



## 10. An Agenda for Human Development

The chapters in this report have discussed various aspects of human development in Punjab, giving a contemporary picture, as well as projections for the future. Though the state has a strong economic base and abundant talent, some areas lag behind others in terms of development. Sustained and determined efforts are required to bring these areas at par with the rest of the state.

As discussed at the start of this report, to identify human development concerns of the state and match them with policy and institutional efforts is an urgent need. Through the report, many such concerns have been identified, as have many backward areas and communities requiring sensitive and focused action. A brief overview will now be attempted and strategy options will be stated.

To attain the objective of human development, three institutions are significant—the State (the government and its agencies), people’s institutions and agencies and civil society institutions. We will concentrate on the State government because it is the State government which bears the prime responsibility for human development. The government is the largest player in education, in macro issues of the economy, in ensuring that marginal and small communities are provided equal opportunities, in ensuring basic amenities to all, in ensuring an administration which is responsive and respectful of citizens and one which involves them

in their own governance, and the government is a major actor in health. Thus, only the government can lead the effort towards greater human development in Punjab.

### Framework for Human Development

In order to foster human development, it is not sufficient simply to identify the deficiencies in education, health care and economic growth. It is equally important to create a framework that makes sure that recommended development strategies are sustainable.

### Governance and Institutions in Punjab

Bringing people into direct governance is one of the most powerful mechanisms to ensure sustainable development. Punjab has responded to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Indian Constitution by its State Acts, but both Panchayati Raj in rural Punjab and local self-government institutions in urban Punjab have not matured to the level of those in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh or West Bengal.

From the 1970s, Punjab’s co-operative network has been an example in other parts of India. Today, there are buoyant and financially large co-operatives, managed by farmers and members and run professionally by administrators. However, the Panchayati Raj system has not developed significantly.



Local self-government and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) bring distinct advantages to any development process.

- They bring people directly into their own governance and deepen democracy.
- Local priorities and local concerns are expressed and acted upon, which ensures that development action is based on demand and not simply on officially set targets.
- Since local people become involved in planning and implementation of development, better quality is ensured, costs are lowered and it becomes easier to maintain physical and social assets. Experiences in states where PRIs are strong have shown that development initiatives under strong panchayats have been of better quality as there is strong community ownership of them.
- Local government builds leadership and takes democracy to the people's doorstep. Panchayats build leadership capabilities in society and strengthen negotiating capabilities vis-à-vis the state and other societies and economies.
- They reduce the distance between people and their government, leading to local solutions. They reduce dependence on government and gradually create a self-reliant and self-confident community.

Strengthening of democracy and governance will not be achieved simply by strengthening local bodies. Other measures need to be taken simultaneously. Many projects across India have shown that involving people's collectives in implementation has led to better cost management, better quality and greater all round satisfaction.

While involving local people should become a necessary strategy for all development schemes, it must be noted that there is sometimes conflict between village leaders and Panchayati Raj representatives. Constant efforts must therefore be made to reassure local groups so that they co-operate with Panchayati Raj officials.

### **Regional Growth**

This report has already shown that there is a great deal of regional disparity in Punjab. There are evident disparities in literacy, infant mortality, child mortality and other areas.

The most effective means to reduce disparities is to invest greater resources in backward areas and ensure that these resources are effectively used. Investment in infrastructure creates jobs and brings buoyancy to non-farm employment.

The State Government has already formulated area development programmes in order to remove

#### **Box 10.1: Programmes with People's Involvement**

West Bengal carried out an experiment of involving local people in the management and protection of forests. This project has become one of India's most successful programmes and ensures that the forest is protected, that the use of the forest is sustainable and has also created a better relationship between people and forest officials. The Joint Forest Management programme emanating from this is now spread across India.

In Madhya Pradesh, the State government started a Watershed Management programme, involving people in Watershed Committees. Local communities were involved in every sphere of the programme from planning to construction work and then in maintenance. This programme has been hailed as one of the most successful programmes in India in watershed management.

these disparities, but they need to be given a fresh infusion of life.

### **Educating People**

The details of education in Punjab have already been discussed. Yet further suggestions can be made on what sort of intervention is required by the State.

- Specific efforts are needed to upgrade the management and quality of the public education system. Public schools are associated with poor quality education and thus children of relatively affluent backgrounds are turning away from government schools. A dual education system is emerging between a poor quality public education system and a far better private education system. The quality of government schools, teaching conditions and teaching inputs must be improved to enable all children to receive quality education in the critical years of their growth.
- Teachers accountability and attendance must be improved. Teachers must be provided with better working conditions.
- Since, as noted earlier, PRIs are not yet very vibrant in Punjab, user committees of parents and other community leaders must be given a role in school management. Stakeholder involvement is critical to ensure accountability of both teachers and school managers. It has been seen across India, that wherever parental involvement has increased and teachers have become accountable to the community, teachers' attendance and quality of education have improved.
- Curriculum and the quality of textbooks need to be changed. School curriculum must meet the changing socio-economic needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Textbooks must be made more interesting and absorbing for children.

Innovative teaching methods and curriculum changes have produced impressive results in education in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh<sup>1</sup>.

- The student-teacher ratio is high. The quality of teaching undoubtedly suffers if the number of students in a class rises beyond 30 or 40 students. Increasing the number of teachers would of course raise costs but there are ways around this constraint. Not only could postings of teachers be rationalised but innovative mechanisms of acquiring additional teachers as are in place in other states, could also be adopted.

### **Sustainable Livelihoods**

The overall economic profile of a state naturally influences individual livelihoods.

- Punjab has witnessed a 'slowdown' in its economic growth, with a consequent decline in per capita incomes. Simultaneously, many sectors are facing growth constraints or have become saturated at current levels of investment, technology, entrepreneurship and markets. Certain suggestions can be made to alleviate some of these problems.
  - Public and private investment must increase, and the credit-deposit ratio of commercial banks must rise to the all India average. The Punjab State Financial Corporation must play a more productive role.
  - Punjab needs to formulate a long term adjustment plan for its economy. The plan has to work out the direction and level of changes in economic activities in various sectors. These changes need to be meticulously worked through in agriculture and industry.
  - The potential of the service sector needs to be tapped in order to generate employment. The growth in services has

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<sup>1</sup> Both states undertook innovative changes in teaching, in teachers' training and curriculum under different efforts, such as the Shiksha Karmies, and Lok Jumbish programmes in Rajasthan, and the Education Guarantee Scheme and DPEP in Madhya Pradesh.



led to economic growth in many states that have progressed from primary sector dominance to service sector-led growth. This model needs to be adopted even for Punjab, since economic growth through manufacturing is a long term process and appears to be relatively difficult to achieve in the short term.

- The government must make massive investments in various activities to encourage private investment. It is up to the government to create investor confidence in Punjab.
- Industrial development in Punjab has so far been dominated by the small-scale manufacturer and unregistered units. Compared to agriculture, industry contributes less value and employs fewer numbers. In order to boost industrial development, a greater number of agro-industries need to be set up, with the public role restricted to that of a promoter.
- The promotion of industry can be dovetailed with greater participation from farmer entrepreneurs as well as from labour. Links between agriculture and industry are weak at the moment.
  - The survival and growth of the industrial sector in Punjab depends on greater efficiency in resource use, upgradation of technology and promotion of the skills of those engaged in the production and development process, such as scientists and engineers.
  - Co-operatives can be involved to ensure the participation of rich/ capitalist farmers in industrial development. Such participation could also encourage peasant-based co-operative processing activities.
- There has been a decline in the labour absorption capacity of industry, particularly in the absorption capacity of local labour.
  - Systems need to be developed which could ensure the employment of at least 50 percent of local labour. In order to achieve this, local labour needs to develop skills that make them employable. It is also necessary to ensure that proper wages are paid in order to attract local Punjabi labour to such jobs.
  - Labour legislation, particularly in wages and hours of work must be strictly observed.
  - Massive manpower planning through planned educational restructuring, industrial planning and planning of crop diversification has to be taken up simultaneously.
- The utilisation of the workforce in the state is less than the all India average and there is a high rate of unemployment and underemployment.
  - There is a need to increase the labour participation rate, particularly among women. This requires an expansion of economic activities and job creation. Planned incentives must be put in places which improve the quality of jobs. These will induce those staying away from work.
  - The government must shoulder the role of becoming a catalyst job creator, particularly in infrastructure development, health and education. Employment will be generated by increasing investments and encouraging private sector participation in infrastructure, as well as increasing social sector jobs through innovative community-based initiatives.
  - The government must also create conditions for the private sector to undertake agro-processing and related activities.
  - The government has to ensure minimum labour standards in the private sector.
- Measures are needed to secure sustainable agriculture development.
  - High investment in Research and Development (R & D) is required to ensure the introduction of new technology, which could introduce new viable crops that would deliver returns comparable to those from wheat and paddy.



- The sustainability of the irrigation system must be strengthened, particularly through the replacement of water-intensive crops by less water-intensive crops, encouraging water economising technologies, conjunctive use of ground and surface water, lining of water channels, undergrounding of water courses and enacting legislation to check over-exploitation of groundwater resources.
- Alternative crops have to be such that they put minimum strain on the water and soil.
- A minimum support price along with a system of procurement should be ensured.
- Investments will have to be made in agro-processing of the proposed new crops. To achieve this, farmers need to be supported materially, through human resource development and above all through the creation of an environment which ameliorates the uncertainties created by liberalisation and globalisation.
- Involvement of the state government in creation of infrastructure and facilities remains crucial.
- Small and marginal farmers face several problems. These include, non- viability of marginal and small holdings, lack of job opportunities in other economic sectors, lack of skills other than farming, lack of capital resources, indebtedness and a high rate of suicides.
  - A massive programme of human resource development through education and training for small and poor cultivators is required, accompanied by financial investment in setting up enterprises in the chosen areas of training or their deployment in assured areas of employment.
  - Across India, self-help groups have provided small consumption loans for poor small and marginal farmer families. Could self-help begin to lend on a large scale? The experience of mature self-help groups has



*Towards diversification of agriculture*

shown that such groups are able to handle agricultural credit once they have established links with banks. These groups have managed to reduce indebtedness, ensured timely formal credit at reasonable rates, and have a much better repayment record than previous credit based programmes.

- Commercialisation of the Punjab Dairy sector:
  - Dairying in Punjab must be transformed from subsistence to a commercial activity by providing small/ marginal farmers the necessary financial support, technical training and quality infrastructure in veterinary services.
  - This effort needs to be supplemented by improving marketing services and guaranteeing quality by reducing malpractices such as adulteration of milk and milk products.
  - In this regard the recommendation of Johal Committee reports may be given due attention.
- Problems of agricultural labourers:
  - There is an urgent need to devise special programmes for the economic upliftment and social mobility of agricultural labourers.
  - Agricultural labour needs to be organised so that they can participate in decision-



making on their life and livelihood and are placed in a position where they can ensure that these decisions are implemented. The empowerment of agricultural labour, through unionisation, backed by implementation of statutory provisions, can help it to rise out of its present degradation.

## Health

The public health sector in Punjab is of great importance, although Punjab also has a rapidly growing private sector. Little is known about private health services. The lack of information is mostly due to the fact that this sector remains unregulated, mostly informal and there is little accountability, either on quality or on data. The government must intervene to ensure that the quality and service of government health centres improves. A stringent control structure for the private health sector must be put in place.

- Required funds have not been allocated to the health sector in the state budget.
  - There must be greater financial allocations to health. Health investment must be sensitively planned and better distributed. Charging for services is another means of infusing funds into the health system, for example, charging user fee in government hospitals. Pooling resources between public and private health sectors may also help in improving the finances of the health sector.
  - User charges have been successfully introduced at the secondary level of health care. They could be introduced at the primary level as well.
- Reducing Infant and Child Mortality Rates:
  - The strategy must be a two-pronged one. First, immunisation services must be improved, proper medical care must be provided during delivery and parents must be encouraged to bring children for proper
- paediatric check-ups. Second, primary care centres and hospitals must be equipped with timely and adequate facilities.
- Inter-sectoral coordination:
  - The excessive compartmentalisation within health departments is unnecessary and reduces the capacity of the health sector to act as an integrated whole.
  - A separate public health cadre is required for effective implementation of various national public health programmes. In many states, a separate cadre of para-medical personnel, community-based health workers for essential services such as immunisation and basic care have been highly effective. Such initiatives could be adopted in Punjab.
- Better institutional care in rural areas:
  - The private sector should be encouraged to meet the growing demand for advanced health care in rural areas.
  - A systematic referral system should be developed whereby a patient moves from one level of health care to another level of care according to medical needs rather than going to a higher level directly. This implies that the role of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of health care should be properly defined.
  - Personnel and infrastructure should be used to its maximum potential. Training of health personnel is essential. Also, facilities such as drinking water, and drainage must be looked after by health personnel.
  - Infrastructure for new developing fields such as bio-informatics should be created.
  - Training institutes for health personnel at all levels should be standardised.
  - The personnel requirement in a health institution must be restructured. At the moment, employees of various schemes work and draw salaries under many separate schemes. Integration of these and consolidation in form of the service



they provide needs to be undertaken. Personnel must get directly associated with the institution they work in.

- Absenteeism of doctors, especially in rural areas, not only makes the vast health system ineffective, but also forces patients towards private practitioners.
  - Making 3-5 years of rural service compulsory for every doctor is an effective way of ensuring the presence of doctors in rural areas. However, experience in most states has shown that doctors have effectively lobbied and forced governments to overturn such initiatives. Since most rural areas of Punjab are already semi-urban in character, doctors have far better work conditions than in other states. It is, therefore, easier to enforce such regulations, although at the same time it is necessary to make rural service more attractive.
  - Community participation and involvement of panchayats can become an effective means of keeping a check on doctors/paramedical staff. Until now, medical personnel have been fairly unaccountable to people or local representatives. Unless local leaders and citizens play an active role, problems such as absenteeism and unresponsive health services are likely to continue.
- Public health – ensuring quality of drinking water and improving sanitation facilities:
  - Much improvement is required in the condition of slums dwellers in Punjab, particularly in the areas of drainage and sanitation.
  - A dual water supply system must be introduced.
  - Environmental pollution must be checked.
- Services of the private health sector:
  - A framework of norms, service delivery systems and standards that promote ethical medical practices is needed.

- To improve the quality of service provided by the private sector, a Nursing Home Registration Act must be enacted.

- Drug abuse:
  - Stringent laws are necessary. Anti-drug education programmes, rehabilitation, support mechanisms and de-addiction centres must be established and maintained.

### **Special Groups and Communities**

In Punjab, women continue to suffer from serious disadvantages in education and health, as well as from the effects of poor juvenile sex ratios. It is a matter of great concern that in a progressive and forward-looking state like Punjab, half its population faces such terrible discrimination and deprivation. Stringent action is required to reform this situation.

- A gender balance sheet must be created to objectively assess specific successes and failures in women's development. Such an assessment must naturally be made within the socio-economic context of Punjab.
- The sex ratio in Punjab is poor and the state has the worst child sex ratio in the country. There is a high rate of female infanticide and foeticide.
  - Stringent laws are necessary. Strict punishment must be handed out if the Pre Natal Diagnostic Test Act is violated. State representatives need to be sensitive to women's concerns and raise the visibility of women beyond the private domain.
  - NGOs, religious bodies and other organisations must be pressed into service to tackle the problem of declining sex ratios because the government alone cannot provide solutions to this terribly disturbing social trend.
  - The religious spirit must be awakened among the public so there is an awareness that even to contemplate foeticide or female infanticide is immoral.



- Health care for adolescent girls:
  - A woman worker from the community can be attached to the *anganwadi* to help adolescent girls in their transition to womanhood. The worker should be able to work at all levels: with girls, parents and the community. On a macro scale, the state should become the protector of the right of girls to lead a healthy and safe life.
- A low worker participation rate among women is an important reason for their poor status. Womens' collectives should become the starting point for delivery of all women-oriented programmes. Women's self-help groups should be used to promote economic activities among women.
- Low political participation of women:
  - The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments provided the basis for empowering women at the grass roots, essentially by providing for 33 percent reservation for women in assemblies and panchayats. If panchayats are strengthened and given greater centrality, women leaders will gradually start to emerge across the state.
- In order to attend to the needs of physically and mentally challenged children, legislative as well as rehabilitative support mechanisms are required.
- Migrants have come to Punjab because of better wages and work conditions available as compared to their home states. However, working conditions of migrants need to be improved.
  - Rules and regulations under the Inter State Migration Workmen Act 1979 need to be followed seriously.
  - The Central government should create an enforcement machinery to inspect and investigate cases of exploitation of migrant workers.
- In several instances, migrants work on deferred wages and collect full wage payment only when they return or visit their homes.
  - Migrants should be made aware of their rights and also made aware of the various ways their grievances can be redressed by the government.
  - Awareness-cum-Registration stalls should be set up at stations of origin. Briefing and de-briefing of migrant workers should be organised by both home and host states.
- Migrant workers are not able to avail of social security as many return to their homes after spending their prime working years in Punjab. They neither claim old age pension nor do they avail of any medical services.
  - Vigilance committees, on the pattern of bonded labour committees, should be set up in the host state. The committee should include representatives from migrant labourers and their trade unions.
  - Mechanisms should be created to register migrants in their host state and free them from harassment.
  - Temporary ration cards should be given to them so that they can benefit from the public distribution system
  - Schools providing full time education should be set up in areas where migrant workers are concentrated.

### The Way Ahead

Punjab must invest in its people by ensuring basic needs such as good schools, effective primary health care and an environment that strengthens and sustains livelihoods.

People are always the best resource of human development and the State should create opportunities for the public to participate in its own governance. The people of Punjab have demonstrated time and again their hardiness in the face of adversity and their capacity for hard work. These energies should be harnessed so that Punjab can once again leap forward to the future.

