CHAPTER-10
GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE TOWARDS UPLIFTMENT OF AGRARIAN POPULATION

The economy of Himachal Pradesh is predominantly an agro-based one and any fluctuation in agriculture and allied sectors production causes significant change in the economic well being and growth of the state, particularly in the absence of strong industrial base and off farm employment opportunity. For this reason, Government has to play a vital role for the shake of economic stabilization through agro based employment and income augmentation policies and programmes in rural areas of the state. As a most recent development in efforts to achieve food and nutrition security in India, has been the intervention of the Supreme Court of India by issuing a series of directives to central and state government to implement, with in stipulated time period, programmes meant to eliminate under nutrition and malnutrition. The constitutional provisions like ‘Right to Food'(RTF) has been proved another mile stone in this direction.

The article 21 of the Indian constitution states that ‘everyone has a right to a standard of living, adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food’ clearly outlines the obligations of the state to ensure the citizens of India their right to food. Himachal Pradesh of today’s can best be understood in the context of socio cultural and economic progress, it has made in the recent past on all fronts. Here, we are concerned with ongoing or existing poverty alleviation programmes meant to provide income yielding assets, skill imparting to ensure employment opportunities and to improve quality of rural life. In the recent decades, the focus of such schemes and programmes has progressively shifted from growth to welfare and than from responsive to an integrated approach.

Poverty alleviation has always been the main agenda of policy planning of successive governments in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Various programmes of the central and state governments have been implemented so far in the state. These efforts can be said fruitful, as the poverty figures have been decreased over the time. But it is
clear that poverty still persists in the state either in one or another form and its prevalence is more among the under privileged sections of society consisting of marginal, small farmers, agricultural labourer, rural artisans, scheduled cast and scheduled tribes, physically handicapped persons and women etc. Hence, more dedicated and integrated efforts are needed to cope with this complex problem. In the light of ongoing study, some of the existing programmes have been enlisted and analyzed in the light of with their performances. This chapter contains three sections consisting of various agricultural development programmes, rural development programmes and socio-economic programmes etc. with the sole objective to provide livelihood to the agrarian population. Moreover, the study is also confined to the programmes concerned with the growth in food grains production to mitigate food feed requirements at farm level in the state.

10.1 AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND AGRO CREDIT PROGRAMMES

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Himachal Pradesh, as providing direct employment to about 69 percent of people in the state. The state government has emphasised on growth of food grains production through various programmes and policies directly concerned with agricultural developments as mentioned below;

10.1.1 High Yield Varieties Programme (HYVP)

In order to increase the production of food grains, government emphasized on the distribution of seeds of high yield varieties to the farming communities. The programme was also aimed to increase area brought under high yield varieties of principal crops viz. maize, paddy and wheat. Himachal Pradesh has about 25 seed multiplication functional farms aimed to produce foundation seeds. There are four vegetable development stations, 14 potato development stations and 2 ginger development stations in the state.

10.1.2 Plant Protection Programme (PPP)

Plant protection programme was launched in the state to increase crop production and to avoid fluctuations in food grains production. For this purpose
special campaigns have been organized to fight the menace of crop disease, insects and pests etc. The scheduled casts, Scheduled tribes, Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) family farmers of backward areas, small and marginal farmers have been provided plant protection chemicals and equipments at subsidized rates like chemicals and equipments at up to 50 percent subsidy. Since 1998 large farmers has also been allowed avail subsidy up to 30 percent on agro equipments.

10.1.3 Soil Testing Programme (STP)

In order to check the gradually deteriorating soil fertility from crop season to crop season, frequent soil samples have been collected from different farms and analyzed in soil testing laboratories. Soil testing laboratories have been established in each district, whereas special mobile soil testing van laboratories have also been operational in tribal and non-tribal areas. During 2006-07 about 70 to 80 thousands soil samples have been collected and tested to suggest appropriate remedies to maintain soil fertility, health and to increase production.

10.1.4 Bio-gas Development Programme

In the low and mild hills of the state, installation of bio-gas plants have assumed great importance, keeping in view depleting sources of conventional fuel i.e. firewood. Since its inception about 42,446 bio-gas plants have been installed in the state by the end of 2006. Out of total bio-gas produced in the Himalayan regions, approximately 90 percent is being produced in Himachal Pradesh.

10.1.5 Fertilizer Consumption and Subsidy

Fertilizer consumption is constantly increasing in the state over the time, starting from demonstration level in late sixties when fertilizer was introduced, as a single input. Which helps in increasing the food grains production, in order to mitigate food feed requirements and for the attainment of food self-sufficiency at national as well as state level. The state government is providing 100 percent transport subsidy on all fertilizers up to retail sale points. The consumption of fertilizers namely Nitrogenous, Phosphatic and Potassic (NPK) has reached to 48,981 Metric Tonnes (MT) by 2006-07.
10.1.6 Agriculture Credit

The Government of Himachal Pradesh has committed to provide better access to institutional credit for small and marginal farmers and other under privileged weaker sections, to enable them to adopt modern technology and improved agricultural practices. The government has taken various measures to ensure timely and adequate supply of institutional credit to the poor and needy rural households at reasonable rate of interest. The state of Himachal Pradesh is moving ahead towards the hundred percent institutional credit inclusions in rural areas. The increasing role of institutional credit in the integrated rural development of the country, a need was felt for a single broad-based organisation, not only to extend adequate financial assistance to the various credit institutional in rural areas but also to provide guidance in all related matters concerning the formulation and implementation of rural development programmes. Consequently National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development came into being on July 12, 1982 as an apex institution for agriculture credit. 5

10.1.7 Kishan Credit Card (KCC)

This scheme is under successful operation, since its inception as it provides adequate agriculture loans at reasonable rates, with the help of about 1,022 bank branches in the state. During 2006-07 about 2,76,292 Kishan Credit Cards were issued. 6 A new category of banks, known as Regional Rural Bank (RRB) has been set up in the Country by 1775, with a view to fill up the institutional credit gap in rural areas with a greater development potentialities. the main objectives of these banks is to increase the local involvement of banks to meet the credit requirements of the weaker sections, particularly small and marginal farmers, landless labourer, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas. 7

10.1.8 Crop Insurance Scheme

The Government has introduced ‘Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojna’ in the state from Rabi Season 1999-2000, initially maize, Paddy, wheat, Barley and Potato crops were brought under this scheme. This scheme is compulsory for loaned farmers and optional for non-loaned farmers. Subsidy on premium in respect of small and marginal farmers is provided on sum set basis and claims on account of losses to crops and premium subsidy are shared equally by the state and central governments.
10.1.9 Seed Certifications Programme

In order to harness suitable agro-climatic conditions for seed production and to enhance farmers economic well being, government has launched seed certification programme. Himachal Pradesh State Seed and Organic Produce Certification Agency (HPSS & OPCA) has been operational in the state for registration of seed growers in different parts of the state for seed production and certification of their farm produce.

10.1.10 Agriculture Marketing

Himachal Pradesh Agricultural/Horticultural Produce Act, 2005 has been enforced in the state, aimed regulation of marketing of agricultural produce. Himachal Pradesh marketing board has been established at the state level, to safeguard the interest of the farming community. The market fee charged was nominal and utilized for raising infrastructure. There is no plan assistance for the board but it has to undertake all activities with special assistance grants and its own resources.

10.1.11 Agricultural Mechanisation

New farm machines are being popularized among farmers, with trail and testing of these implements i.e. small power tiller, sprayers and implements suitable for hilly conditions.

10.1.12 Women in Agriculture Programme

A central government sponsored scheme 'Women in Agriculture' is operational in 68 blocks of the state. Under this scheme farm-women are grouped to undertake agricultural activities for smooth channelization of agriculture extension services and technical know how up to the farm/field level. A sum of Rs. 30 Lacks is being spent under this head.

10.1.13 Macro Management Approach for Agricultural Development

Another centrally sponsored scheme was launched in the state in its modified version as taken up by the state Government. The scheme was receiving 90 percent central financial support and 10 percent from the state plan. The emphasis is being laid on improvement of cereal crops, transfer of technology and construction of water storage tanks, development of off-season vegetable seeds, quality seed production,
integrated nutrient management and balanced use of fertilizers along with involvement of women in farm activities.

10.1.14 Horticulture

The rich diversity of agro-climate conditions favours the cultivation of temperate to sub-tropical fruits in Himachal, along with cultivation of ancillary horticulture produce like flowers, mushroom, honey and hops etc. To harness this agro-climatic suitability government of Himachal Pradesh has fixed guidelines time to time in various plans, as enlisted below;

Horticulture Development Scheme is the major programme aiming at creation and maintenance of infrastructural facilities in rural areas, for ensuring equitable access to the resources and inputs required for promotion of all fruit crops. This scheme consists of programmes like development of fruit production, area expansion programmes, demonstration of new technologies and improved package of practices on orchards for fruit growers, various fruit development programmes, development of medicinal and aromatic plants, horticultural information services, short term research projects for solving the field problems of emergent nature, Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) etc. have been operational simultaneously in the state. These development programmes are under successful operation in various fruit growing areas of the state.

10.1.15 Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Livestock is the second major productive asset of rural households in their possession and it plays an important role to boost rural economy. Therefore, the state Government has also initiated on the same line in following ways;

Animal health & Disease control

Cattle development

Sheep breeding and development of wool

Poultry development

Feed and fodder development

Veterinary education and Livestock census etc.
There are 7 Polyclinics, 303 veterinary hospitals and 1721 veterinary dispensaries by end of 2006. Sheep breeding farms at Jeori (Shimla), Sarol (Chamba), Naagwain (Mandi), Tal (Hamirpur), Karchham (Kinnaur) are supplying improved sheep breeds in the state. Dairy production is an integral part of animal husbandry and forms a major chunk of earnings on small and marginal farms among the agrarian population in the state. Artificial inseminations facilities are being provided through 1700 institutions and 4.55 Lacks cows and 0.85 buffalos are likely to be inseminated during 2006-07.  

10.2 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Rural development has been remained the core issue of all the plans and policy, since the state of Himachal Pradesh came into being, aimed to poverty alleviation, employment generation, and area development programmes etc. The following state and centrally sponsored rural development programmes are operational in the state.

10.2.1 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY)

This Yojana was launched in the year 1999-2000, a holistic package covering all aspects of self employment i.e. organisation of poor into self help groups, training for rural poor, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing of agro-products etc. The Yojana aimed at covering 30 percent of the below poverty line families in each block. Since its inception, it envisaged that monthly income of a beneficiary family must be increased by at least Rs. 2000. The beneficiaries under Yojana called ‘Swarozgaries’. This is a credit cum subsidy programme that is uniform at 30 percent subsidy of the project cost subject to maximum limit of Rs. 7500. For Scheduled cast, Scheduled Tribe and disabled persons ceiling have been 50 percent and Rs. 10,000 respectively. Yojana was designed to focus particularly vulnerable groups among the rural poor. The Yojana is being funded by the central and state government on 75:25 cost sharing ratio.

Since inception of this Yojna 6793 self help groups have been formed. During 2006-07, 445 self help groups have been formed and 403 self help groups consisting of 3806 BPL members have taken up economic activities. Special projects of
Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana are Installation of Hydrams and Gold mines Project for district Bilaspur.

10.2.2 Marketing of Rural Goods

Special provision has been made for the construction of 50 Himachal Gramin Bhandar and Central Gramin Bhandar in the state by the end of 2006, out of which 23 Gramin Bhandar have been constructed. Therefore, Milch livestock Improvement project approved for the Solan district and rural development through diversification in Agriculture have been started. This project undertook the regulation of activities like (i) Cultivation of medicinal Plants, Aromatic Plants, Flowers and orchids (ii) Sericulture (iii) Innovative Practice in Animal Husbandry. Self reliance through sericulture and dairy development project was approved for Hamirpur district, by September 2006 and an expenditure of Rs. 518.28 Lacks has been incurred.

Green Gold Scheme is also operational to promote the cultivation of medicinal Plants, Aromatic Plants, Flowers and orchids, off-season vegetables, Mushroom and improved dairy development project was approved by the Government of India for Chamba district. The subsidy components shared by the central and state Government on 75:25 bases.

10.2.3 Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojna

This programme has focused on the most burning issue to provide food security in rural areas, through provisions to provide additional and supplementary wage employment along with creation of durable community, social and economic assets and infrastructure. Priority is given to the provisions of wage employment to poorest among poor, women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and parents of child labour withdrawn from hazardous occupation. The scheme is being implemented on 75:25 cost sharing basis between centre and state governments respectively. The Yojana is run by Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at grass root level. By the end of 2006 about 17.11 lacks man days have been generated.
10.2.4 Watershed

Three schemes namely Integrated Watersheds Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Areas programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme are under execution. Under DPAP and DDP about 96 watersheds has sanctioned during 2006-07 and likely to be completed by 5 years.

10.2.5 Indira Awas Yojna

This is a centrally sponsored scheme which provides an assistance of Rs.27500 per beneficiary from below poverty line families for construction of new house. The selection of beneficiaries is made by local body i.e. Gram Sabha. During 2006-07, against a target of construction of 3054 new houses, 1036 new houses have been constructed and thousands of construction works are under pipeline.

10.2.6 National Family Benefits Scheme

The scheme is meant to provide financial assistance to the families living below poverty line of Rs. 10,000 per family, in case of death of the bread earner of family.

10.2.7 Rajeev Gandhi Awas Yojana

The scheme is being implemented on the line of Indira Awas Yojana. An amount of Rs. 522.88 lacks has been spent under this scheme on the construction of 1,258 houses while construction works of 3027 houses is in progress.

10.2.8 Total Sanitation Campaign Project

To ensure total sanitation in rural areas, the department is implementing this scheme in all the districts of the state. In addition to this, government has also started community latrine scheme.

10.2.9 National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

The government of India has enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA) which has been implemented in phased manner, initially Chamba and Sirmour districts were included under the scheme and latter extended to the whole state in phased manner. The scheme is providing minimum 100
days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to at least one member from each households in rural areas, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work project to the condition prescribed under the Act. The scheme aimed to create infrastructural facilities for development of agriculture and livelihood base for rural poor.

10.3 SOcio-economIC AND OTHER PROGRAMMES

Socio-economic programmes refers to a range of state and central government run programmes in the state, aimed to provide better livelihood means and ability to the rural poor to earn livelihood. These programmes are consisting of social welfare, educational and health schemes under successful operation in the state. These are as under;

10.3.1 Educational Programmes

Education is the key instrument for human resources development, the state is committed to provide education for all in order to develop better human capital assets through universalisation of elementary education. The state government has established separate Directorate of Primary Education in 1984, further renamed as 'Directorate of Elementary Education' by 2005. Today, a statewide network of educational institutions is under operation with the following objectives. These are encourage enrolment, reduce early dropout rate and enhance the retention rate of children through numbers of scholarships, provisions for free text books for SC and ST students in tribal and non-tribal area along with school dresses. Moreover, free text books for even general category female students at primary school level have been provided under ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ (SSA) to enhance female literacy rate.

10.3.1.1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched by the Government of India (GoI) and by the State for achieving the goal of Universal Elementary Education to provide the elementary education to all children up to the age of 6-14 years by 2010 and to bridge social, regional and gender gap with active participation of the community in management of schools. In the 10th Five Year Plan period the funding pattern was 75:25 by the Central and State Government respectively. The main interventions
under SSA are like opening of new upper primary and alternative schools, free text books for general cast girl students. Education for disabled children, teachers grant for teaching, learning materials and provisions for teachers training. Grants for replacement of school equipments, maintenance grant etc.

Despite this, special grants for sports activities has also been provided for overall development of children and a provisions of Rs. 95.00 lacks made during 2006-07 for sports activities at various level in primary schools. Provisions for the establishment of District Institution of Education and Training (DIET) has also made under 7th Five Year Plan to impart training to the teachers in the state.

10.3.1.2 Scholarship Schemes

Various scholarship schemes are meant to improve educational status of deprived sections of the society by the central and state governments. These are like Swami Vivekanand Utkrisht Chatarvriti Yojana which provides 4000 scholarships for the meritorious students of general categories. It is Thakur Sen Negi Yojna that provides scholarships for 200 boys and 200 girls students of scheduled cast category on merit basis. Maharishi Balmiki Chhatarvriti Yojna providing chhatarvriti to girl students of Balmiki families, whose parents are engaged in unclean occupation up to college level. Dr. Ambedkar Medhavi Chhatarvriti Yojna for SC, OBC meritorious students etc. are main operational scholarship schemes in the state.

10.3.1.3 Free Text Books

Students of various under privileged sections of the society like Scheduled Cast, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes and from Integrated Rural Development Programme families have been provided free text books by the state Government. During academic session 2006-07 an expenditure of Rs. 1,169.00 lacks was incurred on 4,25,250 students.

10.3.1.4 Mid Day Meal Scheme

Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) is being implemented in all the government and government aided primary schools in the state, as a major break through in form of food intervention scheme at school level. Under this scheme each student is being
provided hot cooked meal on every school day w.e.f 1st September, 2004. Scheme is aimed to attract children towards the school and to lessen drop out rate at early schooling. Secondly, to provide enough nutritional rich diet to the under privileged section’s children of the society for their balanced physical and mental growth.

10.4 HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEMES

To provide better health services especially to rural people, the state health and welfare department is implementing various health schemes through a wide network of numbers of civil hospitals, community health centre, Primary health centre, Dispensaries and Sub-centers. The state government is also committed to strengthen the existing infrastructure by providing modern equipments, specialized services, increasing the strength of the medical and paramedical staff in the medical institutions and upgrading the status of the existing medical institutions. A brief description of various health and family welfare activities carried out during 2006-07 has been presented. Some of the major operational programmes in the state are namely National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, National Leprosy Control Programme, National TB Control Programme, National Programme for Control of Blindness, National Family Welfare Programme, Universal Immunization Programme and National Aids Control Programme etc.

10.4.1 National Rural Health Programme

This programme is meant to indentify primary health centre’s to provide 24 hours emergency services. The sole objective of the programme is to provide easy access for all the people around the lock.

10.5 SOCIAL SECURITY NET

10.5.1 Pension Scheme

Under this scheme old age pension at the rate of Rs. 200 per month is being provided in the state to those who are 60 or above 60 years, having annual income less to Rs. 6000. Then disability relief allowances, widow pension, deserted women, irrespective of their age, and whose annual income is not exceeding to Rs. 6000 covered under social security net during year 2006-07 and Rs. 3806.51 lacks was provided for the same purpose.
10.5.2 Child Welfare

In order to look after orphans, semi-orphans and destitute children, the department is providing grand-in-aid for running and maintenance of Bal or Balika Asharams or orphanages.

10.5.3 Integrated Child Development Services

A 100 percent centrally sponsored scheme is functional in the state for the overall development of children between the age of 0-6 years through nursing of mothers, supplementary nutrition, pre-schooling, health checkup and referred services. For this purpose 76 projects are operational in the state and services are being provided by 7354 Anganwadi Centres (AWC) through the state. During 2006-07 approximately 3,30,000 children and 1,00,000 mothers or adolescent girls are being benefited.

10.5.4 Balika Samridhi Yojana

Yojana is aimed to change the negative attitude towards girl child and mother at the time of birth of girl child. There is a provision to give post birth grant of Rs. 500 in favour of first two girl children taking birth in Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.

10.5.5 Kishore Shakti Yojana

This Yojana is fully centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2000-01 initially in 15 blocks of selected districts of the state and in latter phase implemented throughout the state during 2006-07. Despite these programmes, there are numerous other programmes like women welfare programmes, handicapped welfare programmes Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribe and other backward classes welfare programmes are under successful operation in the study region as well as in the state.

10.6 SUMMING UP

It may be concluded that numerous central and state government sponsored programmes and policies are under successful operation in the state for the socio-economic upliftment of rural poor and vulnerable groups of the society. Most of policies and schemes have either attained or near to attainment of their objectives.
But, it was felt that more integrated, dedicated and purposeful policy regime is needed. More efficient administration and implementation authority is required for the fair selection or identification of real beneficiaries. The state has turned as the second most literate state in the Indian Union i.e. 76.5 percent literacy rate, it indicates the pace and pattern of human resources development in the state despite tough topography of the state. Besides this, lower female literacy rate is the other issue of concern, specially in Chamba district which needed special attention. The state Government has started mobile schools, for the universalization of elementary education, with special scholarships and stipends provisions for the children of under privileged sections of the society and committed to be 100 percent literate state. Moreover programmes like Integrated children development programme, Mid Day Meal Scheme and other rural employment schemes have been under successful operation to provide enough for rural poor to earn livelihood.

Specially rural employment guarantee scheme is doing well in the both districts of the state, to provide off season, non-skilled jobs to the registered job seekers and it is extended throughout the state in the second phase. Therefore, more intensified, such programmes are required to make a reach and to indentify real beneficiaries . It was observed that all registered job seeker could not get 100 days job for the reference years. Moreover, special women empowerment scheme are being implemented, to make them financial independent and to assign vital role in household and rural economy through entitlement of resources for women.
REFERENCES


