

Empowerment of socially disadvantaged

10.80 Socially disadvantaged groups viz. the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and the Minorities, continue to lag behind the rest of the society. They constitute a sizable proportion of the country's population with the SCs (179.7 million) accounting for 17.5 per cent and Minorities (188.9 million) representing 18.4 per cent of the population in 2001 (projected in the absence of Census data). The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal agency which implements the programs for ensuring social justice and empowerment to these groups. The Ministry also undertakes programs for persons with disabilities, victims of alcoholism and drug abuse, children in need of care and protection and welfare of the aged.

10.81 The Tenth Plan, focuses on goals to achieve social empowerment, economic empowerment and social justice, for the socially disadvantaged group, with an ultimate aim to fulfill the Constitutional commitment of raising their status on par with the rest of the society. For the Tenth Plan an allocation of Rs.6,526 crore has been made for this purpose. As against an allocation of Rs.1,049 crore (comprising Rs. 470 crore for Central Scheme and Rs.579 crore for Centrally Sponsored Scheme) under Plan schemes in 2002-03 (BE), an allocation of Rs.1, 023 crore (comprising Rs. 508 crore for Central Scheme and Rs.515 crore for Centrally Sponsored Scheme) has been provided for the welfare of SCs, OBCs and Minorities.

Scheduled Castes

10.82 Special Central Assistance (SCA) for the Special Component Plan is a major scheme for the welfare and development of the SCs. Under the scheme, 100 per cent Central Assistance is extended to supplement the efforts of the States/UTs for ensuring rapid socio-economic development among SCs, especially those living below the poverty line. During 2003-04, an allocation of Rs.377 crore was made under this scheme and Rs.384 crore, benefiting 25 lakh persons was utilized up to March 2004.

10.83 As education is the prime requirement for the social empowerment of SCs, efforts are being made to arrest the school dropout rates and improve enrolment and retention rates through provision of incentives viz. scholarships, hostel facilities and other educational aids and support. Under the Centrally Sponsored scheme of Post Matric Scholarships (PMS) to SC students, allowances were enhanced and the income ceiling was revised to cover more number of students. By March 2004, Rs. 265 crore, benefiting 38 lakh SC students, had been released under PMS. The Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarships for children of families engaged in unclean occupation is being implemented with the objective to promote education and wean these children away from these occupations. During 2003-04, Rs. 14.6 crore was released to benefit 5.27 lakh students. The rate of scholarships for day-scholars and hostellers, and ad hoc grants to the students at the beginning of the academic year, have also been revised during 2003-04. To reduce the high school drop out rates and increase retention rates amongst the SCs, OBCs and Minorities, a major support service in the form of hostel facilities have been provided to boys and girls belonging to these groups. Construction of as many of 339 SC Boys/Girls Hostels were taken up during 2003-04, for which an amount of Rs.55.75 crore has been released.

10.84 For economic development of disadvantaged groups through income generating schemes, four special financial institutions have been set-up: i) National Schedule Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSCFDC), ii) National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC), iii) National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and iv) National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC). As per the decision of the Core Committee on Zero Based Budget Exercise in the Planning Commission, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment was advised to undertake a quick evaluation of the functioning of these Corporations and take

necessary remedial measures to improve their functioning as self-sustaining and independent supporting mechanisms. The Ministry has conducted evaluation of these Corporations (NSCFDC by Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad and NSKFDC by Institute of Social Science, New Delhi). The findings and recommendations of these studies will be made use of in bringing forth revisions in the functioning of these corporations.

10.85 There are about 6.76 lakh scavengers in the country. Under the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers, Rs.40 crore has been allocated. Up to 2001-02, 18,000 scavengers were trained and 4,08,644 were rehabilitated. Towards accomplishing the national commitment for complete eradication of manual scavenging, a draft national Plan of Action for total eradication of manual scavenging by 2007 has been prepared.

Backward Classes

10.86 Out of a total allocation of Rs.62 crore for the year 2003-04, Rs.61 crore was released in 2003-04, to the State Governments under various schemes for welfare of the backward classes. Towards socio-economic development of OBCs, the NBFDC has launched a scheme "New Swarnima" for women belonging to backward classes living below the poverty line. The Ministry provides central assistance to State Governments/UT Administrations for educational development of OBCs. The NBFDC have launched a new scheme "Swayam Saksham Scheme" for economic development of OBCs in 2003-04.

Minorities

10.87 Allocation of Rs.48 crore for 2003-04 was made for welfare and development activities of minorities. This includes Rs.30 crore for the scheme of Maulana Azad Education Foundation. A significant proportion of the minority communities are engaged in traditional arts and crafts like handlooms, handicrafts, glass works, metal works: priority has been given for up-gradation of the technical know-how of these trades. NMDFC has been

extending financial assistance and other technical support to minority entrepreneurs.

10.88 According to some studies carried out by National Council for Applied Economic Research, the Neo-Buddhists are the most poverty stricken group and Muslims come next compared to the all-India average. The work participation rate amongst Muslim women is 10 per cent compared to the all India average of 18 per cent. A scheme "Mahila Samridhi Yojana" for providing micro-financing for training to women belonging to the minority communities in tailoring, knitting, embroidery and allied trades has been launched by the NMDFC. The Corporation has also introduced a scheme for providing educational loans up to Rs.75,000 at concessional rates to students for pursuing job oriented, professional and technical courses.

Scheduled Tribes

10.89 The population of Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the country was estimated at 88.8 million in 2001, representing 8.6 per cent of the country's total population. Against an expenditure of Rs.1,006 crore during 2002-03, Rs.1,087 crore was made available for various schemes/programs during Annual Plan 2003-04. An amount of Rs.497 crore was provided under the scheme of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) focusing on income generating activities in the tribal areas and creating critical infrastructure incidental thereto. During 2003-04, guidelines for funding under SCA to TSP were revised with a view to meet the changing needs of the tribals and to extend financial benefits to not only individual beneficiaries who are Below Poverty Line (BPL) but also to SHGs especially focusing tribal women. Besides this, grant-in-aid was also being provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution to the States not only towards raising the level of administration in the Scheduled Areas at par with the rest of the States but also to take special projects for the welfare and development of STs. An amount of Rs.300 crore was made available in 2003-04, which was revised to Rs. 253 crore at the RE stage

and released during 2003-04.

10.90 The Annual Plan (2003-04) emphasized social empowerment of STs through the support of educational and hostel schemes for improving the enrolment ratio as well as retention of ST students. These schemes include Post-Matric Scholarship, Hostels for ST girls and boys, and Ashram school. Under PMS, Book-Banks and Up-gradation of Merit of ST Students, 100 per cent central assistance is provided to the States/UTs over and above their committed liabilities. Total outlay for the scheme during 2003-04 was Rs.56.5 crore. A sum of Rs. 66 crore was, however, released under this scheme during 2003-04, which included Rs. 16 crore released from North East pool.

10.91 The scheme of Village Grain Bank is under implementation since 1996-97 with an aim to prevent starvation deaths of STs in general and children in particular in remote and backward areas. This scheme provides grain banks in the village itself, operated by a managing committee of members. Since inception, 1,483 banks have been set up so far. Against Rs. 1.5 crore at RE stage, an amount of Rs. 1.1 crore was released under the scheme during 2003-04. The Grain Bank Scheme is under consideration for revision with a view to cover large areas and for effective implementation. The allocation under the scheme is Rs. 32.5 crore for 2004-05 to set up 3,648 Village Grain Banks. The Annual Plan 2003-04 laid emphasis on expansion of the programs of special nutrition program through ICDS, Mid-day Meal Scheme and Targeted Public Distribution System.

10.92 For ensuring remunerative price for tribal produce, marketing and employment opportunities and towards preventing exploitation of STs by the middle men, the Ministry provides 100 per cent grant in-aid to State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (STDCC), Forest Development Corporation (FDC), Minor Forest produce (Trading and Development) Federation (MFTDF) for Minor Forest produce (MFLP) operations. Allocation under Tribal Co-operative marketing Development Federation

of India Ltd. (TRIFED) during 2002-03 was Rs. 6 crore against which Rs.6 crore was released, and allocation for 2003-04 was also Rs. 6 crore. An amount of Rs.15 crore was disbursed to TDCs/FDCs, MFTDFs during 2002-03, against an amount of Rs.14 crore and Rs.18 crore was allocated in Annual Plan 2003-04, which was brought down to Rs. 4.5 crore at the RE stage. An amount of Rs. 4.5 crore was accordingly released during 2003-04.

10.93 A Commission under Article 339 of the Constitution of India has been appointed to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the STs. Since the needs of the ST population are quite distinct due to their special characteristics, a National Scheduled Tribes Commission has been set up by bifurcating the erstwhile joint National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

10.94 In April 2001, in order to give focused attention to STs, National Scheduled Caste and Tribes Finance Development Corporation was bifurcated and an exclusive Corporation for STs, namely, the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) was incorporated. The Corporation has an authorized share capital of Rs.500 crore. Rs.37.5 crore was provided during 2003-04 as Central Assistance towards share capital of the NSTFDC and the State Tribal Development Corporations (STDC). An exclusive scheme for women – 'Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana', was launched to promote economic development amongst the tribal women in a more focused manner. Under the scheme, the NSTFDC provides term loan through the State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) for the schemes/projects costing up to Rs.50,000 per unit at a concessional interest rate of 4 per cent.

10.95 The Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955 and the SC and ST Prevention of Atrocities (POA) Act 1989 are the two important legal instruments to prevent and curb social discrimination and atrocities committed against STs and SCs. This is a common scheme for SCs and STs and is

implemented through the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. Voluntary Organisation (VOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are playing a vital role in the socio-economic development of tribals including primitive tribal groups, especially living in difficult and unreachable terrains. A new Central Sector Scheme titled "Exchange of visits by tribal" was launched for providing wider exposure and experience sharing to the tribal by visits to the more developed areas of the country. Under this scheme, Scheduled Tribe Members can visit another State for a period of 10-12 days, thereby enhancing exposure of the tribal population to more advanced and developed areas of the country, and enabling them to reap the benefits of sharing of experiences during such visits.

Welfare of Physically/Mentally Challenged

10.96 An outlay of Rs.274 crore (BE) was provided for the Social Welfare Sector in the Annual Plan (2003-04) under the Central Sector consisting of Rs.198 crore for the implementation of the policies programmes and schemes for the Disabled and Rs.86 for Social Defence and other disadvantaged group. An expenditure of Rs.248 crore has been incurred in 2003-04.

10.97 Over 130 districts have been identified for providing comprehensive rehabilitation services at the doorsteps of disabled persons. One hundred and seven District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs) have started functioning. The Expert Committee on Social Welfare has identified 120 jobs at the supervisory, executive and managerial levels and 945 jobs at the level of skilled/semi-skilled suitable for persons with disabilities, in the private sector. Five Composite Regional Centres (CRCs) at Bhopal, Guwahati, Lucknow, Srinagar and Sundernagar, to expand facilities for manpower development and ensuring availability of rehabilitation services for all categories of persons with disabilities have been set up. Four Regional Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs) at Bareilly, Cuttack, Jabalpur, and Mohali, have been set up to provide services to persons with spinal

injuries.

10.98 For assisting disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured aids and appliances, financial assistance is being provided to the various agencies such as NGOs, National Institutes (NIs), Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO) under a scheme called 'Assistance to persons with Disabilities for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)'. In 2003-04, 152 implementing agencies were assisted for this purpose with an anticipated expenditure of Rs.55 crore. Another scheme being implemented is Science & Technology Project for application of technology in development and utilization of suitable and cost effective aids and appliances such as functional mechanical hand, inter-pointing Braille slate, Braille micrometer, training module for prevention and early detection of childhood disabilities, electronic guide cane, low cost STD/PCO speech card, software for mentally challenged children for learning and teaching and motorized wheel chair.

10.99 The National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation (NHFDC) provides concessional loans to the disabled with an annual income of less than Rs.1 lakh per annum in the urban areas and Rs.80,000 per annum in the rural areas for undertaking income generation activities. Under its micro-financing scheme, the Corporation has also assisted individual beneficiaries as well as the SHGs. The Voluntary Sector has traditionally played an important role in delivering community-based services to the disabled. The scheme 'Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disability' has been supported to widen its operations like providing legal aid, recreation, research etc. and to introduce new innovative components in their services. In 2003-04, an amount of Rs.71.50 crore was released to 657 organizations for implementing various schemes.

10.100 The rehabilitation and empowerment of disabled persons is also now a statutory responsibility of the Government as per the enactment of the Person With Disability

(PWD) Act, 1995. Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation scheme (earlier known as Scheme to Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disabilities) provides financial assistance to voluntary organizations for running, rehabilitation centers for leprosy cured persons, for manpower development in the field of mental retardation and cerebral palsy, and establishment and development of special schools for the major areas of orthopedic, speech, hearing, visual and mental disability. During 2003-04, 657 voluntary organizations got Rs 71.50 crore for implementing the scheme. A Scheme of National Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities was introduced from the year 2002-2003. 250 awards each for male students and female students in different categories of disabilities are being given for pursuing higher and technical education above graduate level.

Reforming Social Deviants

10.101 The Annual Plan 2003-04 advocated reform and rehabilitation of the social deviants such as juvenile delinquents, alcoholics and drug addicts in a humane manner, with a view of transforming today's social deviants into tomorrow's responsible citizens. The 'Program of Juvenile Justice' assists 38,000 juvenile inmates in over 550 mandatory homes. The Annual Plan 2003-04 envisaged an integrated and comprehensive community based approach to curb the growing problems of alcoholism and drug abuse in the country. Ninety Counseling Centres and 369 Treatment cum Rehabilitation Centres are being supported under the scheme of Prevention of alcoholism and substance (Drugs) Abuse.

Caring for the other Disadvantaged

10.102 The Other Disadvantaged include the aged, the orphaned, abandoned, destitute and street children, who, in the wake of declining family support system and other socio-economic circumstances are left helpless and require the support and protection from the State. To fulfill the commitments of the National Policy on Older Persons, special emphasis

is being placed on expanding the on-going programs of old age homes, day care centers, mobile medicare units and medicare centers being implemented under the scheme of 'Integrated Program for Older Persons'. Financial assistance has been extended to 451 NGOs for running 222 Old Age Homes, 201-Day Care Centers and 27 Mobile Medicare Units.

10.103 A special pension policy - **Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana** for persons aged 55 years and above was also launched on July 14, 2003 by the Life Insurance Corporation of India. The policy guarantees an annual return of 9 percent in the form of monthly payment. Minimum pension is Rs.250 per month and maximum Rs.2, 000 per month. For monthly pension a single premium is payable in lump sum. The minimum premium is Rs.33, 335 and the maximum is Rs.2, 66,665.

10.104 With the objective of weaning away the street children from a life of deprivation and vagrancy and rehabilitating them, 'An Integrated Programmed for Street Children' is being implemented with a wide range of initiatives like 24 hour drop in shelters, night shelters, nutrition, health care, sanitation, hygiene, safe drinking water, education, recreational facilities and protection against abuse and exploitation. Currently, 190 organizations have been operating in 22 States benefiting 1.58 lakh street children. The special initiative of the CHILDLINE service, a toll free telephone service is available to children in distress, responds to the emergency needs of the children and provides referral service. This facility is now operating in 34 cities.

10.105 The National Institute of Social Defence is being strengthened professionally, technically and financially to enable it to broaden its activities in the field of social defence and for the other disadvantaged groups. In the Tenth Five Year Plan period an allocation of Rs. 550 crore has been made for various schemes in social defence division.