

ion engagement in socially useful productive work for just rewards is the key to sustainability of any social development. The principle of self-reliance rejects surviving on World Bank loans or donor charity. Besides some exploitative relationships have to end before equality and working for common social goals is possible. This is altogether absent from the Expert Group's report.

While the recommendation to include the child care within the Minimum Needs Programme is welcome, it must be emphasised

that support for minimum needs cannot cure inequality of access to resources and power.

The campaign is by no means over because this policy is yet to be approved by the Parliament. We have tried to lobby with some members asking for a minimum support to cull out coercive elements but feel that unless others join in lobbying we cannot make a headway. Therefore if you agree with our critique we will send you a draft for collecting support from elected representatives which you can use as a lobbying document.



VICTIMS SPEAK OUT AGAINST COERCIVE POPULATION CONTROL

"Small Family is a Happy Family" - the slogan is all too familiar. Government propaganda and empty promises have reached every little corner of India. At the same time that the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was taking place in Cairo with much pomp and show, women's groups in Delhi had organised a "speakout" of victims of Family Planning abuses by the Government, on 10th Sep., 1994. The participating groups were Saheli, Jagori, Sabhla Sangh, along with the Human Rights Trust.

The objective was to expose the government population control policy, by focussing on the ground reality and women's experiences. While the government was trying to present itself in a good light in the international arena, it was necessary to bring out the true nature of its anti-people and anti-women policies.

Some of the cases presented were actual testimonies of women, while others were drawn from surveys and working with women at the basti level.

SANTOSH : Twenty three years old Santosh from Seemapuri, whose husband earns Rs. 1,500/- per month as a peon in the Home Min-



istry, has two children. With the belief that a small family would indeed contribute to happiness, she got an IUD inserted in April '92 at the local health centre. The following month, she had very heavy bleeding, and two months subsequently had no bleeding at all. Since her

periods had been quite regular before the IUD, Santosh got worried and consulted the hospital. There, she found out that she was pregnant. The doctor advised her against an abortion, because the pregnancy was already over four months. The question which arises now is - who is going to bear the expenditure of time, money, and other resources to bring up the third child? The doctor at the health centre had inserted an IUD to fulfil his quota, but got off scot-free when it came to dealing with the consequences.

BILLO RANI : A similar story is that of Billo Rani of Bhandawar village near Jaipur. After three sons, she got herself sterilized at a government camp. It was quite a shock for her to get pregnant five years after her tubectomy. Who is to answer for these failures of birth control measures?

NATHO DEVI : Nineteen year old Natho Devi's husband was forcibly sterilized by government health workers. Ironically, the operation failed, and she gave birth to two children. But the failure of the government health machinery had serious consequences for Natho Devi. She was taunted and socially ostracised for alleged moral lapses on her part, since her husband had undergone a vasectomy. She was suspected of having extra-marital relations, and as a result was completely traumatised and psychologically broken. Who will answer for this, or go to her mohalla to clear her name?

BHAGWAN DEVI : Only twenty seven years old, she has been reduced to a mere skeleton because of continuous bleeding. After two children, she had got herself sterilized at the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital. However, after a year, the operation failed and she conceived. After an M.T.P. a tubectomy was repeated. But even the second operation was not successful and she once again conceived. This time, accepting her fate, she went ahead and had the child. Bhagwan Devi has suffered from frequent bleeding, which has continued non-stop for the last three months.

ASHA : Thirty five years old, decided, along

with her husband who is a labourer to have herself sterilized after they had four children. The sterilization, performed in '90, was carried out in Bara Hindurao Hospital by one Dr. Alka (Reg. No. 789), But Asha gave birth to two more children after the operation. To make matters worse, she has stopped menstruating after the operation, so she cannot even tell immediately if she is pregnant.

SHANTI : The inhuman conditions of sterilization camps is illustrated by Shanti's story. Doctors in a camp in NOIDA, U.P., refused to believe that she was pregnant, and without even the use of anesthesia or painkillers, bound her hands and feet, gagged her mouth, and sterilized her. The fall-out was that Shanti had to undergo a traumatic abortion when she was six months pregnant. Moreover, she has suffered from backache and profuse white discharge after the operation.

MEENA : Forty years old Meena testified that her husband was supportive and sympathetic, and unlike many women she knew, she did not have to face beating or abuse from him. Her husband had undergone a vasectomy in 1975, in spite of which, she conceived one year later. Talking to others who had undergone vasectomy together, they discovered that many of them had met with a similar fate of sterilization failure. Meena gave birth to another child in 1981 and in order to make sure, she herself got sterilized. But her woes/did not end, since she has been having irregular menstruation subsequent to the operation, due to which she gets very easily exhausted, and is unable to work as hard as she used to before.

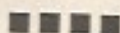
What clearly emerges from these testimonies is that the government in its so called family welfare programme is interested only in fulfilling targets in order to control the population. It is of no concern to the population control lobby that users of F.P. services, especially women, have to suffer untold miseries in the name of family planning.

Unhygienic conditions, rude, abusive and dis-

respectful behaviour by health personnel; concealing information about hazards of the different contraceptives, and inhuman atmosphere of camps, have all contributed to revealing the true intentions of the government.

The women who came out with their experiences asserted that the government was exploiting their genuine need for birth control. The fact that women repeatedly got themselves ster-

ilized was proof enough that they wanted to limit their families, but the government was obviously not competent even to provide adequate services to fulfil this need. In the discussion that followed, the need for safe contraception emerged as a concrete demand for the women's movement, along with the campaign against hazardous contraceptives.



SEX DETERMINATION AND CHILD BIRTH

Critique of the New Bill



Last week activists from several women's and social organisations came out on the streets of South Delhi in protest against the growing misuse of sex-determination and sex pre-selection methods at the hands of doctors and quacks alike. Expressing concern at the worsening sex ratio due to the growing practice of selective male child births, women shouted slogans like, "No to Sex Determination," "No to Female Extermination," "Eliminate Profiteering, Not Women," "Stop Selective Child-Birth," "Stop Misuse of Ultra-Sound," "Women, an Endangered Species." Traffic was stopped and leaflets distributed to draw public notice to the serious implications of such practices. Women were also critical of the failure of the government to take appropriate action in this regard.

The widespread misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the purpose of sex-determination and selective abortion of female foetus has raised alarm for quite some time now. Diagnostic techniques like ultra sonography, amniocentesis tests and chorionic villi biopsy, supposedly meant for facilitating the detection of foetal abnormalities, and thereupon interventions such as abortion or therapy, are being increasingly misused by commercial and professional interests for exploiting the existing

bias against female child. Most genetic clinics and labs in Delhi, as elsewhere, are engaged in carrying out sex-determination tests, which invariably leads to abortion if the sex of the foetus happens to be female. The mushrooming of ultrasound clinics in recent years has made things worse, so much so that the very existence of womankind is at stake.

Although it is not possible to provide definite statistics about the extent of the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for purposes of sex-determination, and subsequent abortion of female foetuses, estimates place this figure around two lakhs. The commercial exploitation of such techniques spread very rapidly soon after technological developments made it possible. According to one estimate, between 1978-82, nearly 78,000 female foetuses were aborted after sex determination tests in the country. Between 1986-87, 30,000 to 50,000 female foetuses were apprehended to have been aborted. Between 1982-87, the number of clinics for sex-determination multiplied manifold in the city of Bombay alone, it shot up from less than 10 to 24. Between 1987-88, nearly 13,000 sex determination tests were estimated to have been done in 7 Delhi clinics themselves. Worse still, these facilities were widely publicised through advertisements in newspapers, in