CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Removal of poverty and unemployment have been the main objectives of development planning in India since 1951. Although there were continuous efforts to tackle the problem of unemployment in totality, the success achieved in this direction was very much disappointing. This is due to the fact that employment objective was often a secondary objective. It was generally added as an after-thought to the growth target of Gross National Product (GNP), but very poorly integrated to the overall frame work of planning.

Iinspite of some efforts to create jobs in the rural areas during the first two Five Year Plans, the problem of unemployment went on increasing. The industrial development of the country also failed to reduce the heavy dependence of the labour force on agriculture. The back-log of unemployment increased to 7.5 million at the beginning of the third plan. The Third Five Year Plan realised that special approach is needed to remove the problem of unemployment. By then, the planners realised that rural unemployment was one of the most difficult problems, not responding to the process of Planned development and therefore decided to attack the problem with
special efforts at generation of employment through a series of rural works programmes. These efforts were continued in the Fourth Five Year Plan also. By the end of 1974 the planning commission had launched a number of special programmes to generate employment opportunities. They were:

1. Rural Works Programmes (1961)
2. Rural Manpower Programme (1964-65)
3. Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (1971-72)
4. Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (1972)

In addition to these central sector programmes, some state Governments have also launched special programmes for employment generation. Some of them are:

1. Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharashtra
2. The Lend Army Project in Karnataka
3. The Labour-cum-Development Bank Scheme in Kerala.

During the Fifth Five Year Plan, the Government of India launched some more programmes. They are:

2. Rural Link Roads Programme
3. The Integrated Rural Development Programme.
4. The Food for Work Programme
5. TRYSEM
The backlog of unemployed at the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan was 26.60 million and the estimated additions to labour force were 44.00 millions. Thus the total labour force during the Fifth Five Year plan period was 70.60 millions. During the Fifth Five Year Plan period major programmes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme and "Food for Work Programme" were introduced. The main objectives of these programmes was to generate additional gainful employment to the rural areas with the utilisation of available stocks of food grains and to create durable community assets. The evaluation of the programme by the programme evaluation organisation (PEO) showed that the implementation process was defective and there was rampant corruption in the implementation. The food grains issued by the Central Government from the Food Corporation of India godowns sank into the parallel economy. Apart from malpractices, the most pertinent factor of the failure of the programme was the strong opposition from the land lord-cum-money lender in the rural areas.

During the Sixth Five Year Plan the Government of India's aim was progressive reduction in the incidence of poverty and unemployment. During this period, the Government of India launched very important programmes like "National Rural Employment Programme" and "Rural
Landless Employment Guarantee Programme.

To plug the loopholes in the food-for-work programme, it was modified and a new name was given to Food for work programme. The new name of the Food-for-work Programme is the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP). The main objectives of the programme are to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and underemployed persons (both men and women) in the rural areas. The programme is expected to generate additional gainful employment in the rural areas to the extent of 300-400 million mandays per annum, create durable community assets, and improve nutritional status and living standard of the poor.

The Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme was intended to improve and expand employment opportunities for rural landless persons with a view to providing guarantee of employment to at least one member of every landless labour household upto 100 days in a year. It was originally expected that 360 million mandays of employment would be generated under the programme. The programme is expected to generate 260.15 million mandays of employment.

The Seventh Five Year Plan lays great emphasis on productive employment generation. The projected increase in employment during the seventh plan period is
40.36 million standard persons years (SPY), of which the agricultural sector would provide 18 million standard person years of employment, while the industrial sector by contrast would provide only about 7 million standard person years employment. In the seventh Five Year Plan the thrust is mainly on creating additional job opportunities so as to absorb the unemployed in some gainful employment so that the country would achieve near full employment by 2000 A.D.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the working of NRE Programmes in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. Anantapur district is a chronically drought prone district. As such the need for generation of additional employment opportunities in rural areas is very high. Agriculture in the rural areas of Anantapur district is a way of life. If does not provide adequate income or employment. Therefore, the study of the impact of NRE programmes in Anantapur district should be of great interest. For this purpose, two taluks of the district have been chosen on a purposive basis. Official reports indicate that the progress of NREP was good in Tadpatri taluk and 'not so good' in Penukonda taluk. Therefore, two villages from each of these two taluks
were chosen for the survey - Peddapappur and Ammalladinna of Tadpatri block and Somandepalli and Challapalli of Pegtukonda block. A pre-tested questionnaire was canvassed among 50 respondents in each of these two blocks. The author himself personally conducted the survey. The emphasis of the survey was on the study of the impact of the programmes on wages, income and employment. The study broadly showed the following results:

The study reveals that most of the respondents working under National Rural employment Programme are in the age-group of 25 to 45 years. At the block level, the composition of male and female labour force was 75 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. The four important categories of works are (1) Roads (2) Minor works (3) School buildings and (4) Wells. But the most important among these categories was the construction of roads both from the point of expenditure and employment. However the roads laid under the Programme were not pucca in their nature and can be washed away in the rainy season. Some of the works were incomplete due to non-release of funds in time. The study shows that there was no uniformity with regard to the payment of wages in kind and cash. Some of the beneficiaries were paid fully in kind, some were paid fully in cash and most of them were
paid both in kind and cash. The beneficiaries complained that the quality of food grains supplied under the programme was not satisfactory. The average number of days worked by a beneficiary under the programme turned out to be 115 days in a year. The wages paid under NREP were higher than the minimum wages fixed for the area as the prevailing local market wages were high. There was no discrimination in payment of wages between males and females.

All the respondents felt that there is a change in their family life after getting enrolled under NREP. 60 per cent of the respondents felt that the wages paid under the NREP were higher than the wages in other employment in off-seasons. Hence, the beneficiaries wanted that the programme should be continued throughout the year by taking up more works and by increasing the wages and fair-price shops. Some of the beneficiaries felt that Government should release the funds in time and there should be proper supervision over contractors and the wages must be paid daily instead of weekly, fortnightly and monthly payments.

The programme has emerged as a very good device to reduce off-season unemployment. It could provide additional employment to the beneficiaries. But the pro-
gramme could not create durable assets to a significant extent. Most of works remained incomplete due to non-release of funds in time. This makes us to conclude that if the programme is implemented throughout the year by plugging all the loopholes without interference from political elite, the programme can make a significant impact on wages, income and employment in this area.

The survey reveals that though the Government has spent a lot of money on implementation of NREP, the works were not completed properly. The main cause of this seems to be political pressure. The study shows that, the respondents felt that the wages paid under WREP were higher than the prevailing wages. On the basis of the total expenditure incurred and mandays generated, road construction stood first followed by building construction, and Minor Irrigation wells. But the roads laid under the Programme were not very durable.

The survey also shows that though the programme could not make a big dent in respect of rural unemployment and create assets of a durable nature, the programme has helped in improving the employment opportunities. The respondents by and large welcome the continuance of the programme on a more effective basis.