training, (doctors, engineers, lawyers, physicists etc.) They get higher rewards from the society. Others like vegetable-sellers, sanitation workers, taxi-drivers, typists, receive lower rewards. There is inequality but as it happens to maintain the society, it is considered functional. All these jobs have to be performed to meet the needs of the society.

13.4.2 Vicious Circle Theory

This theory argues that the poor are trapped in circumstances which make it difficult for them to escape poverty. The poor have inadequate diet which makes for low energy and hence poor performance in school and at work. Poor diet also makes them vulnerable to illness. They have poor housing and often have to go long distances for their work. They cannot afford or are not allowed to stay near the place of work. The circumstances combine to make the poor continue to be in poverty. Discussing the problem of poverty in rural areas of India a leading authority in rural development asks the question :”Does the policy in rural development considers integrated rural poverty?” Aspects of which include poverty, physical weakness, vulnerability, isolation, powerlessness. As this theory suggests the poor cannot get over their poverty. But it is difficult to accept such a deterministic view, a view suggesting that they cannot escape poverty. Sometimes this explanation of poverty is called “Situational Theory” in the sense that poor find themselves in a particular situation and have great difficulties in getting out of it, if at all.

13.4.3 Geographical Factors

Poverty is explained at times by the geographical conditions in which people live. The resources are scarce and people are unable to overcome the problems of lack of resources. The desert areas, the hill areas are good examples. In India, certain areas have been designated as drought-prone areas. Survey in these areas indicate that not only that the conditions are poor but in spite of hard work they are unable to overcome the situation.

Neither of these theories by themselves can explain the totality of the phenomena of poverty. They do however provide some analysis and understanding as to why poverty exists.

13.5 CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY

As mentioned earlier the rich have influence to continue to be rich. In them there is a vested interest in the continuance of poverty. Poverty survives in part because it is useful to a number of groups in society. Poverty benefits the non-poor in general and rich and the powerful in particular. There are a number of functions of poverty:

- i) Poverty ensures that ‘dirty work will get done, there are many menial jobs that have to be done in society. It is the poor who take up such jobs.
- ii) Poverty provides a market for inferior goods and services-second-hand clothes, stale food material, poor houses, and services from unqualified persons.

- iii) Poverty facilitates a life style of the affluent. The work done by the cooks, gardeners, washermen, house cleaners etc. enable the upper classes to lead a life of comfort.
- iv) Poverty provides a group that can be made to absorb the political and economic causes of change. Technological development means more unemployment for the unskilled. Building of dams displaces the areas where the canals are built. People with no land get no compensation. Policies which change, when there is a tight budget situation, are the welfare programmes. The rich and often the government itself has a vested interest in the continuation of poverty. As it tends to provide for the maintenance of the stability of the society.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the causes of poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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- 2) What are the functions of poverty ? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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13.5.1 Poverty and its Consequences

Poverty and its consequences are discussed in the subsection below. First there is the culture of poverty which is discussed. We specify this discussion with poverty in India. Finally there is the inequality of income distribution.

13.5.2 Culture of Poverty

In the previous paragraphs discussions has been with regard to the causes of poverty. The structural or the vicious circle theory suggests that poor find it almost impossible to get out of the situation. How do people in such sad conditions manage to live? One explanation is that poverty forces them to develop certain patterns of behaviour enabling them to survive the sordid conditions of poverty. This pattern has been termed 'Culture of poverty'. The concept was developed by an anthropologist, Oscar Lewis, based on his studies in Mexico. He suggests that the poor develop a culture of their own, or rather

a subculture which is not part of the behaviour pattern or the value system of the society in which they live. Lewis says that the poor tend to be socially isolated. Apart from the family, no matter what other group they belong, their outlook remains narrow. They do not relate themselves to total society in which they live or to the poor in other parts of the country. The individual who grows up in this culture has strong feelings of fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority. Their orientation is to living in present, they hardly think of the future. In brief it can be said that the culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor in the marginal position. It is an effort to cope with the feeling of hopelessness and despair due to a realisation that it is almost impossible to achieve success according to values of the high societies. Their isolation also means lack of participation in the activities of the society-political, social and economic. There is also a suggestion that children are socialised into such a culture and hence are not willing to make use of opportunities to improve themselves they would feel insecure in a new situation.

There are many criticisms of this concept. One of the questions that is relevant is as to whether the culture of poverty applies to the rural conditions. Lewis develops the concept on the basis of his studies in slum areas. There is some evidence that the poor in rural areas also have developed a subculture, and defense mechanisms. Some feel that the poor do not participate not because of the culture that they have developed but because the larger society in a way prevents their full participation. Participation in social institutions requires certain levels of resources which the poor do not have (for example-participating in religious festivities). Another criticism is that the concept of culture of poverty tends to put the blame on the poor for being poor, rather than holding the social system responsible. Earlier there has been a discussion of how inequality is perpetuated in society. It also suggests that the culture of the poor is a consequence or a result of the poverty rather than the cause of poverty.

Activity 1

Visit the houses of a potter or a washerman or a dishwasher. Ask them regarding whether they have a social circle of friends. Try to find out all you can about the culture of poverty. Write down your findings in two pages and then discuss them with other students in the Study Center.

13.5.3 Poverty in India

There has been a substantial discussion of poverty in India since about 1960 when Dandekar and Rath focused the attention on the number of people who were below the poverty line. At that time they had calculated that if the income per capita per month was less than Rs.20/- the person was said to be below the poverty line. Separate figures are mentioned for rural and urban areas (For Bombay the amount indicated is Rs.200/- per month in 1960). The amount is based on what is needed to buy the required calories of 2400 per person per day. For rural areas, the figures was RS.122/- in 1988.

There are various estimates of the number of people below poverty line in rural areas. In 1977-78 it was estimated that 51% of the rural population (252 millions) were below the poverty line. In 1987-88 it was estimated that about 45% (261 millions) were below the poverty line. Although percentage-wise there is a fall, but in absolute numbers there is an increase as the population has increased. Although there are different estimates, it is generally accepted

that there are substantial number of people living in poverty. (In the urban areas the number of people living in poverty). In the urban areas the number of poor in 1987-88 was estimated 77 million (38%); in 1990, it is estimated that in rural and urban areas together about 350 millions are below the poverty line.

Table 1: Poverty prevalence Ratios by Rural-Urban Location: All India and 14 Major States (1993-4 to 1999-2000)
(Percentage of Population Below the Poverty Line)

States	Rural		Urban	
	1993-94	1999-2000	1993-94	1999-2000
All India	39.36	36.35	30.37	28.76
Andhra Pradesh	27.97	25.48	35.44	32.28
Assam	58.25	61.78	10.13	12.45
Bihar	64.41	58.85	45.03	45
Gujarat	28.62	26.22	28.86	21.7
Haryana	30.52	14.86	13.4	13.79
Karnataka	37.73	38.5	32.41	24.55
Kerala	33.95	26.5	28.2	31.89
Madhya Pradesh	36.93	39.35	46.02	46.29
Maharashtra	50.21	50	33.52	32.16
Orissa	59.12	62.67	36.99	34.27
Punjab	17.61	14.24	6.79	6.74
Rajasthan	25.92	15.01	30.6	24.36
Tamil Nadu	37.27	39.37	37.83	29.82
Uttar Pradesh	39.08	29.87	34.23	36.39
West Bengal	54.15	56.16	20.97	16.74

Notes: State specific poverty lines for 1993-94 have been adjusted for inflation by reference to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Laborers (for rural population) and the Consumer Pries Index or Industrial Workers for the urban population.

Source: Sundaram, K. 'Employment and Poverty in 1990s: Further Results from NSS 55th Round Employment-Unemployment Survey', 1999-2000, Economic and Political Weekly, 11 August 2001, pp. 3039-49.

In recent years there has been a decline in the proportion of people living below the poverty line at the all India level. However, those are several regional variations among the state. Again in some of the state while the extent urban poverty has declined the rural poverty has increased, for example the state of Karnataka, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. However in the case of Haryana, Kerala, while rural poverty has decline urban poverty has marginally increased. In the case of Assam and Madhya Pradesh extent of poverty has in creased both in the rural and in the urban areas.

13.5.4 Inequality of Income Distribution

Income distribution is very unequal. The share of the bottom 20% is 4% of the total income in rural areas whereas the share of the top 10% is 36%. Similarly in urban areas while the share of the bottom 20% is 9% that of the top 10% is

42%. The situation is indicative of the wide gap between the rich and the poor. The consumption expenditure also shows the same pattern. While the top 20% of the population accounts for 42% of the consumption, the bottom 20% accounts for about 10%. The pattern of land distribution confirms the wide difference between “haves” and “have not”. About 15% of the cultivators own nearly 50% of the cultivated land whereas 50% own less than 20%. There are questions about the exact figures—but there is general agreement of the overall pattern of maldistribution of wealth, income and consumption pattern among the people.

The maldistribution of assets leaves at least one-third of the population without effective means of satisfying their basic needs. The net result is that a large number of people lie just below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And a few keep on accumulating assets. Because of such a phenomenon, one wonders whether the gap between the poor and the rich can be bridged. Poverty is the result of unequal distribution of production assets, entitlements and surpluses reinforced by a power structure of closely knit economic, political and bureaucratic forces and vested interests. When discussing the causes of poverty one of the major ones mentioned was inequality. Poverty is therefore not merely an economic phenomenon but also has political and social ramifications.

13.6 POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

Planning in India has always had some concern about high levels of poverty. The approach in the earlier plan has tended to deal with the problem indirectly i.e. increasing of GNP, land reforms, provision of services, minimum needs programme etc. It is in the 6th plan that a specific poverty alleviation programme was initiated. However, there is recognition that the problem is too deep to be solved by a specific programme. The VIIth Plan documents says “Poverty alleviation programmes have to be viewed in the wider perspective of socio-economic transformation of the country. The present strategy of direct attack on poverty through specific poverty alleviation programmes is justified on account of insufficient percolation of benefits to the poor from overall economic growth. It should be appreciated that the strategy of direct attack on poverty cannot be sustained and would not yield the desired results if the growth of the economy itself is slow and the benefits of such growth are inequitably distributed. The economic betterment of the poorer section can’t be achieved without social transformation involving structural changes, educational development, growth in awareness and changes in outlook, motivation and attitude.

The specific programmes which are described here should therefore be understood in the perspective of the above statement. The programmes that are mentioned here were operative in the VIIth Plan.

13.6.1 The IRDP and Employment Programmes

The Integrated Rural Development Programme was introduced in the late 70s. The main objective of the IRD Programme was to evolve an operational integrated strategy for the purpose—on the one-hand of increasing production and productivity in agriculture and allied sectors based on better use of land, water and light, and on the other of the resources and income development of vulnerable section of the population in Blocks of the country.

The Integration is in terms of bringing various programmes which dealt with specific programmes or areas, together. For example: Small Farmers' Development, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers, Drought-Prone Area Programme. The programmes were to help the poorest of the poor i.e. whose household income was less than Rs.4,800/= per year. If the cut off point for the poverty line is Rs.240 p.a. how can this amount represent the poorest of the poor? The specific activities were target group oriented. The programmes of special rise programme, operation flood, programme for handloom, sericulture etc. Steps were to be taken to increase the industries, services and business. The financial assistance consisted of subsidies and loans.

Unemployment is a major factor in poverty. In rural areas, agricultural labour has work available only seasonally. The rate of unemployment has tended to increase. In 1971 about 31/2million persons were unemployed. In 1983 it has risen to 4.5 million. About 30 million are registered in the Employment Exchange Centre all over the country. Employment Generation is therefore an important programme in meeting the problem of poverty.

Two programmes in these areas were initiated namely, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). In the later part of the 80s another programme Jawahar Rojgar Yojana was introduced. The NREP was expected to generate 300-400 million mandays per annum. The programme envisaged creation of durable assets such as irrigation canals, social forestry, soil conservation, roads, school buildings, panchayat ghars etc. The RLEGP was introduced with the objective of improving and expanding employment opportunities for the rural landless. It aimed at providing guarantee of employment for at least one member of every landless household up to 100 days, and also to create durable assets. Housing, and social forestry, were among the activities to be undertaken in these programmes. In the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana the employment was to build community halls, panchayat ghars etc.

Activity 2

Visit a rural area or a slum and try to collect information on the poverty eradication programmes initiated in these areas. Based on your information write a short note of about 20 lines on the impact of poverty eradication programmes in rural/slum areas. If possible, discuss your note with your co-learners at the Study Center.

13.6.2 Women and Youth and Area Development Programmes

The Programme entitled Development of women and child in rural areas was initiated as a Pilot Project in the early 80s. The purpose was to increase their income and also to provide support, services, needed to enable them to take up income generating activities. Employment, education and improvement of health was the focus for improving the status of women. Training for rural youth for self employment was also launched in the beginning of the VIth Plan. The target group was youth between the age of 18-35 from families living below the poverty lines. The number to be trained was 40 per block per annum. Stipends to the selected youth were provided. Efforts were made to provide training relevant to the needs of the geographical areas.

There are areas which are affected adversely because nature has not been bountiful to them, viz. drought-prone areas, desert areas, hill areas etc. The incomes in these areas are subject to great fluctuations. Various programmes have been initiated to help the poverty-stricken people in these areas. In DPAP areas, for example, productive dry land farming, livestock development, sericulture, were among the activities introduced. In the desert areas, the activities included afforestation, animal husbandry, exploitation of ground water etc.

The major emphasis in the urban areas was the environmental improvement of the urban slums. Pre capita assistance of Rs.300/- per month was provided in the infrastructure, roads, payments, water supply etc.

The description of the programmes is very sketchy. The purpose is only to provide a general idea of the approach of the government to meet the problems of poverty. There have been many evaluation studies of these programmes. Most of these are of the view that while there is some improvement in the situation, target set are far from being achieved.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss poverty and its consequences. Use 5-7 lines for your answer.

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- 2) Discribe a poverty alleviation programme. Use 5-7 lines for your answer.

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13.7 LET US SUM UP

The unit is divided into various section to provide a conceptual and also a pragmatic view of poverty. Definition of poverty includes how poverty is measured. The causes and consequences of poverty have been described. In the last section of the unit the extent of poverty in India and the policies and programmes to overcome poverty have been briefly mentioned. Solution to problems of poverty needs a multidimensional approach. These are also discussed here.

13.8 KEY WORDS

- Absolute Poverty** : Absolute poverty refers to the inability of a person or a household to provide even the basic necessities of life.
- Area Programme** : There are areas which are not bountiful by nature. Various programmes have been initiated to help poverty-stricken people in these areas.
- Poverty** : This has been defined in many ways—mainly by a poverty line falling below which a person is called poor. Now sociological, psychological and political dimensions are also taken into consideration.
- Relative Poverty** : Poverty according to this concept is to be measured according to the standards of life at a given time and place.

13.9 FURTHER READINGS

Marickan S.J. (Ed) 1988. *Poverty in India*, Xaier Board : Trivandrum.

Swamy D.S. and A. Gulati 1986. From Prosperity to Retrogression : Indian Cultivators during the 1970's. *EPW*, June 21-22, p.A-63.

13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Poverty is defined relative to a 'poverty line' and if people fall below this line they are considered to be poor. One drawback is that the poverty line is arbitrarily fixed, hence we can question it. However, it does provide a way of determining who the poor are.
- 2) The minimum approach to poverty is to try to raise to the minimum level all those who are poor. It is to try and raise the self-respect and opportunities for social mobility in many forms of decision-making.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) There are many causes of poverty. The first of these causes is inequality of distribution of wealth in a society. Next is the vicious circle theory where the poor remain poor due to lack of funds. Finally the geographical factors where the area where people are settled is unproductive and hence leads to poverty.
- 2) There are a number of function of poverty. These are that :
 - i) it ensures menial labour
 - ii) inferior goods and services and purchased and manned by the poor respectively.
 - iii) it facilitates the life cycle of the affluent
 - iv) it produces a group that is made to absorb the political and economic causes of change.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Poverty has several consequences. One of these consequences is the culture of poverty. In such a culture the poor learn to survive in solid conditions of poverty. This subculture is not the same as in the society they live. Further the poor tend to be socially located often living below the poverty line.
- 2) The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced in the late 1970s. The main objective of the IRD Programme was to increase yields in agriculture and allied areas based on land. It was also to develop the resources and income of vulnerable sections of society.