CHAPTER TEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. Introduction

This study began with the basic proposition that poverty is closely related with unemployment both open and disguised and low wages. Families dependent on wage earning requires more employment to get relief from the incidence of absolute poverty. This study began also with the basic observation that in the course of development process apart from agriculture some new activities not directly related with agriculture has emerged in rural areas. This has enlarged the scope for the workers to enter in these new activities and earn their livelihood.

The moot area of this study is to see the poverty removable capacities of such alternative fields in comparison with the agricultural sector in an area which is relatively agriculturally developed in the district of Bankura. To that end an equal number of households dependent on agricultural occupation and two alternative occupations, sand-lifting and construction have been selected. The different contributing factors like assets, wage and non-monetised sources have been carefully surveyed and their contributions are taken into account to get the total income of the families. Using the official poverty line as used by the local administration, it is seen in the study how many households in each category of occupations are above the poverty line and how many are below the poverty line. This has offered us the primary idea of poverty removal capacities of alternative occupations.

Being not confined to the income levels only the present study also enquired the actual economic conditions by taking into account expenditure levels and the changing pattern of expenditure as a consequence of higher income levels. Is there any indication of any change in proportionate expenditure on food and on other items or in the overall consumption propensity of three groups of households? This study also has taken into account the level of living of the households and has seen whether there is any marked difference of their level of living in terms of quality of items enjoyed by them. All these information helps us to draw the conclusion regarding the overall impact of occupational
diversification on the normal course of poverty eradication among the rural poor in our selected area.

10.2. Major Findings

1. Factors behind Diversifications of Occupations

Some causes of the poor households’ attempts to diversify their occupations from agriculture to non-agriculture have been tried to analysed in the present study. It is found that poor earning conditions in the agricultural occupations are the primary reasons for the preference of the workers to work in such non-agricultural occupations. This is some kind of push factor and mainly economic in nature. On the other hand earning stability, mode of wage payment, easier system of searching jobs, liberal system of work pattern, urbanized mode of work and above all future prospect of getting higher income by acquiring skills are some pull factors which play also some important roles in selection of any work - agriculture or non-agriculture. All these are discussed in our study to make an analysis of relation of workers to the jobs. It is found that although some pull factors are important to some extent, push factors are still the basic factors behind such occupational diversification in our study area.

2. Potential Employment Opportunities

Workers are seen to be engaged in different occupations. The scope of earning in different occupations is different. Level of wage income of any households depends on two factors, daily wage incomes received by its workers and per-worker number of days of employment. Comparing per-worker employment days it is found that per-worker employment days in the households of agricultural occupation 138 days in a year but in sand-lifting and construction occupational category per-worker employment days are 243 and 289 days respectively in a year (vide table-5.3). The basic cause of course that seasonal effect is less in such non-agricultural activities than the agricultural activities.

3. Variations in Wage Income

Apart from greater employment opportunities, variations are found in the daily wage received by the workers in different occupations. Comparing per-worker daily wage income it is found that a worker in construction occupation earns as much as Rs. 61.89 on an average while a worker in agricultural occupations earns only Rs. 54.21. Even the per-worker wage
income of sand-lifting occupation is Rs. 55.28 which is marginally higher than that of the agricultural workers (vide table 5.5).

Higher employment opportunities measured in terms of higher number of days of employment available to a worker and higher daily wage income act as a pull factor for the occupational diversifications as found in the study. This only reflects the less advantageous position of agricultural workers in terms of employment stability and income stability. We may note here that our study area Kotalpur block is relatively developed in agriculture in the district. If the economic factors like lower employment days and lower wage income have so much effect on the poor households the condition of the people in more backward areas can easily be conceived. So agriculture how ever much developed it can not relieve the casual workers from unemployment and lower income causing unemployment and poverty.

4. Occupational Hazards

But disadvantages in non-agricultural occupations some times outweigh advantages in that occupation. Over-utilisation of physical capacities, uncomfortable working conditions make such non-agricultural activities a hazardous occupations than the agricultural occupations (vide table 4.1). In-work hazards particularly health hazards make a quick downfall of their physical capacity of work. This makes their span of working life shorter than that in agricultural occupations. Sometimes workers in their later years of their working life again come back to the agricultural occupation leaving such hazardous non-agricultural occupations. This is evident from the age structure of the workers in different occupations. Most of the workers in the agriculture is in the higher age group but most of the workers in sand-lifting and construction are in the lower age group (vide table 4.4)

But all the workers may not be so calculative given their acute struggle to overcome poverty. A large number of workers are seen to be engaged in such non-agricultural activities and occupations of workers become diversified. Thus many households are found in our study area for which agriculture is not the only source of wage income and other sources have become important in their wage earnings. Overtime dependence on agriculture has come down and dependence on non-agricultural activities has increased. Such a switch over of dependence from agriculture to non-agriculture occupations amounts to occupational diversifications among the rural casual workers and their respective households. Our concern is whether such diversification of occupation in rural areas helps poverty removal? Thus we
address the question whether income potential of the diversifying households has sufficiently increased to lift them above the poverty line.

5. Potential Income of Workers in Different Occupations

To know the poverty removable capacity of alternative occupations in the rural areas the income status of households in alternative occupations are to be known. Potential incomes from three sources, from wage earning, from asset holding and from non-monetised sources have been primarily considered to get the incomes of the households. But it is found in chapter seven that incomes from assets and non-monetised sources are negligible in comparisons to wage incomes of the casual wage earners in our study area (vide table 7.5). Thus the income potential ultimately depends on wage earning potential in alternative occupations. We have captured the wage income potential by per worker annual wage earning in alternative occupations. It is found that per-worker yearly wage earnings are Rs.7080 in agriculture which is very much lower in comparison to Rs.13806 in sand-lifting occupation and Rs.17097 in construction occupation (vide table 5.6).

6. Potential Incomes of Households in Different Occupations

The differences in per worker yearly wage incomes have their effect in average daily incomes of equal number of sample households in each occupation. It is found that average daily income of construction households is Rs. 88.92 which is 80 percent higher than average daily income of agricultural households which is Rs.49.40 only. Even the average daily income of sand-lifting households is Rs.65.33 which is 32 percent higher than that of agricultural households (vide table 7.3).

Due to the difference in potential daily incomes, construction households have higher daily average per-capita income than that of agricultural households despite the same average number of family members as in agricultural households. But sand-lifting households have higher number of average family members than the agricultural households. Still these households have higher daily average per-capita income than the agricultural households (vide table 7.4). Daily average per-capita income of construction households is 80 percent higher than that of agricultural households. Sand-lifting households though not as high as construction households enjoy 10 percent higher income than that of agricultural households.
7. Potential Incomes and Poverty Eradication

Such differences in per-capita incomes have differential effects on the poverty scenario of different categories of households. For the same numbers of sample households only 18 percent of construction households are below the poverty line but 48 percent of sample agricultural households are below the poverty line (vide table 7.11). So a higher percentage of construction households are above the poverty line than that of agricultural households. A higher percentage of sand-lifting households than that of agricultural households are above the poverty line also. This is a marked improvement of the economic conditions of construction households and sand-lifting households over the agricultural households. This may be taken as an indication that diversification of rural workers may reduce the people below the poverty line. As a measure of poverty eradication, so diversification of occupations may be an effective policy in the rural area.

8. Effects of Diversification on Consumption Expenditure

For a close picture of the impact of occupational diversification on the actual economic condition, the overall standard of living reflected in expenditure pattern of the sample households has also been considered in our study. Three major items, say food, other (including clothing, education and entertainment) and medical expenditures are considered in this study. It is found that for all the sample households, expenditure on food takes the major part (around 70 percent) of their total expenditure. Non-food expenditures captured in ‘other’ and ‘medical’ expenditures take minor and more or less equal (around 30 percent) positions in all the three categories of sample households (vide table 8.1). The poor economic condition of the households in general is reflected by such pattern of expenditure.

But a noticeable change has occurred along with the change in income from occupational diversification as we have seen that expenditure on food as a percentage of daily income gradually diminishes from 67 percent to 54 percent as the households shift from agricultural activities to non-agricultural activities (vide table 8.3). The overall change of this expenditure pattern is itself an indication of betterment of economic condition from agriculture to non-agriculture occupation.

We also attempted to estimate the effects of diversification on poverty through highlighting the impact of income variation on consumption. We have found the normal relationship that income and expenditure are positively correlated for all categories of
households. But the importance of income in explaining the variations in expenditures is low in the case of non-agricultural households compared to agricultural households. For agricultural households 83 percent of the variations in per-capita daily expenditure are due to variations in daily per-capita income. For sand-lifting and construction households 76 percent and 64 percent of the variations in per-capita daily expenditure respectively are due to variations in daily per-capita income (vide table 8.6). To make a precise analysis of responsiveness of actual consumption expenditure to change in income level, we tried to find out the marginal propensity to consume (MPC) of households in different occupations.

From the values of MPC it is understood that agricultural households and sand-lifting households spend 53 percent and 48 percent of incremental incomes on consumption expenditure respectively. But in sharp contrast construction households spend only 34 percent of their incremental income on daily spending. In this sense also an upward movement in the economic conditions of construction households may be realised as they earn more but their propensity to consume is low (vide table 8.7).

9. Poverty Eradication in terms of Quality of Living

The above analysis is quantitative only. But change in income may bring about the change in quality of consumption and consequently quality of living too. In this study, type of house and six other items were considered first to capture the quality of living in terms of consumption goods necessary for a minimum standard of living. In a collective picture it is found that no household living in kotha or kuchhabari enjoys all the six items which are important for a minimum standard of living. Most of the houses have three items only. These three items are bicycles, torch and transistor. But in most cases they do not have in-house toilet, electricity and do not purchase fuel for cooking. All these denote a poor standard of living. Thus as a whole qualitative changes among the different categories of households are insignificant (vide table 9.8).

In respect of provision of social goods it is found that they have equal access to drinking water. But disparities are found in respect of access to health-care facilities. While most of the construction households, due to their higher income, go to the MBBS doctors in private clinics, most of the sand lifting households go to the quack doctors and most of the agricultural households go to the health centres (government run) due to their lower incomes.
Such disparities indicate mild improvement of construction workers in access to health-care facilities (vide table 9.9).

Social security in its true sense as found in organized sector does not prevail in such occupations which are basically unorganized in nature. The prevalent scheme of social security for agricultural workers (old-age pension) has not reached to all the agricultural workers. So social security in its actual form is still away from their life and job.

Thus we tried to gather evidence of qualitative changes, if any, in the living conditions among the sample households but observed that qualitative variations are insignificant. Thus in terms of income and expenditure pattern there are some signs of improvements in the economic conditions of non-agricultural households over the agricultural households but in terms of quality of living no remarkable change has been found in our study. Still from the point of poverty eradication diversification of occupation has shown a positive impact on the households which depends on non-agricultural occupations.

10.3. Some Recommendations

Our country is growing and slowly uplifting towards a relatively rapid development path. Even in rural areas signs of slow changes are being observed. The factors like mechanisation of agriculture, changes in infrastructure, spread of education, urbanisation are imparting to rural people some initiatives. These effects give rise to movement of labourers from agriculture to some non-agricultural sectors. In our micro level household study it is found that it is an outcome of ‘push’ effect which is primarily related to the poverty of agricultural labourers. But the movement is not reinforced by similar ‘pull’ factors of better terms and conditions of work and other benefits (protective and promotional) likely to be offered in organised urban sectors.

Apart from push and pull factors workers own initiatives are notably found in our study. They are responding to the growing non-agricultural activities in our study area. They are going outside the village to find a job keeping ‘push’ or ‘pull’ effects aside. A general willingness is found among the young generation to participate in the non-agricultural activities. This kind of orientation may emerge largely from the educational background of the workers. In our study we find that workers with some years of schooling are more interested in construction works. Schooling brings the young people in touch with others and
thereby broadens their horizons of looking towards future. Education imparts a sense of consciousness which improves personal outlook and thinking and control over personal behaviour. These improved qualities orient a person or a family towards a higher level of living. But the question still remains whether they are actually in better conditions than the traditional occupation of agriculture.

In our study we have made an intersectoral comparison of working conditions and economic conditions. It is found that economic conditions of those labourers who have moved from agricultural sector are relatively better in terms of attaining the positions above the poverty line. But overall living conditions are almost same with the agricultural households. Along with this there are scopes for further improvements of their working conditions and economic conditions also. Finding of those scopes and formulating some policies may be beneficial to the rural people as a whole. This is also important for the structural transformation of the economy. The agricultural sector can not be developed and productivity of agricultural labourers (and also their wage rate) can not be improved if all the labourers remain stagnant in agricultural sector. So transfer of labourers from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors is necessary. If we adopt appropriate polices for creating an appropriate environment and conditions for gainful transfer of labourers from agriculture to non-agriculture it will be a notable efforts towards solution to the problem of poverty and inequality in India.

Considering such necessities, some selected non-agricultural activities where the scope of employment of casual workers is substantial should be encouraged by the government. As found in the report of the Economic Census - 1998, there are some other non-agricultural activities in Kotalpur block where casual workers are employed. Regular occupation-level survey at local level may be conducted to know the emerging non-agricultural activities in the normal course of development of the area and their potential employment capacities to absorb the casual workers of this area. The nature of the occupations, prospect of these occupations, capacities of these occupations to create direct and indirect employment should be properly judged and effective policies should be taken to promote such alternative occupations. The activities providing regular employment to wage earners are to be encouraged by providing various institutional and technical assistances from the government. This will be the indirect assistance to the poor people with lower burden on government exchequer. Again this may not be disassociated from the normal course of
development. This may be better than many schemes of direct employment assistance given to the poor which is sometimes questioned on the ground of the availability of fund.

Direct employment assistance may be given if these alternative occupations can not generate sufficient man-days of employment. Our contention is that if employment opportunities can be related with the development it will be a viable solution to the unemployment problem for rural wage earners. Towards this objective the investment facilities for small and medium enterprises may be broadened in the rural areas.

Construction activity is a labour intensive activity and so this should be boosted up in the rural area. Facilities of house building loan which is provided to a limited number of people may be extended to cover all the prospective builders in the rural areas, if possible at a subsidized interest rate. Policies should be made in such a way that construction activities can spread over to the remote areas, not centred on only urban and semi-urban towns. Larger subsidies may be made available if any construction is made in remote areas. This will solve the problem of unplanned development of semi-urban towns, create permanent assets in the rural areas, raise the housing status of the people and also provide viable employment opportunities to the casual workers. This may keep pace with normal development process of the economy and small percentage of plan outlay may be required for giving subsidies and lower interest rate but will create enormous employment opportunities in such non-agricultural sectors.

As stated in introduction sand-lifting activity is rurally located but urban-linked. As sand is transported to other places out of our study area, it has a normal prospect of development. It has greater market outside the study area. It is not constrained by the local area construction activities only. As long as construction activities continue there may not be any problem of sand-lifting activities from demand side. As it has enough demand no direct policy is required for expansion of the sand lifting activities.

The continuation of the sand-lifting activity depends only on the availability of good quality of sand from the river bed. For any natural reason good quality sand may not be available from the river bed of this area and in consequence sand-lifting activity may be disrupted. Again lifting of sand from the river bed is related with the environmental problems. In some cases large scale lifting of sand from the river bed may distort the normal flow of the river and may severely affect the river-banks. If these problems arise government
may impose some restrictions on sand-lifting activity. In that situation sand-lifting workers would be the worst sufferer by loosing their jobs.

So, although the shift of dependence from agricultural to such non-agricultural activities is beneficial to the casual wage-earning households, the economic and environmental viability of these occupations should be duly considered. There should be adequate protection against any temporary or permanent discontinuation of works and the consequent unemployment of those workers.

10.4. Addressing Some Specific Problems

In the last chapter we have seen that the quality of living of the wage earning households in general has not improved as expected with their higher incomes in the non-agricultural activities. Most of them still live in kuchha houses without any sanitation facility and electricity, collecting woods for fuels and going to quack doctors for medical facilities. Round the year they suffer from ill-health due to unhygienic conditions of living, undernourishment due to dietary deficiency of protein based food. Although they work at back-breaking labour and contribute substantially in construction and sand-lifting activities, they receive little from these occupations. Most of the times they are exploited by the intermediaries in the process of contracting and sub-contracting. There is no clear and fixed employer-employee relationship and no employment security and social security as found in the organised sectors of the economy.

Again, they are superstitious and some old values prevail in their life. Some of them are addicted to either alcohol or tobacco. Health consciousness is too little among them. These factors along with the physical overwork keep them in weak physical condition. All these factors shorten their working life rapidly. In view of this some welfare measures may be taken to uplift such workers and their families from their precarious economic conditions. Here we will try to discuss some welfare measures that may be taken for both the sand-lifting and construction households.

1. Regular Revision of Wage Rate

A sand-lifting worker carries a load on his head. His work normally consists of lifting of sand from river, loading the boat and then carrying and loading the truck. All these work is performed in a group. Since the availability of the work is dependent on the arrivals of
trucks, it is extremely difficult to predict the time and volume of work. As a result there is no fixed time of work; rather working time is used to be spread over the day. Sometimes they have to stay more than eight hours a day on the river bed to earn the minimum income they expect. Unfortunately, this hardship and physical over work have not been recognised and the workers receive a much smaller share towards their labour than they contribute towards this activity.

But every worker requires a stable income to maintain a minimum level of living. Also a worker can remain productive and efficient only if he is paid a minimum wage. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 is enforced by the Central Government and the State Government, in respect of scheduled employments in their jurisdictions. There are 46 scheduled employments in the Central sphere and 1530 in the State sphere (India, 2007 p. 609). In the absence of a uniform national minimum wage, the central Government in 1996 based on recommendations of National Commission on Rural Labour, 1991 fixed initially Rs.35 per day as the national floor level minimum wage. Based on the subsequent increase in the price level the national minimum wage is fixed at Rs. 66 per day with effect from February 1, 2004.

But it is known that many traders are left out of the purview of this act. Inclusion in the scheduled employments requires an organised effort on the part of the workers. Sand lifting labourers are unable to sustain such organized effort. So the piece rate is usually fixed at a low amount that most of the workers working all day can not earn the minimum wage for the day. Again the piece rate is not linked with the consumer price-index and it is not revised for 5 to 10 years. As a result, the real wage continually erodes. So the piece rate of wage should be fixed in such a level so that the workers may get at least the minimum wages by spending normal working hours in the sand-lifting points. To ensure this, the piece rate should be regularly revised to link it to the price level so that these labourers may be protected from the regular price rise.

2. Improvement in Working Conditions

As already stated sand-lifting labourers have to work in bad working conditions. In their place of work, they do not get drinking water to quench their thirst, food in their hunger, first-aid in their injury and place for their rest. In case of agricultural workers, food and
water are provided to the workers in the field by the land-owners. The employers of sand-lifters do not make any arrangement to supply water and food at the sand-lifting points.

They bring ready-made food from their home. Generally, they take food whenever they get any short-interval in their work. But the problem is that unlike in agricultural works, no fixed time is available to take that food. Sometimes workers have to leave their half-finished dishes to start the loading of the truck because of tough competition among the different groups of labourers to get the job first. Thus they even restrict themselves from taking food whenever a truck reaches the sand-lifting point.

In hot summer, workers take shelter beneath the trucks to protect themselves from the direct sunlight. The situation is same when it rains. In winter also, they remain unprotected from the cold-air which blows heavily through the river channel. Thus they are directly affected by the nature and the conditions in which they work are substandard.

Taking stock of the situations the government may sort out the problems of workers and may evolve some policies regarding the conditions of work to safeguard the workers' interest. If required government may directly arrange some welfare schemes to improve the working conditions of sand-lifting workers because it collects a royalty from such activities. Some special arrangements may be:

i) To fix up a time of recess so that they can take food and rest at that time. Arrivals of trucks at the sand-lifting points may be controlled at that time. Waiting cost of the trucks may be higher which ultimately raise the price of sand. But this should be sacrificed for the interest of the poor sand-lifters.

ii) Generally, sand-lifters collect drinking water from the river bed. But that scope is limited and it cannot satisfy the quench of all labourers particularly in summer. So any possible arrangement may be made for the supply of safe drinking water to the labourers at work.

iii) To protect the labourers from intense cold, storm and heat, adequate make-shift shelters may be provided at the sand-lifting points.

iv) In case of any mild injury they do not get any primary treatment. But in long-run, the mild injury may turn to be serious without treatment. So some
arrangements of medical check-up and primary medical treatment may be made near the sand-lifting points.

These measures along with some others if appropriately implemented the working conditions may improve and raise the physical conditions of labourers and also the productivity of labourers. By such improvement they will be able to work for longer time in their life and may be able to sustain their improved earning conditions.

These particular measures are specially relevant for the sand-lifting workers. Some of these may be beneficial for the construction workers also. But there are some general welfare measures that may be taken for the labouring households in general. These measures may be required for improvements of economic conditions not directly related with employment and income.

3. Preventing two Deadly Habits - Smoking and Drinking

Many poor workers are addicted to smoking, tobacco-chewing and to some extent to wine. But smoking and tobacco chewing are the biggest risk factors for heart-attack and cancer. The use of bidi is very widespread among the sand-lifters. It is found that the fabulously rich bidi kings in India shoot 900 billion arrows (bidi sticks) into the chests of innocent villagers and poor people of India and the workers suffer from ill-health and are not able to earn livelihood for their families and look after their children. We see them slowly killing themselves due to violence against their bodies with smoking and alcohol abuse. Both these killer habits are on the increase and more so among the poor labourers.

The only remedy of this problem is to make them conscious of the adverse effects of tobacco and alcohol consumption. They are to realize the bad-effects of addiction and good effects of leaving it. The government agencies, the media, the panchayats, the primary health workers, the voluntary organizations should wake up and put up a fight against these great human tragedy at all fronts and in all possible manners.

4. Providing Sanitation Facilities

Sanitation as per the modest concept is related to package of facilities which can bring a behavioral change among the large number of people as per need. The practice of free provision of such package facilities to certain identified groups has failed to change the basic
outlook as also to give the desired result, hence the idea of beneficiary’s contribution is made compulsory so that it can create effective awareness and right approach in this direction.

In our study area, we have found one Non-Government Organisation (NGO) which helps the poor people in their sanitary problems. ‘Kotalpur Sarvik Swasthya Bikash Prakalpa’ (a voluntary organisation) is engaged itself in the following aspects related to sanitation:

1. Construction of low cost sanitary latrines for the poor people
2. Handling of safe drinking water by making low cost filter
3. Guiding the people for making the required arrangements to protect food from being infected by flies and other insects, to keep home and surroundings clean, use of smokeless chullah, garbage pits etc.

A sanitary mart was in work to look after the daily functioning. It is obvious that they do not work for any specified group like sand-lifting labourers. But this organization can help the sand-lifting labourers to improve their sanitary conditions. But according to this organization there are some general problems in the sanitary projects.

Problems regarding Sanitation

1. The basic problem is that the poor people themselves are not interested to have any latrine. They do not feel the need for it and so they do not want to spend any amount towards this purpose.

2. There are some people who do not believe the technical feasibility of low cost latrine. They think that low cost latrines last for few days and it may pollute the in-house environment.

3. The area of homestead land of the poor people is so small and the dwelling huts are so densely situated that it becomes very difficult to construct latrine for each family.

4. Use of latrine becomes easily possible if there is in-house supply of water. But the poor people do not have in-house supply of water. They use water from a pond which is owned by others. In that case, it becomes very difficult to use the water for such purpose.
These are the particular problems faced by the *Sarvik Swasthya Bikash Prakalpa*. However, the volunteers still emphasize on the lack of awareness as the chief bottleneck towards a good sanitary system.

So, there is no panacea for the health-care and sanitation problems of the villagers including sand-lifting and construction households. Only one factor which can be said responsible for all these problems is illiteracy. Without the ability to read access to basic knowledge of health and strategies for improvement are beyond their reach. Illiteracy, therefore, is a major barrier for those seeking improvement in health status and quality of life.

5. Social Security for the Workers

In recent years, scholars have defined social security in a comprehensive sense and that refers to the conditions that would enable the poor to satisfy their basic needs in sustainable manner. This definition of social security therefore covers measures to improve chronic or structural conditions of insecurity arising out of extreme poverty and incapacity to acquire income earning resources. This has been included in the promotional social security programmes mostly of macro-type like employment guarantee schemes, IRDP, public distribution system of food-grains, health and nutritional programmes. Fortunately for sand-lifting and construction households some of the promotional social security measures are of comparatively less important than protective social security measures. Protective social security measures will be of much help for the security of the income conditions they have attained.

In this connection, we can mention some of the general protective social security benefits that should be provided to the sand-lifting and construction workers. These benefits include introduction of provident fund facilities, medical allowances and medical benefits, accident benefits etc. These minimum social security benefits can protect their present economic conditions as well as their future economic conditions.

The monetary burden of these social security benefits can be shared among the employers (direct and indirect) and the government. To make it realised, an implementing board may be formed. The Board will be represented by the government, local self-government, workers’ representatives and employers’ representatives. Apart from providing social security the board may settle disputes between workers and employers, arrange
meetings for negotiations, get new employers and workers registered and can monitor the distribution of wages.

10.5. Conclusion

In our study area construction activities are conducted by some labour contractors. Also sand-lifting activities are undertaken by some contractors. In both the cases contractors are the direct employers of the workers. In construction activity owner of the proposed construction and in sand-lifting activity owner of the sand-lifting points (ownership goes to the government) have no direct relation with the workers. Lack of such direct relationship may cause a careless attitude to the casual workers from all the corners and nobody bears any direct responsibility for the welfare of such casual workers. Any welfare measures proposed to be undertaken for the workers like improving the working conditions revision of wage payment or any social security measures ultimately depend on the efforts and personal initiatives and good wishes of these direct employers. Actual employers remain out of sight to the workers. So in case of non-agricultural activities some policies should be considered regarding the involvement of the actual employers in labour welfare schemes. Moreover government may take more initiatives for the welfare of the workers engaged in sand-lifting and construction so that they can remain permanently above the poverty line by their own efforts without taking any direct help from outside.

In this concluding chapter we have tried to discuss some possible measures to uplift the quality of life of sand-lifting and construction households. Some of these are protective in nature, as for example, regular revision of wage rate, improvement in working conditions etc. Their economic conditions cannot be permanently improved unless the above benefits are given to such non-agricultural wage earners. These measures are generally linked with the employment benefits. Workers in the organized sector are normally covered with these benefits. These are not additional benefits to the workers of organised sector.

Other measures like preventing deadly habits and improving sanitary facilities are general measures. These measures are not directly related to the employment conditions and the employers may not have direct role in this regard. These measures are included in general welfare programme of government. Notwithstanding some achievements are made in these programmes, there are much to be done for their awareness and helping them to get a better living condition.