

UNIT 4 SOCIAL PLANNING AND SOCIAL POLICY

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4.0 Objectives

This unit seeks to help you understand the concept of social planning and social policy. It will enable you to appreciate the interrelationship between planning, policy and development as the ultimate objective. It will also acquaint you with social planning experience in India since last fifty years, which would help, you understand as to how approach and focus of planning and policies have shifted over a period of time in accordance with the changing socio-economic and political realities.

4.1 Concept of Social Policy

Planning is the process of preparing a blueprint of actions to attain stated objectives within a time frame. The determination of objectives, the specifications of targets, the strategy for mobilization of resources, the allocation of outlays to different development sectors, the blueprint of actions (including their

operationalisation in the shape of policies, programmes and their delivery system) are aspects which have to be considered in any planning exercise.

M. Webber defines planning as the process of making rational decisions about future goals and future courses of action, which relies upon explicit tracing of repercussions and the value implications associated with alternative courses of action and in turn requires explicit evaluation and choice among the alternative matching goal- action sets.

Alfred J. Kahn defines planning as follows: -

Planning is policy choice and programming in the light of facts, projections and application of values.

All of this may be summarized briefly as;

Planning is policy formulation and realization through choices and rationalization.

Planning is essential because it enables us to formulate with some precision what we intend to achieve within a given time frame. Prioritization among various objectives enables us to demarcate the more important objectives from those, which are less so. Once this is done one can decide what is feasible considering the resources at hand and how additional resources can be mobilized. Therefore, planning is a more scientific path towards achieving development objectives, and for bringing about economic and social transformation in a systematic manner.

Perhaps, the most important reason, which comes to your mind, may be that you are faced with a severe shortage of certain resources/factors. Given the fact that each of these may also have different uses, you may be unable to decide how to utilize these resources. It is in such a situation that planning becomes extremely

important. Therefore, you must plan the use of resources in some rational manner.

The Need for Planning in India

An underdeveloped economy like India is characterized by inequalities of incomes and ownership of assets. The high incidence of poverty, coupled with these inequalities, makes the task of development particularly important. There are also regional imbalances and problems connected with the development of areas, which are disadvantaged due to geographical and ecological factors (as for example drought-prone areas, flood-prone areas etc). Needless to say, planning in India has to be geared to meet these challenges.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the model answer provided at the end of this unit.

- i. Justify in your own words, the need for planning.

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4.2 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL POLICY

Broadly speaking, the term 'policy' refers to the general guidelines or principles, which give direction to a particular course of action by the government or by an organization. It also refers to, in a very specific sense, an intended or executed course of action.

Definitions of Social Policy

An attempt to define social policy is beset with many practical difficulties. Is there one social policy with capital S and P or are there multiple social policies with small s and small p? This question is relevant because we have social policies compartmentalized into a policy for scheduled castes, a policy for backward classes, a policy for weaker sections, a policy for women, a policy for children and so on. Does an addition of these policies make up a "whole" social policy? We have Directive Principles of State Policy, the Fundamental Rights and the preamble to the constitution. Do these make up a social policy? In the light of the above dilemmas, in the following section, we attempt to define social policy:

Social policy can be referred to both in the plural and singular case.. When referred to in the plural, it denotes comprehensive and integrated set of policies in the social sectors such as health, social welfare, education, social security etc., when used in singular the term social policy refers to a specific governmental policy such as the policy towards the SCs and STs, the policy for providing universal education etc.

Following are definitions of social policy:

According to David Gill:

Social policies are principles/course of action designed to influence:

- i. the overall quality of life in a society;
- ii. the circumstances of living of individuals and groups in that society and
- iii. the nature of intra- societal relationships among individuals, groups and society as a whole.

According to Kulkarni “Social policy is the strategy of action indicating means and methods to be followed in successive phases to achieve the declared social objectives.”

Marshall states that the term, “Social policy refers to the policy of governments with regard to action having a direct impact on the welfare of citizens, by providing them with services or income.”

According to Prof. Titmuss, social policy represents a summation of acts of government, deliberately designed to improve the welfare of people.

While summarizing the whole discussion, it can be said that social policy is a deliberate action on the part of individuals, collectivities and governments, undertaken to organize services, opportunities and social action so as to affect the life styles of people and initiate a process to prevent, postpone, initiate and manage change.

B. Characteristics of Social Policy-

- 1) Many writers on social policy including such well-known names like Titmuss, Donnison and Boulding have stressed that the distinguishing trait of social policy is its distributional or redistributive character. Thus the concern of

social policy is with social and economic justice based on the principle of equality, which means that the redistribution of social resources should take place from the better off sections towards the worse off sections of society.

- 2) The second characteristic of social policy is its concern with weaker and vulnerable sections of society such as poor, women, children, disabled, backward classes so as to bring them at par with the rest of society. Thus social policies visualize of an egalitarian society where inequalities are reduced to minimum level.
- 3) Another characteristic of social policy is that social policies do not exist in isolation. These are determined to a large extent by the socio-political scenario of a nation, its economic viability and last but not the least, by socio-cultural ethos of people of the nation. Now after Liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatization, policies have become global and changes in one corner of the world definitely leave impact over rest of the world. Most live example of this feature is the opening up of economy by most of third world countries in accordance with guidelines of World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

C. Objectives of Social policy

- 1) It is frequently stated that social policies aim to bring about social change. In the final analysis all social policies are government policies as stated by Marshall and Boulding. As part of the operation of the government, social policy cannot hope to introduce fundamental changes in society, which would mean undermining the *status quo* on which government rests. Whether in the socialist countries or in the capitalist countries, the social policy cannot usher in the fundamental structural change. It can only achieve moderate social

change, whereby certain undesirable conditions of a section or sections of society are redressed and as a result social tension is minimized.

- 2) Pinker has argued that objective of social policy is minimization of sufferings and maximization of welfare.
- 3) Another objective of social policy is improvement of quality of life of people. It is necessary to ask whose quality of life that we want to improve? This is a pertinent question in developing countries like India where majority of the population live in conditions of serious deprivation, without being able to get even the basic necessities for survival. They are said to be living in absolute poverty or below the poverty line. According to World Bank the estimates of poor population in the developing countries is 57%. It should be very clear that the limited resources of the developing countries cannot be utilized to improve the quality of life of all the population of these countries. It has been very well documented by several studies that the major beneficiaries of development planning in the Third World have been the numerically small fraction of the population. So the aim of social policy should be to redistribute social resources so that the quality of life of the top 20% of the population does not keep on improving at the cost of the provision of the basic necessities for the very survival of the 50 or 60% of the population. It is for this reason that Mahboob-ul-Haq has stated that the aim of development planning in Third World should be stated as the preservation of the very life itself and not as the improvement of the quality of life, which presumes that the basic survival needs have been met.

D. Models of Social Policy

Model A: Residual Welfare Model of Social Policy

This formulation is closely related with laissez-faire position. With concomittant social changes that have accompanied industrialization and urbanization, there emerged a grudging recognition that under rather exceptional circumstances, malfunctions of market or of the family, may necessitate some temporary supplement to social provisions. From the angle of policy, however, this approach perceives the family and the market as the only instruments for meeting human needs. There is emphasis on “means-testing” and less eligibility”. Selectivity is inherent in such a policy-frame and only the poor who qualify means test are selected for benefits.

Model B: Industrial Achievement- Performance Model of Social Policy

This incorporates a significant role for social welfare institutions. It holds that social needs should be met on the basis of merit, work performance and productivity. It is derived from various economic and psychological theories concerned with incentives, efforts and reward and the formation of class and group loyalties.

Model C: Institutional Redistributive Model of Social Policy

This envisages built-in institutional social provision to overcome the stresses of modern complex industrial-urban life. This model sees social welfare as a major integrated institution in society, providing Universalist services outside the market on the principle of need. It is basically a model incorporating systems of redistribution in command-over-resources-through-time.

Modern concept of social policy is inextricably bound with social justice. Mere equalization of opportunities in an inequalitarian socio-economic system reduces social justice just to absurdity. Thus in the modern concept of social policy, concepts of positive discrimination and equity find prominent place. India follows this model while envisaging social policies.

These three models are, of course, only very broad approximations to the theories and ideas of economists, philosophers, political scientists and sociologists. Many variants could be developed of a more sophisticated kind.

E. Actors in Formulation of Social Policy

Evolving social policy everywhere is a challenging task, more so in the age of dynamic technological changes affecting physical environment and social mobility. Policy formulation is done or influenced by following actors:

- i. Government
- ii. Political parties
- iii. Individual reforms
- iv. Voluntary organizations
- v. Social action groups
- vi. Plan documents
- vii. Laws and courts
- viii. Parliamentary committees
- ix. Consumer reactions
- x. Technological breakdown etc.

F. Problems in Policy Implementation

- i. Lack of political will
- ii. Prevalence of coalition government
- iii. Widespread corruption at each and every level of functioning
- iv. Financial constraints
- v. Red-tapism
- vi. Erosion of moral values
- vii. Financial constraints
- viii. Inadequate staffing
- ix. Absence of training
- x. Lack of people's participation
- xi. Gross mismatch between actual needs and perceived needs of people
- xii. Delay in getting justice.

G. Strategies for effecting Changes in Policies

- i. Use of mass media
- ii. Creation of public opinion
- iii. Demonstrations
- iv. Public Interest Litigation
- v. Discussions, Meetings and Seminars
- vi. Building pressure over government
- vii. Submission of memorandum
- viii. Signature campaign
- ix. Pressure groups etc.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the model answer provided at the end of this unit.

1. Discuss three models of social policy.
(Hint: see section 1.2 D and write your answer)

2. Discuss characteristics of social policy.

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4.3 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLANNING

Planning gives expression to the idea of intervention and it is a central notion in social development. Advocates of planning contend that social and economic processes can be directed through rational intervention to improve society. The process of social development is not like the inherent process of social change that is continuously taking place in every living community. Rather, it is the result of conscious and deliberate intervention with the instruments of policy and planning to bring about a non-random change towards the desired goal (s).

The dictionary meaning of word 'development' is the act or process of growth to more advanced or mature state of condition. Development is considered as referring to economic aspects alone. In order to see the relevance of social aspect of development one has to go back to history.

In the wake of industrialization in Europe and in India too, came accelerated urbanization of unprecedented scale. With it also came overcrowding, slums, rural-urban migration, social and occupational mobility, some degree of social breakdown, crime, delinquency and organized commercial vice. This is a familiar story, so familiar in fact that some amount of social disorganization came to be regarded almost as natural and, therefore, inevitable concomitant of development.

It is generally believed that there is nothing, natural, much less inevitable, about social ills flowing from development and with planned intervention, it is not only possible to prevent the occurrence, but in fact it is possible to marshal social forces so as to turn them to advantage, and this is to a large extent the area, actual and potential of social planning.

The advocacy of planning by United Nations in the 1950s reflected this view. While the United Nations advocated the adoption of economic planning to foster rapid growth, it also promoted a residuals approach to social welfare and social planning in which minimum government services catering to the needs of the most desperate sections of the population were created. This approach not only minimized governmental responsibility for social development, but also fostered the compartmentalization of social policy from economic development.

The residualist approach was also criticized for failing to contribute to the overriding need for development. In the colonial period Welfare administrators had sought to identify social interventions that would support economic development initiatives. The emphasis on residualism contradicted this idea and viewed social welfare as a drain rather than a resource for progress. By 1960s,

the criticism of residual approach intensified, the United Nations began to reassess its original approach.

The United Nations adopted a new approach, which transcended the narrow emphasis on economic growth and sought to integrate economic and social planning. This approach was known as *unified socio-economic development planning*. As a result of these developments, many Third World countries during the 1970s began to expand the scope of their central planning agencies to incorporate social planning. New divisions concerned with social sector planning were created, more sociologists, and social scientists were recruited to work closely with economic planners, and there was a new attempt to define development in social rather than economic terms.

During the 1970s, national plans began to define development in terms of reducing poverty and raising levels of living. Social indicators were increasingly used to complement economic indicators. Plans also began to include chapters dealing with sectoral fields such as education, health, and rural development, housing and social work services. Social planners also sought to identify the obstacles to improving people's welfare. While some were concerned about social impediments to economic modernization, others focused on the role of exploitation; wealth concentration and oppression in preventing progressive social change. Many were also committed to mobilizing investment for human capital formation. These ideas were widely used for social sector planning. By the 1980s, considerable progress had been made in linking social and economic planning and promoting a unified approach to development.

During 1970s and 1980s, as a result of two major oil crises and unprecedented increase in global interest rate, many developing countries fell into debt and many governments were compelled to seek additional aid to meet the credit

obligations. This resulted in the imposition by international agencies such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank of structural adjustment policies. These policies sharply reduced government intervention in the economy, curtailed social expenditures and limited social planning. As a result, the social planning initiatives, which were adopted in the 1970s, have been impeded and in some cases discontinued. However, some countries managed to maintain their commitment to unified socio-economic planning.

The unified approach to development planning requires that government economic and social plans be carefully harmonized. The unified approach gives equal emphasis to economic growth and social progress, and requires that economic and social planners share a common commitment to improving the well being of the population. It requires that planners be properly trained for the task and that they acquire the technical expertise needed to formulate and implement effective social and economic policies. It also requires that governments make a commitment to promoting economic growth and fostering social welfare. It depends on state intervention, technical expertise, and political will. While unified socio-economic planning may be criticized for being top-down and technocratic, current social and political conditions may well prove to be conducive to the revival of this approach and its adoption.

4.4 SOCIAL PLANNING IN INDIA

Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of planning in India set up the national planning committee towards the end of 1938. He viewed planning as a way of developing the country avoiding the unnecessary rigours of an industrial transition in so far as it affected the lives of the masses living in India's villages. Moreover, he recognized that planning was a positive instrument for resolving imbalances and contradictions in a large and heterogeneous country such as India. The committee, set up by him, considered all aspects of planning and produced a series of studies on different subjects concerned with economic development. These, together with reports of earlier commissions and committees, prepared the ground for larger planned effort for the country after independence. Just after the attainment of independence, government set up planning commission in 1950s to assess the country's need of material capital and human resources so as to formulate plan for their balanced and effective utilization.

A. Objectives of Planning;

The Directive Principles of our constitution visualizes an economic and social order based on equality of opportunity, social justice, and the right to work, right to an adequate wage and a measure of social security for all citizens. These directive principles provide a guideline of state policy. Planning in India has to follow these guidelines and to initiate action, which, will, in due course create, desired social and economic pattern. The directive principles are an expression of the will of people for economic growth and consequently the government adopted planning as a means for fostering economic and social development. Four long-term objectives were set out by the planners in India. They were:

- 1) To increase production to the maximum possible extent so as to achieve higher level of national and per capita income;
- 2) To achieve full employment;
- 3) To reduce inequalities of income and wealth
- 4) To set up a socialist society based on equality and justice and absence of exploitation.

Planning in India has thus been conceived as a comprehensive process of developing material and human resources in terms of defined social ends. The social structure envisaged was a socialistic pattern of society. The political framework being a federal government, the state governments and elected legislatures have their assigned spheres of action. The citizens were expected to participate in the process of planning on the widest possible scale.

B. Five Year Plans

The main vehicle of planning, however, was the Five Year Plan. Though the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was basically a simple exercise of putting together programmes, targets and outlays, it provided the first milestones in rural

development through the launching of the community development programmes, national extension services.

Second five-year plan was conceived in an atmosphere of economic stability. Agricultural targets fixed in the first plan had been achieved, price levels had registered a fall and consequently, it was felt that Indian economy had reached a stage where agriculture could be assigned a low priority and a forward thrust made in the development of heavy and basic industries of the economy for a more rapid advance in future.

The basic philosophy of second five-year plan was therefore to give a big push to the economy so that it enters the take-off stage. Besides, the government announced its Industrial Policy in 1956 accepting the establishment of socialistic pattern of society as the goal of economic policy. This necessitated the orientation of economic policy to conform to the national goal of socialist economy.

Among the priorities listed in the Third Plan, it was generally recognized that agriculture had the first place. Thus in its initial formulation at least, the third plan differed from the second plan. It is generally recognized that there was a general de-emphasis of agriculture in the second plan. The third plan attempted to reverse this.

Indian planning suffered two major shocks caused by exogenous factors in the 1960s. The first came in the shape of the war with China in 1962 and the second in the form of successive harvest failure in 1965 and 1967. The first shock caused a sharp increase in India's defense outlays and a severe curtailment in public investment of the government. Consequently, the capital goods sector was badly hit. The crisis on food front was met with wheat imports from the USA. This situation exposed India's dependence on international aid. However, Indian

planners woke up to the need to build food self-sufficiency as a result of these crises. The response of the government to the crisis came in the shape of the abandonment of the Five Year Plans. As a result, the period between 1966 and 1969- the Annual Plans phase- is often labeled as the “Plan Holiday “ period.

The new strategy came to be implemented during the course of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974) and was more popularly known as the “Green Revolution” in agriculture. Even as the “Green Revolution” in agriculture was ushered, it was realized that “distributive justice” still remained a distant dream. Thus arrived the popular slogan of Garibi Hatao (Removal of Poverty) and with it came the emphasis on poverty alleviation as a distinct planning objective in its own right.

The Approach Paper to the fifth plan followed the recommendation of the Working Group in its definition of poverty in terms of nutritional inadequacy and ventured to put the explicit redistribution of incomes towards the lowest three deciles as an objective in itself. Thus, the basic approach of fifth five-year plan was growth with redistribution. However, on account of the serious harvest failure of 1972-73 and the oil crisis of 1973, inflationary pressures forced Indian planners to curtail the ambitious programmes they had envisaged. Public investment continued to be under strain and as a result, many of the programmes had to be postponed to the next five-year plan.

The Sixth Plan (1980-85) again undertook eradication of poverty as its primary aim. Consequently, the programmes to eradicate poverty—NREP, RLEGP (later merged into Jawahar Rozgar Yojana), TRYSEM, DWCRA, and Integrated Rural Development Programme- were strongly emphasized. The IRDP coupled with

rural employment programmes, the Minimum Needs Programme and the area development programmes meant that the Sixth Plan had strong emphasis on the rural sector.

Poverty alleviation continued to be a central concern in the Seventh Plan. Growth of employment opportunities, human resources and infrastructure development, removal of inequalities, an expanded system of food security, increase in productivity in agriculture and industry, participation of people in development and substantial improvement in agricultural and rural development administration, were identified as priority areas. In the course of seventh plan, the emphasis had shifted towards the concept of modernization again- this time in industry. With this came the relative deemphasis on the public sector as an engine of growth.

The eighth five-year plan (1990-95) could not take off due to changing political situation at the centre. The new government which assumed power at the centre by June 1991 decided that this plan would commence on April 1992 and that 1990-91 & 1991-92 should be treated as separate Annual plans.

Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97) was launched immediately after the initiation of structural adjustment policies and macro stabilization measures which were necessitated by worsening balance of payment position and inflation position during 1990-91. Various structural adjustment policies were introduced gradually so that economy could be pushed to a higher growth path.

The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2000) launched in 50th year of India's independence, was based on careful stock taking of strengths and weaknesses

of past development strategies and seek to provide appropriate balance for socio-economic development of country. The principal task of this plan was to usher in a new era of growth with social justice, in which not only the government at the centre and states, but the people at large, even the poor can become effected in participatory planning process.

One could obviously see here an understandable relationship between the democratic and political processes on the one hand and the planning process on the other. The government in power naturally wants the development process to take place in accordance with its stated policies and this is given effect through the mechanism of five-year plans.

C. Multi-Level Structure of Planning

The important feature of planning in India is that it operates in a democratic framework, through a federal system, involving concurrent planning at the national and state level.

The federal nature of India's Constitution demands planning at least at two levels i.e. Union and States (economic and social planning being in the Concurrent list). However, in view of mixed economy resulting from a pluralistic socio-economic environment and the large size of some states, planning in India has to be viewed in terms of activities at different area and agency levels extending well beyond union and state framework.

A multi-level structure of planning for the country based on the politico-administrative structure is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Levels and Types of Planning

Planning Level	Political/Administrative Territorial Equivalent	Planning Concept
Macro-level (National Plan)	Nation	Central planning/policy planning/sectoral planning
Meso-level (State Plan)	State	State Plan/Sectoral budgetary planning/Regional planning
Micro-level (Decentralized Plan)	District	District planning area development
	Block	Block level planning
	Village	Village production plan & Planning for target group.

i. National level Planning

i. Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is the technical body for facilitating the planning process in India. It was set up by the Government in March 1950. Its chief function is to make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country, including technical personnel and investigate the possibilities of augmenting these resources that are found to be deficient in relation to the nation's requirements.

The Planning Commission performs its role as an advisory body functioning at the highest policy level without further being involved in the responsibilities of day-to-day administration. The prime minister is the Chairman of Planning Commission. Within the general organization of planning commission, the Programme Evaluation Organization (PEO) has functioned since 1952 as an ancillary agency. It undertakes evaluation studies to assess the impact of selected Plan and programmes in order to provide feedback to the planners and implementing agencies.

i. National Development Council

Under the constitution, the subject of economic and social planning is in the concurrent list as this is a subject in which the Centre as well as the states are interested and have to work in unison. The coordination of policies between the two integrating structures of the federal set-up is brought about through a process of mutual consultation. The system of consultation in the formulation of policies on the basis of overall national requirements is the central point of planning in the country. The National Development Council is the highest policy

making body which provides the opportunity for plans to be formulated and implemented throughout the country as a unified development effort.

ii. State Level Planning

As in the centre, so also in the states, a number of organizations and departments are involved in the planning process. Let us now consider these:

i. State Planning Department

On account of diversity in administrative organization in different States and Union Territories of the country, it is not possible to have a single uniform pattern for the planning machinery at that level. However, a broad understanding of the position as it prevails in a large number of states is given in this section.

In each state, there is a planning department, which is responsible for the preparation of the Five Year Plans, Annual plans, monitoring of the plans and generally the evaluation of programmes through its evaluation wing. Essentially the Planning Department is responsible for coordinating the development effort in the state.

The five-year plans for the state provide framework within which Annual plans are prepared. These take into consideration the guidelines set by the Planning Commission. In most state in addition to the State Planning Department, there exists a State Planning Board. It comprises of the ministers concerned, experts, non-officials and officials. Normally, the role of such a Board is advisory, relating to plan strategies. It also suggests ways and means to improve the working of various programmes in the state.

ii. Department of Economics and Statistics, Manpower and Evaluation

In most states, within the administrative umbrella of the State Planning Department, there are departments of Economics and Statistics, Manpower and Evaluation. The Department of Economics and Statistics provides technical personnel at the state and lower levels for planning and monitoring of programmes. The Manpower department assesses the requirements and need for manpower in the coming years and enables the planning process to incorporate action plans for meeting the overall manpower requirements for plan implementation. The Evaluation Department as the name suggests, is entrusted with task of conducting evaluation studies of the various programmes being undertaken on concurrent or *ex post facto* basis. Such studies provide feedback to the government for enabling corrective action to be taken in regard to plan schemes.

iii. **District Level Planning**

Requirement of district planning arises from the need to supplement the national and state plans with a more detailed examination of potentials at the mid-unit of administration i.e. the district. Such planning would help in investment decisions geared to the needs of each district. District planning, therefore, would involve striking a balance amongst specific needs of the people of the district, growth potentials of the area and budgetary allocation available.

The organizational framework at the district level should offer an integration of the political, district, administrative and local institutions for determining the programme of development for the district and the manner in which it can be implemented. Besides, its aim should be to bring all administrative operations at

the district level under effective coordination and control of single agency and clearly lay down a programme of work for the participating agencies (Panchayati Raj Institutions).

At the district level most of the heads of departments are represented by officials termed as District level Officers. For example, there are Executive Engineers for PWD, Irrigation, Public Health, and Engineering Department etc. These officials are part of the planning process at district level. In the context of major poverty alleviation programmes, viz., IRDP, NREP & RLEGP, in 1980 the District Rural Development Agencies were set up to plan, implement and monitor such programmes.

In states like Maharashtra, there are District Planning and Development Committees (DPDCs), which take important decisions with regard to planning rural development programmes at the district and lower levels. In other cases there may be District Planning Committees which are for coordinating the work of development programmes and sometimes for taking decisions related to location of projects such as schools, roads, villages to be electrified, villages where drinking water is to be provided, etc.

iv. Block Level Planning

The community development block is one of the levels at which the task of planning is undertaken in the country. In fact, it is the lowest administrative level at which such an exercise is undertaken in India. Block planning essentially means planning for the development of block within a specified time frame. Whereas for a national plan the needs of various sectors will be taken into

account at a micro level, block planning essentially goes through the planning exercise at the local level. Needless to say, even small changes in living conditions, as a result of the plan, are readily visible at such a level. This encourages popular participation. Such public participation makes the block planning exercise more broad based and therefore, very vital.

The block planning has its origin in the establishment of community development blocks under the Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1952. These blocks were considered as suitable units for planning and development purposes. It was felt that this would facilitate people's participation in plan formulation and implementation.

Block plans could not be formulated in the required manner as there was lack of expertise on the one hand and lack of coordination among different functionaries operating at that level, on the other. As a result, though schemes were selected by the officers responsible for the integrated development of different sectors, these were implemented in isolation; however, these schemes were put together to indicate the allocations for different programmes in a block.

The fact that only a handful of blocks in the country have actually participated in the planning process has considerably weakened the block planning exercise in the country. Since block level planning has been subsumed in the district planning exercise, this has undermined the progress of block level planning in the country. Thus inspite of efforts made in some pockets in the country, block planning has by and large failed to materialize. Therefore, in the years to come steps towards a coherent block planning exercise will first have to reckon with ways and means of actually installing this structure in the planning machinery.

Unless this happens we will only talking about a virtually non-existent tier in the planning structure.

In a democratic and federal structure like ours, the process of planning has evolved on the basis of consultations between the central and state governments and involvement of the states in the planning process. In our country the planning process is basically decentralized in nature in the sense that the powers, responsibilities and duties have been handed over to the people in general to ensure the effective implementation of plans and policies with maximum people's participation.

D. Approaches to Social Planning

Approaches to social planning may be briefly recounted:

I. Sectoral Planning

Planning by individual sectors like education, health, housing and social security are included in sectoral planning. This approach advocates compartmentalization of development in different sectors as if these are watertight compartments and have nothing to do with each other. Its inadequacies stem from this compartmentalized approach. Little attempt is made to integrate them.

II. Area Development Approach

This approach contemplates that development of an area depends not only on the development of an adequate infrastructure network but also the way factors of the local economy are activated around the production infrastructure. In other words, for development of an area, spatial and functional integration is necessary. Thus, while rural growth centers provide ideal locations for the provision of infrastructural facilities, their hinterlands are regarded as basic planning units for integrated multi-sectoral planning to achieve integrated development of an area.

The approach, while taking area poverty into consideration, provides a balance between various sectoral activities as well as spatial pattern of growth; however, it does not ensure that economic growth is being shared by all classes and communities of the rural areas.

III. Integrated Development Approach

In the context of problems in the area development approach as discussed above and the government policy to tackle the problems of rural poverty, a new strategy of development, i.e. the integrated development approach has been developed because the area development approach by and large failed to address the question of inequalities in the distribution of employment, incomes and assets. A mere geographical emphasis, as is the case with the area development approach, has been found to be inadequate in solving the problems.

The Indian economy and social structure are characterized by widespread poverty, poor health conditions, illiteracy, exploitation, inequitable distribution of land and other assets and lack of infrastructure and public utilities (roads, communications etc). Clearly, this means that the problem requires an approach

that will take into account all these factors in devising a comprehensive strategy to further rural development.

The concept of “integrated rural development” came into vogue with the need for a multipurpose thrust to rural planning. It stresses that various facets of rural development, which have an impact on rural life, are interrelated and cannot be looked at in isolation. Thus, an integrated approach towards rural development is essential. The various dimensions of rural life- growth of agriculture and allied activities, rural industrialization, education, health, public works, poverty alleviation and rural employment programmes –all form a part of an integrated approach to the problems of rural development.

E. Components of Planning

a. **Spatial Component-** Spatial plan would need to consider the physical resources, land use and all human settlements in a region right from smallest settlement to the city. The spatial component would be such as to guide the development programmes through a location blue print, ensure distributive justice and bring about rural-urban integration and continuity.

b. **Economic Component-** Economic planning has traditionally been the case of core of planning, since a principle aim of development planning has been to increase employment and income. Essential prerequisites of economic planning are knowledge about the state of following in the district:

- Resources;
- Demographic features;
- Agro economic features;

- Socio-economic features;
- Infrastructural factors
- Sectoral profiles

c. Social Component- *The task of a plan is also to reduce social inequalities, provide social services and ensure public participation. For any plan, public participation is both an important tool and a goal for development since planning is the medium of social transformation and means to bridge the gap between government and the people.*

d. Administrative Component- success or failure of social planning is ultimately influenced by the political and administrative set up of planning machinery. Administrative arrangements of development were discussed in a number of workshops and committees in India. The working group on district planning in its 1984 report, considered the following administrative aspects for smooth functioning of planning process-

- Establishing mechanisms for coordination and implementation of plan;
- Introducing procedural innovations for release of funds and procedures for effecting inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral transfers;
- Establishing procedures for monitoring and review of schemes.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with the model answer provided at the end of this unit.

1. Discuss constitutional basis of planning in India.

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2. Discuss three approaches to social planning.
(Hint: See the text of section 1.4D and write your answer)

3. What are respective roles of the Planning Commission, the Central ministries and the State Planning departments in the formulation of plans?
(Hint: See the text of Section 1.4 C and write your answer)

4.5 LET US SUM UP

The process of social development is not like the inherent process of social change that is continuously taking place in every living community. Rather, it is the result of conscious and deliberate intervention with the instruments of policy and planning to bring about a non-random change towards the desired goal (s).

Planning in India has been conceived as a comprehensive process of developing material and human resources in terms of defined social ends. The Directive

Principles of our constitution visualizes an economic and social order based on equality of opportunity and social justice. These directive principles provide a guideline of state policy. Planning in India has to follow these guidelines and to initiate action, which, will, in due course create, desired social and economic pattern.

Planning experience in India over last 50 years indicate that there has been definite shift in the approach towards development. In the initial years, all the efforts were directed towards higher rates of GNP. Soon, this approach started showing its weaknesses and it was realized that there has to be systematic efforts towards overall development. Development does not mean economic development alone rather it aims for improvement in the overall quality of life of human beings. Framers of constitution envisaged a socialistic pattern of society in which state is responsible for promoting welfare of the people; public sector has to undertake major responsibility while role of private sector was limited. Through liberalization, globalization and privatization, state has withdrawn itself from its responsibility and private sector has come to exist forever by replacing the public sector. The gulf between haves and have not, has widened further due to economic reforms. The present experience calls for giving human face to LPG (economic reforms process).

4.6 KEY WORDS

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Value of all goods and services produced within a country.

Gross National Product (GNP): GDP plus net factor income from abroad.

LPG: Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization

Decentralized Planning: Planning at several levels and not just at the apex level.

Mixed Economy: An economy characterized by co-existence of government and private social sector activities.

4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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4.8 MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress I

1. Given the scarcity of resources and the fact that each of these resources may have different applications, planning can play a vital role in the allocation of resources in a rational manner. The rational use of scarcity resources to meet stated objectives is the primary justification of planning.

Check Your Progress II

1. Characteristics of Social Policy
 - i. The distinguishing trait of social policy is its distributional or redistributive character

- ii. The second characteristic of social policy is its concern with weaker and vulnerable sections of society such as poor, women, children, disabled, backward classes so as to bring them at par with rest of society.
- iii. Another characteristic of social policy is that social policies do not exist in isolation. These are determined to large extent by the socio-political scenario of nation, its economic viability and last but not least by socio-cultural ethos of people of nation

Check Your Progress III

1. Planning in India has been conceived as a comprehensive process of developing material and human resources in terms of defined social ends. The social structure envisaged is a socialistic pattern of society without much difference between the lowest and highest incomes. The political framework being a federal government, the state in nature and elected legislatures have their assigned spheres of action. The citizens are expected to participate in the process of planning on the widest possible scale. The Directive Principles of our constitution visualizes an economic and social order based on equality of opportunity, social justice, and the right to work, right to an adequate wage and a measure of social security for all citizens. These directive principles provide a guideline of state policy. Planning in India has to follow these guidelines and to initiate action, which, will, in due course create, desired social and economic pattern. The directive principles are an expression of the will of people for economic growth and consequently the government adopted planning as a means for fostering economic and social development.