UNIT 22 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES TO DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE

Structure

22.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- define sustainable development;

- identify inter linkages between sustainable development and governance;

- discuss the responsibility of state and local bodies in sustainable development; and

- describe the implementation strategies.

22.1   INTRODUCTION

For the last decade and a half, sustainable development has been the catchword in most of the policies and programmes of nation states all around the world. The Rio Earth Summit has been hailed as a landmark meeting aimed at augmenting efforts towards achieving sustainable development and environmental protection. We often hear or read about global warming, environmental degradation, depletion of resources and scarcity of water, pollution of air, water and land, melting glaciers, or mass migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of livelihood means. Why have these issues become so prominent? Why has it become so important for the nations to incorporate the sustainable development dimension in their policies and governance? India, for its part, has also been playing an active role towards this end through various multilateral agreements apart from making it one of the core themes in its governance matters. The management of resources is easier said than done. It needs massive efforts not only at the Central but also at the State level to meticulously work out the modalities of integrating the goal of sustainable development with governance and decentralised governance, in particular. From a positive angle, decentralised governance can help a great deal in accomplishing these constructive goals in tandem with the national policy. It is an on-going process in India. It would definitely take a considerable length of time to measure its impact on the nation. With this background, this Unit deals, in depth, as to what sustainable development is and how it can be realised through decentralised governance.

22.2   WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Commission Report *Our Common Future* (1987), is defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This is one of the most widely used definitions relating to sustainable development. Similar definitions have been coined since then that emphasised on 'improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems' or 'the development that comprises of economic and social development that protect and enhance the natural environment and social equity'. The World Conservation Strategy Report defined it as 'the integration of conservation and development to ensure that modifications to the planet do indeed secure the survival and well being of all people'. Whatever the definition is, it carries the tenor of development that can be achieved without an undue exploitation of the natural resources. For long, it was taken for granted by the mankind that nature is bountiful and can be used unscrupulously. Accordingly, the resource exploitation continued unmindful of the consequences till it was realised that the resources are actually being overexploited. The international community called for a meet that aimed at bringing a halt to this menace and chalk out a programme to restore nature's capacity.

The first call to these environmental threats was given as early as1960s. A new environmental movement emerged around this time that was sparked off by Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*; the book drew the attention of the world to the destruction of wildlife by the use of pesticide DDT. She warned that these chemicals contained the

prospect of a dying world in which springtime would no longer bring forth lease to new life but only silence. Carson revealed that our actions could lead to seriously damaging environmental consequences when we interfered with the natural systems we fully did not understand. There were meetings from time to time addressing these issues including the Stockholm Conference of 1972; the United Nations General Assembly, in 1983, set up the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) with the Norwegian Prime Minister Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland as the chairperson. The Report *Our Common Future* was brought out by this commission. The core theme of the Report emphasised the importance of taking into consideration environmental resource limitation before deciding the economic policies of the State. Thus a need was felt to integrate environment and economics in a co-ordinated manner without having detrimental effects on both.

In this period of market driven economies and globalisation, there is an immense competition between various nations to reap maximum benefits. This undue competition led to overuse of natural resources in the name of development. The developing countries especially are compelled to use their resources in an un-economical manner; while the poverty levels remained as they are, development eluded many a country. Keeping this in view, the Brundtland Commission argued that in a world marked by extreme poverty, people are compelled to use resources in an erratic manner for meeting their immediate needs; these means of survival result in an unhealthy environment. Therefore, the key to development is welfare of the people with a simultaneous nurturing of natural resources.

There exist two dimensions of human needs: (1) the fulfilment of basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and a clean environment; and (2) the option of pursuing a chosen lifestyle, in terms of materialistic possessions. The developed countries were successful, through early industrialisation, in providing these comforts to their population. The developing countries have not been able to secure the advanced technologies that would ensure a better life style to their citizens. To this day, they are in need of technical knowledge that would not only give them a good life but also an economically viable one. These countries have abundant natural resources but they lack the know-how to convert them into environmentally sustainable technologies and tools. In this context, the second option, that is, the option of choosing one's own life style becomes a subjective option. A good governance strategy promises a better standard of living and how this can be realised depends on the integrated approach adopted by the government. Thus an intermittent linkage has been established between both the aspects.

22.3 INTER-LINKAGE BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The National Human Development Report (2001) states that 'governance for human development relates to the management of all such processes that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables individuals to raise their capacity levels, on one hand, and provide opportunities to realise their potential and enlarge the set of available choices, on the other'. The Report also reiterates that the State is responsible for creating a favourable political, legal and economic environment for building individual capabilities and encouraging private initiative. Governance, therefore, requires the states to exercise their power through various designated bodies and pursue the said goals through an equitable, socially sensitive, non-discriminatory and participatory approach involving people at large. The most important factor is the accountability of the state in governance.

While the western countries have successfully incorporated this in their governance, the State Accountability, in India, is more or less negligible. The relevance of good governance policies and strategies is lost when the State Accountability factor is uncared for and does not mirror the aspirations of the population of a nation.

The governance for sustainable governance should include an integrated approach of economic and environmental concerns in the development strategy, keeping in view not only the quality of life that has to be offered to its citizens but also an equal distribution of it with 'social equity' as its goal. Governance should also safeguard a citizen's right to develop, simultaneously holding the environmental concerns at a high pedestal. The prerequisites towards achieving this goal include democracy, autonomy, fairness, interdependence, responsibility and accountability (Integrated Environmental Management, IGNOU, New Delhi, 2005). A government should incorporate these qualities before it formulates its policies and programmes for the betterment of a society. There are many virtues related to the abovementioned prerequisites: (1) A democratic government has various mechanisms and institutions that confer certain fundamental rights to the citizens to participate in the system; (2) The development choices should be determined by the people and government together with a certain degree of autonomy; (3) the resources of the planet need to be sustained and shared in an equitable manner. The disparities that are in vogue need to be reduced by taking up anti-poverty measures and educating people. A considerable degree of fairness should operate where the resources can be left un-utilised for the future generations; (4) with an increasing level of globalisation, there should be interdependence between the nations in terms of technology transfer, providing assistance towards development projects and also extending cooperation. This should extend beyond local, regional and territorial borders so that the common problems are amicably settled; (5) It is the responsibility of every citizen to preserve and protect the environment and to achieve development without harming the interests of fellow citizens. The government is also equally responsible for controlling the damage to the environment wherever necessary and impose stringent measures to prevent any loss to the natural habitat; (6) Every nation is a stakeholder in the global environment and is entitled to sharing the common benefits. It is also accountable to the damages caused, intentional or unintentional, and is liable to pay compensation in case of occurrence of such incidents. Therefore every nation is a custodian of the natural environment in its own capacity.

22.4 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

Some of the fundamental principles that characterise sustainable development are:

- Conservation of natural resources and biological diversity

- Deterrence of harmful effects on environment

- Integration of environment and economy

- Training and awareness programmes on environmental protection

- Cooperative and participatory approach

Thus, there is a predestined link between governance and sustainable development; there is a need to integrate the dynamics of society, ecology and economy through the use of environmentally compatible technologies. Above all, there is a need to sustain development in urban and rural areas by providing basic amenities and good standard of living.

Despite an effort towards good decentralised governance via Panchayati Raj institutions, there exists a denial of basic needs of food, water and shelter to substantial proportion of the population. Many an effort has remained ineffective due to delay in governmental support and lack of initiatives. The provision of basic amenities, good standard of living and income generation is a crucial aspect of good governance. Even in States where the development is said to be on an increasing level, there are instances of poor governance that have widened the gaps in terms of human development.

22.4.1   Basic Amenities

Food, shelter and clothing are basic amenities for a good life and it is the government's responsibility to provide them to its citizens. This should be applicable in both rural and urban areas alike. This is also termed as human development and extends to providing health care, sanitation facilities and eliminating poverty. The United Nations has even brought out a concept paper on *Millennium Development Goals* that aims at realising the goals of decent standards of living to the population all over the world within a set period of time. The process of globalisation did bestow certain benefits on various nations including India. But it is disheartening to note that many of these benefits have not reached many secluded sections of the society. Many of the poor are still going without a square meal a day and are often rendered shelterless due to displacement and occurrence of natural calamities. The rural women often go as far as 10-15 kms to fetch water. The villagers also travel more than 15 kms for the nearest health care centre. They are also prone to unhygienic conditions of living and contagious diseases; they are often compelled to indulge in environmentally destructive activities for means of livelihood.

The situation in urban areas is no better with many people living in urban slums. Majority of this population consists of those who might have migrated from their native villages or towns to cities in search of a livelihood. As such it is a burden on the urban bodies to provide continuous power supply or water or even a better transport to their population. The migrants, especially the labour class, are the ones who suffer the most; the local governments find it difficult to manage resources to provide the people basic facilities. Without these amenities, an individual's right to well-being and sustenance are eroded. This is a clear evidence of mismatched equations where people's potential does not match with the resources available, as per social indicators.

22.4.2   Reduction of Poverty and Good Standard of Living

Good standard of living more or less implies the reduction of poverty. While the reduction/elimination of poverty is part of millennium development goals, the measures towards integrating environment and sustainable development in poverty reduction programmes are vital for decentralised governance. A good standard of living is determined in terms of a higher income level and attainment of a higher average life expectancy, higher literacy and a higher value as per human development index. This progress automatically leads to an increasing level of Gross National Product, which, in turn, makes an impact on higher public expenditure and lower poverty levels. Thus the process is round-about and interlinked. The poverty reduction measures need major initiatives from the government side; its efficacy lies in taking up key public oriented beneficial actions, policy changes and institutional reforms. These should be prepared in a participatory mode involving people at all levels. But there should be a clear cut distinction of these goals from materialistic affluence, which, of late, is seen as an essential characteristic of a decent standard of living.

22.4.3   Income Generation

As has been stated earlier, there are gross inequalities between the urban and rural areas in terms of development. A substantial number of people are living below poverty level. The sustainable development becomes all the more important in the rural sector. What options can a government give to its population to earn their livelihood? What are the schemes it can undertake to generate income? The urban areas are seen as potential income generators with the concentration of many engineering, heavy metal, garment and software industries to name a few. While urban areas are preferred for their industrial base and technical opportunities, the rural areas are left with few options and that too without implementation strategies. Though agriculture is a predominant occupation in rural areas, not enough measures have been taken to revitalise the sector for commercial purposes; and where the measures were taken, there continues to be an undue exploitation of the natural wealth. The resultant effect is the mass migration of people from rural to urban areas. This has created severe crisis in terms of providing job opportunities and generating sufficient levels of income. The wide variety of natural resources was put under severe constraint for meeting the livelihood needs. Though varied efforts regarding sustainable human development have been undertaken, not enough income was generated to meet the required needs.

22.5   CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

There are numerous challenges to sustainable development in India. While many of these problems are caused due to insensitive use of natural resources, governmental responsibility is also trifling in solving the critical issues. This deterioration of environment has a direct impact on the life of individuals, affecting the longevity of life, which in turn, affects the development process on the whole. The degraded soil, depleted aquifers, diminishing forest cover, deteriorating urban environment and destroyed eco-systems can scarcely support better living standards and quality of life in future. The challenges are both natural and man-made and are enumerated as below:

22.5.1   Deforestation

The forest resources in India as well as around the world are on the verge of a higher depletion rate and are reaching alarming proportions. The individuals, corporations, government agencies etc., are responsible for this menace. In the name of developmental projects, the felling of trees is being carried out leaving behind the goals of sustainable development and human progress. The most serious problem of deforestation is the loss of biodiversity. The destruction of forests leads to not only the extinction of endangered animal species but also many plant varieties that have immense medicinal value. It is also responsible for global warming in a massive way.

22.5.2   Threat to Biodiversity

The biodiversity of the earth is a crucial asset that needs to be conserved and utilised in a judicious manner. The fair and equitable sharing of these resources is a prerequisite for a good life. The massive habitat destruction, pollution of the land, water and soil has a drastic effect on the survival of biodiversity. The biological resources, due to injudicious use, are on the verge of extinction. Though the problem can be solved by applying serious restrictions on the excessive use, lack of collective will has greatly hampered the process of sustainable development at large.

22.5.3   Effects of Climate Change

The drastic changes in the climatic variations resulted in poor health conditions of the human beings and earth resources. These have also spilled dire consequences on the social and environmental aspects of the society. The increasing temperature levels and the carbon emissions had severe effects like crop failures, increasing droughts, scarcity of food supply, contagious diseases, degradation of environment, increasing floods and so on. Lack of disaster management methods and systematic marginalisation of local communities in policy formulations have increased the vulnerabilities to the natural and man-made disasters.

22.5.4   Increasing Pollution Levels

The degrading levels of air quality are widely recognised as a major factor of pollution, especially in urban areas. The sources of air pollution include industrial pollution, indoor and vehicular pollution. The pollution in urban areas is caused by the presence of a number of industries that emanate smoke and other chemical substances into the air. Added to this is the vehicular pollution that has been on an increase every year. The sale in the number of vehicles has been zooming at an unprecedented scale and leading to massive traffic congestions. This invariably has resulted in serious health hazards like asthma, respiratory problems, hearing impairment and so on. The indoor air pollution is caused due to the use of wood, dung cakes and crop residues. Children, especially girls, are said to be at greater health risk as they stay indoors to help women in the household chores.

22.5.5   Ground Water Depletion and Pollution

While shortage of water continues to loom large, the inefficient use of water is an avoidable crisis, which otherwise can lead to imbalances in the water management methods. Apart from this, access to safe drinking water has also become a pertinent issue with major organic and bacterial pollutants being untreated. In many of the cities, untreated municipal waste/sewage is being discharged into the rivers. The urban regions are especially prone to such pollution as they are not equipped with adequate sewage treatment facilities. The shrinking ground water levels have resulted in acute shortage of water across the nation, especially during the summer season. It is only recently that the water harvesting measures are being undertaken with some of the cities making it mandatory.

22.5.6   Poor Health

The developments in the health sector are confined basically to urban areas; moreover, the status of income too largely determines the access to it. Life expectancy levels, no doubt, have gone up but it is altogether important to note the high rates of infant mortality. The recent UNDP Report too expressed its unhappiness over India's inability to provide health facilities to its population. The provision of health care facilities is closely related to economic growth and social well being; better health of an individual enables him/her to bring down the production losses thereby contributing to higher levels of productivity. This has a direct influence on the resources and avoids unnecessary expenditure, which can be diverted towards ensuring better living standards. The Community Health Centres, responsible for ensuring the rural health care facilities, are often under-staffed or comprise the staff that is unwilling to work in the rural areas. Often, they lack necessary medical equipment and infrastructure to extend health care.

22.5.7 Literacy Rate

One of the basic and most important components of development is education. It is a critical invasive instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion and a durable integration of people, particularly those 'excluded' from the mainstream of any society. It is the best social investment, given the synergies and the positive externalities that it generates for people in their well being. The female literacy rates continue to lag behind and the progress is often overshadowed by the disparities in terms of gender, caste groups, and income groups and at urban and rural levels. Where there is a higher female literacy rate, it has substantially lowered the fertility, infant and child mortality rates. It has also instilled confidence among rural women to earn their incomes by joining the self help groups and women's development groups.

22.5.8 Environmental Sustainability

The environmental quality is also threatened by the urban solid wastes in the form of garbage, household solid waste, waste from hospitals and scientific laboratories. In urban areas, one recurrently comes across heaps of solid waste including the plastic bags lying on the roadside, which serve as open dumping sites. The fungi, bacteria and virus pose enormous risk to health especially to the residents living close to these open disposal sites. Time and again this waste is disposed off through sewage system, ensuing in drain blockages and interruption in free flow of water. This further leads to the contamination of water and pollution of safe drinking water. Inadequate collection and lack of proper disposal facilities are the prime reasons for this widespread peril.

22.6 STATE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The State has an enormous responsibility in ensuring the conservation of resources in a sustainable manner apart from providing a decent standard of living. For this, effective policy needs to be framed at the State and local level as well. The governmental machinery should involve itself in a very big way to realise this goal. The necessary prerequisites for this are enumerated as follows.

22.6.1 Policy Framework at the State Level

The policy framework includes initiatives at the Central, State and Local levels to counter the above mentioned challenges to the society. Since our concern is to discuss the efforts at the state and local level, let us look into some of the policies as undertaken at this level. The Indian policies, especially the ones related to the economy, centred on the promotion of the public and the private sector and adoption of liberal/market oriented economic policies. The liberalised phase of the economy witnessed an unprecedented use of resources as the nation had to compete in the global markets. The resulting depletion of resources had put an enormous burden on the State to pursue environmentally friendly policies. Since then, numerous efforts are being undertaken or initiated at the local levels to take into consideration 'sustainable development' as a major goal. For development without destruction, the Government initiated the programmes like controlling urban pollution, minimisation of deforestation measures, joint forest management, environmental management system, water harvesting measures to counter ground water depletion, biodiversity conservation measures and so on. The government even initiated a National Environmental Policy, which is under thorough scrutiny by various concerned bodies and organisations of the State. The government has also given due importance to rural

development programmes, development of indigenous systems and industries, enhancement of technical and indigenous know-how through social welfare and income generation schemes.

22.6.2   District Level Efforts and the Role of Panchayats

The meaning of decentralised governance incorporates in itself the efforts taken at the lower levels to provide good governance. Various efforts are also being undertaken at the district level to pursue sustainable development policies. To improve the quality of life, various governments initiated rural development programmes that need coordination at the district level. The District Government machinery is usually involved in the development of the potentials of different areas and also the development of local industries in order to generate income opportunities. The development programmes need to be initiated in the backward areas and in the areas where the natural calamities wreak a havoc. The role of Panchayats, therefore, is vital for the overall development and for pursuing development from the bottom to the top level.

The goal of sustainable development is best realised through Panchayati Raj institutions. They enable the participation of locals in various development projects and let the former have a say in creating an environment most beneficial to them. The Panchayati Raj Institutions have been in existence since long but without vested powers for a long time. The Amendments to the Constitution laid emphasis on the empowerment of these local bodies for an effective development. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has vested the Panchayats with Constitutional Status, more powers and functions including the financial matters. According to the National Human Development Report, the explicit objective of this initiative for democratic decentralisation of governance is to accelerate the socio-economic development of the rural areas within a participatory framework at the grass-root level. Since then, the Panchayats have been taking an active interest in the local governance matters enabling an effective local participation. More and more women are now contesting elections to these local bodies. In most of the places where women are elected, the development strategies are being implemented at the district, block and village levels. The areas that come under the Panchayat development plans include agriculture, irrigation, watershed management, village farming, farm produce, dairy, poultry, animal husbandry, fisheries, rural development plans, housing, cottage industries, use of energy, social and family welfare, improvement of transport and communication and public distribution system, relief and rehabilitation, educational and training programmes, health and sanitation facilities and poverty alleviation programmes.

As per the provisions of the Panchayats, the Gram Sabha is given power to control the institutions and functionaries in all social sectors, including activities like ownership of minor forest produce; selection of beneficiaries under various programmes; management of minor water bodies; and minor mineral leases. The recent proposal of National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, if implemented in a fair manner, can bring about significant gains at the local level. The success of the decentralised governance depends much on the active implementation of these welfare schemes.

22.6.3   Managing the Urban Environment

The increasing pace of urbanisation throughout the country is now posing enormous challenges to the management of urban environment. Multi-centred settlements, sprawling shopping malls, multiplication of population, scarce resources, poor urban infrastructure, inadequate housing facility, air, land and water pollution, problems of solid waste

collection, access to safe drinking water have jeopardised the economy, health and productivity levels of the urban population. Lack of careful design, planning and management further abated the existing environmental challenges. The neglect of rural areas in the development process resulted in mass migrations to urban centres for an alternative source of livelihood. This further led to job scarcity and insecurity and unhealthy living conditions.

Maintenance of the quality of life in urban regions is one of the most crucial aspects of decentralised governance. The municipal bodies are directly responsible for safeguarding the urban atmosphere. Apart from accelerating efforts towards providing civic amenities, these institutions should promote environmental ethics and spread awareness among the general public to avoid such activities that directly or indirectly lead to environmental degradation. The adverse effects can be minimised through addressing the concerns of local people and provide basic services. One of the foremost reasons for deteriorating urban standards is the poor coordination and management between these civic bodies and public sector institutions.

The duplication of work and overlapping mechanisms need to be eliminated in order to facilitate smooth functioning of the responsible institutions. Absence of accountability, lack of training and skilled manpower further contributes to the problems. Effective coordination between municipal bodies, NGOs and urban management institutions will go a long way in restoring the sustainable resources of urban regions.

22.6.4 Role of Local Communities

In order to ensure efficiency, transparency and sustainability of the development initiatives, the local participation should be encouraged as it not only brings in the democratic approach but also ensures implementation of the projects. Participatory management and techniques need to be adopted towards achieving development. If the earth's resources are to be protected from excessive human intervention, there is a need to adopt sound and stringent penal measures. The involvement of local communities, panchayats, cooperative societies and women is a must towards creating sustained and self reliant communities. This approach should be promoted in such a manner in which the expressions of the local communities are articulated. Their culture and livelihoods are dependent on the surrounding natural resources; therefore, it is necessary that they should be involved in the development schemes right from the beginning stage of the development plan to the execution stage. This approach ensures their place as stakeholders and associates of the development course of actions and also enables and empowers them to classify, plan, sustain and share the common benefits. The development process is essentially a vision of the society; it helps in utilising the knowledge and skill to solve the problems. Rural industries are the basis of income for the local people and the development strategies should include the means of effectual participatory management and enhance productivity and income.

While the potential of youth may be utilised for making the process swift, the role of women should be emphasised. Women are the most affected when there is an alteration in the strategies but they are least consulted when the development proposals are initiated. Leaving them out or ignoring their presence cannot bring in the desired results. Their empowerment is imminent as expressed in the National Human Development Report: 'the empowerment of women, the marginalised and the excluded has been demonstrated, in many cases, to be among the important means to establish countervailing forces in the society for checking deterioration in governance standards and personal exploitation by others'. Women have played the role of nurturing their families and the environment. The access to and management of resources through acquisition of land, collection of fuel,

fodder, forest produce and water is crucial for women. The process of globalisation and existence of patriarchy have limited the role of women to a great extent; subsequently they lost control over sustainable resources. The improvement in their education, health and income levels will ascertain their position as essential caretakers of the environment. Further, extending financial assistance to set up their own income modalities will enable them to join the mainstream and contribute effectively.

22.7   IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

In any development process, the policy formulation is never a problem; the problem is with implementation. There is no shortage of plans and policies in India; their implementation is the real concern and this concern is often expressed by different strata of the society. Governance requires efficient machinery/institutions. These institutions are the ones on which depend the delivery mechanisms and the supportive framework of programmes, rules and procedures. These institutions are important for fulfilling the proclaimed objectives and coordination between them determines their efficacy. As is popularly known, there are three Fs-Functions, Functionaries and Finance.

22.7.1   Functions

The functions of the implementing institutions are varied. They span over a wider area of governance-political, economic, social and civil. The priority is to ensure the fulfilment of basic rights to food, shelter, water, health and sanitation. There should also be continued efforts towards decentralised form of governance rather than installing power in one implementing institution. These include an efficient means of governance at the State, District and village level. There should be monitoring of implementation of reservation in these political bodies at the local level. It should be made mandatory for women and weaker segments of the society to participate in the local administration or even take up the responsibility of heading an executive body or decision-making. There should also be mobilisation of people towards better occupational ethics, sustainable human development, environmental protection and civic responsibilities. The functions also include maintenance of law and order; ensure rule of law and freedom of speech, expression and rights of individuals as well as free press and media; ensure steady improvement in social indicators; take up anti-poverty measures; simplification of tax administration and realisation; distribute the local resources and benefits equally; cooperate with the non governmental organisations and other philanthropic organisations in relief and rehabilitation measures; and ensure transparency and control corruption at the higher levels of public offices. With the passing of the 'Right to Information' Bill, the government has taken a major initiative towards ensuring transparency in the governance matters.

22.7.2   Functionaries

The first and foremost of the functionaries of decentralised governance is the government itself. It is responsible for its decisions, actions and implementation of the policies. The accountability factor is a crucial element in this context. The bureaucracy has the decisive powers in the administrative matters and is accountable to the citizens at large. In India, most of the decisions are taken by the bureaucrats who are at the core of administrative machinery. It has been ill-reputed for its absolute authority and for ignoring the concerns of the general public. Ultimately, the role of the civil administration system is considered as the most significant factor in decentralised governance. There are even demands for a clear demarcation of power between the law enforcing machinery and the machinery that is meant to carry on the development process at the district and rural levels. For example,

the District Magistrate monitors almost 167 development schemes at the block level; this severely undermines the status of the decentralised bodies and also the overall institutional capacity (NHDR, p.129). This also means a compromise in the human development initiatives and in the quality of work. Officials at the District, Block and Village levels are responsible to a great extent in performing tasks that are public development-oriented. Extending rewards and incentives to the officers who perform and taking disciplinary action against those who are malfunctionaries will ensure the transparency, efficiency and accountability in the realm of governance.

22.7.3   Finance

One of the most crucial aspects of governance is the allocation of substantial funds for the development projects. Adequate funds and budget should be directed towards the implementation of these programmes. The management of the economy at the macro and micro level enables the institutional capacity to deliver effective governance. The available resources should be utilised in a wise manner and the local resources should complement them. It should be taken into consideration that the procedural delays and hurdles are likely to deter the inflow of funds and assistance and prevent them from reaching the beneficiaries for whom it is meant. This, often, is prevalent in the Indian context where the weaker sections of the society do not get their due share. This is a poor reflection on its governance and management of resources. The public investment also constitutes the finance aspect. The development of infrastructure like roads and housing schemes would provide income to many rural people; this in turn, would place fewer burdens on the environmental resources that are extracted in an injudicious manner. This also helps in tackling poverty and deprivation. The Planning and Finance Commissions play a significant role in allocating funds for the overall development of the rural areas. Inspite of substantial budget allocation, many of the funds do not reach the targeted beneficiaries because of the prevalence of corruption. Enhancing transparency, social audit and financial accountability, expediting disciplinary action against corrupt officials are some of the steps towards effectual sustainable human development governance.

22.8   CONCLUSION

Sustainable Development is the process of improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems. It carries the premise of development that can be achieved without an undue exploitation of the natural resources. The management of resources is easier said than done. It needs massive efforts not only at the Central but also at the State and District levels to meticulously work out the modalities of achieving the goal of sustainable development in tandem with the national policy. It is an on-going process in India. The governance for sustainable development should include an integrated approach of economic and environmental concerns in the development strategy, keeping in view not only the quality of life that has to be offered to its citizens but also an equal distribution of it with 'social equity' as its goal. Governance should also safeguard a citizen's right to develop simultaneously holding the environmental concerns at a high pedestal. There are numerous challenges to sustainable development in India such as loss of biodiversity, depleting natural resources, pollution of land, water and air as also poor health, poor literacy rate and environmental sustainability. The decentralised governance helps in promoting human and environmental concerns alike. For this the pace of integration of the functions, functionaries and finance machineries needs to be accelerated so as to ensure sustainable human development.

22.9   KEY CONCEPTS

Constituent Policy	:	Policy design to benefit the public generally or to serve the government.
Distributive Policy	:	Policy involving use of general tax funds to provide assistance and benefits to individuals or groups.
Non-Profit Organisations	:	Organisations prohibited by law from distributing surplus reviews to individuals.
Stakeholders	:	The many different persons who are involved in policy decisions and are affected by the results.

22.10   REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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22.11   ACTIVITIES

1) What is sustainable development? How can effective governance help in ensuring sustainable development?

2) The integration of governmental strategies at the State and local levels results in good governance towards human development. Justify the statement.