PREFACE

One of the major tasks confronting the third world countries is the problem of bringing about improvement in the lives of the weaker sections of the society.

While the affluent countries are not completely free from the problems of the underprivileged/minority strata, these problems tend to assume alarming proportions in the case of developing countries.

The weaker sections in society (poverty groups) constitute a significant client system of social work. One such weaker section in the Indian context is the scheduled caste community.

The development of weaker sections from an allocative point of view and their integration into larger society are social objectives sought to be achieved through organisation of welfare services within the policy structure of protective discrimination in favour of these sections.

India is in its fourth decade of experimentation with such a welfare approach. Time and again, appraisal of protective discriminatory provisions has been engaging
the government, social researchers and welfare workers. (Oommen, 1968; Aushkarin, 1972; Calanter, 1972; Chitnia, 1972; 1977; Premi, 1974; Rao, 1976.) Though the scheduled castes, as a group, have shown low means for survival, it must not be forgotten that they receive welfare primarily on the application of the caste criterion. This, of late has become a bone of contention to several upper caste strata amongst whose members also there are significant numbers of the poor. These groups believe that, like the scheduled castes, they too could benefit from the state welfare schemes if the economic criterion is used. The latest thinking on these lines is also expressed in Mandal Committee Report. (1980)

The present study entitled 'Development of Weaker Sections: a Study in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh' attempts at an appraisal of the ongoing welfare programmes organised by governmental agencies for the scheduled castes. It studies the programme related responses of the scheduled castes as one of the client groups of social work profession.

It may be stated that the study identifies the situation of disadvantaged groups, their awareness, their deprivation, the welfare schemes of the state, and the predominant attitudes of these groups to such welfare schemes. The
findings intermingled with theoretical perspectives are presented in six chapters.

Chapter I broadly reviewed the situation of poverty groups, and attempts at a cross-national perspective of the disadvantaged and minority groups who are discriminated the world over. Conflicting situations leading to changes in society and strategies available for minority group's integration into the national stream are central to the discussion in this foreworder.

As the study deals with a weaker section group identified in the Indian context, a concise historical review of the problems of these weaker sections and their development is also presented.

Chapter II deals with the methodology adopted for the study of the development of weaker sections in Nand district of Andhra Pradesh. This entails an outline presentation of the specific objectives of the study, the universe and the locus of the study, the method of study and data collection, processing and analysis of the data.

Chapter III describes the profile of the respondents: the client group, the setting, education, income and occupation, familial details and infrastructures available for
development. It discusses the problems of weaker sections in the context of social development at individual, group and community levels and presents the need structure of the weaker section groups and their related awareness.

Chapter IV presents a perspective on need-oriented actions and the available resources for the weaker sections to meet their needs. It critically examines the response of weaker sections to the development programmes organised under the aegis of the state and voluntary agencies. It also includes a perspective of self-development as perceived by the client groups.

Chapter V attempts at an appraisal of the problems of the scheduled caste groups from the social work viewpoint. It develops the role of social work in dealing with socially disadvantaged groups and communities.

Chapter VI discusses the various findings of the study and summarizes them.

The present study considers that a weaker section policy must prescribe that conditions must be created to make its clients participate in the community. The programme must aim at emancipation of these sections. Emancipation is defined here in a wide sense: as the process of enhancing
self-respect and self-awareness of those sections and their individual members, and also influencing other members of the larger society so that they offer constant scope for development to the weaker sections. The programmes must be directed at reducing social and economic disadvantages of the members of minority groups. These programmes must aim at preventing discrimination, combat it where it occurs and, whenever necessary, use legal sanctions against it.

A unique problem faced by a third world country like India, which has opted for a free and a democratic society, is that the means and measures adopted by the state should be acceptable to the vast majority of the people. Any excessive zeal in tackling the problems presented by the disadvantaged subjects can have political, legal and social repercussions.

Social Work, we presume, cannot remain silent in such situations. It should step up its role for which a proper insight into the problems of the weaker sections/disadvantaged in the society must be gained.

This study is to serve such a beginning. . . .