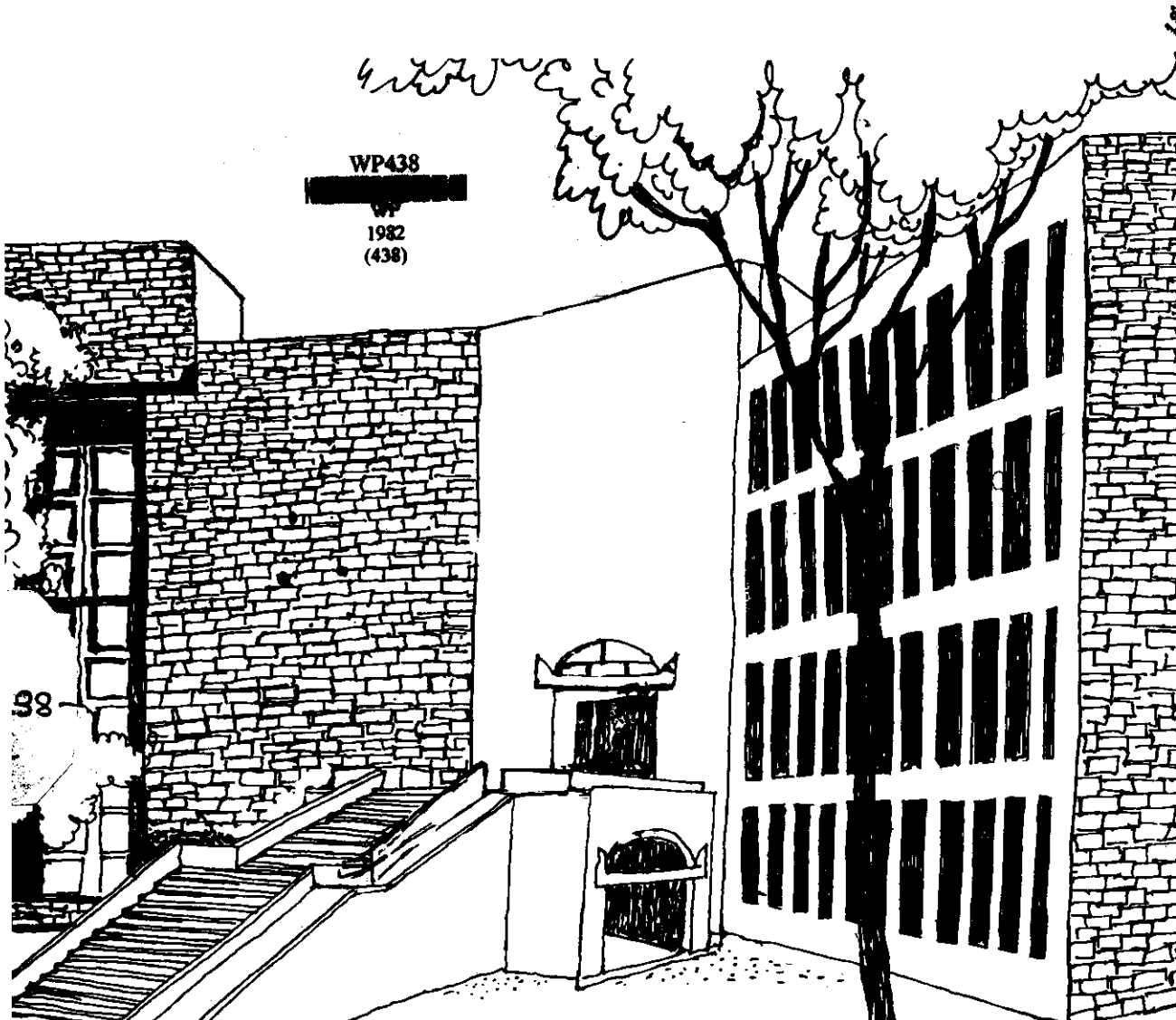




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DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR THE POOR:
DO STRATEGIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR THE POOR : DO STRATEGIES
MAKE A DIFFERENCE ?

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The seventies have witnessed the addition of a major policy focus in development planning. For the first time, special programmes for the "weaker sections" of the population have found a dominant place in the Five Year Plans. A variety of agricultural and employment programmes meant for the weaker sections such as small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers was initiated since the early seventies on a national scale. The Minimum Needs Programme, aimed at the provision of a minimum level of physical and social infrastructure in the countryside, was launched along with the Fifth Plan (1974-79) Upto 1978-79, more than Rs.1500 crores were spent on this programme.

Background of the Study

The increased plan allocations for development programmes for the weaker sections were clearly a response to the growing criticism that benefits of economic progress were not reaching the poor. Studies of the impact of the Green Revolution of the sixties had convincingly shown that the better endowed and powerful sections of the population had appropriated a disproportionately large share of the benefits of development efforts (Frankel, 1971; CHH Rao, 1975). The question of the actual beneficiaries of growth and progress in the country was widely debated. The mix of area specific (drought prone area; desert) and group specific (small farmers; tribal)

programmes of the seventies was an important response to this critique. The **Minimum Needs Programme** had a dual focus insofar as it was 'target group' specific and 'need' specific at the same time.

The major premise of the programmes is that benefits will flow to the weaker sections because of the specificity of the target groups and activities chosen. To the best of our knowledge, comprehensive studies of the impact of the new programmes for the weaker sections are not available to judge whether the intended beneficiaries have in fact gained from these significant public interventions across the country. Partial studies and ad hoc evaluations of these programmes by the Planning Commission, financial institutions and independent analysts, however, do not fully support the validity of this hypothesis. They present a mixed picture. It appears that the weaker sections did benefit significantly in some of the programmes and not in others (ISAE & IIMA, 1974; Harvey & Others, 1979; Dantwala & Barmeda, 1982). Thus the performance of the different programmes for the weaker sections seems to have varied a great deal though their intentions were similar. This leads us to a significant question: Under what conditions do benefits of development programmes flow to the weaker sections? Individual programme planners may have asked this question to review past experiences of related programmes. One shot studies of independent programmes have come up with a number of conventional issues such as the need for minimising corruption and delays. As far as we know, an analysis of different programmes in order to seek answers to this question, has not been attempted. The

purpose of this paper is to address this issue in a preliminary fashion through an investigation of the experiences of eight programmes :

(1) Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), (2) Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programme (MFAL), (3) Antyodaya, (4) Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), (5) Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), (6) Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) (7) Food for Work (FFW), and (8) Operation Barga (OB).

All these programmes and projects were specifically directed at benefiting the rural poor. Of these, the SFDA, MFAL, DPAP, CSRE and FFW were centrally initiated. Antyodaya, EGS and Operation Barga were initiated by the states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra and West Bengal respectively. Both Antyodaya and EGS were precursors of national programmes in later years - the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the FFW respectively.

In terms of target groups and activities, the programmes were to serve the weaker sections of the rural areas - landless agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, marginal and small farmers and artisans. The programmes were to generate income for these groups through activities in agriculture and allied industry, self employment or wage employment. A matrix linking the programmes studied with respect to their target group and activities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Development Programmes Reviewed

	Target Group			
	Farmers	Landless labourers	Artisans	Share croppers
Agriculture & Allied Industry	← SFDA →			
	← MFAL →		← OB →	
ACTIVITY				
Self Employment				
Wage Employment	← CSRE/FFW/EGS →			
All of the above	← Antyodaya/DPAP →			

Given the contexts in which these programmes have developed and their varying magnitudes, it is difficult to assess the relative effectiveness of these programmes. However, it appears that the State initiated programmes - Antyodaya, Operation Barga and EGS - have done relatively better in terms of attempts to enable the programme benefits reaching the weaker sections. However, any attempt to assess effectiveness is faced with the problem of indicators chosen and questions regarding the ultimate beneficiary, the sustained nature of the benefits etc. A summary of the programme features and accomplishments is presented in the Appendix.

While the primary focus of this paper will be on these programmes, supplementary evidence from the experience of other programmes related to those under review will be presented from time to time. For instance, the IRDP experiment, with its close links with the SFDA, MFAL and Antyodaya programmes will be referred to.

Where directly relevant to the issue under discussion, lessons from the positive or negative effects of changes in other programmes such as in the social service sectors will be presented.

The basic data for the study have been gathered from the various articles, reports and evaluations of these programmes and supplemented by discussions with those who have managed or studied the programmes. Thus, survey and analysis of secondary data have been our primary tools of research.

Reasons for failure

In the literature on development, there are two rather parallel views on the reasons why development programmes fail to benefit the weaker sections. One traces the problem to the absence of structural changes in society. According to this view, until society is radically restructured and productive assets are more equitably distributed, the poorer sections of the population cannot possibly benefit from the gains of development. In the absence of such radical changes, programmes will merely serve the interests of the rich and powerful and exploitative relationships will continue. The other view perceives the problem as one of implementation. This holds that benefits do not flow to the weaker sections because implementation of programmes is half-hearted. There is nothing wrong with the programmes, but there is no political commitment nor strong leadership behind them. If only they are implemented as planned, benefits will accrue to the weaker sections. According to **this**

view, the administrative structure, and/particular the personnel at the operating level, are incapable of translating policy into programmes and plans into action. Managerial skills are also inadequate. Moreover there are few ways of checking corruption and leakages that divert the flow of benefits.

We do not intend to refute the validity of these views. There are development programmes which have failed to benefit the weaker sections because of the state's failure to effect radical structural changes in the distribution of assets. Thus many agricultural programme could not make an impact because of the neglect of land reform measures. However, some programmes do not have to wait for structural changes in order to benefit the weaker sections at least in the short run. Moreover, even when structural transformation has occurred, programmes will be necessary to translate the new policies into action.

Similarly, problems of implementation do limit the extent of benefits that flow to the weaker sections. When programme leaders are uncommitted and ill-equipped and political support is missing, implementation suffers. Under these conditions, programme impact may be minimal and it is probable that benefits are appropriated by the richer segments of the population. We do find, however, that programmes perform poorly even when there was an honest intention to implement and the leadership was committed. It is possible that weaker sections failed to benefit from such programmes, not because implementation was the hurdle, but rather because their design or strategies were at

fault. When programme strategies are poorly conceived, certainly implementation will become more difficult. But it would be superficial to attribute the problem to implementation in the operational sense.

Focus on Strategy

While conceding the importance of structural changes in society and effective implementation in influencing the distribution of benefits of development programmes, the focus of this study will be on the role of programme strategy in enabling the weaker sections to benefit from development. Experiences analysed from this view point are likely to generate insights which might assist designers in improving future strategies.

The terms design and strategy are sometimes used interchangeably in the planning literature. The term "design", however, carries with it the flavour of an engineering instrument and might be interpreted to mean an a priori blueprint to be faithfully adhered to in implementation. Design, used in the technological and engineering sense communicates this somewhat static view and the same term used in the programme planning context may connote an elaborately structured, mechanical and rigid plan for development programmes. Strategy, on the other hand, implies the dynamic process by which the programme strategy, organisational structure and processes are appropriately aligned with the demands of the environment. In this view, organisations are seen as open systems where continual learning leads to a set of management interventions in the form of strategies. This

concept has, of course, been extensively applied to corporate management (Chandler, 1962). There have been some recent attempts as in Paul (1981) to adapt and apply the strategic management concept to public programmes.

In order to focus attention on the significance of strategy for the distribution of benefits of public programmes we state below a set of propositions. Most of these propositions have been articulated, sometimes not explicitly, by analysts and practitioners in the development literature. Each proposition states a condition under which programme benefits are likely to accrue to the weaker sections. These conditions in every case require interventions by those who manage the programmes in terms of their strategy. In other words, the strategy must be so designed that the desired conditions are created through the programme. Evidence from the eight programmes referred to earlier will be used to test the validity of these propositions:

- (i) The weaker sections of the population are likely to benefit from a programme when its service is designed to meet the varying needs of beneficiary groups through a process of adaptation over time where necessary.
- (ii) The stronger the vertical and horizontal linkages in a programme, the greater the chances that the programme will benefit the weaker sections.
- (iii) The weaker sections tend to benefit from a programme when its service is so designed that its appropriation by others is rendered difficult or unprofitable.

- (iv) The more participative the process of identification of the intended beneficiaries, the greater the chance that programme benefits will reach them.
- (v) The lower the technological and institutional barriers to entry implicit in the design of a programme, the higher the likelihood that the weaker sections will benefit from its service.
- (vi) The stronger the participation of either beneficiaries or local organisations in the planning and implementation of a programme, the higher the probability that benefits will flow to the weaker sections.

Proposition 1: The weaker sections of the population are likely to benefit from a programme when its service is designed to meet the varying needs of beneficiary groups through a process of adaptation over time where necessary

The subsistence farmer, the agricultural labourer, the artisan and other categories of the poor have their own unique attributes and needs arising out of their socio economic background and condition. Any programme service must carefully consider their (i) ability to utilise the programme service, and (ii) priorities for the use of the service, if the service is to reach the intended beneficiary.

Indebtedness, a poor asset base, insecurity of tenure and a host of other socio-economic features were a part of the working lives of the intended beneficiaries of the SFDA and MFAL programmes. Given this, it is interesting to note how a successful SFDA effort at organising landless agricultural labourers into a vegetable estate responded by undertaking the 'formidable' but necessary task of securing the 'release' of the labourers from rich cultivators and allaying their fears. The task took three weeks of effort (Maitra, 1979). Kingra (1979) mentions another useful response by an SFDA in Himachal Pradesh.

The small and marginal farmer beneficiary had very small holdings in hilly conditions. The SFDA facilitated the adoption of a mixed farming system to suit the environs and cover risks of failure. Noting that traditional sheep farming families did well with sheep loans, an RBI study (1975) of 13 SFDA's concludes that the schemes of piggery, poultry and sheep breeding are best supported when they are taken up by the traditional occupational groups associated with these animal husbandry activities.

The Food for Work Programme was modified soon after its initiation to provide year round, instead of seasonal employment, thus responding to those who would need continual rather than short term employment. Among other changes, this modification too has probably contributed to the relatively greater use of the programme service by the poorest groups. In an evaluation of the FFW carried out in 10 districts, it is recorded that about 70% of the 793 beneficiaries interviewed received daily or weekly payment rather than fortnightly or monthly wages. (PEO, 1980a)

The programme's inability to consider the beneficiaries' attributes, his strengths and limitations, appears to result in his exclusion. Shah (1978) describes the economic difficulties of holding on to an asset as one goes down the economic ladder and refers to Desai's assessment of the working of the MFAL in Baroda in relation to dairying. Thirty seven out of 254 beneficiaries interviewed had disposed off their animals acquired through the programme's dairying scheme. The beneficiaries' inability to feed and maintain the buffalo

can turn an asset into a burden. Srivastava (1978) narrates how 35 out of 132 goats given to 22 households under a drought prone area programme (DPAP), died from diarrhoea. The beneficiaries did not know how to handle the improved Jamunapuri breed of goats. A study by the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS, 1980), of the IRDP experiment in two districts of Tamil Nadu notes four difficulties in the economic position of the weaker sections: (i) overdues on past borrowings, (ii) lack of security for borrowing, (iii) lack of resources to maintain the asset, and (iv) unwillingness to face delay and initial expense. It also notes the helpless feeling that 'only the rich will get benefits' as a reason for a section of the weaker beneficiaries not coming in contact with the programme. There is a suggestion that these factors and the programme's lack of response or capability to deal with them contributed to IRDP service being (i) more accessible to small and marginal farmers rather than agricultural labourers and (ii) appropriated by the large or better off farmers (9% of the total in one district and 17% in the other). The non payment of daily wages seems to have excluded landless agricultural labourers from the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and the provision of only seasonal employment appears not to attract the poorest who require year round work (PEO, 1980 a).

Apart from the beneficiary's ability to manage on an asset, the programme's lack of concern for his cash flows seems to have a negative effect on its accessibility to the subsistence farmer or labourer. The All India Rural Credit Review Committee (RBI, 1969)

highlighted the below subsistence level of the small and marginal farmers and noted that peasants with consumption needs were unrealistically expected to repay loans without meeting such needs. Maitra (1979) underlines this problem in an SFDA dairying scheme in M.P. The loan repayment schedule when implemented mechanically created problems for the beneficiary in planning his inflow and outflow at the time of stabilizing milk production from the buffalo. Often, a second buffalo which could have stabilised his income was denied. The RBI study (1975) of 13 SFDA's in relation to credit suggests that despite the provisions made to ease credit flow in terms of differential interest rates, subsidies and risk covers, commercial and cooperative banks were not 'as bold and favourable to small farmers' (p. 21) as they could have been. Sometimes, the feeling is that the institutional changes in response to the beneficiary needs stop short of action that will fully meet a need. Upadhyaya (1979) mentions how, as an outcome of the Maharashtra Tribal Economic Development Act, 1976, consumption loans were extended to the non surplus tribal loanee. However, the amount of loan was very small, meeting only a month's need for a family of five when 3 to 4 months was the period of distress.

Examples from other sectors can supplement the argument. The distance of water supply point (more than a kilometer) proves inconvenient for the poor (PEO, 1980 b) Programmes for women do not attract poorer sections because they (the women) do not have time for them nor the means to use the training, thereby attracting only rural women with leisure and their own means of using the training (Dept. of Rural Development, 1978).

It seems that illustrations for the mismatch between programme service and beneficiary needs and attributes have been documented extensively. On the other hand, examples of programme services matching needs are few. This is perhaps partly due to the appraiser's inclination to stress the blemishes in order to improve upon performance. Nevertheless, the evidence for the mismatch is overwhelming and merits serious consideration by programme planners and managers.

Proposition 2: The stronger the vertical and horizontal linkages in a programme service, the greater the chances that the programme will benefit the weaker sections.

A range of inputs is often required to make an asset or activity productive. Thus, a farmer requires land, water, seeds, fertiliser and efficient farm practices in order to yield returns over a period of time. Linkages with the sources that provide these inputs (horizontal) in the required quantity, quality and at the right time are necessary. Similarly, linkages with the market (vertical) may be required to convert the output into returns for the beneficiary. Where the beneficiary is unable to establish these linkages on his own, as is likely to be the case with most of the weaker sections, the programme service has to provide a cover for him and provide the necessary linkages.

The successful experiences of the SFDA (Maitra, 1979) is an example of a programme cover for the beneficiary. There was demand for milk in the nearby city. The SFDA undertook to revitalise the Cattle Breeders' Association for procurement, preservation and sale of milk.

Village level cooperative societies were initiated. Veterinary services were also facilitated through the SFDA's intervention. The Rural Works Scheme was used to improve roads and hence facilitate milk routes. Later this grew into the Anand Pattern of dairy cooperatives, which offers veterinary services, feed, extension education and all other inputs except credit (horizontal) on the one hand and procurement, processing and marketing services (vertical) on the other. Maitra pleads for production, marketing and loan recovery as an organised system and illustrates with the examples of the SFDA's assistance to the vegetable estate of landless labourers. They were given land on lease, credit and marketing support at the instance of the SFDA. In West Bengal, Operation Barga not only involved the distribution of land to share croppers but also the provision of a set of linkages to enable them to make productive use of the land. Thus credit for land development, agricultural inputs, extension services, short term sustenance through FFW and marketing services were organised (D. Bandyopadhyay, 1980; N. Bandyopadhyay, 1981; B. Dasgupta, 1982; Dutt, 1981). The RBI study (1975) of SFDA's concludes that a 'package approach' is vital particularly for dairying and generally for animal husbandry programmes. The experience of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Development Corporation corroborates this learning. A study of 100 bird poultry units acquired by small and marginal farmers and financed by the Syndicate Bank under the TAPCO scheme in a district in Tamil Nadu by the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Cell of the Bank (1980) highlights the integrated approach

of providing all the inputs such as chicks, equipment, feed, veterinary care etc., and the linking of credit with marketing as a significant reason for the improved economic status of the beneficiaries.

Considerable evidence from many sectors seems to be available to show that the absence of a planned set of linkages both in terms of inputs and marketing adversely affect the productive capacity of a programme's benefit to weaker sections and its sustenance over a period of time. Isolated provision of inputs by different government departments even when the inputs complement one another was pointed out in the DPAP study (Srivastava, 1978). Each executing department planned its projects according to its own norms. There was no spatial integration of the plans of irrigation and agriculture inputs with the result that those who had some of the other inputs could still not use them for want of water and those who had water did not have the rest of the inputs. Gaikwad (1971), in analysing the functioning of the Integrated Agriculture Development Programme (which was to explicitly assist the small and marginal farmers) in a taluka of Maharashtra, points out to the fact that a set of inputs were to be offered to the beneficiary but finally only irrigation became available. The beneficiary was by and large, the better off sections, quite the unintended segment of farmers.

Of the Antyodaya programme's benefits, the self employment category had the greatest potentiality for improving upon the income level of the beneficiary in the short run. However, once the credit was made available, the programme did not provide any other inputs with the possible consequence suggested in a study of 50 beneficiaries in a district of Rajasthan (Khanna and Subramanian, 1982): Those for whom it was not a problem to establish the appropriate linkages or very favourable market conditions were available, are able to cross the poverty line with the minimum support of credit from the programme. Thus the only non tribal among the twenty beneficiaries interviewed in a tribal area multiplied his earnings. Another beneficiary who had set up a cycle shop was able to exploit the unreliable and expensive transportation system between his village and the city. The programme was not designed to offer a range of inputs and vertical linkages with the market. Thus while intended beneficiaries may have received the programme's benefit (Land, Credit, etc.) it was a big question whether this was sustained to produce a flow of earnings. The absence of market linkages and the plight of small and marginal farmers are highlighted by Aiyasami and Bohle (1981). They point out in their case study of two villages in South India - the higher marketing costs due to brokerage, middlemen and transport in relation to the amount sold, when compared with the large farmers. A Bank of India survey (1981) of 115 borrowers of 12 milk societies in five tribal talukas identifies improper selection and inadequate feeding practices as reasons for low returns.

As mentioned in the few examples where linkages were provided to beneficiary groups, the latter did gain from the programme in a sustained manner. In the absence of the linkages, it is the more resourceful who seem to profit, thereby allowing for the possibility of edging out the intended beneficiaries. Or, even if the benefit, in its material form reaches the intended beneficiary, he is likely to find it difficult to sustain it in order to produce a stable cash flow without the necessary linkages.

Proposition 3: The weaker sections are likely to benefit from a programme when its service is so designed that its appropriation by others is rendered difficult or unprofitable.

The programme may be designed in a manner that its focus on a particular target group or offer of a particular service discourages other groups from easily appropriating the benefits. The restricted appeal of the features of the programme may make competition for its service unprofitable to others. Also, the way the programme is designed may make it difficult for competing groups to divert its service.

The non-agricultural labour category interviewed with regard to the CSRE specified 'work not suitable' as one of the reasons for their non-participation in the employment programme (PEO, 1979 c). It was felt by the study group that this was possibly a skilled group; hence, unskilled or manual labour would have had relatively less appeal. In the case of Antyodaya, the label of the 'poorest' category may have also had something to do with the relatively lower order of

leakage of benefits. While effective identification during implementation no doubt contributed to the benefits reaching the intended beneficiaries, the provision that the programme was meant for the 'poorest' as identified in public could have dissuaded other groups from appropriating the benefits. Vyas (1982) mentions how the public declaration in a taluka of Rajasthan that all of the houseless would get house sites provoked most of the houseless to pursue the patwari. In another taluka of a neighbouring state, the informal news that the poor would get sites was interpreted by the poor as a programme that would be intercepted by the dominant groups.

The specific focus also enables the management to be vigilant about leakage. The choice of well defined beneficiary groups can make it difficult for unintended sections of the population to divert programme benefits. The Self Employed Women's Association works for an evident occupational category. Vegetable growers, leather workers, sheep breeders etc., are other examples of occupational categories that development agencies have focussed on in their programmes. Such a delineation of beneficiary groups makes them less general, more homogeneous and identifiable categories than labels such as the poor weaker sections, small/marginal farmers, peasants, tribals etc., On the other hand, where the programme is meant for a specific target group, but identification of the group presents serious problems, then the chances of the benefits not accruing to that group are higher. The SFDA/MFAL programmes were good examples of this problem.

Lack of clear operational identification criteria was one of the reasons for the stronger of the small farmers coming under the programme (RBI, 1975 : PEO, 1979 a). For instance, by non farm income standards, the so called 'small farmer' group was found to be a heterogeneous mix of marginal, small and big farmers (RBI, 1975). The high yielding variety of seeds and related inputs were offered to the farming community at large. Benefits naturally went to those who were already relatively more resource endowed (Frankel, 1971; Jannuzi, 1974).

The indication is that careful choice of a service or group makes it irrelevant or difficult for others to appropriate benefits. If, however, lack of clarity allows for a variety of interpretations of the intended beneficiary group, then competition for the service or benefits is likely to occur.

Proposition 4 : The more participative the process of identification of the intended beneficiaries, the greater the chance that programme benefits will reach them

Since any task is best performed at the level where information and knowledge exist for its effective performance, it is suggested that the identification of the beneficiary is best done at the village level where an informal understanding of the beneficiary's socio-economic condition exists. Given the absence of an organised information system and the possibility of incorrect primary data, the people themselves are the best direct and most reliable source of information for identification.

A major learning for implementation, it appears, has been the direct face to face interaction of the programme personnel with the village community so that (1) the concern for right identification is communicated to the beneficiary group (2) the beneficiary group or the citizenry, at large, participate in identification and (3) all those concerned with identification for future assistance such as the BDO, patwari, bank officials etc. are present at the same time and place. The Antyodaya programme demonstrated this very effectively (Mehta, 1981; Mukherjee and Sengupta, 1979; Khanna and Subramaniam, 1982). Camps were organised to identify the beneficiary households through gram sabha gatherings. Revenue camps were then held along with the gram sabha to distribute benefits such as land and pension. Similarly, credit camps were held to ensure distribution of credit. The West Bengal government's Operation Barga also used the camp approach and sought the assistance of local peasant organisations. Between 1978 end and May 1980, 8.5 lakh bargadars out of about two million were recorded. Local peasant organisations were used in this recording exercise. However, some sections of the community opposed this move of using "informal" organisations often associated with the party in power in the identification process.

Lack of appropriate identification criteria, as in the case of SFDA and MFAL, mentioned earlier, posed a problem in implementation. Initially, an area approach in terms of the size of holding was the criterion suggested. It was only later that other items such as non-agricultural income were included for identification (RBI, 1975).

Similarly, in the Intensive Area Development (IAD) scheme undertaken by the Government of Maharashtra in 1965, weaknesses in the definition of smallholders led to the leakage of benefits to unintended sections (RBI, 1969; Gaikwad, 1971).

Apart from the need for proper criteria for identification, there is also the aspect of applying the definition in the field. Social barriers and traditional practices seem to come in the way. Fear of presenting oneself as a tenant farmer and incurring the wrath of the local land owner (Rudra, 1981), oral leasing arrangements (Frankel, 1971; RBI, 1975) and reliance on old records (RBI, 1975) were some of the major reasons for the lack of reliable information and difficulties in identification.

The indication is that there has been considerable learning from past experience. Firstly, there is an attempt to sharpen the definition or the criteria for beneficiary identification. Secondly, there is a shift from reliance on records to a participatory process and the use of informal means, thus improving the field application of the planned norms. However, when vested interests are threatened, implementation is more difficult and programmes have to contend with new barriers.

Proposition 5 : The lower the technological and institutional barriers to entry in the design of a programme, the higher the likelihood that the weaker sections will benefit from its service

Access to programme service may be rendered more difficult by the nature of the technology or of the institutions extending the technology to weaker sections. Removal of such institutional or technological barriers is likely to ensure benefits to intended beneficiaries.

The level of complexity of the service offered could influence the flow of benefits. The public works programmes - CSRE, FFW and EGS - offered employment involving unskilled manual work. This enabled a vast majority of the rural unemployed to take advantage of the service. The requirement of any skill would have restricted the potential beneficiary group. A way of reducing the complexity of a service which is delivered by an agency external to the community served is demonstrated by the example of the Community Health Volunteer (CHV). The CHV is a village level worker from among the beneficiary community. With training to handle the majority of minor ailments and supervised by the Primary Health Centre staff, he seems to be a useful means of dealing with the problems of distance, communication and accessibility for rural families (NIHFW, 1978; 1979).

Similarly, special measures or mechanisms included in the programme to lower the institutional barriers could direct the flow of benefits in desired ways. For instance, a special feature of the Antyodaya programme was the village camps held not only for identification but also for choice of benefits. It was a way of 'approaching the identified poor families right at their doorsteps' (Special Schemes Organisation, 1979, p.1). The design thus planned to take the administration a step closer to the people. The state government of West Bengal envisaged the provision of land development subsidy and irrigation support for lands distributed under Operation Barga. Commercial and rural banks were persuaded through a pilot project in 1978 and later about 1.3 lakh beneficiaries gained access to institutional finance during 1979-80 (D. Bandopadhyay, 1980; N. Bandopadhyay, 1981). The SFDA and MFAL provided a subsidy of 25% and 33-1/3% subsidy on programme related investments as part of the strategy to provide access to new technologies and opportunities. Moreover, risk cover was provided to credit institutions which were to deal with such a large sized clientele whose creditworthiness was in doubt (Department of Agriculture, 1969; 1970). Effective extension appears to be a factor in enabling entry to weaker sections. It was found that the High Yielding Varieties (HYV) programme, which followed close on the heels of the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) and the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP), was able to reach its benefits to the small farmers in places where the already present IADP extension staff was active and effective (Sen, 1974).

Raj Krishna (1979) underlines the significance of extension and notes that under SFDA, a difficulty was the use of the same extension staff for a large body of small farmer beneficiaries, without additions to the number of personnel or reorientation. The reliance on the existing field level organisation of the government for the distribution of inputs was also a weakness (RBI, 1975). The SFDA was designed to be a facilitating agency among the farmers, credit institutions and district level departments of the government, and bring them together for the small farmer's benefit. But such a role in a highly differentiated departmental and hierarchical setting of the government, did not seem to have matched the demands of the task. Consequently, the activities of the SFDA, which did not require as much interaction with and between others, such as identification, took precedence over significant others such as the evolution of viable agricultural or allied industry projects. Thus the agency was not able to assist the small farmers as much or as well as it could have (RBI, 1975). It is also suggested that another outcome of the "weak" role is the focus on subsidy distribution rather than facilitation, the agency thereby carrying out what was within its control (Desai BM, 1979). These are examples of certain strategic miscalculations rendering the SFDA ineffective in improving the access of intended beneficiaries to institutional services.

Despite improvements in design, the prevalent institutional culture and conventions may have a strong impact on the behaviour of other related organisations. Thus, the type of security

required by cooperative and commercial banks in the creation of assets below Rs.5000 in IRDP might defeat the very objective of helping marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The MIDS study (1980) points out how the insistence on land as security over and above the hypothecation of assets arising out of the loan, excluded the landless sections for whom benefits such as bullock carts, sheep units etc., could be the most appropriate.

There are cases where the attributes of the technology do not make it easily accessible to the weaker sections. Just as the HYV required land, water and other inputs and hence capital, the biogas technology available now requires capital. Even with the subsidy on the investment for the plant, access to the technology was difficult for the less well-off groups due to the need for free land to instal the plant and water for mixing with the dung. Access will, therefore, naturally be restricted (Moulik and others, 1978).

There is evidence that a number of organisational, financial and educational measures in lowering technological and institutional barriers have been tried with some good results. At the same time, the prevalent culture and norms of the institutions such as government departments and financial institutions are not easily changed and there is evidence to suggest that they tend to pose barriers to effective implementation. While there is no conclusive evidence on the efficacy of the measures intended to lower the barriers to entry of weaker sections, it does seem that a campaign approach, as in the case

of Operation Barga and Antyodaya, and the use of a linking person (such as the Community Health Volunteer) from among the beneficiaries have had a favourable effect on the accessibility of programme services to the weaker sections.

Proposition 6: The stronger the participation of poor beneficiaries or their organisations in the planning and implementation of the programme, the higher the probability that benefits will flow to the weaker sections

Involving beneficiaries in organising the programme can lead to a more relevant service and improved benefits for the intended groups. Changes and adaptations may thus be incorporated in the programme. Involvement may arise out of the direct participation of beneficiaries in planning and implementation. Or a local organisation - voluntary agency or panchayat - may participate in the programme on behalf of the beneficiaries.

The influence of committed agencies has been demonstrated in several fields. The PEO (1980 a) study of the FFW talks of Satguru Seva Sangh's efforts with the tribals in Gujarat. The Sangh enabled the tribal families to acquire land, grow fodder and trees, obtain milch animals and use the FFW programme to utilise the land profitably. Nutritive food was also being supplied.

Participation of voluntary agencies specifically in the other programmes selected for study were difficult to come by. However, several other specific instances of their involvement and the consequent flow of benefits to the poor have been recorded. These are in

the fields of education, particularly, non-formal education (Rao TV and others, 1980; Fernandes, ed. 1980); special programmes for backward areas, as in the case of tribals (Upadhyaya, 1981) and other social service efforts (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981).

The panchayat has not been held up as a model of an effective local organisation representing the interests of the poor (Department of Rural Development, 1978). It appears that where the state is supportive through its overall policies, panchayats may be potential instruments for effective delivery of programme services. In West Bengal, the democratic decentralisation process seems to have motivated them to implement programmes like OB with local needs in mind. An opportunity was made available to bring out varying interests into the open forum by the panchayat members, many of whom were from the weaker categories¹ (B. Dasgupta, 1982). The PEO study of FFW (1980 a) refers to the positive experience of the panchayats participating in the choice of the technical departments. It was felt that local needs were taken care of in planning where the panchayats were involved.² However, the study does not go on to say whether the poor in fact benefitted in such circumstances.

¹ They are party functionaries, say the sceptics.

² The advice following this about "bottom up" planning is somewhat surprising in view of the PEO's own recommendations after their study of CSRE (1979) that the Public Works Department be the key agency for the planning and implementation of the programme.

As far as we know, the direct participation of beneficiaries in the management of the programme in relation to the programmes under review has not been studied. There are references to the useful, and, indeed, necessary participation of beneficiaries in programmes such as irrigation (Jayaraman, 1981), where decisions regarding the flow of water are required on a periodic basis. Positive experiences of the participation of weaker sections in similar programmes have been referred to in some studies. Fernandes (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981 m p.35) suggests that in projects, where dissatisfaction on the part of the people, rather than a concern for charity on the part of the external agency was the cause of developmental effort by an external agency, participation was more likely. He also indicates that sustaining any programme seemed to require participation, whereas merely achieving a set of physical targets did not. We have yet to come across studies suggesting the inappropriateness or irrelevance of participation, in specific programmes.

It is our impression that participation by beneficiaries directly by local action groups, voluntary agencies, panchayats and other representative bodies in specific development programmes is only now becoming a subject of attention for investigation. The Sixth Plan (1980-85), for instance, gives much greater emphasis to this issue as compared to the preceding plans. Consequently, in the programmes under review, even though they may have enlisted the involvement of beneficiaries or beneficiary-supported agencies in particular cases, participation has not been explicitly recognised or given prominence in programme design except perhaps in Operation Barga. There have

been some examples of participation in implementation. This is surely an issue which calls for a more serious study of all its assumptions, implications and preconditions for effectiveness, if it is not to remain platitudinous.

Conclusion

The seventies have witnessed a number of development programmes whose objective was to benefit the weaker sections of society. Their accomplishments in relation to this objective have been varied. While many factors have helped or hindered their performance, it was the purpose of this paper to understand, in a preliminary fashion, the role of programme strategy in enabling weaker sections to benefit from development programmes.

To begin with, six propositions about specific elements of strategy were listed. These were culled from the various analysts about development programmes and processes. The propositions were tested against the evidence on eight development programmes - three state initiated and five launched by the centre. The tentative conclusions with regard to each of the propositions have been summarised at the end of each section. Our overall conclusion is that careful attention to programme strategy might make a difference to the accrual of the benefits to the weaker sections. It would seem that specification of needs and attributes of the beneficiary group and hence of matching services to their unique needs, creation of programme linkages, careful design of service to avoid competition

for benefits from more powerful interests and a participatory identification process are particularly significant. Available evidence is not adequate to judge the impact of lowering technological and institutional barriers and of participation of various sections of the community on the accrual of benefits to weaker sections. This is not to imply that these are less important dimensions of strategy. The question of participation, especially, deserves much greater attention and deeper study.

APPENDIX 1SUMMARY OF PROGRAMMES TAKEN UP FOR THE STUDY1. The Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA)

The Report of the All India Rural Credit Review Committees 1969 recommended the setting up of an agency to assist the small farmer, who had not benefitted from the gains of the Green Revolution in the 1960s. The SFDA programme of the Government of India was initiated in 1969-70. Its objective was to ensure the viability of the small farmer. Since its inception, the SFDA received budgetary support to the tune of Rs.134.31 crores upto September 1977, of which Rs.123.59 crores was utilised. A sum of Rs.124 crores was utilised as credit by over 6 million beneficiaries. SFDA was a registered society at the district level and was to act as a catalyst agency in identifying small farmers, investigating their problems, helping them to obtain inputs from various developmental organisations and thereby acting through existing agencies to the maximum extent possible. Standardised projects for each agency were not prescribed.

2. Agency for the Development of Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers (MFAL)

Following the recommendation of the All India Rural Credit Review Committee, 1969, the MFAL programme was also launched in 1969-70. The objective was to assist the marginal farmer and agricultural labourers by improving the productivity of the farmer's land and pursuing related activities such as animal husbandry, dairying etc. The MFAL was also to be a Registered Society but was to be kept distinct from the SFDA initially. It was, however, merged with the latter after a couple of years. A catalytic role was envisaged. Just as in the case of the SFDA, an all-India coverage was sought after the pilot projects.

3. Antyodaya

In June 1977, the new state government of Rajasthan felt that the existing rural development programmes were inadequate in terms of coverage, resources and local participation. As a response, the Antyodaya Programme was launched in October, 1977. The objective was to raise a selected set of the poorest families above the poverty line. Four special features marked the programme: (1) The family was to be identified concretely in its village setting and assisted (2) Emphasis was to be given to the delivery of productive assets (3) The administration was to perform on active outreach function rather than remain passive and (4) The identification criteria were to be strictly economic. The administrative bureaucracy from the VLW up to the state secretariat was to implement the programme. Some

of the other states like UP also initiated its own Antyodaya Programme. Nearly two lakh of the poorest families were assisted in Rajasthan. Assistance was in the form (1) pension (2) land and credit to be used for land improvement (3) self employment and (4) wage employment. After a loss of the initial momentum, due to a change of government in 1980, the essential elements have been incorporated into the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

4. Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP)

The Rural Works Programme started in 1970-71 in 54 districts, was aimed at the generation of employment through the execution of rural works. Later, the programme was reoriented to follow the area development approach. During the Fourth Plan, it was renamed as the Drought Prone Area Programme. It became a central scheme following the mid term appraisal of the Fourth Plan. The programme objectives were: (1) Restoration of ecological balance (2) Integrated area development (3) Equitable distribution of development benefits and (4) Greater employment. Since its origin in the late sixties, 74 districts in 13 states were covered up to March, 1980. Progress was noted in soil treatment, augmenting irrigation facilities, afforestation and pasture development.

5. Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE)

The CSRE was undertaken between 1971 and 1974. The basic objectives were: (1) direct generation of employment in all the districts at the rate of 2.5 lakh man days per annum in each district (2) creation of durable assets in consonance with local development plans. The cost

cost of material, equipment etc., was not to exceed one fourth of the total cost of the project. The scheme was administered by the Department of Rural Development at the centre and the parallel departments in the states. The centre released Rs.122.6 crores for this scheme (a 100% grant-in-aid effort) over the three years and this resulted in the creation of 3160 lakh man days of employment. The three most important schemes taken up under the CSRE were road construction, land development, and minor irrigation. Block development agencies and Panchayati Raj organisations were the primary implementors.

6. Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS)

The EGS was initiated by the Government of Maharashtra in 1972-73 to provide gainful employment in approved works to all unskilled persons in the state, who needed work and were prepared to do manual work in rural areas. Productive works of a labour intensive nature (60% of costs as wages) leading to the creation of durable assets were to be taken up. They were to be executed through the available departmental machinery. A sum of Rs.216 crores had been used between 1972-73 and 1979 resulting in 5627 lakh man days of employment. Additional technical staff was provided for at the district level for better planning and supervision. A list of technically and economically viable projects was drawn up. The EGS was implemented as a parallel scheme after the induction of the Food for Work Programme of 1977.

7. Food for Work Programme (FFW)

The FFW, as a national programme in the series of interventions by the government in the public works genre, intended to use excess foodgrains as a part payment for employment offered to persons below the poverty line in rural areas. Although the programme was initiated in 1977, it gained momentum in 1978, with several states participating in it. Improvement in income and nutritional levels ; the creation of durable community assets and strengthening of the rural infrastructure were the objectives. Foodgrains were given to the states for plan and non-plan schemes for partial or full payment of wages. The departmental machinery, Panchayat Raj Institutions and voluntary agencies were to be involved. Up to October 1980, .56 lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains were allotted and 46.5 lakh tonnes utilised. About 8700 lakh man days of employment were generated.

8. Operation Barga (OB)

The Government of West Bengal undertook OB with the objective of registering the name of all share croppers. Finding that previous attempts were ineffective, the state government launched a drive under OB in 1978. Identification was to be done in camps by governmental revenue staff with the assistance of local peasant organisations. About 50% (10.4 lakhs) of the estimated total number of share croppers (23.1 lakhs) could record their names up to March 1981. In 1980, the total number of share croppers recorded was 2.17 lakhs, the average monthly rate being 18000. In the same year, 34,437 acres of land were vested.

Of the total land available, 6.7 lakh acres were distributed to the share croppers. A number of schemes to support OB was implemented by the government so as to make the land acquired by the share croppers secure and productive.

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