

Chapter 5

Development of Women in Fishing Community in Jelepara

5.1. Introduction:

The chapter focuses on the strategies of overall development of the weaker sections in the society, National and International efforts for empowering women, strategies for uplifting urban poor by Hooghly – Chinsurah municipality including the people of Jelepara, role of SHGs in empowering marginalized sections in general and women of fishing community in particular, welfare schemes of the Department of Fisheries, West Bengal, for the development of the fisher folk families and the role of Capability Approach in reducing vulnerabilities and empowering marginalized communities like fishing communities.

Development is a universal phenomenon; it is a worldwide concept which means about freedom of thought and speech, freedom to participate in decision – making, and freedom to work without social bondage. The Brandt Commission rightly observed ‘Development never will be, and never can be, defined to universal satisfaction.’ For some, development means increase in national economy, for others, it implies social development, for still others, it is another name of modernization.

However, development is a multi – dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes, and institutions as well as it also demands equality of opportunity, that is, equal access to economic, social, political, and cultural opportunities to all citizens. It is different from the conventional economic model of equating progress and development with per capita income or growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While income and economic growth are necessary conditions, for improving the quality of people’s lives, they are not always sufficient. It is also important to focus on the condition of women and their share of equity vis a vis men¹; as well as acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

¹Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), ‘Women in India How Free? How Equal?’, Mensa Computers Pvt. Ltd.

The broad objective of the development programme is to improve the quality of life of the people. But the development² can only be sustained when the people will build their own capacity to solve the problems and take decision in the management of their own resources. In a society people are managing their own resources according to their norm. But unless this management is not conducted in a planned sustainable manner, the scarcity of the resources will become an issue. For sustainable development³ two things are important – one is the systematic utilization of natural resources and the other is the systematic utilization of human resources.

In Simple words, development means improving the conditions of life. In development, all the modern advances in science, technology, democracy, values, ethics, and social organisation fit into the single humanitarian project of producing a far better world. In its strong sense, development means using the productive resources of society to improve the living conditions of the poorest people. Development means more of everything for everyone in the context of a lot more for a few.

Development can be understood in terms of empowerment. Empowerment can be understood by “recognizing the capacities of such groups (the marginalized and oppressed) to take action and to play an active role in development initiatives”⁴. Oakley identifies five key uses of the term empowerment in development studies. These are: empowerment as participation, empowerment as democratization, empowerment as capacity building, empowerment as capacity building, empowerment through economic improvement and empowerment at the individual level⁵.

²The development means capacity building, expanding one’s ability and energy to bring about desired (as far as possible) change at individual, community, national or global level. It addresses equity or distributional issues so that increasing development and increasing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well – being for many people, not just a few (Barbara Thomas Slayter, 1955).

³ Sustainable development refers not only to economic development based on sustained yield of renewable resources, but also to a process of social change which secures human welfare while maintaining the natural resource base.

⁴Siwal, B.R. (2010) ‘Empowerment of Women: Conceptual Framework’ in Archana Sinha ed *Sustaining Communities Strategies for Sustainable Community Development*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 202.

⁵Ibid.

Naila Kabeer refers empowerment as the “process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability”⁶. This definition makes clear that only those previously denied such abilities can be considered to be empowered and also that the choices in question are strategic. Kabeer defines strategic choices as ones “which are critical for people to live the lives they want (such as choice of livelihood, whether and who to marry, whether to have children etc)” as opposed to “less consequential choices which may be important for the quality of one’s life but do not constitute its defining parameters”⁷.

Naila Kabeer (1994) subscribes not so much to ‘power over’ but to ‘power within’ that needs to be strengthened; power within needs recognition by experience and analysis of the subordination of women. According to Kabeer, such power cannot be given; it has to be self – generated and taken. Empowerment is a process where women are able to change from a state of powerlessness (‘I cannot’) to a state of collective self – confidence (‘we can’)⁸. Development of women, safeguarding their interest is to ensure that they are brought into the mainstream to take advantage of the general development activities. The various efforts and activities for the development of women are based on the empowerment strategy and policy making.

Policy making for women involves the usual formal or informal channels of planning, as in the case of other areas of national development, which concern government. The formal channels are the legislative, the executive, both political and bureaucratic, and the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog). The informal and very influential groups of policy making are the political parties and non – governmental organizations. In the case of policy for women, the voluntary organisations for women, eminent women in different walks of life and women activists do play a very important role in policy formation⁹.

⁶Kabeer, 1999, ‘Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment’ in *Development and Change*, Vol. 30, 437.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸Siwal, B.R., 2010, ‘Empowerment of Women: Conceptual Framework’ in Archana Sinha ed *Sustaining Communities Strategies for Sustainable Community Development*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 214.

⁹Seth, Mira (2001), *Women and Development The Indian Experience*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 52.

Although women has been given rights under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956¹⁰, for inheriting an equal share of their husband's property along with their mother – in – law and children. They also inherit an equal share of their fathers' property as also their sons'. In fact, there is no country in the world which gives women better inheritance legislation. Under the Hindu Marriage, 1955, a woman has the right to monogamous marriage and to divorce.

The National Commission for Women Act, 1991, sets up a statutory body to act as an advocate of women's interests. Finally, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1993, provides for reservation of seats for women in Panchayat Raj institutions.

Health and market opportunities are closely interlinked as pointed out by Amartya Sen and yet health interventions continue to perceive women as largely confined to the reproductive domain. Further, they are still considered as secondary earners despite evidences that their participation in income generating activities often pull families out of the poverty trap. Such stereotypical construction of women gets reflected in women's highly marginalised access to productive resources such as education, training, and skill formation.

Development means Capacity Building, expanding one's ability and energy to bring about desired (as far as possible) change at individual, community, national or global level. Development addresses equity or distributional issues so that increasing development and increasing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well being for many people, not just a few¹¹. Development is not only to economic development based on sustained yield of renewable resources, but also to a process of social change which secures human welfare while maintaining the natural resource base¹².

¹⁰The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to amend and codify the law relating to unwilled succession among Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. According to the law, any property possessed by a Hindu female is to be held by her absolute property.

¹¹Tyagi D. and M. Chatterjee (2005), 'Women in Development' in Narayan Reddy, V. et al (eds) *Women in Development: Challenges and Achievements*, Serials Publication, New Delhi, 35-43.

¹²Raj D. Sunder et. al. (2005), 'Women and Empowerment : A Perspective' in Narayan Reddy, V. et al (eds) *Women in Development: Challenges and Achievements*, Serials Publication, New Delhi, 57-58.

At present, the limited educational/ training/ vocational opportunities available largely cater to the needs of the formal labour markets contrary to where women workers are actually concentrated. Women are treated as equally important claimants and partners in labour market opportunities and the interventions are informed by ground realities. That is in informal sectors like fisheries sector, where women fisher folk have not given recognition ever by the government. Empowerment of poor women is a process that enables individuals and groups to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of their lives. This process provides opportunities for greater access to knowledge, skills and resources.

For institutionalizing the issues, it is essential that both men and women are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Only the government orders cannot bridge this lack of awareness, leaving open the possibility that the gender roles can become a controversial issue, which affects the sustenance of the total programme. A comprehensive campaign is therefore, required to overcome this lack of awareness. Here, Non – Government Organisations can play an important role by organising workshops and seminars to make people, especially women, aware of their potentialities and catalyse them in taking greater role jointly in development work so that development can be of the people, for the people and by the people¹³.

The right to lead a long and healthy life irrespective of gender is fundamental to the idea of human development. The denial of access to productive resources, basic education, health care facilities to the women, is in effect, is the denial of the basic freedom to build a better future. Since 1995, UNDP has been measuring the gender disparities in human development to identify the extent of its variation across various regions, social groups and communities. In fact, while studying the level of development of a region, it is essential that one takes into account the fact that the development outcomes should spread evenly across all sections of the society. It is almost a well accepted notion that nowhere in the world do women enjoys equal opportunities compared to men. However, along with the progress of socio-economic development in some spheres and in many

¹³ Tyagi and Chatterjee, 2005, 'Women in Development', in Narayana Reddy, V. et.al eds *Women in Development Challenges and Achievements*, Serial Publications, New Delhi, 42-43.

countries significant progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in development. Still, it is often observed that women, particularly, lag behind their male counterparts in many aspects.

The latest Human Development Index (HDI) 2015 report themed on how access to work in a digital era labour market can improve lives termed India's National Rural Employment Guarantee act a 'milestone' that has ensured 'greater social protection'. Despite the progress, India's 2014 HDI score was 0.609, which is below the average of the medium development nations (0.630), according to the report published by the Human Development Report office of the United Nations Development Programme. Although India, the world's ninth richest country, look to be scaling up the rankings rather quickly, the picture is not all rosy. When adjusted for equality, the country's actual improvement is just one rank since last year.

This means that development has been highly skewed, and causes an overall human development 'loss' of 28.6% under scoring the need for policies that will enable wider, more secure and sustainable employment. The findings show gender inequality is a growing risk. For every 1000, live births, 190 women die from pregnancy – related causes every year in India. The figure for Bangladesh and Pakistan is lower at 170. Only 27% of adult women reach at least a secondary level of education in contrast to 56.6% of their male counterparts in India. In India, the world's largest democracy by size and population, 12.2% seats in Parliament are held by women, while 20% parliamentary seats are held by women in Pakistan. The maternal mortality ratio of women in war torn Syria is better at 49 than India. Iraq too, despite a lower rank, tops India on maternal deaths (67 per 1000 births against India's 190).

The HDI report calls upon countries to increase access to employment in a labour market transformed by digital technology and globalization. Indian farmers and fisher folk who compare wholesale prices and track weather on mobile phones increased profits 8%. Better internet access will enable more people to work from home increasing living standards.

Given globalization and technological changes, employment terms tend to be skewed against workers, 46% of them are vulnerable in India. The HDI report says newer forms of trade unionism and worker organizations, such as India's Self Employed Women's Association of India, widely known as SEWA, strengthen social protection and need to be supported¹⁴. According to the Gender Development Index (GDI) 2014, female HDI value for India is 0.525 in contrast to 0.660 for males and Gender inequality Index (GII) value is 0.563.

Gender equality in society implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Despite many developmental efforts, women are still much more likely to be poor and illiterate than men. They usually have less access to medical care, property ownership, credit, and training and in employment. They are far less likely to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence compared to men. Women in Hooghly district are well placed in gender development ladder of West Bengal. As per West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004, the district attains third position in terms of gender development index, although, in overall human development ladder it ranks sixth among the districts of West Bengal. The rising level of women's education, the growing SHG movements and Panchayat's participation in empowering women have been increasingly reducing the discriminatory practices against the women in the district. However, it does not mean gender inequality is non-existent in the district. In fact, the existence of gender disparity is more visible at the sub-district level indicators of development. In spite of the initiatives taken by the Government of West Bengal, benefits have not been percolated down to the marginalized sections of Jelepara, which warrants immediate policy intervention.

The discourse of development is incomplete without the overall development of women in all fields including healthcare, economic independence and education. There are several measures for addressing the problems of marginalized sections of the society

¹⁴Haq, Zia, Dec 15, 2015, 00.09 IST, 'India at 130 among 188 countries in human development, up 5 slots', *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi.

especially for women at international, national and local levels but still there are lacunae in the policies and their implementation for the women folk of the fishing communities.

5.2. International measures for the development of women:

In Capitalist Societies development is conventionally measured in terms purely of the size of the economy, as the Gross national product (GNP) that is, the value of the “total final output of goods and services produced by an economy, the higher the annual growth of GNP/Capita, the more rapidly a country is said to “develop”.

An alternative measure that takes into account social and cultural variable more attuned to development than just economic growth alone is the “Human Development Index” (HDI) calculated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Stemming from an alternative conception of development, “enlarging people’s choices”, especially in terms of increasing access to knowledge, nutrition and health services, security, leisure, political and cultural freedoms, the HDI measures “development” in terms of longevity (life expectancy at birth), knowledge (adult literacy and mean years of schooling) and income sufficiency (the proportion of people with sufficient resources to live a decent life). According to UNDP human development can be achieved by promoting more equitable economic growth and by using participatory, democratic political methods.

The United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Human Development Report (1995) states ‘Investing in women’s capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and development’ as Amartya Sen also explained the same about the development. The report reaffirms that ‘human development is impossible without gender equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, social development will remain lopsided. Sustainable human development implies engendering the development paradigm, and here is the importance of women empowerment.’

5.2.1. International Conferences on Women:

Legislating for women’s right was a gradual process throughout the twentieth century. In 1933 the Convocation on the Nationality of women was adopted at the Seventh

International Conference of American States in Montevideo, Uruguay. It allowed a woman to retain her own nationality if she married a man of another nationality. This was the first International treaty ever adopted concerning the rights of women; it was also the first international conference that women were allowed to attend as part of the delegations.

Twelve years later, in 1945, the UN Charter, the founding document of the United Nations, affirmed the ‘equal rights of men and women’, ‘the dignity and worth of the human person,’ and the realisation of fundamental human rights for all as core UN principles and objectives ¹⁵. Then in 1979 came one of the most important international conferences on women’s equality – the United Nations Convocation on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A legally binding treaty that dealt comprehensively with women’s rights, it defined discrimination in the following way:

*“Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”*¹⁶

The most valuable aspect of this convention was the critical accountability mechanism it included. When states ratify the CEDAW, they also assume responsibility for enshrining the principle of equality between men and women in their constitutions and legislative systems. In other words, they have to make sure that their laws are enforced¹⁷. In September 1995, the fourth United Nations World Conference on Women was held in Beijing and brought together 189 states and 2,600 nongovernmental organisations. The conference ended with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and a “Platform for Action,” which encouraged all signatory states to take specific legal and cultural

¹⁵The UN Founding Charter of 1945, www.un.org/aboutun/charter accessed on 23.10.2016.

¹⁶UN convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw.

¹⁷Amnesty International, ‘Respect, Protect and Fulfill Women’s Human Rights: State Responsibility for Abuses by ‘ Non – state Actors,’ August 31, 2000, AI index number 10R 50/001/200 accessed on 23.10.2016.

measures to protect women's rights.¹⁸ Violence, the effects of armed conflict on women, mainstreaming gender in all development activities and overcoming the constraints which women face in accessing opportunities in terms of dedicated programmes for women were specifically targeted as areas of concern. However, being a signatory of the convention and in spite of increasing the education budget to 6 percent of GDP, universalizing mother and child care programme and setting up a commission for protecting women's human rights named National Commission of Women, in the country, formulation and operation them is a far cry.

Promotion of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women is central to the work of the United Nations. Gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but is also recognized as a critical means for achieving all other development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, Eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and health for all, combating HIV/AIDS and facilitating sustainable development all require systematic attention to the needs, priorities and contributions of women as well as men. The UN actively promotes women's human rights and works to eradicate the scourge of violence against women. The UN also adopts global norms and standards and supports follow-up and implementation at the national level, including through its development assistance activities. The UN has taken some measures for gender equality and empowerment of women which were:-

5.2.2. The Commission on the Status of Women:

The Commission on the Status of Women under ECOSOC, monitors progress towards gender equality throughout the world by reviewing implementation of the platform for action that emerged from the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). The Commission makes recommendations for further action to promote women's rights, and to address discrimination and inequalities in all fields. The major contributions of the forty five members Commission during more than sixty years of activity include the preparation of and follow up to four world conferences on women, including the Beijing

¹⁸Horsbrugh – Porter, Anna, 2009, *Created Equal*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, xii -xiv.

Conference and development of the treaty on women's human rights- *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

5.2.3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):

It monitors adherence to *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. The twenty three members committee holds constructive dialogues with States parties on their implementation of the Convention, based on reports they submit. Its recommendations have contributed to a better understanding of women's rights, and of the means to ensure the enjoyment of those rights and the elimination of discrimination against women.

5.2.4. The Division for the Advancement of Women:

The Department of Economics and Social Affairs, supports the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women, the ECOSOC and the General Assembly to advance the global policy agenda for gender equality and strengthen the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all areas of the United Nations.

5.2.5. The Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women:

It provides advice to the Security General. She plays a leadership and coordinating role within UN on gender equality issues, and provides advice and support on gender mainstreaming in all areas of its works as well as on improving the status of women within the organization – including the achievement of fifty-fifty gender balance. She provides support at the senior level to inter governmental and expert bodies, including to the Security Council, on women, peace and security. The Special Advisor also chairs the Inter Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which is comprised of the gender equality advisors and focal points from all parts of the UN system.

Beyond the Secretariat, all the organizations of the UN family address issues relating to women and gender in their policies and programs. Women are central to UNICEF's work for children. Much of UNFPA's mandate revolves around women's health and reproductive rights. UNDP, UNESCO, WFP, ILO, and others have programs specifically

focused on women and the permission of gender equality, while also mainstreaming gender perspectives in their work, generally. In addition, to other entities have an exclusive focus on women's issues: UNIFEM and UN-INSTRAW.

5.2.6. United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM):

Now known as UN Women, it provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses on four strategic areas: strengthening women's economic security and rights, ending violence against women, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

5.2.7. United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW):

It works together with UN member states, international organizations, academia, civil society, the private sector and others and conducts action oriented research with a gender oriented perspective. Its research promotes the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality, by strengthening the capacities of key stake holders to integrate gender perspectives in their policies, programs and projects¹⁹.

5.2.8. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established in 2000 to reduce the number of people who live in extreme poverty by 2015. MDGs are quantified targets with many dimensions – income, poverty, hunger, disease, and exclusion while promoting gender equality, education, lack of adequate shelter and environmental sustainability. These targets were developed by the leaders from 191 countries including India.

Of all these late – twentieth- century events, perhaps CEDAW and the MDGs will have the most far – reaching impacts for the development of women. But in India, especially

¹⁹ United Nations (2008) 'The United Nations Today', Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 197-198.

the women of marginalized section of the society like fishing communities of Jelepara are far behind from the fruits of these above mentioned programmes of United Nations about the promise of equality and dignity of women are also applicable in the case of Jelepara.

5.3. Programmes and Policies for Development in India:

Several mechanisms have created in the country to work for enhancement of the women's capabilities. Some programmes initiated for the development of women are following:

5.3.1. Constitution of India and Women's rights:

The Constitution of India, which came into force on 26 January 1950, is amongst the most comprehensive constitutions in the world. It contains 447 Articles divided into 26 parts and 12 schedules. The Preamble, Part III of the Constitution consisting of Fundamental Rights, Part IV (A) containing Fundamental Duties, constitute the human rights framework in our constitution²⁰. The Constitution granted equality to women and empowering the state to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women:

- a. Equality before the law. Article 14
- b. No discrimination by the state on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of these. Article 15(1)
- c. Special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children. Article 15(3)
- d. Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. Article 16
- e. State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 39(a)
- f. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 39 (d)

²⁰ South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (2006) *Introducing Human Rights An Overview Including Issues of Gender Justice, Environmental, and Consumer Law*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 66.

- g. Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. Article 42
- h. To promote harmony and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Article 51(A) (e)²¹.

Drawing the strength from the constitutional commitments, the Government of India has been engaged in the continuous endeavour of concretely translating all the rights, commitments and safeguards incorporated in the Indian Constitution for women.

5.3.2. Evolution in the Approach of Five Year Plans for development of Women:

The approach on women development changed from viewing women as beneficiaries of social services to contributors of social and economic development process in nation building. Development approach has attempted to address not only women's immediate needs but also their strategic gender interests addressing inequalities in employment, political participation and cultural and legal status. In the last few decades a significant shift has been apparent in the planning process of country. Approaches towards empowering women which was started with 'welfare' in the fifties, shifted to 'development' in the seventies and has been successfully continued under different Five Year Plans.

A review of Five Year Plans will reflect that by framing different approaches and strategies, the Government has tried to create an enabling environment with various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for women empowerment, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services.

From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974 – 79) there was a marked shift from welfare to development, recognising women as participants in the process of development. In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980 – 85) a multi – disciplinary approach, with a special thrust on three core sectors – health, education and employment had been affected. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) stated, for the first time, that confidence building and

²¹Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), 'Women in India How Free? How Equal?,' Mensa Computers Pvt. Ltd.Sen, Kalyani Menon and Ak Shiva Kumar (2001), 'Women in India How Free? How Equal?,' Mensa Computers Pvt. Ltd.7.

awareness of their rights among women must be accelerated so that women realize their own potential for development and their rights to a share from this process. It also spoke, for the first time, of the need for initiating integrated development projects for women covering health, education, nutrition, application of technology and science and creation of employment²².

In the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) the emphasis was on training and skill development programmes to make women economically independent and self – reliant. Empowerment of women was recognized and accepted as a distinct strategy. In the Ninth Plan, which runs from 1997 to 2002, the empowerment of women is one of its nine primary objectives. Also, the Plan attempted convergence of services available in both women – specific and women – related sectors. This was the first plan which involved women’s groups from around the country in a consultative process. However, the Ninth Five Year Plan refrained from making any commitment for achieving any specific goal or target. This was overcome to some extent in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), which emphasized on empowerment of women and also views development of children as the most desirable societal investment with a rights – based approach to their development²³. The Eleventh Plan (2007-12) has also laid great emphasis on removing gender disparities by ensuring access to basic physical infrastructure as well as health and education services to all. It has recognized gender as a crosscutting theme across all sectors and commit to respect and promote the rights of the common people²⁴.

5.3.3. The National Commission for Women:

Owing to the overwhelmingly patriarchal structure of Indian society, women have been relegated to a secondary status and have been subject to various legal and social discriminations. The framers of the Constitution recognized the need to remove such inequalities, and made special provisions to redress the same. The need was felt for a structure to uphold the rights and implement the provisions of beneficial legislations in an

²²Seth, Mira (2001), *Women and Development The Indian Experience*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 63.

²³ Raju, Saraswati (2006) ‘Locating Women in Social Development’, in *India Social Development Report*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 80.

²⁴ Somasekhar, K. (2014) ‘Empowerment of Women Need for New Initiatives’, in Nagaraju Battu (ed) *Empowerment of Women in India New Strategies*, Regal Publications, New Delhi, 64-65.

organized and institutionalized manner. The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a statutorily constituted body under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990²⁵. The Commission highlighted the problems and position of disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Castes and Tribes, widows, prostitutes and women living in slum areas²⁶.

5.4. Government policies for the development of the marginalised people in India in general and West Bengal in particular:

The empowerment of the poor and the marginalized is a multistage process and all the different sections of poor including women should be enabled through a series of measures like leadership building, legal knowledge, livelihood security, and better access to information. The active participation of the poor and the marginalized communities in the development process has been deemed to be a prerequisite for improving their socio – economic status. Reservations in the political bodies at various levels for the socially and economically disadvantaged groups enable them to take part in the decision making, and thus protect their interests. To make them effective in all endeavors, the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities are essential. Through these IEC activities, systematic efforts can be made to sensitize and educate people and communicate such information for ‘empowering’ the poor. The ‘Right to Information’ Act is a right step in this direction. The process of policy making and planning is a continuous process, which is always evolving. The success of this endeavor would finally be judged when full gender equality is achieved in all development programme of the country.

5.4.1. Measures for improving Housing and Living conditions:

The provision of drinking water and sanitation has been one of the major concerns of the government since Independence. The problem understandably is more serious in urban centres due to their rapid population growth. Several programmes have been launched

²⁵ South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (2006) *Introducing Human Rights An Overview Including Issues of Gender Justice, Environmental, and Consumer Law*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 145.

²⁶ National Commission for Women (1996), *Annual Report, 1992 – 93 to 1996*, National Commission for Women, New Delhi.

often with time bound targets in different Five years plans to cover sizeable sections of the population but the success has at best been limited. The goal of covering the entire urban population with minimum basic amenities was set right at the beginning of the planned era. Ambitious targets were set to provide these services to all sections of the urban population, especially the urban poor. Unfortunately, these were not matched by a corresponding allocation of resources or by the launching of major programmes to achieve the desired targets. The inability of the government to provide minimum basic services to all sections of the population was explicitly noted by various Task Forces set up by the Planning Commission/ Ministry of Urban Development as also in the Five Year Plans. Following are the policies that have been implemented for the development of the poor people in general and women in particular:-

5.4.1.1. International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade:

A master plan was adopted for Water Supply and Sanitation during the 1980s and the decade was declared as International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. Despite these, the targets to cover the entire population could not be met due to inadequacy of resources under the programmes and lack of efficient management and coordination among the various agencies. It may indeed be difficult to provide basic services to all sections of the population within the next decade or so, especially to the economically deprived classes.

After a long period of Independence, state governments have gradually taken over the responsibility of providing basic services such as water supply, sewerage, sanitation, solid waste disposal, and street lighting from the local governments. Many of the state governments had set up semi – independent and autonomous corporations and boards in their respective states in the 1960's to undertake the preparation of long – term plans for urban water supply and carry out capital works that were until then undertaken by the state governments own public works departments.

Major changes in the organisational structure and supporting financing system have come up in the 1990s. The Eighth Plan (1992-7) had clearly envisaged cost recovery to be built into the municipal finance system, which has been reinforced in the subsequent plan

documents. Cities and towns were given clear directives to make capital investment in water supply and sanitation facilities, besides covering their operational costs. These are to be undertaken mostly through institutional and private finance rather than budgetary support. The allocations for government departments and agencies, like Housing Boards, Water Supply Corporations, Development Authorities, etc., allowing them to undertake capital projects, have been cut down drastically²⁷. Martha Nussbaum also accumulates the ability to have proper living conditions in her Capability Approach.

5.4.1.2.74th Constitutional Amendment Act for empowering urban local bodies:

The passing of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) in 1992 had a significant impact on the system for managing basic services for empowerment of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), through the formation of District Planning Committees (DPCs) and Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) to take up developmental activities. The Creation of wards committees in cities having population over 300,000 as per the Act has also been interpreted and incorporated in the administrative orders differently in different states, mostly to meet their political convenience. Only Kerala and West Bengal have established separate committees for each ward. Only a few states and union territories have taken the steps to constitute the DPCs. The situation is worse with regard to the MPCs. It is only in the state of West Bengal that the MPC have actually been formed.

5.4.1.3. Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited (HUDCO):

HUDCO was set up in the late 1960s by the Government of India, to provide funds for infrastructural development to bring about balanced urban development in the country. However, an analysis of HUDCO's loans over the last few decades shows that there have been shifts in the pattern of devolution and that about 80 % of the loans have in recent years been given to a few large cities located in the developed states²⁸. In the water supply sector, HUDCO has been advocating innovative 'payment by users instruments'

²⁷Kundu, Debolina (2006), 'Globalisation, Decentralisation and Crisis in Urban Governance Providing Drinking Water and Sanitation Facilities', *India Social Development Report*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New York, 50- 55.

²⁸ Kundu, Debolina (2001), 'Provision of Basic Services in Urban India in the context of the Changing Perspective of Governance: A Regional Analysis', Unpublished Theses, Centre for the Study of Regional Development (CSRD), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

like advance registration charges, connection charges, enhancement of water tariff, water tax, etc. In Jelepara, It has not been applied.

Important physical and social development programme have been launched in urban areas since the 1970s which has upgradation of basic services as a key component. Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), Integrated Development for SMTS (IDSMT), Low Cost Sanitation (LCS), Shelter and Sanitation for Pavement Dwellers (SSPD), Urban Transport Project, Mega City Project, and Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme are some of them.

5.4.1.4. Low Cost Sanitation Programme (LCS):

Low Cost Sanitation Programme (LCS) was started with the announcement of the UN Decadal Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. The goal of this programme was to provide sanitation facilities to 80 percent of the urban population. It covers all households which have dry latrines and those having no latrines including slum and squatter settlements. Under this scheme, loan, which is guaranteed by state government and central subsidy are both channeled through HUDCO.

5.4.1.5. National Slum Development Programme (NSDP):

The National Slum Development Programme (NSDP), initiated in 1996 as a scheme of Special Central Assistance for slum improvement, has been providing additional central assistance to state governments to provide water supply and sanitation among other facilities to the slums. The focus of the scheme is on community infrastructure, the provision of shelter, etc. The tenth plan has pointed out that its performance has not been satisfactory because of the delays at the state level for releasing funds to the implementing agencies. The Ministry of Urban Development monitors the progress of the scheme.

It is important to point out that city authorities do not have the adequate technical competence to assess the cost implications of the contractual arrangements for the people or urban economy in the long term. There has been no effort on the part of the state government to create an information base or provide technical assistance to Urban Local

Bodies (ULBs) for assessing. Even when the cities have been successful in getting the private sector involvement in basic services, they face problems in providing basic amenities to the poor. These people get priced out of the projects, launched through investment in private or joint sector through subcontracting arrangements and through this management contracts the inequalities within the cities would sharpen.

5.4.1.6. Community Based Pro-poor Initiatives Programme:

The Community Based Pro-poor Initiatives Programme (CBPPI), which is supplementary to SGSY, lays greater focus on women. For instance, 'Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Natural Resource Management' aims at capacity building of women and the management of resources like land and water. Similarly the 'Strengthening Livelihoods for Women's Empowerment' programme is to strengthen women's organizations working for community action to address issues relating to the livelihood systems. Another programme entitled 'Harnessing Women's Collective Strength for Poverty Alleviation' aims at strengthening women's groups for livelihood security and economic empowerment of SCs and STs. The programme of 'Capacity Building of Women for Effective Governance' deals with training of women's groups in the field of planning and monitoring and also to carry out the gender audit of development initiatives²⁹.

5.4.2. Self Employment Programme:

The *Swarna Jayanti Gram Swrojgar Yojana* (SGSY) programme was operationalised in April 1999 after restructuring and combining the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) with allied programmes into a single self – employment programme. It aims at mobilizing the rural poor to organize themselves into self – help groups (SHGs), initiate thrift and credit activities, link the SHGs with banks, and promote microenterprises through credit, training and market support.

Under the SGSY, since inception, about 4.83 million SHGs were formed till March 2004 and 4.60 million *swarozgaris* (self – employed persons) received financial assistance.

²⁹RadhaKrishna, R. and K. HanuMantha Rao (2006), 'Poverty, Unemployment, and Public Intervention', in *India Social Development Report*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 12.

Credit to the tune of Rs. 63.3 billion was mobilized and was made available to the *swarozgaris* during the five year reference period 1999 – 2004. Studies revealed that in several states the progress of SGSY was slow, mainly due to the failure to form and nurture SHGs of the poor, poor quality of social mobilization approaches, and lack of clarity on the operational aspects.

Nongovernmental Organisations have been financially supported to take up social mobilization and organizing the poor and women at the rate of Rs. 10,000 per self help group (SHG) to nurture and develop over a period of 3 years under this scheme. Training programmes to build the capacities of women have been organized by the government, NGOs, and also with the support of international agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF). On the other hand it has been revealed through the field visits that there are only two NGOs registered and functioning in Hooghly District, working for the welfare and addressing the problems of the fisher folk but not a single NGO is working in Jelepara, whereas in this area fishing folk concentration is huge.

5.4.3. Employment Generation Programme:

Employment programme has become important instruments for alleviating poverty and smoothening consumption during critical periods including drought and flood situations. Three major employment programmes existed: Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), which guaranteed 100 days of employment to the rural poor, Food for Work (FFW) programme that provided temporary employment with food grains as wages, and *Jawahar Gram Samridh Yojana* (JGSY) with emphasis on creation rural economic infrastructure as the prime objective. These programmes were replaced in 2001 by the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* (SGRY), scheme combating the various features of EAS, FFW, and JGSY. The main aim of SGRY remains the same as for previous employment programmes: providing wage employment in rural areas and the creation of durable community, social and economic assets.

5.4.3.1. The Food For Work programme:

The Food For Work programme (FFW) is one of the oldest wage employment programme launched during the 1970s. The programme was designed to ensure employment and food security to the rural people affected by natural disasters like droughts and floods. The experiences of this programme helped in the design of many other wage employment programmes by the government.

In November 2004, the National Food for Work programme (NFFWP) has been launched in the 150 most backward districts. The districts were identified by the Planning Commission in consultation with the states and Ministry of Rural Development. It is a 100 percent centrally sponsored scheme and aims at generation of supplementary wage employment and assurance of food security through creation of need based economic social and community assets.

5.4.3.2. Integrated Child Development Services:

The Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS), launched in 1975, is a centrally sponsored, state administered nation-wide direct nutrition intervention programme, which integrates supplementary nutrition with primary health care and informal education. It provides six services to under six – year old children and mothers, supplementary feeding³⁰, immunization, health check – ups, referral services, health and nutrition education to adult women, and non – formal pre – school education to 3- 6 year olds. The *anganawadi* child care centre is the focal point in the delivery of services at the village level covering 1000 population. Currently, 34 million children, consisting of 23 percent of children in the relevant age group, and 4.8 million mothers are being provided with supplementary nutrition. The low coverage could be due to very meager public spending by Central and state governments on nutrition.

³⁰ The ICDS provides food ration for 300 days, containing 300 kcal and 12.5 gms protein, to a child and food ration containing 500 kcal and 12 – 15 gms protein to pregnant and lactating women.

5.4.3.3. Mid – day Meal Programme:

The National Programme of Nutritional support to Primary Education (NPNSE), commonly known as Mid –day Meal Programme launched in 1995, is another nationwide central scheme intended to improve enrolment, regular attendance, and reduce dropouts as well as improve the nutritional status of primary school children. It provides to a child aged 6- 14 years cooked food comprising 100 gms of food grains (rice or wheat) per school day or 3 kg food grains per month. India's mid – day meal scheme has been classified as biggest school feeding programme benefiting 105 million beneficiaries or 15 % of India's population.

5.4.3.4. Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY) and Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUEP):

Besides, the Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY) and Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUEP) were two important direct poverty alleviation programmes in urban areas. Although their thrust was on employment and income generation for the urban poor, they had components for the provision of basic services as well. PMIUEP was launched in the year 1995 - 6 with the objective of employment generation, shelter upgradation, social development, and community empowerment. However, during 1997, the three programmes of UBSP, NRY, and PMIUEP have been merged into a single employment generation programme called Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY). Still there is a huge gap between policy formation and enactment due to lack of willingness.

Poverty alleviation programmes should go beyond their present minimal concerns of providing safety nets. There should be a substantial investment in human resource development for enhancing people's capabilities. Along with this, there should be attempts to create more economic space for the poor by equipping them with assets and skills for livelihood outside agriculture. The existing poverty alleviation programmes are essentially top – down ventures that are heavily dependent on the bureaucracy. There have been moves towards strengthening the participants of the people through PRIs, NGOs and SHGs in the planning and implementation of the programmes.

Development is the best contraceptive and such development needs to be labour intensive and broad based. The reforms also offer new opportunities and pose certain challenges. A people – centred decentralization with participatory institutional structures cannot only enlarge the social capital of the poor in the short run but also make them partners in the socio – economic transformation of the Indian economy in the medium term³¹.

5.4.3.5. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

MGNREGA is considered as world's largest public works programme by World Bank (World Bank Group's report 'The State of Social Safety Nets 2015'). India is among the five middle income countries³² running the world's largest social safety net programmes and reaching over 180 million people. India's rural employment guarantee programme MNREGA has been ranked as the world's largest public works programme, providing social security net to almost 15 percent of the country's population³³. The latest HDI report –themed on how access to work in a digital era labour market can improve lives – termed India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act a 'milestone' that has ensured 'greater social protection'.

According to the World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim and Executive Director of International Labour Organisation, Guy Rider, and 'The World Bank Group and the ILO share a vision of social protection for all, a world where anyone who needs social protection can access it at any time'. The group's Senior Director for Social Protection and later Arup Banerjee said, 'There is strong body of evidence that these programme ensure poor families can invest in the health and education of their children, improve their productivity, and cope with shocks'. It is also said that the safety net Programmes must be more efficient and effective to close the coverage gap.

³¹RadhaKrishna, R. and K. HanuMantha Rao (2006), 'Poverty, Unemployment, and Public Intervention', in *India Social Development Report*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 13- 16.

³² The World's five largest social safety net programmes are all in middle – income countries (China, India, South Africa and Ethiopia) and reaching over 526 million people.

³³ Trivedi, Bhutnath (July, 07, 2015), 'MNREGA world's largest public works programme : World Bank', Times of India.

5.4.3.6. India Vision 2020:

India Vision 2020 document, while discussing about women in the labour force has, inter alia, mentioned that secure child care support services are necessary for working women. The 1th Five Year Plan document of the Planning Commission incorporated various schemes and programmes for women and child development. It also mentions about the setting up of crèches in unorganized sector and restructuring and revamping of the existing Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the children of working mothers.

5.4.4. Measures for Improving Health Standard:

Sustainable socio – economic development is possible only if the health and education are given top priority in the process of planning. The issue of health and the right to health is considered in all developing countries and developed countries as an issue of fundamental importance. As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) everyone has the right to adequate health and well being. The article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) encapsulated the ‘Right to Health’ in the following words:

1. ‘Everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Viewing women in a much larger role, there has to be a swing back to planning and policies. Also, preventive, curative, and promotional health services have to converge. More importantly, women’s health has to be seen as a social issue closely interlinked with other spheres of their existence framed by patriarchal structures.

. In the case of the many developing nations, the basic indicators of health are found to be unsatisfactory. People live below the standards expected to maintain good health. When

the target was fixed as the 'Health for all by 2000 AD', all nations planned to achieve it as targeted.. Of the three areas of health, the promotive, the preventive and curative, the promotive aspect was given the priority³⁴.

Promotion of health would assure a high quality life, active participation, good habits, and high input of work, healthy mind, sound thought and happy interpersonal relationship leading to a healthy society. To work on health promotion, education of the masses and spreading of health information among them is very much essential. Health information could be disseminated in the community fast with the help of media. But this is feasible in the case of developed nation where the educational and economic statuses are high. But the situation in the traditional/developing societies is different. These societies require active participation of human resources than the application of mechanical media. Interpersonal contacts, awareness campaigns, persuasion through persistent contact only will help in disproving the existing traditional mode of health practices³⁵.

Health is one of the central elements of human security because it refers to the welfare of individuals and present at the core of their survival. Women's health is the foundation of a healthy nation. A healthy women as Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach, who is able to lead a complete healthy life in healthy circumstances till the end of life. One of the greatest health challenges confronting the fisher folk families may become HIV/AIDS. Fishermen appear to be particularly vulnerable because of their ignorance of the disease and the time spent away from their families. Access to affordable treatment and education on safe sex is, therefore, the fishermen and their wives must be aware of their rights to protect themselves³⁶. A woman's sociological, economic and health implications are affected by the malnourishment and long working hours. Government of India has taken various steps for improving the condition of women's health, especially for the women who belong to the marginalized communities of the society. Some of them are :—

³⁴Nalini, B. And S. Elango, 2005, in Narayana Reddy, V. et.al eds *Women in Development Challenges and Achievements*, Serial Publications, New Delhi, 231.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Williams, M.J., S.B. Williams and P.S.Choo (2014), 'From Women in Fisheries to gender and fisheries' in *SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin*, 24 – July 2014, 6-9.

5.4.4.1. National Health Policy:

National Health Policy which was adopted in 1983 was to attain the goal of Health for All by the year 2000 by establishing an effective and efficient health care system for all citizens, in particular vulnerable groups like women, children and underprivileged. Other major priority areas were: close coordination of health- related services and activities like drinking water supply, sanitation, and nutrition, the active involvement and participation of voluntary organizations and provision of essential drugs and vaccines. The target was attained more or less in all states..

In the year 2002, a new National Health Policy was again formulated. The major concerns were the determinants of health- water, food, sanitation, and environment. There are 137,271 sub-centres functioning in the country of which the Centre finances 97,757 and the states the balance. The Public Health Centre (PHC) is the first contact point between the village community and the medical officer, and there are 22,975 PHCs operational in the country. The PHC, as the name suggest, has facilities mainly for primary out – patient care with minimal arrangements for in – patients, while the Community Health Centre (CHC) has facilities for secondary care, with specialists and in – patients beds. There are 2935 functioning CHCs³⁷.

These developments imply major challenges for the reproductive health agenda. The following issues need to be addressed: 1) affordable cost and access to services, 2) decentralization and devolution to panchayat raj institutions (PRIs), 3) community need based planning, 4) sustainability of infrastructure and workforce, and 5) improved quality of services. There is growing consensus in the country over the need to acknowledge the rights to and needs of adolescents, girls and boys, married and unmarried, to education, health, empowerment, livelihood, and social mobilization.

5.4.4.2.National Urban Health Mission (NHUM):

National Urban Health Mission (NHUM) encourages the participation of the community in the planning and management of the health care services. It would promote an urban

³⁷Nanda A.R. and Almas Ali (2006), 'Health Sector Issues and Challenges', in *India Social Development Report*, Council for Social Development, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 26.

poor settlements (USHA) (one USHA for 1000 – 2500 urban poor population covering about 200 to 500 households), ensure the participation by creation of community based institutions like Mahila Arogya Samiti (20 -1000 Households) and Rogi Kalyan Samitis. It would proactively reach out to urban poor settlements by way of regular outreach sessions and monthly health and nutrition day. It mandates special attention for reaching out to other vulnerable sections like construction workers, rag pickers, sex workers, brick kin workers, rickshaw pullers, boat man communities, fishing communities, etc.

The NHUM would promote community health risk. Health insurance, as measures for protecting the poor from impoverishing effect of out of the pocket expenditures. For promoting community risk pooling mechanism slum women would be organised into Mahila Arogya Samiti. The members of the MAS would be encouraged to save money on monthly basis for meeting the health emergencies. The group members themselves would decide the lending norms and rate of interest. The NHUM would provide seed money of Rs. 2500 to the MAS (@ Rs. 25/- per household represented by the MAS). The NHUM also proposes incentives to the group on the basis of the targets achieved for strengthening the savings.

The NUHM would promote an urban health insurance model which provides for the cost of accessing health care for surgery and hospitalisation needs for the urban population at reasonable cost and assured quality, while subsidizing the insurance premium for the urban slum and vulnerable population. The mission recognizes that state specific, community oriented innovative and flexible insurance policies need to be developed.

Urban Community Health Insurance Model by National Urban Health Mission (NHUM):

Objective: To ensure access of identified families to quality medical care for hospitalization/surgery;

Beneficiaries: Identified urban poor families, for a maximum of five members, Smart Card/Individual or Family Health Suraksha Cards to be proof of eligibility and to avoid duplication with similar schemes;

Implementing Agency: Preferably ULBs, possibly state for smaller cities;

Premium Financing: Up to a maximum of Rs.600 per family as subsidy by the central govt. Additional cost, if any, may be contributed by state/ULB/beneficiary.

Benefits: Coverage for hospitalisation/surgical procedure, Coverage of surgical care on a day care basis, Pre-existing conditions/diseases, including maternal and childhood conditions and illness, to be covered, subject to minimal exclusion.

The National Urban Health Mission promotes the role of the urban local bodies in the planning and management of the urban health programmes. The NUHM would also incorporate and promote transparency and accountability by incorporating elements like health service delivery charter, health service guarantee, concurrent audit at the levels of funds release and utilization. NUHM would aim to provide a system for convergence of all communicable and non-communicable disease programmes including HIV/AIDS through an integrated planning at the city level. The objective would be to enhance the utilisation of the system through the convergence mechanism, through provision of a common platform and availability of all services at one point Urban health Centre (UHC) and through mechanisms of referrals. The existing IDSP structure would be leveraged for improved surveillance.

The management, control and supervision systems however would vest within the respective divisions but urban component /funds within the programmes would be identified and all services will be sought to be converged /located at UHC level. Appropriate convergences and mechanisms for co-locations and strengthening would be sought with the existing systems of the Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturotherapy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) at the time of operationalisation.

The effective implementation of the above strategies would require skilled manpower and technical support at all levels. Hence the National Urban Health Mission would ensure additional managerial and financial resources at all level. An estimated allocation of approximately Rs. 8600 crores from the Central Government for a period of 4 years

(2008-2012) to the NUHM at the central, state and city level may be required to enable adequate focus on urban health. The

National Urban Health Mission would commence as a 100% centrally sponsored scheme in the first year of its implementation during the XIth Plan period. However, for the sustainability of the Mission from the second year onward a sharing mechanism between the Central Government State/Urban local bodies is being proposed³⁸.

5.4.4.3. The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY):

This is a maternity benefit programme introduced in 2010 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. This is a conditional cash transfer programme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first two live births. In 2013, the scheme has been brought under National Food Security Act, 2013,³⁹ for implementing the provision of cash maternity benefit of Rs. 6000. Presently 200 'high burden districts' are under consideration for this scheme.

According to the National Family Health Survey (2015 – 2016) only 28.7 women received Janani Suraksha Yojana for their health benefits in West Bengal. Infant Mortality Rate is 27% and 32% in the case of the children under five years according to NFHS 2015-2016. The figure of already mothers or pregnant at the age of 15 – 16 is 18.3% in West Bengal in general and 25% in the case of Jelepara during the field visits. Only 21.8 mothers had full antenatal care during their pregnancies. 62.5% women are still anaemic in West Bengal and the percentage is higher in case of Jelepara which is 80%.

Although the World Bank ranked the Janani Suraksha Yojana with 78 million beneficiaries as the topmost social security programme with conditional cash transfers. Also it ranked the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme as the second largest unconditional cash transfer social security programme in the world.

³⁸Government of India,(2008), 'National Urban Health Mission 2008 – 2012 Meeting the Health Challenges of Urban Population especially the Urban Poor (with Special Focus on Urban slums)', Urban Health Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 3 -8.

³⁹The National Food Security Act 2013, passed by the parliament of India, to provide subsidized food grains to two third of the Indian population. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme and the Public Distribution System.

In spite of all these mechanisms women are still neglected in Jelepara. Neglecting the women is the root cause of getting failure of the processes of development. Empowerment of women through capacity building is the key to socio –economic development to the community in bringing women into the mainstream of the national development.

5.4.5. Measures for improving the Education level especially of women:

The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. The great Aryans, Buddha among the rest, have always put woman in an equal position with man. For them sex in religion did not exist. In the Vedas and Upanishads, women taught the highest truths and received the same veneration as men. – Swami Vivekananda

Education, especially female education, is generally considered a key factor to development. It is related to demographic parameters and other indicators of health and socio – economic conditions of a population, or a nation as a whole. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl education, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover, educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population⁴⁰.

Female education is believed to have a great influence on the maternal and child health as it enhances the knowledge and skills of the mother concerning age at marriage, contraception, nutrition, prevention and treatment of diseases. It also means that the higher infant and child mortality rates among the poorly educated mothers are due to their poor hygienic practices and lack of connection with the modern medical facilities. Moreover, maternal education is related to child health because it reduces the cost of public health programmes relating to information on health technology, increases

⁴⁰Khongsdier, R.,2005, ‘Maternal Education in Relation to the Indicators of Health and Development in Northeast India’, in V. Narayana Reddy, S. Vijaya Kumar, and B. Nalini eds *Women in Development Challenges and Achievements*, Serials Publications, New Delhi.

household income and productivity of health inputs. So it is necessary to increase in investment in formal education of female, for the best health development agenda⁴¹.

An International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, held in 1994, has strongly recommended that all countries should take immediate steps to achieve the goal of universal primary education before the year 2015, and to ensure that girls and women should get the widest and earliest possible access to secondary and higher levels of education.

It is envisaged that only education empowering poor backward women and thus they will be able to participate fully in social, economic and political process, which affect their lives and be able to take control of them.

According to the World Population Report (1990), 'A mother's education is the single most important factor in keeping her family small and her children alive. Education is the first line of defense for women faced with the life threatening situation that traditional life styles perpetuate. It encourages the sense of control over personal destiny. It opens the door to choices that are not beyond bound by tradition. With an education, the women's status steps beyond the confines of motherhood. Further, the quality of life in the family of educated women becomes a priority'⁴².

A large number of women in India are actively engaged in unorganised sector within them a large number of women are engaged in unpaid agricultural work (like fishing) for their families. It has been revealed that fishing is that occupation in unorganized sector which have not any strong data regarding women's participation in fishing based activities. So, women of this community are marginalized due to various factors in which education is one. Through education they could be aware about their conditions. Women's lower status is reflected not only in their work being underpaid, unrecognized, and undervalued but also in their limited access to productive resources and support services such as health and education. In this context, the major problem identified as

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Sadik, Nafis (1990), *State of World Population 1990*, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, New York.

hindrances in the way of empowerment of women are categorised as individual and family related, community level problem, social – political and cultural problems and economic problems that often overlap and are interlinked.

The Government of India for the first time accepted the concept of ‘investment’ in education in its 1968 Policy and quantitatively fixed a target of six percent of national income to be invested on education from the public exchequer by 1986. Some efforts have been initiated in recent years towards mobilization of non – governmental resources, mainly for secondary and higher education. The measures include introduction of cost recovery measures, introduction and revitalization of student loan programmes in higher education, and mobilization of community resources for primary education. These are in addition to measures being taken towards privatization of education and thus again marginalized sections of the society are lagging behind in the process of development through education.

Though several measures were being taken for improving the education level of women; still the country yet to realize its goal in this section. Some of the measures were:

5.4.5.1. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS):

A novel scheme called Education Guarantee Scheme has been viewed as an effective answer to the problem of physical access to schools. This is an important initiative that the government has taken at the national level in 1999 – 2000. The purpose of this programme was to provide an opportunity to the rural poor, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes to secure education for their children. The scheme is meant for those areas where no school currently exists within a radius of 1 km. These areas could be the areas where the poorest of the poor live. The EGS envisages the poor local community to a) come forward, expressing demand for a school, b) specifically provide the premises required for a school, c) provide for a local part time teacher and d) maintain the school at least for two years with the gram panchayat mobilizing contributions in cash and kind from the local community. Now it

has been made a part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan⁴³. Instead of these measures women of fishing communities are not getting fruits of them.

5.4.5.2.Operation Blackboard:

The government of India has initiated the Operation Blackboard programme, as a follow – up of the National Policy on Education 1986 to improve the infrastructure facilities, and quality of primary education. The scheme was started in 1987 – 88 and aimed at substantial improvement in basic facilities in all primary schools run by government and local bodies. It consists of three different components: a) a building comprising at least two reasonably large all weather rooms with a deep verandah and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, b) at least two teachers in every school, as far as possible one of them a woman and a third teacher if the enrolment in a school is above 100, and c) essential teaching learning material including blackboards, maps, charts, toys and equipment for work experience including teacher's material and miscellaneous facilities (water facilities), etc. The Revised National Policy on Education (1992) suggested an expansion of the scope of Operation Blackboard to provide three reasonably large rooms and three teachers in every primary school, and to extend the scheme to upper primary level.

5.4.5.3.Free Elementary Education:

To reduce the households direct costs of schooling of children, like many other countries had resolved long ago to provide free elementary education- specifically tuition fee free. The Government of India has also recommended in the Programme of Action, expansion of the existing schemes more intensively to the target population groups. For example, it suggested the provision of two sets of free uniforms, free text books and stationary, and attendance incentives to the girls of all families below the poverty line, and provision of free transport in state roadways buses and local trains to children attending elementary schools, etc. In fact, the Government of India has promised, in the Programme of Action, that 'a comprehensive system of incentives and support services will be provided for girls and children of the economically weaker sections of society'.

⁴³Tilak, Jandhyala B.G.,2006, 'Education A Saga of Spectacular Achievements and Conspicuous Failures' in Council for Social Development's *India Social Development Report*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

5.4.5.4. Decentralization of Education:

An important development of the 1990s refers to significant efforts of the government to decentralize educational planning and administration and the involvement of the community at various levels(like School Committee, Panchayat Education Committee, Municipal Education Committee, District Education Committee with two boards, one at the district level called District Education Board and state level board called State Advisory Board for School Education) in planning, administration, financing, monitoring, and supervision of the working of the school system. Following the Constitutional Amendment in favour of Panchayati raj institutions and also the launching of externally aided projects in primary education, village education committees at various levels have been set up. Local, more specifically district primary educational plans are being formulated at decentralized levels. Their performance with respect to education development is well known. But there may not necessarily be a one to one relationship between decentralization⁴⁴.

5.4.5.5.Encouragement to Private Schools:

With respect to private schools, the present tendencies indicate that government favours in the name of ‘building partnerships’, the growth of private schools – both schools that are financially supported by the State as well as self – financing private schools. But the number of government aided school is decreasing. With the growth of such schools, the government might not feel the need for opening new government schools and as a result, the access of the poor to schools would be seriously affected. The Private schools promote dualism in education – an expensive system for the rich and a poor quality one for the poor⁴⁵. There is a strong need for the governments to substantially increase their spending on education with a strong political will⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Tilak, Jandhyala B.G.,2006, ‘Education A Saga of Spectacular Achievements and Conspicuous Failures’ in Council for Social Development’s *India Social Development Report*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 39 - 45.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dreze, J., and A.K. Sen, 1995, ‘Basic Education as a Political Issue’, *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, vol. 9, no. 1, January, 1-26.

5.4.5.6. Sabla / Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls:

This is a scheme for the empowerment of the adolescent girls, launched in 2012. 200 districts of the country have been undertaken for the same. The scheme offers a package of benefits to the girls at risk of the age of 10–19 for becoming self reliant, including nutritional supplementation and education, health education, life skills and vocational training.

5.4.5.7. Kishori Shakti Yojana:

Kishori Shakti Yojana is a Programme in which young girls between the age of eleven and eighteen are promoted and provided education and knowledge regarding their environment, social status, social problems, health, hygiene, marital status etc. It also teach vocational skills by which they would be empowered and become self sufficient. This scheme helps to make young women productive and contributive social beings in the society.

5.4.5.8. Kanyashree Prakalpa for girls, 2013 (West Bengal):

Ministry of Women and Child Development of West Bengal, Introduced Kanyashree Prakalpa a scheme for girls; the two main objectives of this scheme are to encourage girls for secondary education and to reduce the prevalence of child marriage under 18. The scheme assures an annual scholarship of Rs. 500/- to girls based on the following criteria-

- 1) The girls are between the age of 13 and 18.
- 2) The girls are unmarried.
- 3) The girl is enrolled in Classes 8 to 12 in a formal school or equivalent.
- 4) Annual income should not exceed Rs. 1, 20,000/- of the girl's parents/guardian (no bar in case of the death of both parents of the girl).
- 5) The girl is not the beneficiary of any other scheme or applied for any other financial assistance.

Under the present scheme there is also a criterion for one time grant of rupees 25000/- based on the following criteria-

- 1) The girl's age should be 18 to 19 but not exceed the age of 19.
- 2) The girl is unmarried on attaining the age of 18.
- 3) The girl is enrolled in school/college/institutions/open school or university or in vocational or technical training institution which should be recognised by the concerned recognition authorities or is inmate of any home registered under J.J. Care and protection Act 2000.⁴⁷
- 4) The girl's parent/guardian's income does not exceed Rs. 1,20,000/- per annum whereas no income bar in case of girls who lost their both parents or are housed in Shelter Homes under J.J. care and Protection Act 2000⁴⁸.

In Jelepara, 10 girls got the chance to avail the Kanyashree Prakalpo till now. This act of the Government helped many girls for getting education and marry after 18.

5.4.5.9. Sabuj Sathi Scheme (West Bengal):

This is a project of bicycle distribution among all students of the state of West Bengal who are studying between Class 10 to 12 in Government. Or Government aided Schools or Madrasahs. The project was started in August, 2015 for promoting education among poor and marginalized class of the society. The project was started only for girls initially but after that the Honorable Chief Minister of West Bengal declared for all students for going schools from their places and the scheme *Sobuj Sathi* that means green companion. 22.5 lakh cycles distributed under *Sabuj Sathi* scheme in the financial year 2015- 2016 to the student of West Bengal and thus the state ranks first in the country in the bicycle distribution⁴⁹.

5.4.5.10. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana:

The Census (2011) data showed a significant declining trend in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR), calculated as number of girls for every 1000 boys between age group of 0-6 years,

⁴⁷The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, an act which is for consolidation and amendment of the laws relating to juveniles and children in need of care and protection. To provide care and protection for their development needs, and to adopt a child – friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of matters established under this enactment.

⁴⁸Ministry of Women & Child Development, West Bengal, www.newincept.com/westbengal/kanyashree-prakalpa-2013.html, accessed on 19.07.16 at 14.30 pm.

⁴⁹Goswami, Tarun, 19 February 2016, '22.5 lakh cycles distributed under Sabuj Sathi scheme', www.millenniumpost.in/News Content.aspx?NID=238102, accessed on 19.07.2016 at 19.30 pm).

with an all time low of 918 in 2011 from 976 in 1961. This is an alarming indicator for women disempowerment. It reflects both pre birth discrimination manifested through gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls. Alarm by the sharp decline of girl child,

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana (save daughter, educate daughter) has been launched which is a scheme of Government of India, introduced by the Honorable Prime Minister in January 2015 for saving and empowering the girl child. In the scheme it has been announced that the village which has balanced sex ratio, will be awarded Rs. 1 crore. The scheme has focused on 100 Districts of the country which have low Child Sex Ratio to ensure survival, protection and education of the girl child⁵⁰.

In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the state governments and central government through various schemes and programmes over the last 66 years and above all, the United Nation's enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India.

The 2011 census report indicates that literacy among women as only 54 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average, i.e. 65.38. The growth of women's education in rural areas and urban slums (including Jelepura) is very slow. This obviously means that still large women folk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover, education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 54% against 76% of men as per 2011 Census⁵¹.

5.4.6. Sustainable Development as a new vision of Education:

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, explicitly highlighted the collective

⁵⁰Government of India, 2015, '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*', Ministry of Women and Child Development.

⁵¹Kiran Das Naik, E. and M. Aravinda Kumar, 2014, 'Education and Women Empowerment in India' in Nagaraju Battu et al eds *Empowerment of Women in India New Strategies*, Regal Publications, New Delhi.

responsibility of all mankind to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually – reinforcing three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at the local, national, regional and global levels (United Nations,2002). This notion essentially implied a need for significant change in scope and orientation for environmental education, and for the emergence of a new vision of education for sustainable development.

In 2002, the proposal for establishing the decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) was endorsed at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The UN General Assembly later adopted the decade by consensus, designating the years of the decade as 2005 – 2014. The decade provides an opportunity for a concerted effort to integrate the various values inherent in Sustainable Development into every aspect of learning, through all forms of education, training and public awareness raising, to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable society. Internationally collaborative work is under way aiming at the development of the International Implementation Scheme and subsequently the Regional Implementation Strategies⁵².

There is a wide agreement that education has an important role to play in motivating and empowering people from community like fishing community, to participate in the changes towards more sustainable lifestyles. It was a quarter of a century ago, that education was described ⁵³ as the ‘greatest resource’ for achieving a just and ecological society.

‘The extent to which women are free to make decisions affecting their lives may be the key to the future, not only of the poor countries but of the richer ones too. As mothers, producers or suppliers of food, fuel and water, traders and manufactures, political and community leaders, women are at the center of the process of change...The most effective route to smaller families is to provide women with the means of social and economic self- determination, full rights in the family and society, access to income and

⁵²UNESCO (2005a, 2005b) retrieved fromwww.unesco.org accessed on 10.04.16.

⁵³Schumacher, F. (1973), *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Really Mattered*, Abacus, London.

career development, education and health care, and a real say in the decisions that their lives of which one of the most important is family size'⁵⁴. This is the way how a society can take itself towards Sustainable Development.

Awareness and concern about environmental, economic, and equity issues must become firmly rooted in public consciousness. To produce that understanding, women need to know how natural systems work and appreciate natural cycles. An understanding of the inter – dependence of economic, social, political and ecological conditions in rural and urban areas as well as locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, also needed.

Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. The Brundtland Report,⁵⁵ argued that teachers had a crucial role to play in helping to bring about the extensive social changes necessary for sustainable development. The 1980 World Conservation Strategy was more explicit about the role of education in bringing about such changes. It was argued in Chapter 36 on 'Promoting education, public awareness and training' was one of the few aspects of Agenda 21⁵⁶ which did not provoke contention at the Earth Summit. Both economically developed and developing countries agreed that education of women is essential for promoting sustainable development and increasing the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues⁵⁷.

5.4.7. Sustainable Development involving all forms of Education:

Sustainable Development is a complex undertaking with connections to every part of life. Capacities required for sustainable development are enormous and can only be enhanced by engaging all possible measures of education, training and awareness- raising opportunities. Education for sustainable development should take place within a

⁵⁴UNESCO (1992) *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda 21*, UNESCO, Switzerland.

⁵⁵World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2 – 5.

⁵⁶ UNESCO – UNEP (1996) *Education for Sustainable Development*, Connect Vol. XXI No. 2 June.

⁵⁷Kainth, Gurusharan Singh (2010), 'Environment and Education: A Pathway to Sustainability' in Archana Sinha (ed) *Sustaining Communities: Strategies for Sustainable Community Development*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

perspective of lifelong learning, encompassing all modes of education initiatives, formal, non – formal and informal, from early childhood to adulthood.⁵⁸

Formal Education:

It carries a particular importance in providing basic education to the majority of the population mostly women, with the perspective of ‘education for all,’ which is the key to a nation’s fundamental development, particularly through the improvement of literacy and numeracy.

a) Non – Formal Education:

In the past, non – formal education demonstrated an impressive development in its scope and magnitude of delivery, in particular, in the field of environmental education (EE). It was developed in response to local needs and priorities, and thus closely linked to the development of the required human capacities within the local context. NGOs and community- based organisations have been widely recognised as the primary providers of non – formal environmental education and are gaining greater responsibilities and influence in the development of education of this particular mode.

b) Informal Education:

This mode of learning takes place in the family, community, workplace and social interaction, as well as through the media (newspapers, television, radio, etc.) and a diversity of indigenous methods and processes, such as religious, informal beliefs, cultural activities, popular art, theatre and music. Informal learning generally raises public awareness on socio – economic and environmental implications of human activities, and shares relevant information for important decision making. Some religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, promote respect and cultural belief related to nature conservation and sustainability issues.

Different modes of educational efforts must be unified and integrated. Formal, Non – Formal and Informal Education should be recognised as indispensable components of

⁵⁸ Ibid.

education for Sustainable Development, which should be linked with education of health, environmental awareness and other sustainable development concerns.

5.4.8. Integrated Approach Involving All Forms of Education:

Sustainable development is a complex undertaking with connections to every part of life. Capacities required for sustainable development are enormous and can only be enhanced by engaging all possible measures of education, training and awareness- raising opportunities. In fact, education for sustainable development should take place within a perspective of lifelong learning, encompassing all modes of education initiatives, formal, non – formal and informal, from early childhood to adulthood. A lifelong learning perspective sees all the different modes of education as a continuous and interactive process, to collectively promote the societal changes towards sustainable development.

Communities like fishing communities should take a stronger interest in educating their people for sustainability, recognizing that current and future generations will need to be well – educated in order to bring about a sustainable future. Educating for sustainability does not follow academic theories according to a single discipline but rather emphasizes connections among all subject areas, as well as geographic and cultural relationships. Part of sustainability education is learning citizenship skills and understanding that citizens have the power to shape their lives and their communities in the light of their vision of a healthy and prosperous future⁵⁹.

5.5. Developmental programmes and policies of Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality for marginalized section including Jelepara:

In the Hooghly-Chinsurah municipality the service sector and small businesses are growing at a fast pace within the municipal area and constitutes the main economic base of the municipality. Population is fast increasing which resulting in higher and higher density of population. Lack of large-scale industry implies that the municipality has to be run on taxes collected from the middle class residents. Very little taxes are collected from the slums and poor colonies. So, it is very difficult to improve this municipal area only on the basis of

⁵⁹Chakravorty, T. (2016) 'Education and Sustainable Development of Women of Fishing Community : An Experience from West Bengal', in *Himalayan Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, Issue No. 1, April 2016.

municipal taxes. Hooghly-Chinsurah Municipality now comprehends the situation and plans to supplement this revenue through other sources.

74th Amendment of Indian Constitution in 1992 has conferred the Urban Local Bodies of the country with the constitutional status as third tier of Local Self Government in urban areas. By way of incorporating the 12th Schedule, in the Indian Constitution, under Article 243W, Urban Local Bodies have been empowered to carry out the various functions which include Urban Planning along with Town Planning, Planning for Economic & Social Development and Regulation of Land-use. Besides, the 12th Schedule has also empowered the Urban Local Bodies to deliver various civic services like water supply, public health, solid waste management, road network, slum improvement, urban amenities, registration of birth and death, urban poverty alleviation as well as to safeguard the interest of the weaker section of the society.

Considering the local context the Local Economic Development ⁶⁰(LED) approach has been addressed for Development from three angles - firstly identifying natural resources, which have the potential for exploitation economic resources like designating the stretch of river Hooghly for a viable fisheries project creating engagement opportunities for the unemployed youth. Secondly, providing promotional and facilitative support to unorganized sector activities for strengthening their resource base. Thirdly, promoting urbanization linked local long-term projects in the area of economic development in association with the private sector.

With the enactment of the West Bengal Municipal Act, 1993 and other legislations controlling the various Municipal Bodies of the State, the 74th Constitutional Amendment has been translated into reality and it has been experienced by the passage of time that all the Urban Local Bodies of this State are gradually becoming the Third Tier of the Local Self Government in its actual term. By way of incorporation of Section 297 in West Bengal Municipal Act, the preparation of Draft Development Plan for the period of every 5 years has been made mandatory for the Urban Local Bodies of the State, thus providing the legal back-up of preparation of Development Plan for the city.

⁶⁰ Aim of the Local Economic Development (LED) is to grow up the economic capacity of a particular local area, to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all.

Subsequently with the introduction of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission⁶¹ (JnNURM) in mid of the last decade, the preparation of the City Development Plan has become mandatory for sanction of the projects, with particular focus on economic and social infrastructure, strategies that deal specifically with the issues affecting the urban poor, strengthening of municipal governance along with financial accounting and budgeting systems and procedures, creation of structures for bringing in accountability and transparency along with land-use concept. The process of preparation of the City Development Plan has also been emphasized in the 12th Five-year Plan Document and it is well apprehended that the urban infrastructures programmes which are likely to follow JnNURM will have similar requirement of the City Development Plan for each city or town, as the case may be.

5.5.1. Objectives for City development of Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality:

- a) Strengthening the existing institutional structures in the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) created by the various Government plans and programmes;
- b) Strengthening the community structures and increasing the coverage, reach and network of these existing community structures;
- c) Provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the urban poor by identifying innovative micro enterprise opportunities for the self help groups in the ULB;
- d) Improving operational transparency of all schemes for poverty alleviation;
- e) Coverage in Social Security Programmes like Old Age Pension, Disability Pension, Widow Pension etc.

Other Initiatives:

- a) Planning livelihood programmes for the homeless, shelter less squatters and informal settlers who do not receive benefits from the existing government schemes/programmes;

⁶¹ Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal mission was launched for massive city modernization and for improving the quality of life and infrastructure in the cities under Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India on December 3, 2005.

- b) Participatory planning in managing livelihood development initiatives in slums/squatters and informal groups;
- c) Partnering with organisations to facilitate growth in wage employment in the ULB;

5.5.2. Improvement of Slum Infrastructure: reflecting Jelepara:

The Slum Infrastructure sub-component refers to planning for the ‘in-slum’ infrastructure development in the ULB. It aims at providing basic minimum services to the slum population. There are 140 slums within the municipal jurisdiction covering about 3.5sq km. in aggregate. About 59,000 population lives in these slums. Thus, about 32% of municipal population is accommodated on 20.24% of land area. The development objectives which the Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality (HCM) seeks to address through their Slum Infrastructure Improvement Plan are to ensure basic infrastructure services to all slums, irrespective of their tenure status in order to provide a safe and quality of life to the residents and to give priority to the slums having inadequate infrastructure and having poor socio economic condition.

Within the proposed infrastructure improvement in slums, emphasis thus has been on the access to drinking water supply, improved road condition, collection of solid waste and its disposal in appropriate manner, proper drainage to avoid water logging and provide sanitation facility to all. Priority sectors for Prioritized slums have been identified. Sectors / service areas which were considered in descending order of priority are water supply, sanitation, drainage systems and road network. Since the service in the field of Solid Waste Management is provided by the municipality at par with any other area, this was outside the purview of consideration. Project proposals identified for improvement focuses on improvements in operation and maintenance, community participation and projects involving significant capital investments. The nature of assets that will be created are Pipeline network for drinking water, Drains, Roads/ pavements, Community latrines and two pit latrines⁶².

⁶²Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality (2015), ‘City Development Plan 2014 – 15 -2018 -19’, HCM, Chinsurah, 72.

In Jelepara, no household is connected with water supply. There are total 71 households in Jelepara including two slums, only 5 houses (as per the field survey) are built under the programme Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP). Women collect water from the street taps for their day to day needs. As the fisher folks of Jelepara are considered as urban poor slum dwellers, there are no special developmental plan which are designed for these people and they are excluded from most of the developmental programme initiated by department of fisheries of the state.

5.5.3. Other Programmes in Jelepara:

Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) are the programmes running for the development of the slum dwellers. In Jelepara, 8 people out of 808 are getting Pension Rs. 400 under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme. 10 women out of 396 are getting Rs. 600 under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme. No one is being benefited by Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension of Rs. 600 in the study area.

5.5.4. Self-Help Group and Women's Empowerment:

Women empowerment is an important tool for social development and this can be achieved when the society recognizes women as one among the social partners, provided them equal rights, facilitated them with equal education, health and out of all these allow them to participate equally and effectively. Participation has become an important issue in all development programs. Significant efforts were also made by the government agencies as well as by the non – governmental agencies to sensitize and motivate women to participate in the development programs.

Due to the lack of agency, power and social barriers, poor people especially women, are often unable to take advantage of the opportunities that are meant for them for availing their own rights⁶³. These problems can be better solved through group efforts and Self Help groups are one of these groups. Self Help groups have become the vehicle of change for the poor and the marginalized. Therefore, creating multiple opportunities for building

⁶³.As per the survey conducted by Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality, 2015.

social capital is a challenging task. So interventionist policies of states and intermediate civil society groups can play transformative role in supporting poor people's capabilities for their development⁶⁴.

Bangladesh Grameen Bank founded in 1975 by Mohammed Yunus is considered to be the pioneer of the origin of the concept of self-help groups and micro-finance to combat the problems of rural finance and rural poverty and to empower the vulnerable women. Since 1990's this concept has been adopted to reduce rural poverty and to empower the women. Many countries of the world have started working on this concept to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the people in general and especially of the women.

In India NABARD was set up in 1982, but, the real effort was taken after 1991-92 from the linkage of SHGs with the banks. An SHG is a small economically homogeneous affinity group of the poor voluntarily coming together to save small amounts regularly, which are deposited in a common fund to meet members' emergency need and to provide collateral free loans decided by the group. The basic principles of the SHGs are: group approach, mutual trust, organization of small and manageable groups, group cohesiveness, spirit of thrift, demand based collateral free lending, women friendly loan, peer group pressure in repayment, skill training, capacity building and empowerment.

The movement of SHG and micro-finance based economic activities has emerged in a substantial way in the district of Hooghly. In recent years, the district witnessed an unprecedented interest in micro-credit and micro-finance in the form of group-lending. Hooghly district has taken a challenge and formed 27,550 SHGs covering 1,79,030 women under NABARD scheme exclusively with co-operative banking and disbursed Rs. 50.51 crore loans to improve the life of the rural poor. A number of NGO's all over the district are actively involved in bringing the economically weaker sections of the population in the SHG net for meaningful participation in economic activities. With the instructions of the NABARD, commercial banks of the district are taking active role in forming effective SHGs to help the rural poor. Government sponsored rural development

⁶⁴Sarmah, Jayanta, K. and Mofidul Islam, 2015, 'Role of Self Help Groups in Capacity Building of Women: An Empirical Study in Assam' in *Man and Society: A Journal of North – East Studies*, vol. xii, Winter 2015, ICSSR, Shillong, 70.

schemes like SGSY, PMRY, REGP etc. are being performed satisfactorily in the district in collaboration with the banking linkages. These schemes have generated meaningful employment to the weaker sections of people in the district especially to women⁶⁵.

These SHGs of district Hooghly have been understanding economic activities and establishing linkages with formal credit institutions and markets in the process emerging as self – reliant bodies. The external agencies (government and NGOs) have been taking several measures for the capacity building of SHGs and supporting them with necessary managerial and trade related skills. Thus, the SHGs of the poor, offer great promise for the socio – economic upliftment of the poor in a sustainable manner⁶⁶.

Self help groups have emerged as an alternative mechanism to promote savings habit among poor and to provide small and short term loans to its members at lower interest to meet their necessities, consumption and income generation activities as aqua culture. Women are considered as appropriate tool for implementing community and self development programmes. SHGs are very successful as a large number of people have accepted the system and taken up fish production as their main means of livelihood and source of main or additional income⁶⁷.

The overall empowerment of women is dependent on their economic empowerment. SHGs in this area, work in various fields including agriculture, fisheries, forestry and aquaculture seeking income generation activities with the help of micro credit. In other words, SHGs are activity specific and women are considered as appropriate tool for implementing community and self – development programmes.

5.5.4.1. Self Help Groups, Capacity Building and Capability Approach:

SHGs play a significant role in capacity building to the women belonging to the weaker sections of the society. The members of the SHGs in the district have received various

⁶⁵Government of West Bengal (2011), 'District Human Development Report Hooghly 2010', Department of Development and Planning, Kolkata.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Nune, Subba Rao, 2008, 'Role of Aquaculture in Poverty Reduction and Empowerment of Women in India Through the Medium of Self – Help Groups', *IIFET 2008 Vietnam Proceedings*, 1-6.

training programmes to enhance their capabilities⁶⁸ like agriculture based training like goatery, piggery, etc., training on organic farming, land and watershed management training, aquaculture etc. Undoubtedly, the movement of SHGs in the district including in Jelepura has brought about significant changes in the lives of women belonging to the weaker sections of the society.

According to Amartya Sen, there are five instrumental freedoms that, if present, and if women have access to them, will provide opportunities for women to act in their own self – interest and reduce their vulnerability. Access to these instrumental freedoms, namely political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security – is necessary for women to gain a better quality of life and acquire the capabilities they need to act as their own agents of change⁶⁹.

Commonly referred to as the ‘capabilities approach’, Martha Nussbaum (2000) describes this approach as, ‘an approach to the priorities of development that focuses not on preference – satisfaction but on what people are actually able to do and to be. Central to this approach is the idea that freedom is more than citizens having rights on paper: it also requires that citizens have the resources to exercise those rights. Thus, the capabilities approach goes beyond asking about satisfaction of people’s preferences to ask what women opportunities and liberties actually are, as well as how the available resources work or do not work in enabling women to function.

According to Sen, this ‘capabilities approach’ to development has considerable potential for enabling and empowering poor women. ‘These different aspects (women’s earning power, economic role outside the family, literacy and education, property rights and so on) may at first sight appear to be rather diverse and disparate. But what they have in common is their positive contribution in adding force to women’s voice and agency-through independence and empowerment’,⁷⁰.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Anchor Books, New York, 191-2.

⁷⁰Ibid.

5.5.4.2. Self Help Groups in Jelepara:

In Jelepara, there are 12 SHGs running successfully for the development of the fisher folk families. The names of the SHGs are *Shubhra Swanirbhar*, *Mamata Swanirbhar*, *Karunamayi*, *Puja*, *Pheluda Swanirbhar*, *Bholebaba*, *Lakshmi*, *Saraswati*, *Debi*, *Mitali*, *Provati* and *Swarnalata* run by the women of Jelepara. Each and every SHG has 10 – 11 women members of Jelepara. SHGs are funded by Allahabad Bank and the bank funding upto Rs10000 to each woman. Women of Jelepara are using this money for the support of their family; in meeting the expenses in fishing etc. The following success story from the field has reiterated this fact.

Case Study 1

Shobha Yadav (Mondal), (real name of the respondent) 45 years old women, daughter of a fisher man, was get married at the age of 16 with her choice, after one month of marriage her husband started to show his real character, started to beat her, broke her front two teeth, forced her to have sex with him anytime, without using any contraceptives means, she got pregnant eleven times and gave birth to eleven babies but she failed to protect her babies from diseases, malnutrition and natural hazards, nine out of eleven babies were lost and only two survived, after sometimes she started to refuse him then he started to go towards another women.

After struggling for surviving as working in pen factory, fishing boats, distilled water units and brick factories, as having rice juice as meal, getting hurt by husband by spoiling one eye and after the death of nine children, she survived with two children after taking care of them by imparting education. She works as mid day meal cook in Hooghly Girls School, Hooghly. She is leading a SHG named SWARNALATA in Jelepara, She runs a small grocery shop in her house by investing Rs 10000. She is helping her son in fishing by mending nets and arranging money. Shobha filed a case against her husband in local police station for torturing her through her life, but there is no trace of her husband since 7 years. She wants to change her surname and go back to her maiden name but lack of documents she is unable to do.

Thus, through SHG and with strong fighting mentality with the circumstances, like Shobha, other women can also develop their condition by taking lesson from the Shobha's success story. Though it is true that patriarchal structure of the society always hinder the path of women's development, Shobha wants to change her last name and go back to her maiden name but she is unable to do because she has not any document as proof of her maiden name. This is very strange and sad that the parents who brought up their daughters with care, after marriage coincidentally if her last name changes and she wants to take her maiden name back; she has to give proof for the same. Shobha has the capabilities and abilities to get all the freedoms of life. She fought against the abnormalities with courage and now she is the famous lady in Jejepara for her success but still she is struggling.

5.6. National Level Policies especially for women:

As Swami Vivekananda said, *'There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing'*.

There are initiatives from Government of India for uplifting the condition of women. Some of them are:

The Department of Women and Child Development was set up in 1985 as a part of the Ministry of Human Resources Development is the nodal department in the Government of India to look after advancement of women and children;

The National Commission for Women (NCW) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992 to safeguard the rights and interests of women. It acts as a statutory ombudsperson for women. The annual report of NCW containing recommendations is placed in Parliament by the Government of India with a detailed compliance report;

The National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development assist the Department in the areas of training and research. Objectives of the Institute include the development and promotion of voluntary action in social development. It has developed innovative gender training / sensitization modules;

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Credit Fund for Women), established in 1993, has as its main objective facilitation of credit support or micro finance to poor women, as an instrument of socio – economic change and development;

Central Social Welfare Board is an umbrella organization networking the activities of State Social Welfare Boards and voluntary organizations. It implements a number of schemes including Family Counseling Centres, Short Stay Homes, Rape Crisis Intervention Centres, Crèches for children of working mothers, etc;

State Departments of Women and Child Development, State Commissions for Women and State Social Welfare Boards form part of the institutional system in most of the states. Women's Development Corporations (WDCs) have been set up in most of the states to help the government implement the programme;

Women's Cell as Gender focal points have been formed in the ministries in the development sector, including Education, Rural Development, Labour, Agriculture;

The Panchayati Raj Institution and urban local self – government bodies provide a framework for women's empowerment in political participation and decision making all over the country;

A Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women was constituted by the *Lok Sabha* in 1997, and reconstituted in 2004, to review the effectiveness of measures taken by the central government for the empowerment of women. The Committee has 30 members from *Lok Sabha* and *Rajya Sabha*;

The Planning Commission carries out periodical reviews of programmes and policies impacting on women; Commissions and Committees are set up from time to time focus on specific areas. A focal point on the human rights of women has been set up in the NHRC (National Human Rights Commission);

A number of institutions are in place to help women get speedier justice like wider recruitment of women police officers, establishment of women police cells in police stations and exclusive women police stations. Also Rape Crisis intervention Centres have been set up in police stations in some big cities. Help lines for women in distress have

been set up. The States are being requested to set up Family Courts and earmark one Fast Track Court, if there is more than one in a district, to deal exclusively with cases of sexual abuse and cruelty in marriage relating to women;

Development of Women and Children in Urban Areas (DWCUA) aims at helping groups of urban poor women in taking up self – employment ventures. The group should consist of at least 10 women. The ceiling subsidy under the scheme is Rs. 1,25,000 or 50% of the cost of the project. Where the group sets itself up as thrift and credit society in addition to its self employment venture, it will be eligible for an additional grant of Rs. 25,000 as revolving fund at the rate of Rs. 1,000 maximum per member. The fund is meant for purchase for raw materials, marketing, infrastructure support, onetime expense on child care activity, expenses up to Rs. 500 on travel cost of group members to banks, payment of insurance premium for self / spouse/ child by maintaining savings for different periods by a member and any other expense allowed by the State in group's interest. The revolving fund can be availed by a group only after one year of its formation;

Apart from these initiatives there some other initiatives, there are:

Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana is centrally sponsored scheme for providing shelter to the urban poor and land title is given in the name of wife and husband jointly, or preferably in the wife's name alone;

The *Indira Awas Yojana* stipulates that houses under the scheme are to be allotted in the name of the female member of the beneficiary household. During 2003 – 04, as against the target of 1.48 million, 1.25 million provisional houses have been either constructed or renovated⁷¹;

The *Mahila Samakhya* Programme (Education for Women's Empowerment) started in 1989 focuses on socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women. 'Education' is understood as the process of learning to question, critically analyse issues and problems and seek solutions. The programme sees education as central to the effort of empowering women to achieve equality. To move towards this objective,

⁷¹Government of India, 2005, 'Platform for Action 10 years after, India Country Report', Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 14.

the programme emphasizes the process of learning, and seeks to bring about a change in women's perceptions about themselves and the perception of society in regard to women's roles. It is now operational in over 12000 villages in 59 districts across nine states⁷²;

The *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* Scheme has been launched by Government of India for setting up 750 residential schools at the elementary level for Marginalised and Backward communities of the country, in difficult and hard – to – reach areas with the aim of providing quality education to girls. The schools are proposed to be set up in 2656 identified educationally backward blocks in 298 districts by the end of 2007 where female literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is more than the national average.

5.6.1. Skill and Capacity Building Programmes:

The strategy for women's development has been multi – faceted, it could not have been otherwise as women had to be given their share in all spheres of development and now the emphasis continues to be multi – sectoral. Although many schemes have been made for women in different ministries and departments, the agencies for executing them have been the same and they give women a certain consideration. From the eighties there has been an effort to give women an integrated approach and to provide health, family welfare, non- formal education, create awareness of their rights and skill training at the same time. This was conceptualized in the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) programme which is essentially an employment programme for women⁷³.

In 1991, Community Based Convergent Services (CBCS) was started as a component of DWACRA where the community is involved in raising the social consciousness of poor women where they can articulate their felt needs and orient the community towards raising the social and economic status of women. A programme of skill training and employment (STEP) for women initiated in 1985 was also based on this integrated

⁷²Government of India, 2005, 'Platform for Action 10 years after, India Country Report', Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 19.

⁷³Seth, Mira (2001), *Women and Development The Indian Experience*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 83.

approach where inputs for skill and employment are combined with sensitization of women in the fields of health, education, family planning, non – formal education and awareness of legal rights, providing training to poor and asset – less women in traditional sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts. The Department of Women and Child Development developed an integrated women’s project called Indira Mahila Yojana in 1990 where health, family welfare and employment services along with non – formal education and skill training would be combined and delivered by the government agencies cover all districts of the country⁷⁴. Such programmes for skill development as;

Swalamban train women for employment in traditional and non – traditional trades. The new areas in which women seek training are Computer / Typing, Beautification, Handloom/ Embroidery/Toy making, Food Processing, Mushroom Cultivation , Readymade Garments/ Handicrafts and Paramedical;

Swa- Shakti, rural women’s development and empowerment project;

Swayamsiddha, the integrated Women’s Empowerment Programme, launched in 2001, aimed at all round empowerment of women by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all the ongoing sectoral programmes;

Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), launched in April 1999, is a holistic programme covering all aspects of self – employment. The rural poor are organized into self – help groups (SHGs), and access to training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing is facilitated. About 40% of the benefits under this programme are earmarked for women. The objective of SGSY is to bring the assisted poor families (swarozgaries) above the poverty line in three years by providing them income- generating assets through a mix of bank credit and government subsidy.

5.6.2. Partnerships:

The agencies listed above draw in persons from the voluntary sector, and the women’s movement. Such partnerships have been essential to the formulation and implementation

⁷⁴Ibid.

of approaches to gender equality. The country wide network of more than 12000 voluntary organizations has played a very significant role in the development of women and children as they share the major burden of implementing governmental policies and programmes. NGOs have demonstrated viable alternatives in the areas of women's literacy, support services, micro – credit for poor women, employment and income generation, gender sensitization, organizing women into SHGs, fight against atrocities, etc. The various programmes and schemes of the Department are based on the concept of SHG that have been set up with the cooperation of organisations at the grassroot level.

Different Departments of the government also work in partnership with bilateral, multilateral and UN agencies on women – specific and women related projects. Such as UNIFEM's role in gender budgeting and gender statistics, the role of State Human Development Reports with the assistance of UNDP in the same.

5.6.3. Stree Shakti Puraskars:

Instituted in 1999, these national awards are in the name of five eminent women personalities. The awards are given in recognition of services of an exceptional nature in the areas of education, health, agriculture, rural industry, protection of forest and environment, awareness generation and consciousness on women's issues through art and media. Each award carries a cash prize of Rs. 100,000 and a citation.

5.6.4. Gender Mainstreaming:

Gender mainstreaming emerged in the early 80s as a concern of the women's movement to move women's issues from the periphery to the centre of development decision making. Gender mainstreaming has been a major approach to ensuring gender justice especially through creating an enabling environment for making women equal partners and beneficiaries of all socio – economic activities and development in the country. The Eighth Plan (1992 – 97) spoke of the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general development sectors to women. The Ninth plan introduced the Women's Component Plan to ensure that 30% of funds/ benefits under various welfare and developmental scheme were to be earmarked for women.

The Tenth Plan reaffirms the major strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all sectoral policies, programmes and plans of action. Women specific interventions will be undertaken to bridge existing gaps.

State Human Development Reports (HDRs) have emerged as a powerful tool for advocacy for gender justice since their inception in 1995. Gender mainstreaming of the HDRs has been done both in the form of specific chapters on gender as also highlighting gender concerns in the sectoral analysis of education, health, livelihoods and governance. The ownership of the State HDRs rests with the State Governments and the exercise is supported by the Planning Commission, Government of India and through the Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC), UNDP.

5.6.5. Gender Budgeting:

Gender responsive budgeting or gender analysis of budgets is a very useful tool being used in India to promote gender mainstreaming. It refers to presentation of budgetary data in a manner such that the gender sensitivities of budgetary data in a manner such that the gender sensitivities of budgetary allocations on the overall socio – economic status of women in the country. The Tenth Plan states that ‘the Tenth Plan will continue the process of dissecting the Government budget to establish its gender differentiated impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments...’ The Tenth Plan will initiate immediate action in tying up these two effective concepts of Women’s Component Plan and Gender Budgeting to play a complementary role to each other, and thus ensure both preventive and post facto action in enabling women to receive their rightful share.

At a national level, a task force was set up in 2000-01 to examine this issue. On its recommendation, a sub – group was set up to suggest a framework for introduction of gender budgeting in the Government.

While initial gender budgeting efforts were limited to education, health, nutrition, access to resources and public services, etc. the Department of Women and child has recently (2004) prepared checklists to assist all departments in gender budget exercises and in using these to develop a gender perspective in planning. The sub - group has

recommended that Gender Budgeting Units be set up in identified departments, as well as an Interdepartmental Steering Committee to identify issues for gender budgeting that cut across departments, budgetary allocations related to domestic violence, micro – finance, homelessness, etc. These check lists are not only for the conventional social sector Ministries and Departments but also seek to involve so called gender neutral Departments but also seek to involve so called gender neutral Departments like Transport, power, Home, etc.

Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) took the lead in partnership with UNIFEM to initiate gender mainstreaming in macro fiscal policy frameworks by initiating a two year process of gender budgeting within the Government of India. In partnership with the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), Ministry of Finance, the Department supported a study on ‘Gender Budgeting in India’. The study analysed the existing degree of gender inequality in economic policy issues and identified policy alternatives to build in a gender sensitive national and state level budgeting processes. For the first time, gender as a category was included in the National Economic Survey in 2001 – 02 and 2002 – 03.

5.6.6. Gender Sensitisation:

DWCD initiated a series of meetings with the representatives of line Ministries and concerned organizations for scaling up gender sensitization and development of standard parameters for training in the areas of ‘Gender and Police’, ‘Gender and Administration’, and ‘Gender and Judiciary’.

If the entire gamut of policy formulation and planning for women’s development in India have been reviewed, one thing strikes most sorely is the lack of much effort in planning or policy formulation and proper implementation for women in the states. There is almost no conceptualization about the needs of women and what should be done to give them a bigger share of development. A few states have made schemes for women’s development, but they are extremely inadequate and do not meet the needs of the women. The state of West Bengal is not different from this. There is a gap between policy formulation and its implementation due to lack of interest and willingness. So the benefits

of the policies are not percolated down to the marginalized women of Jelepara. In a Federal State, unless the state governments fully realize their responsibility for making a herculean effort to raise the status of women, it will be difficult to achieve universal success. In these processes, grassroots level organizations have to be involved to a much greater extent through the political process⁷⁵. This is applicable for Jelepara also.

5.7. Development Plan and Welfare Schemes for Fisher Folk in West Bengal:

The contribution of fisheries sector in West Bengal towards state domestic product is 2.44% (2012-13) which is 2nd in the state after agriculture. The state contributes about 16.5% of fish production, 23.4% of inland fish production and 40% of fish seed production of the country. The fish production has increased from 2.73lakh tons in 1982-83 to above 14.90 lakh tons during the year 2012-13, which has been increased as 16.17 lakh tons in the year 2014-15(Hand book of fisheries statistics, 2014-15). In export arena also achievement is not less significant. In the year 1983-84, amount of foreign exchange earned through export of sea fish food products was only rupees 44.12 cr where as at the end of 2012-13 the figure has been estimated at Rs 1825.12 cr meaning there by more than 42 time increase within a span of only 30 years. Due to the large yield gap and increasing demand, there is adequate scope of development in this sector. Different disciplines and directions are involved in boosting up fisheries in allied activities as well as development of rural and urban economy and to motivate the fisher folks of the state and create more employment generation. The Department of Fisheries, Govt. of West Bengal with its following 5 functional organizations, is making all efforts for increasing fish production by exploiting potential resources including rivers, beels, canals, tanks, reservoirs, hill-streams, estuaries, sewage – fed water bodies and brackish water – areas.

- The Directories of Fisheries
- The West Bengal Fisheries Corporation (WBFC)
- The State Fisheries Development Corporation (SFDC)
- The West Bengal State Fishermen's Co operative Federation Ltd (BENFISH)

⁷⁵.Seth, Mira (2001), *Women and Development The Indian Experience*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 66 - 67.

- Fisheries Data Mapping Centre

5.7.1. Important Welfare schemes of the Department of Fisheries:

- i) **Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture** -Subsidy disbursed for inland fisheries: 933.71 ha, Jhora Fishery 83 units and other 4 schemes are under progress with financial achievement of Rs. 253.33 lakh during financial year 2012-13.
- ii) **Development of Social Fisheries (Minikit distribution)** - To supplement stock as well as to restore the breeding ground of indigenous carps and endangered fish species in natural water bodies; 9 lakh of fingerlings were released in 500 water bodies with financial involvement of Rs. 58 lakh during the financial year 2014-15.
- iii) **Setting up Demonstration Centres**- To increase fish production by adopting intensive fish culture method and to disseminate the technology among the farmers 14 nos of Demonstrations Centres have been completed in different districts with a production of 6 – 8tons/hectare. Setting up of 45 nos of DCs is being implemented during the financial year 2012-13. Fisher folk of Jelepara are not included in this programme as it is considered as urban slum and these programmes are for rural fisher folk.
- iv) **Economic Upliftment of Tribal People**- Renovation of water bodies with infrastructural facilities and composite fish culture are being executed in the tribal areas of different districts. So far 326 nos of beneficiaries covered with financial achievement of Rs. 87.12 lakh during financial year 2012-13.
- v) **Replenishment and propagation of the indigenous local fish species through stocking of beels** - An amount of Rs. 12.72 lakh has been sanctioned during the financial year 2012-13 to implement the scheme in 212 units are being implemented⁷⁶.
- vi) **Rastriya Krishi Vikash Yojana (RKVY)**- To increase annual growth rate in fisheries sector following achievements have been made under RKVY schemes:

⁷⁶Annual Report, 2012- 13,Dept of Fisheries, Aquaculture, Aquatic Resources and Fishing Harbours, GOWB, 13.

Culture of indigenous fish and IMC ⁷⁷ in backyard ponds and ponds excavated under MGNREGA ⁷⁸ in 2012-13, 941 units of water bodies are brought under culture [backyard :370 units (Rs 111.10 lakh), MGNREGA: 571 units (Rs 57.10 lakh)];

Distribution of fingerlings under seed mahotsav⁷⁹: in 2012-13; 200 units (Rs 100.00 lakh) have been covered;

To maintain quality of fish; hygienic insulated box have been distributed to 6710 (Rs 201.30 lakh) nos of fish vendors in 2012-13;

To analysis soil and water of ponds of farmers in block; construction and commissioning of block level laboratory cum training centre in 21 blocks was taken up in 2012-13;

Upgradation of 3 Departmental Training Centres (Namkhana, Junput and Barasagar Dighi) in the year 2012-13 (Rs 42.00 lakh) took place;

Development of 3 Departmental Farms (Junput, Barasagar Dighi and Kalyani) as in 2014-15 (Rs 60.00 lakh) was taken up in 2012-13. Government Fish Technological Station, Junput consisting 40.70 hectares water area, Barosagar Dighi fish farm, Malda consisting 80.20 hectares water area and Kalyani Fish Farm consisting 47.112 hectares water area;

Hilsa conservation programme was taken up in the year 2012-13 (Rs 10.00 lakh).

- vii) **FFDA programmes for Inland Fisheries**- Fish Farmers Development Agency have been taken up with the assistance of Government of India since 1981-82. FFDA schemes have been implemented in all the twenty districts of the state to increase the production and productivity of Inland Fisheries. Till 2014-15, 129413 hectare of water area has been covered in the state. The average productivity in inland has been

⁷⁷ Indian Major Carp- the major Indian carps include Catla catla, an economically important South Asian fresh water fish, Cirrhinus Cirrhosus, the Mrigal carp, a ray-finned fish of the carp family native to rivers in India and Labeo Rohita, the Rohu(Rui), a fish of the carp family found in the rivers of South Asia.

⁷⁸ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – MGNREGA targeting rural household adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work of 100 days wage employment in a financial year to enhancing the livelihood security.

⁷⁹ Distribution of fish seeds among fisher folk by the department of fisheries, West Bengal.

increased from 600-800kg / hectare /annum in the year 1981-82 to 4000-4700 kg/hectare/annum by 2014-2015. But the fisher folk of Jelepara are not getting any benefits of this programme.

- viii) **Short Term Credit Programme** – STCP was introduced in the year 2004-05 by the Department of Fisheries in West Bengal. Under this programme 2631.90 hectare area of sanctioned water was involved in STCP, 3606 number of cases were enrolled, Rs.1069.55 lakhs involved in STCP as Bank Loan, 1535 number of beneficiaries were enlisted and Rs. 684.75 lakh was disbursed under STCP as Bank Loan to fisher folk.

Whereas, in the year of 2014-15, the sanctioned area of water under STCP was 400.01 hectare, 1441 number of cases was enrolled, Rs 7697.59 lakh was involved in STCP as Bank Loan and the number of beneficiaries was 1417 but the final disbursal amount has not been officially declared by the department till now. The fruits of this programme are not reachable for the fisher folk of Jelepara.

- ix) **Employment Generation under Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA) Schemes** – The rural economy of West Bengal depends mainly on Agriculture and allied activities such as fishery. The fishery department plays a significant role in this regard. It aims not only towards increased fish seed production but creates employment generation too. There were 886931 number of people was benefited under the said schemes in the year 2011-12 except the fisher folks from Hooghly and Malda districts. In the year 2012-13, 892385 numbers of people were employed under the FFDA scheme including Malda district but Hooghly district was not included. In the year 2013-14, 1174596 numbers of people were benefited under the scheme except Malda and Hooghly districts. Whereas, in the year of 2014-15, the total number of beneficiaries was 885839 including Malda, and Hooghly districts has also been included with the number of 3005 people as beneficiaries⁸⁰. But the fisher folk of Jelepara are not included in this employment generation programme.
- x) **Training of Fishermen-** To transfer the scientific pisciculture methodology among the fish farmers, block, district and state level training programmes are being

⁸⁰The Handbook of Fisheries Statistics, 2014-15, Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, 32-33.

implemented. In the year 2012-13 training programme for 7680 fish farmers and 180 FFA⁸¹ are being implemented. There are 4 different bodies for fish farmers training like State Plan, National Fisheries Development Board, Tribal Sub Plan and Marine Plan. In the year of 2014-15, 14382 number of people benefited under these organisations. There are total 261 number of Block Level Fishery Laboratory and Training Centre in West Bengal as per Handbook of Fisheries Statistics, 2014-15⁸². It has been revealed that urban bodies are not included in these training programmes included Jelepara, as Jelepara is also an urban slum and thus the people of Jelepara are marginalised.

- xi) **Co – Operative Societies for Fisher Folk** – To bring the large water bodies such as ox-bow lakes, beels, baors etc, the state has encouraged 3-tier co-operative societies.
 - i) APEX society (BENFISH) as state level. ii) CFC (Community Fishery Centres) at District level and iii) PFCS (Primary Fishermen Co-opt. Societies) at primary level. Total number of primary fishermen co- operative societies as on 31.03.2015 is 906. There are total 35 numbers of PFCS in the districts of Hooghly & 1 CFC. 2115 number of members is enrolled in these co-operative societies. Total 202 hectares water area is affected under these co-operative societies as on 31.03.2015 according to the Handbook of Fisheries Statistics 2014-15⁸³. The fisher folk of Jelepara are not connected with any co –operative society.
- xii) **River Ranching Programme**- A unique River Ranching programme, in the country was launched during 92-93 in West Bengal. Selected stretches of the River Bhagirathi and its tributaries are ranched by liberating 20 lakh fingerlings every year. This has helped in restoring breeding ground for indigenous carp and boost up in production in beel and reservoir fisheries. Encouraging results have been observed spawns and table fish are seen in increasing number in Bhagirathi and her tributaries and other selected beels. In 2006 – 2007, 13 lakh fingerlings stocked in different water bodies whereas in the year 2014 – 15, 562.25 lakh fingerlings stocked in the

⁸¹ FFA is a regional advisory body of FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture. Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) providing support to its members for the conservation and management of living marine resources.

⁸² The Handbook of Fisheries Statistics, 2014-15, Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, 32-33.

⁸³ Ibid, 91.

water bodies according to the Handbook of Fisheries, 2014-15⁸⁴. But due to the overfishing and receding of the river, fisher folks of Jelepara are not getting the benefits.

- xiii) **Housing Scheme** - Apart from the production oriented schemes, State Government decided to implement large number of welfare programmes for the fisher community. Fisheries Department started providing housing facilities to 50 poor fishermen families through state budget. 17985 houses have been constructed under Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) (Later termed Indira Awas Yojna). Development of model villages for fishermen and tribal people under the Centrally Sponsored National Welfare Fund schemes was initiated and later another housing scheme namely 'Geetanjali' as has been introduced in the year 2011-12. Number of 33638 houses has been provided to needy fishermen so far. In the district of Hooghly, 444 fisher folk families availed the housing facilities. Whereas in the case of East Midnapore the figure is 2042 according to the Handbook of fisheries Statistics, 2014-15⁸⁵. But the inhabitants of Jelepara are excluded from this programme.
- xiv) **Pension Scheme**- Old age pension scheme was started in the year 1991-92 to extend help to old and infirm fishermen. At present pension of @ Rs. 1000/month /person is provided under this scheme. In 2014 – 2015, 8500 number of old fishermen achieved pension under the scheme. In which 365 persons are from the district of Hooghly. But the fisher folk of Jelepara are not included in the scheme.
- xv) **Personal Accident Insurance**- Fishermen group personal accident insurance for active fishermen scheme was started in the year 1984-85. The families of fishermen are issued for a sum Rs 1 lakh for the death or permanent disablement and Rs 50000/- for partial disablement due to accident. The premium is Rs 28/- only /annum /head on 50:50 share basis by State and Central Government. There were 1250000 fisher folk families who received personal accident insurance benefits under the scheme. It has been revealed through the study that fisher folk of Jelepara are excluded from this scheme.

⁸⁴Ibid,77.

⁸⁵Ibid,78.

xvi) **Issuance of Identity Card**- From the year 1991-92, identity cards are being issued to fishermen. During 2014-15, 46913 numbers of identity cards have been issued to the fishermen in which 887 fishermen are from Hooghly District.

xvii) **Self Employment and Skill Development Programme** – Total Target of this scheme were 24517 people in the year 2014 – 15, whereas, 33165 numbers of people were benefitted in the year. But in the case of district of Hooghly, 1512 number of people was targeted and 1051 number of people achieved the target. There are only 57 Self Help Groups sponsored by the Department of Fisheries in Hooghly District out of 14799 in the overall West Bengal.

Despite all these developmental efforts, Jelepara is still excluded because of the location and the communication gap between the Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal and the Hooghly- Chinsurah Municipality, under which Jelepara is located. Women fisher folk of West Bengal in general and of Jelepara in Particular are excluded from these schemes and programmes.

In India, Bengal occupies the topmost position in contributing to inland fish production and for this purpose the state has been offered the national productivity award for consecutive nine years. Despite increasing importance of inland fishery, several fishery co –operatives/ groups are beset with untoward socio- cultural and economic features⁸⁶.

5.7.2. Hilsa Conservation as Sustainable Livelihood Management:

Hilsa Conservation and Research Centre is an important initiative by the Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, for management interventions towards sustainable Hilsa fishery with an ecosystem approach in the state.

Hilsa (*Tenualosa ilisha*), better known as '*Ilish*' is an aquatic resource, that has migratory habits and trans-boundary distribution. It is significant component of open –water capture fishery in the state contributing to about 19% of total fish landing in Hooghly-

⁸⁶Rahim, K.M.B. and M. Padhy, 1994, 'Scope and Constraints of inland Pisciculture in West Bengal: A Case Study of Birbhum Districts', 141-158, in S. Giriappa (ed.), *Role of Fisheries in Rural Development*, Delhi, Daya Publishing House.

Matla estuarine system and represents one of the most lucrative commercial fisheries of a single species. Over the years, due to wanton exploitation, pollution and habitat destruction there has been an alarming decline in the availability of Hilsa both in sea and rivers.

In West Bengal, upstream migration of brooders generally takes place with the approach of first shower during monsoon i.e., from July and the migration continues up to October–November. Another smaller batch of migration is reported to occur during January–February. The spawns grow in the upstream waters up to 80 - 110 mm in about four to six months and then migrates downstream (February to June) to sea for further growth and maturity. In course of its upstream and downstream migration, it is caught in abundance by bag nets, seine nets, drift and fixed gill nets.

In the recent times, it has been reported by various workers that there has been a marked reduction in the mean catch size as well as the maturity size of Hilsa. There is a reported trend of Hilsa keeping mostly to the sea showing decline in production trend due to manmade reasons. The unrestricted increase of mechanized fishing boats, use of bag nets/gill nets with small mesh size is destroying the natural cycle of recruitment of the fish.

The fluctuation and gradual decline in the availability of Hilsa is a major concern in West Bengal because there are more than 26000 Hilsa fishers who are primarily dependent on this sector. It's predicted that in the near future the abundance of Hilsa will go down further leading to disruption of this fishery.

5.7.2.1. Initiatives by the Department of Fisheries for Hilsa Conservation:

The declining trend of Hilsa fishery over the past decade has been a major concern both at the national and state level. Presently to salvage the situation the Fisheries Department, Government of West Bengal has undertaken a number of measures to bring to halt the southward trend of Hilsa Fishery. On the administrative side a number of

Amendments in west Bengal Marine Fisheries regulation Act 1993⁸⁷, have been brought about. The salient amendments are -

- A) Protection/ Conservation of juveniles – Ban on:**
 - i) Catching, Marketing, Transportation and Processing juveniles less than 23 cms.
 - ii) Use of monofilament gill nets having less than 90 mm mesh size.
 - iii) Putting up Bag nets, scoop Nets and small meshed Gill Nets along the migratory route during February to April each year.
- B) Facilitating spawning – Ban on: Catching 5 days pre and post full moon during peak breeding period 15th September to 24th October every year.**
- C) Protection of Habitat – Ban on: Bottom trawling, with in 12 nautical miles of the continental shelf.**
- D) Declaration of Hilsa Sanctuaries along Bhagirathi / Hooghly river in the following locations:**
 - i) Lalbag to Farakka (Murshidabad)
 - ii) Katwa to Hooghly Ghat (Burdwan/Hooghly) (Hooghly Ghat is the nearby Ghat of the study area Jelepara).
 - iii) Diamond Harbour to Nischintapur-Godakhali (south 24 Paraganas)
 - iv) 5 sq. Kms around sand bars near Matla, Thakuran, roymangal in Sunderbans and 5 sq kms within Farakka barrage.
- E) Regulations imposed in Sanctuaries – Ban on Fishing during –June to August & October to December and complete ban on fishing within 5 sq kms of Farakka barrage round the year. The Government realizes that mere imposition of ban without any alternate livelihood options would not hold well. Therefore, the issue of alternate livelihood has been taken up with proposal for funding. Various alternatives can be considered like poultry, duckery, apiary, grosser’s shop, tricycle vans etc. However a detailed sketch can only be made on getting the total number of Hilsa fishers and their local resource based preferences.**

Sustainable livelihood framework seeks to ensue both livelihood and environment security. This involves 1) a suite of asset the community possess 2) the dynamics that

⁸⁷Gazette Notification No 718 & 719.

determine the communities' access to these assets and 3) the activities dealing with and without natural resources. Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Approach has its base on the differential capability of families to cope with crisis and partly from necessity for sustainability of ecosystem.

Livelihood security is assessed in terms of income stability, income level, seasonality and degrees of risks. Resilience and sensitivity are the attributes that define the health of livelihood. A general premise of sustainable livelihood is to identify ‘what the poor have’ rather than “what they lack” and strengthen peoples’ own innovative models.

5.7.3. Programmes for development of Fisher Folk by the Department of Fisheries, West Bengal:

The following are the future programs envisaged for further development:

- a) **Water Quality Map:** Improvement in fish production is dependent on water quality, viz. dissolved oxygen content in the water, chlorophyll content in the water, water turbidity, water depth etc. The department is planning to estimate these parameters through multispectral satellite image.
- b) **Fishery Infrastructure GIS database:** Establishing new fishery infrastructure like fishing harbors, fish landing centres, fish markets, link roads, hatcheries, fish – feed plants, ice – plants, fishery offices and units with facilities for database creation of the existing fishery infrastructure are important for development of fish production and distribution in the state. Establishing new fishery infrastructure requires overall distribution pattern of fish production areas and suitable site selection for fishing harbors, landing centers and distribution centers. This could be possible only through activating GIS database and Mapping with associated attributes. Some of the existing fishing harbors have already been mapped with associated attributes.
- c) **People Participatory Program (PPP):** PPP is an accepted method for sustainable development of any venture. The purpose of PPP is to develop through pilot projects an operational method for participation of local fishermen in fish production and fish storage and distribution. It is also aimed at assisting the

local fishermen to organize themselves into self – help groups and co –operatives in order to engage in income raising activities with the access of existing fishing ponds and fishery infrastructure. The digital maps of water bodies will be the basic requirements to develop this to generate rural employment generating opportunities creating thereby the scope for uplifting rural economy.

- d) **Watershed Mapping:** In the drought prone areas of Bankura, Purulia and West Midnapore districts a considerable volume of rain water is wasted as surface run – off. This water if harnessed by small check dams can be used for pisciculture, cultivation and domestic use in the lean season. Thus watershed⁸⁸ development plays an important role in uplifting the rural economy, increasing fish production, agricultural production, afforestation, water, and soil and land management in drought prone areas.

The limitation of this Programme is to identify the real fisher folk belong to fishing communities instead of the people who catch fish for business purpose. The situation is more pathetic in the study field. After having the identification as reserved fishing sanctuary in Hooghly Ghat, which is adjourned with the study area, lot of people apart from fishing communities involve in Hilsa fishing for monetary gain. Therefore the actual fishermen are not getting good catch in the Hilsa season as well. Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, took initiatives for identifying the people from non fishing communities but failed to identify the persons completely because the banned fishing sanctuary is under the Hooghly Chinsurah Municipality whereas the Department of Fisheries works for the blocks only. Alternative Livelihood Measures are not sufficient enough for their day to day lives. After banning to catch small fish they are suffering a lot, specially the people of Jelepara.

⁸⁸ Watershed is defined as the land that contributes water to a given site. It refers to the area from where the water to a particular drainage system, like a river or stream, comes from.

5.8. Increasing Capabilities and Reducing Vulnerabilities through Capability Approach:

As Amartya Sen, mentioned in his five instrumental⁸⁹ freedoms that, if present, and if women have access to them, will provide opportunities for women to act in their own self interest and reduce their vulnerability.⁹⁰ A success story from the field also proves the power of these instrumental freedoms.

Case Study 2

Anima Mondal of Jelepara, working as a 'help' in 7 households, helping her husband in fishing related tasks. Her husband Nakul Mondal is a fish seller. Anima is helping her husband by financing him for buying fish. By working a lot she educates her two sons. Her elder son is doing masters now. Sometimes she has to take Loan for helping her husband and repay this. She has a bank account in Allahabad Bank. Now she has a pucca house and she is willing to furnish it properly.

This true story of Anima really inspires other women who are struggling a lot for meeting their both ends. Anima got the opportunity for flourishing her wishes as Amartya Sen explains in his theory that if a woman gets opportunity then she can go ahead. So every women of our society should get the opportunity for development, for freedom.

5.9. Conclusion:

India has been a pioneer in Asia and elsewhere in efforts to enhance the social and economic role of women in fishery communities. As in other fields India has made tremendous progress in fishery development as well as in rural finance associated with it over the last decade. But it is to be noted that in India about 70% of the population are vegetarian while in contrast in West Bengal state almost 100% people are fish eaters and approximately 12 lakhs are engaged in fishing activity. But still women's role in other fishing communities in general and in Jelepara in particular, are not recognised. Despite of all developmental efforts, the condition of women in Jelepara is still marginalized. The

⁸⁹Political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.

⁹⁰Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Anchor Books, New York, 191-2.

gap between the policy and its implementation is widening. There is a need to bridge the gap between these two poles which are block level fishing communities and municipal level fishing communities.

The benefits of these developmental schemes have not been percolated down to the needy citizens of the country. Women are an integral and inalienable part of the society, constituting about half of the total population of the world. The all around development and harmonious growth of a nation would be possible only when women are given their desired place and position in the society and are treated as equal partners of progress with men. The plans and programmes pertaining to women are not charity of an investment in the country's future with high rates of return. Confinement and subjugation of women to routine household work and the denial of productive skills and decision making will do irreparable damage to the nation. It will make the nation weak and insecure, encourage internal domination and exploitation by caste, class and gender, external domination and exploitation.

On the other hand, empowerment of women contributes to social development. Economic progress in any country whether developed or under developed, could be achieved through social development. Empowerment is a process, which generates changes in ideas and perceptions and creates awareness about one's rights and opportunities for self - development in all important spheres of life. It enables individuals and groups to change the balance of power by way of knowledge, know- how and experience to strengthen one's capacity and confidence. It creates circumstances and conditions in which people can make use of their potentialities and abilities up to the maximum level in furtherance of some common objectives. Of all these facets of women's development, their economic independence or economic empowerment occupies an area of utmost significance for a lasting and sustainable development of the society. Women, in direct or indirect association with men folk, contribute a great deal to the growth of Indian economy⁹¹. As Naila Kabeer⁹² mentioned that empowerment is not the power over, it is the power which

⁹¹Nune, Subba Rao, 2008, 'Role of Aquaculture in Poverty Reduction and Empowerment of Women in India Through the Medium of Self – Help Groups', *IIFET 2008 Vietnam Proceedings*, 2.

⁹²Kabeer, Naila (1994), *Reversed Realities, Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*, London.

comes from within. It is the concept of power within. Women of Jelepara should also realize the power which is within them.

Awareness, Dialogue and Action are three actions to be taken for sustainable future. Each recommendation is accompanied by specific actions that articulate the necessary partnerships and activities needed for implementation at local, state and national levels. Awareness is the tool by which women of the marginalised section of the society like fishing community can be empowered by knowing the duties and rights towards the community for sustainability. Dialogue is the process by which they can share their pros and cons with the rest of the society and the outcomes of Awareness and Dialogues would come out as Actions. By which Sustainable Development can be possible. Thus, women's education, especially women of fishing communities, because they are directly connected to the nature, is the only weapon which can be used for Sustainable Development.