

GRASSROOTS REACHOUT AND NETWORKING IN INDIA ON TRADE AND ECONOMICS - PHASE II

NATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE POLICY 2004-2009: IMPLEMENTATION

THE WEST BENGAL SCENARIO

WEST BENGAL AT A GLANCE

Area	88,752 sq.km.
Population (2001)	802.21 lakhs
	Female: 387 lakhs; Male: 415 lakhs
District	19
Sub-Division	65
Police Station	452
Zilla Parishad	18 ; Total Elected Representatives :716
Mahakuma Parishad	1 ; Total Elected Representatives : 7
Panchayyats Samity	333 ;Total Elected Representatives : 8543
Gram Panchayat	3354 ; Total Elected Representatives: 51075
Literacy Rate (2001)	69.22 per cent.; Male 77.58;Female 60.02
Agricultural Land	58,43,483 Hectares
Irrigated Land	44.47 per cent
Unirrigated Land	55.53 per cent

National Foreign Trade Policy (NFTP): establishing the context

For India to become a major player in world trade, an all encompassing, and comprehensive view needs to be taken for the overall development of the country's foreign trade. While increase in exports is of vital importance, we have also to facilitate those imports which are required to stimulate our economy. Coherence and consistency among trade and other economic policies is important for maximizing the contribution of such policies to development. Thus, while incorporating the existing practice of enunciating an annual Exim Policy, it is necessary to go much beyond and take an integrated approach to the developmental requirements of India's foreign trade. This is the context of the new Foreign Trade Policy.

A policy represents a programme of action. The National Foreign Trade Policy 2004-2009 accordingly envisages a programme that seeks to secure economic growth and national development. The enunciation of the NFTP makes it evident that foreign trade is not just about exports and imports but incorporates such concerns as economic growth and employment generation, especially in semi-urban and rural areas.

In order to promote economic growth, the NFTP considers further liberalization of the tariff regime, simplification of procedures to bring down transaction costs while engaging in trade related activities. And the concern for employment-generation is sought to be addressed through

the promotion of employment-intensive exports in areas such as agriculture, gems and jewellery, leather and footwear, handloom and handicraft and marine products.

Trade is not an end in itself, but a means to economic growth and national development. The primary purpose is not the mere earning of foreign exchange, but the stimulation of greater economic activity. The Foreign Trade Policy is rooted in this belief and built around two major objectives. These are:

- (i) To double our percentage share of global merchandise trade within the next five years; and
- (ii) To act as an effective instrument of economic growth by giving a thrust to employment generation.

The NFTP contemplates several steps to enhance Indian exports to major markets. But at the same time there is recognition of a general lack of awareness among producers about these and there is also lack of cooperation and coordination between different agencies dealing with these issues.

The Annual supplement (2006) to the NFTP draws attention to a 'grand leap forward' - showing that in just two years, exports have jumped by 60 per cent, from 63 billion to 101 billion dollars. Yet the intriguing question is how much of the resultant benefits have accrued to the real producers. India's development would remain largely vacuous if these producers do not enjoy a fair proportion of the economic growth resulting from foreign trade.

The NFTP is to be guided in a major way by the Board of Trade.

The Board of Trade has been revamped and given a clear and dynamic role in advising government on relevant issues connected with Foreign Trade Policy. There would be a process of continuous interaction between the Board of Trade and Government in order to achieve the desired objective of boosting India's exports. *The Board of Trade would have the following terms of reference:*

- I) To advise the Government on Policy measures for preparation and implementation of both short and long term plans for increasing exports in the light of emerging national and international economic scenarios;
- II) To review export performance of various sectors, identify constraints and suggest industry specific measures to optimize export earnings;
- III) To examine the existing institutional framework for imports and exports and suggest practical measures for further streamlining to achieve the desired objectives;
- IV) To review the policy instruments and procedures for imports and exports and suggest steps to rationalize and channelise such schemes for optimum use;
- V) To examine issues which are considered relevant for promotion of India's foreign trade, and to strengthen the international competitiveness of Indian goods and services; and
- VI) To commission studies for furtherance of the above objectives.

Government shall nominate an eminent person or expert on trade policy to be Chairman of the Board of Trade. Government shall also nominate 25 persons, of whom at least 10 will be experts in trade policy. In addition, Chairmen of recognized Export Promotion Councils and President or Secretary-Generals of National Chambers of Commerce will be ex-officio members.

The Board will meet at least once every quarter and make recommendations to Government on issues pertaining to its terms of reference

The Board of Trade will have the power to set up subcommittees and to co-opt experts to these, to make recommendations on specific sectors and objectives.

The Board of Trade will have a Secretariat and Budget Head and shall be serviced by the Department of Commerce.

The Board of Trade was set up in 1998 with a view to providing an effective mechanism to maintain continuous dialogue between Government and trade and industry and the Board, *inter alia*, advises the government on policy measures connected with India's foreign trade in order to achieve the objective of boosting the country's exports, including advising the government on the preparation and implementation of short term as well as long term strategies for enhancing exports in the light of emerging national and international scenarios.

Indeed one of the guiding agencies of the NFTP is the Board of Trade. But if one considers the composition of the Board, one notice that while there is emphasis on the incorporation of experts, not much thought has been given to the representation of direct producers, civil society organizations and women.

Such representation is vital for ensuring that the NFTP while emphasizing the objective of economic growth and development, also focuses on institutions which need to be in place so that a fair proportion of the beneficial effects of growth and development percolate to the stakeholders at the grassroots.

The NFTP acknowledges that a trade policy cannot be fully comprehensive in all its details and would require modifications from time to time. The purpose of this research is to find out the various problems that hinder the enhancement of exports and the obstacles that prevent the fruits of development from percolating to the producers and stakeholders in particular sectors. An insight into these problems might help CSOs in making necessary interventions in the policy-making process which may enable suitable modifications in the NFTP to suit changing times and circumstances.

THE VIEW FROM INSIDE

The Policy-Making Process in relation to the NFTP 2004-2009: (The Director General of Foreign Trade, Govt. of West Bengal)

Steps involved from formulation of NFTP, 2004-09

NFTP is not something prepared in single day arising out of the mind of a single Minister or a business house. It is a **continuous process including several round of meetings among various interacting parties** : the Chambers of commerce, bureaucrats, Individual trade bodies, Trade representatives, Export Promotion Councils, various boards set up for different agricultural products.

At first a draft paper was formulated based on the whole gamut of government policies, export – import data etc. and circulated among the different stakeholders for their inputs.

After getting inputs from the different stakeholders the policy paper was finalized and implemented.

Structure of Decision Making

Economic or policy decisions are still made at the centre and left to the bureaucrats to implement. Though they can give their inputs on any draft policy paper but it is up to the Ministers whether or not to incorporate the views in the final paper.

Extension of the DGFT office

Unlike the DoA which has the greatest extension starting from the Central Ministers to the Gram Panchayat, the DGFT has offices only upto the State capitals. They do not have extension offices at the District or at the Blocks. **This could be one of the reasons due to the lack of awareness about international trade at the grassroot at the level of individual farmers or a weaver's**. One main reason is that most of the big industrial / business/ export houses have their head offices at the state capitals and not in the villages. These business houses being DGFT's main clients, there may not be any need to set up extension offices. This at times poses problems for the small exporters in terms of getting necessary information at the right time.

In spite of this limitation a few of the small exporters at the districts get information from the DGFT directly over phone. Unfortunately these are only very rare examples.

Do government policies give due importance to local needs

The government policies are framed keeping mind the local conditions but there is no mechanism to guarantee incorporation of local needs in NFTP. Moreover while formulation of NFTP, the local farmers or weavers have not been consulted at all.

Perception about RTI

RTI is really a very useful tool which is supposed to increase accountability of the government. But there are only stray cases where it has been used in public interest. In most of the cases it is used to know the rates quoted by business rivals etc.

What is lacking in the present NFTP, 2004-09

The major problems with the existing policy are as follows:

- a) No major innovative schemes
- b) There is only a little bit of government subsidy here and there but nothing worthy of interest
- c) There is no major thrust for developing industries
- d) The decision making process has to be followed in its true spirits, to involve the real beneficiaries while framing policies.
- e) Lobbying among different industries is also a big problem which is being manifested in discouraging growth of small entrepreneurs.

Need for introspection: What could be the possible recommendations in order to enhance domestic exports in the next phase of NFTP?

The recommendations could be as follows:

- a) Drastic reduction of export duties
- b) Build port infrastructure
- c) Simplify procedure i.e. reduce the number of paper works
- d) To integrate the various departments and sub departments
- e) Simplify registration procedures.

Some of the Key Provisions for Agriculture and Handloom in NFTP 2004-09

(i) Agriculture and Village Industry

(a) A new scheme called the Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojana (Special Agricultural and Village Industry Scheme) for promoting export of fruits, Vegetables, Flowers, Minor Forest produce, Dairy, Poultry and their value added products and Gram Udyog products has been introduced (Para 3.8).

(b) Funds shall be earmarked under ASIDE for development of Agri Export Zones (AEZ)

(c) Capital goods imported under EPCG shall be permitted to be installed anywhere in the AEZ.

(f) Import of restricted items, such as panels, shall be allowed under the various export promotion schemes.

(g) Import of inputs such as pesticides shall be permitted under the Advance Authorisation for agro exports.

(h) New towns of export excellence with a threshold limit of Rs 250 crore shall be notified.

(ii) Handlooms

(a) Specific funds would be earmarked under MAI/MDA Scheme for promoting handloom exports.

(b) Duty free import entitlement of specified trimmings and embellishments shall be 5% of FOB value of exports during the previous financial year.

(c) Duty free import entitlement of hand knotted carpet samples shall be 1% of FOB value of exports during the previous financial year.

(d) Duty free import of old pieces of hand knotted carpets on consignment basis for re-export after repair shall be permitted.

(e) New towns of export excellence with a threshold limit of Rs 250 crore shall be notified.

(f) Government has decided to develop a trade mark for Handloom on lines similar to 'Woolmark' and 'Silkmark'. This will enable handloom products to develop a niche market with a distinct identity.

HORTICULTURE IN WEST BENGAL

In recent times the Govt. of West Bengal is giving a lot of thrust to the export of Mango and Pineapple, both direct and processed. To that end, the Govt. also intends to focus on the development of infrastructure in these areas in the form of better storage and packaging facilities along with port expansion and renovation. Under the circumstances it would be most relevant to examine what ails the enhancement of exports in these areas and what are the perceived problems of the relevant producers and stakeholders.

(1) Unfortunately over production, which results in good measure on account of a conducive climate, along with the perishability of the product are major problems. In fact almost 30% of the produce has been found to be wasted.

(2) There are other hurdles also which stand in the way of enhancement of exports in these areas, like the absence of security nets for growers and other stakeholders.

(3) Existing marketing mechanisms include multiple layers of middlemen and the growers are often at their mercy.

(4) There is a general lack of information on the specific requirements of particular export markets at specific times among both growers and processors. The problem of overproduction is compounded by inadequate cold storage and packing facilities. These items hold great potential for entry into the world market, and the handicaps and obstacles need to be addressed.

(5) There is also lack of sufficient number of Processing units / Agri-exporters in the areas and consequently very little market choice is available to the farmers. Hence the need for this research.

HANDLOOMS AND TEXTILES IN WEST BENGAL

The textile and clothing industry is indeed an important sector in West Bengal. But the industry has been going through stagnation both due to lack of growth as well as due to increasing competition from outside. Time and again the Government has taken initiatives such as formation of cooperatives, but they have not been sufficient and the beneficial effects of such efforts have not really trickled down. The main reason could be the lack of participation from a large section of the artisans. However, demands and markets have constantly evolved. Therefore there is need for the textile sector in West Bengal to be more informed about the needs and demands of the market to be able to cater to the market needs. There is need for infusing more professionalism in the handloom sector.

The uniqueness of handlooms and their exclusiveness has to be preserved. There is need to identify and promote the strengths of handlooms in order to enhance export. Most of the handloom and handicraft products of India are traditional in nature and much localized. Competitiveness of these products cannot be judged in quantitative terms alone, qualitative factors are also important. Handloom weavers in West Bengal are facing competition from cheap substitutes, for example the influx of Chinese silk.

Some of the major problems that handicap the enhancement of export of handloom products may be highlighted:

- (1) *A Shrinking Market*: it seems that consumer preferences have undergone a change; intricate designs produced by handlooms are no longer in demand.
- (2) *One must also explore the tremendous potential for hosiery in export enhancement.*
- (3) *Threat imposed by the power loom*: the power loom can make available simple and utilitarian items like saris and lungis for everyday use at much more affordable prices. Traditional handloom weavers are feeling compelled to move out of their professions. Besides, the one time reservation of 22 items for handloom was reduced to 11 in 1985 and today there is no such reservation at all.
- (4) *Unfair and Foreign competition*: advent of Chinese silk has put a decisive closure on the demand for 'silk tangail' which was a speciality of Fulia at one time.
- (5) *A rapidly evolving technology*: Traditional handloom weavers are making a desperate attempt to produce new and intricate designs which cannot be done by power looms; but such designs can be produced only with the help of expensive looms, which cannot be afforded by most of the weavers. Besides, the demand for such items is also not

- substantial. One must address the means for technology upgradation and enhancing the technical knowhow of the weaver. For this purpose there ought to be an effective and operative mechanism/institution, and not simply a technology upgradation fund.
- (6) *Lack of financial support:* A majority of the weavers are outside the cooperative fold, and have to operate independently, mostly under no cover of security. Even cooperatives are heavily dependent on Govt. subsidies and the day the govt. is unable to dole out aid, and these cooperative societies will shrink.
 - (7) *Lack of managerial efficiency:* lack of professionalism is a major handicap among the handloom weavers of West Bengal; there is need for proper strategy formulation to enhance the bargaining power of the weavers.

Hence the need to take a closer and intense look at the plight of the handloom sector in West Bengal.

KEY ISSUES

In view of the afore-mentioned problems in the realms of horticulture and handlooms and textiles, the NFTP clearly ought to address the following key issues:

- (1) There is a general **lack of awareness** that is noticeable at various levels. There is, for instance, lack of trickle-down of government policies and programmes among direct producers. There is also lack of awareness among policy-makers about grassroot realities. Producers and weavers also need to be better informed about changed market situations.
- (2) There is in general **lack of coordination and cooperation** among various agencies and groups. Alongside training of Panchayat officials and other personnel manning bodies of local governance, need is felt for institutions/entities to complement the existing infrastructure so as to ensure export augmentation.
- (3) There is clearly **lack of market intelligence** in the realms of horticulture and handlooms & textiles. This is of crucial importance if, for instance, the weavers are to enhance their ability to cope with competition.
- (4) There is **absence of social security** nets- This is crucial in an age of liberalization and there ought to be easy availability of loans and credit facilities.
- (5) The issue of **'gender'** also needs to be addressed and particular attention has to be devoted to the role of women and the prospects of women participation in decision-making.
- (6) There is also **need for participatory management:** Presently there is very little interface between policy-makers and the direct producers and stakeholders.

In the light of these afore-mentioned key issues, there is imperative and immediate **need to focus on:**

- (1) Translation and distribution of relevant information and literature as part of a strategy of empowerment.
- (2) Necessity of establishing an interface between the government/policy-makers and the direct stakeholders.

Following is an intense look at some of the districts of West Bengal in respect of the perceptions of the government officials and those of various stakeholders:

MALDA

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

So far as **Export Promotion measures** were concerned there was definitely awareness among government officials about the NFTP. The DM was aware of the NFTP 2004 and mentioned the

utilization of two schemes – Vishesh Krishi Yojna (VKY) and Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) scheme by the exporters in Malda. He was conversant about various govt. schemes such as Micro Irrigation Scheme; Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana under National Horticulture Mission., DHO, Malda spoke elaborately about the state govt.'s schemes such as Area Expansion Subsidy (New Orchard Subsidy) and Macro Mode Work Plan (2001-02, 02-03, 03-04, and 04-05). He also spoke about other schemes such as Food Plan Mini Kit Supply, AEZ, and formation of a Demonstration Centre. He added that the AEZs for Litchi and Mango were introduced in Malda in 2002. Pack house and multi purpose food storages have already been established in Malda. *He had heard of the WTO Cell but didn't have clear idea about the Cell.*

He was very much aware of tax concessions such as VKY, DEPB, O.G.L (Open General License). And he came to know about these schemes from DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade) office as well as from various websites. ***He opined Central Govt. inspires exporters by implementing various export schemes but State Govt. is careless about export policies.***

On the whole he seemed to hold the opinion that the Govt. of India's export policy is much better now for various incentive schemes seem to have undoubtedly benefited the exporters.

However, an exporter present in the group clarified that he was not much **aware** of NFTP, WTO cell, RTI Act, or even the WTO cell or its functioning. He highlighted that there were no level playing fields, and so it is only the big exporters who have derived maximum benefits from the Govt. schemes based on export related policies. In his opinion rate of employment has not increased.

So far as **Awareness about NFTP 2004-09** goes, the D.H.O. of Malda was found to be very much aware of NFTP and export related policies. Some awareness was exhibited by the media personnel. But for others, including representatives of NGOs, SHGs there was hardly any awareness.

On the question of **Awareness about any pro poor policies / schemes**, the D.M. emphasized the poor level of awareness about different Govt. schemes, late alone NFTP among the growers and the traders, by and large.

Regarding the **Source of information** for most exporters, it seemed that information about export was availed from FIEO's (Federation of Indian Export Organization) monthly bulletin though no one was sure about the media's role in generating awareness among people. ***There is no Govt. machinery from which one can get adequate information about export and trade issues.***

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

Most representatives of the export groups opined that Govt. officials are of course accountable and they should inform the business houses and associations about RTI, WTO cell and NFTP. Public organizations must also recognize their responsibility in spreading information among people. But although in principle governmental policies put a premium on people's needs, in practice Govt. schemes ultimately benefit political parties. Grassroots' demands are not sufficiently addressed and the noble goals depicted by government policies invariably fall short of realization.

As to **why the governments Policies do not deliver the desired result** the answer was that Govt. policies are based on and oriented towards local demands but they go astray at the implementation stage. At the Customs office, for instance, the exporters are given a patient hearing but the tax concessions promised were yet to be extended. Even if the NFTP introduced various opportunities for the exporters, there is lack of information among the exporters. Ultimately it is the big exporters who derive maximum benefits from any Govt. policy by virtue

of their access to timely and adequate information. ***Communication is thus a major problem for the exporters.***

Some exporters feel that national policies should incorporate local demands. Higher Govt. officers don't want to facilitate grassroots demands and are generally oblivious of local needs. Govt. officials provide lip service to popular wants but seldom work actively towards their realization.

Some of the govt. policies do reflect a response to local demands but due to lack of information, proper implementation of those policies have not made. But it is also true Govt. seldom takes initiatives for grassroots participation in policy making. CSO's can communicate people's needs to the Govt. machinery, but in actuality very few demands get adequate hearing in Govt. offices and only those with sufficient backing are able to get themselves heard.

There is thus a gap between promise and performance, a gap between policy objectives and its implementations. Some felt that the attitude of the policy makers should also change in a proactive direction.

On the question of **Perception about RTI**, the government officials and legislators expressed awareness about the RTI Act. But they felt that people, in general, are unaware of RTI, they also observed that there is no proper implementation of RTI Act in the villages, generally speaking. Regarding RTI Act the exporters opined that Govt. officials ought to inform people about this type of act. He added Govt. officials should inform local organizations like NGOs, public organizations etc about various policies. After that these organizations should inform villagers and local people because most of the villagers are illiterate. It seemed awareness about RTI is limited to cities, and its impact is not being felt in the villages. There is no campaigning regarding RTI in villages. There is scant awareness of RTI and its procedures. Electronic media should also cover this issue.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

Economic policies, according to the DHO, Malda are not formulated from the grassroots level. It was evident from his statements that decisions and discussion on economic and trade related issues mainly take place at the state and district levels but not at the panchayat level. In other words the decentralization of the decision making has proceeded downward to some extent but has failed to trickle down to and animate the lowest levels of the administrative hierarchy; i.e. decisions are not taken further down to the gram sabha and gram panchayat. It was felt that the **grassroot** people should be first informed about the government policies. He is also of the same opinion that though government policies incorporate the needs of the grassroot people but there are glaring lacunae in the implementation process.

In respect of **Discussion on Trade and Economic Issues at the Local / Panchayat Level**, a member of the legislative assembly who is also a member of Horticulture Food Processing Committee, Malda observed that whenever he visits villages he takes initiatives to organize a discussion with the villagers regarding their problems. He also regularly raised questions in the Assembly House regarding budget. He added MP/MLA/political parties never discuss economic problems and trade related issues. If MP could discuss export oriented issues in the parliament then exporters would be benefitted. In his opinion along with MLAs/MPs, capitalists and industrialists can take decision about economic policies. The ex MLA of his area was quite active but recent MLA is not that much active. He did not think that panchayat machineries discuss economic and trade related issues. He was not consulted at any stage in the making of NFTP. ***Public hearings are not held for purposes of getting inputs on local needs so far as the process of policy-making is concerned.*** The exporters observed that the Horticulture Dept. conducts workshops but outcome does not suggest any sustained positive results. They were of the view

that the MP/MLA/political parties never discuss economic problems and trade related issues. They seldom attend panchayat meetings because of lack of time. He never heard whether panchayats discuss trade related issues, and they were definitely not consulted in the making of NFTP. Public hearings are not held in the area they are familiar with. They expressed the view that our Govt. policies give less importance to people's participation in policy making. No discussion has ever been organized by the panchayat levels or state machineries for exchanges on economic and trade related issues. Needless to add that they have never been consulted in the making of NFTP and they expressed the apprehension that perhaps Govt. didn't think people should participate in policy making.

Regarding **local inputs in NFTP**, as the District Horticulture Officer, Mr.Khara informed that does participate at district level discussion on economic and trade issues. But he has not been consulted at any stage in the making of NFTP. Public hearings also were never held in his area regarding economic issues but *awareness programmes have been conducted for export promotion*. But he observed that national/state policies usually incorporate local demands. e.g. the National Horticulture Mission scheme is a local product-specific scheme. Various Govt. schemes including export related schemes have been found to generate employment in different districts. Representatives from the media opined that they attend municipality meetings regularly. But they have not been consulted by anyone in the making of NFTP, perhaps because Govt. wants to avoid media pressure. In the last two years public hearings have not been held. But Govt. officials, on one or two occasions, invited the media and had conducted a seminar for dissemination of information.

On the question of **Impact on livelihood**, the D.H.O. felt that employment has increased significantly compared to previous years because of the formation of AEZ. The exporters held that they did not get any tax concessions till now. But they agreed that income levels have increased noticeably. They lamented that big exporters derive maximum benefits from any Govt. policy because they get adequate information but it is also true employment and economic development has increased at a good rate. Many of them did not hear the term NFTP but they were aware of various export related schemes. That is why they felt that Govt. policies such as NFTP did after all address livelihood concerns of the people and the people benefited from VKY, DEPB and such other schemes. Others including representatives of SHGs and NGOs felt that employment rate is same like other years and there is no economic development in their area. Govt. has to look after rural people's needs. Livelihood and employment have increased but there is a need for more involvement of the grass root community.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

The D.H.O. confirmed that political parties can of course be a link between local needs and national policies but the problem is that political parties mainly patronize their supporters. He said Govt. agencies take part in policy discussion process. Political leaders sometimes visit Gram Sabhas. People are weary of political leaders that's why they don't want to discuss about their needs and demands with the political leaders.

The exporters expressed the view that they are small exporters, so they support that political party who helps them in their activities. The MLA of that region, Mr. Biswanath Ghosh is very helpful and has organized many awareness generation programmes about export and other related issues. The process of policy formulation does not include decisions taken by the Panchayat. Mr. Mukulesh Chowdhury , an exporter in the group usually did not attend Panchayat meetings. A meeting was held two years ago with Mr. Kamal Nath at Kolkata where he was present as the President of Exporters Association, Mahadipur. In the meeting, the perspective of the exporters

was considered during formulation of NFTP. But Central government has not taken any step towards any awareness generation programme.

The media personnel suggested the existence of a communication gap, information gap, and corruption in policy implementation. For these limitations 'Food for Work' program has failed. But it is also true some employment opportunities have been created through panchayat. He added govt. policies should give priority to grassroots level and panchayats. ***National policies never incorporate local demands. So Panchayat Samiti along with media and NGO can translate peoples' needs to the policy makers and Govt. machineries. In this regard media can play a productive and positive role but remain inactive.*** This contributory role is important for employment is decreasing and migration is gradually becoming a feature of Malda. Political parties have a role in government policy making. During formulation of policy, demands of grass root people are taken into consideration. It has also been found that grass root people are sometimes not even aware of their own needs.

On the issue of **How can the up-linking and down-linking be facilitated between the Grassroot stakeholders and the policy makers**, the D.H.O. held that although some MLAs/MPs of Malda raised questions in the parliament regarding Malda's needs and demands, ***the most effective way to make people's demands heard in policy making circles would be a combined initiative of the Media, NGOs, MP/MLAs and judicial bodies.***

The exporters felt that political parties can serve as a link between local needs and national policy making but leaders are involved in making their own profit. And they also added that exporters' organisations can translate their demands into Govt. policies may be through a press conference which could give wide currency to their aspirations and needs. Political parties can be a good link between grassroots demands and national policy making. The government does not feel the need to inform the local associations regarding any export information. If government can organize workshops in the port areas for all the custom officers and provide them with information on export and import then the exporters would be the most benefited. In other words, ***administrative personnel at all levels of the administrative hierarchy need to be sensitized to all policy decisions and changes adopted at the national and highest levels.***

On the questions, **who are the key players in framing policies**, according to the D.H.O., the Govt. of India's Financial Dept and Finance Minister take the decision about economic policies. But along with them administrators also have a role in policy making process. MLAs/MPs also take part in making of the economic policy.

Others like representatives of SHGs and NGOs felt that the Finance departments along with ministers take decision about economic policies. They were convinced that Panchayat has no role in the making of economic policy. But MP/MLA takes indirect decisions in the policy making through passing the bill in the parliament. The media personnel opined that it is the political party (mainly ruling party) which takes decisions about economic policies. According to them political parties and business houses take decision about economic policies.

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

The exporters were keen to voice specific demands from Govt.: better roads, credit facilities, marketing, and transportation. He talked about ECGC (Export Credit Guarantee Card). As regards export, mango is exported to Bangladesh from Malda but unfortunately *these mangoes are then sent to London and other countries from Bangladesh and not from India.*

The exporters wanted a Mango Pulp Company to minimize wastage of different varieties of mangoes. Tax reduction by the government has benefited them. Farakka is popular for Litchi cultivation and in last five years they have earned profit out of this cultivation. Pataka Group undertook a project to export litchi but unfortunately they could not complete it.

Even the export of rice and wheat market was hampered due to higher price of these cereals whereas on the other hand, these cereals reach Bangladesh through Nepal. As a result, the exporters are the worst affected. With reference to the schemes, income tax rebate would benefit them. The customs office should be located at Hili, port of Malda but instead it is located in Malda town. Bangladesh is importing pulses from Australia whereas India cannot export pulses to Bangladesh. Here lies the weakness of the government. The price that has been fixed by the government for export of cereals is higher than the price at which the exporters sell the products. Therefore, this is another weakness of the government and as a result their export market gets affected. ***There seemed to be an articulated demand on part of all sections for infrastructural development.*** Specific demands from Govt. included enhancement of Marketing opportunities and skilled labour. There was a specific demand from Govt. for better roads, for Malda's trade has been affected because of poor roads.

The media personnel felt that the prospects for alternative source of income for the people need to be explored. ***They want the government officials to feel the ground reality instead of taking any decision at the Planning office.***

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

On this issue the Role of Media cannot be exaggerated. The D.H.O. observed that the Media is active in generating awareness about economic policies. Local media is not that much active regarding dissemination of information but they have a good coverage on the process of exporting products to different foreign markets. And he thinks if NGOs are not corrupted they can play a contributory role in spreading information among people.

The legislator **when** asked about Media's role replied media can play a good role in generating awareness about economic policies including NFTP. Mainly visual media has a role to play in awareness generating process.

According to the exporters media has a great role in generating awareness about economic policies including NFTP. But media is interested in other commercial news and neglect initiatives to conduct awareness generating programs. They read newspapers regularly and watch TV everyday. NGOs are also not active in information dissemination about trade related issues. ***The most effective way to translate people's demands into Govt. policies is media pressure.***

The general belief is that "Media particularly electronic media can increase awareness among people about Govt. policies". But the local media is not active at all. In Malda there are lots of NGOs working on grassroots demands but they are not working on export related issues.

According to the exporters the most effective way to make people's demands audible in policy making circles would be a combined initiative of the Media, NGOs, political parties and the Govt. functionaries. Local media and news channels can play a significant role in disseminating export related information. If this information can reach them in local language then it would be of immense help to them. Local newspapers are not given much importance. Even local NGOs are also not much active in generating awareness regarding export related information. It would be helpful if media and local export association can highlight their problems through Federation of Indian Export Organization.

Indeed, added media has a great role in generating awareness among people about any type of policy. In this area absence of local media is a big problem. One weekly journal is published at Chanchal.

The media personnel corroborated this viewpoint. The Media plays good role in generating awareness among people about various economic policies. But local media's role in information dissemination is not that much active. The NGOs in his area are mainly working on health, blood donation etc. In the process of information dissemination a political party should serve as a link between local needs and national policy making. But the most effective way to translate people's demands into govt. policies was definitely public opinion expressing itself through media pressure.

Political parties have to play a contributory role in the information dissemination process but they are not active at all. The exporters alleged that MP/MLAs are not at all helpful. They are of the opinion that the local MP can do a lot of work and solve many of the existing infrastructural problems but they are not interested in all these activities. Hence, the progress of the work is also getting hampered.

The media representatives opined that national policies never incorporate local demands. e.g. there are lots of MPs from Malda but they hardly discuss about Mango exports in the parliament. So when central govt. and state govt. adopt any policy they can inform people through instruments like press conferences. Political parties' role in national policy making have to be impartial. Media and NGO can take combined initiative to translate people's demands into Govt. policies through protest demonstration. Political parties should communicate regularly with the government in order to ensure proper flow of information.

Regarding the Role of **Government**, the **D.M.** strongly felt that a proper market information system can go long way in boosting Mango exports to different foreign destinations. High quality Mango is already available and there is already a number of enterprising exporters present in Malda. *What is necessary is information about assured markets and proper infrastructure facilities.* He also said that district level Govt. officials can take adequate initiatives to boost up exports as per the guidelines from the respective ministries and he felt that availability of fund is not at all a problem

The **D.H.O.** *emphasized promotion of various export related training programmes for grassroots level people so that they can participate in export promotion.*

The legislator felt that planning should be based on grassroots' demands. So first of all it is important to inform the grassroot levels about their rights. In order to inform them it is necessary to hold discussions in Gram Sabhas. And he added in every village there are some literate skilled people. So their opinions should take into account while making Govt. policies. In his opinion Malda media is active and they play a good role in generating awareness among people. But again he added media should be regularly and clearly informed by the Govt. so that they are able to spread awareness among people.

The exporters added that Govt. officials should inform local organizations like NGOs, public organizations etc about various policies. After that these organizations shall inform villagers and local people because most of the villagers are illiterate. According to them income tax procedures should change. If Govt. reduces income tax then exporters will be benefitted. Central Govt. should look after export related issues. State Govt. should not interfere on matters pertaining to export policies. *The Govt. should give priority to agricultural production because Indian economy is mainly based on agriculture. And in order to inspire the farmers it is necessary to give soft loans to the farmers and Govt. has to be attentive to the demands for a good infrastructure.* They complained Mahadipur and Hili ports are not in a good position. There

is lack of facilities in the ports. Poor condition of the roads is a major constraint for the exporters. And it is difficult to communicate with Western countries for exporting mangos from Malda.

Govt. of India should transfer information to the exporters. And DGFT should deal this issue. NFTP can communicate the exporters through DGFT. When they visit Govt. office his demands get adequate hearings.

The exporters further stressed that every type of exporter has been benefited from export policies. But the subsidy under DEPB decreased from 3% to 1.5%. Hili, Changrabazar are not getting facilities as Govt. of India's export office is situated near Mahadipur and far from Changrabazar, Hili. Another problem is shortage of employees in Govt. offices. It is also true employment rates and economic developments have improved in recent years. ***Major handicaps include Technological underdevelopment, no airport facility, marketing problems.*** If roads become 4 lane roads export will increase 3 times. Arbitrary detection of export products by the marketing dept.s because of corruption (check post) is also a deterrant to export promotion.. Export should be treated as an essential service. ***An export potential centre is needed in Malda.*** Limitations exist in govt. policies. Policies should base on field survey. People's participation is also important in making policies .Though some of the government policies help in their exports but still there are certain problems like they are supposed to pay agricultural tax once in a year but in Hili and Mahadipur border areas they have to pay this tax twice as the Balurghat police force behave with them rudely.

The general sentiment seemed to reiterate that if Govt. wants to improve its policy making and its implementation process then Govt. has to think about grassroots' needs and demands. People's rights to make their demands and voices heard at policy-making levels ought not to be denied. Government officials should inform media about different policies so that they can disseminate this information to the lower levels but they do not function like this.

The role of the common people in this respect ought to be highlighted. According to the D.M. the most effective way to make people's demands heard in policy making circles would be a combined initiative of the Media, NGOs and the Govt. functionaries. The exporters association can be informed about these policies so that the information percolates down to the small exporters.

MURSHIDABAD

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

With regard to **Export Promotion measures**, Mr. Kairy, an exporter had no idea of NFTP and export related policies. He heard about the WTO cell from the Horticulture Mission and he was aware of RTI Act but never had occasion to operationalize it.

Another point he raised is that there are demands of Indian products abroad but supply is less due to lack of production. Flowers can be exported to various foreign destinations particularly Lotus, Indian Rose etc because these flowers have a demand in foreign countries. But better infrastructure is needed to increase export. He informed that Mangos and Litchis have been exported to Dubai from Amoipara, Jiaganj. But quantity is not appreciable. Another exporter, Mr. Sarkar said different varieties of mango are exported to Germany. Mangoes exported to Bangladesh have been sent to different gulf countries through Bangladesh. Maximum mango export takes place from Jangipur sub-division.

Representatives of the Mango growers opined that Export promotion initiative has never been taken seriously by the Govt. The Govt. has on occasions urged growers to do organic farming but due to lack of infrastructure it is very difficult to start organic farming in Murshidabad.

On the issue of **Awareness about NFTP 2004-09**, the Project Director of the District Rural Development (D.R.D.) Cell, Mr. Mesbahul Haque, and WBCS expressed awareness about the NFTP. He didn't hear of WTO Cell. The MP was very much aware of NFTP & RTI Act and mentioned NFTP is mainly export oriented and RTI Act will benefit urban people rather than rural people. *Only conscious people can benefit from such acts*

An exporter who exports flowers like chandramallika, dalia to Bangladesh, Thailand, Nepal, Dubai and Bhutan and also imports seeds from Thailand, had never heard of NFTP or WTO cell. The Director General of export has a good idea about NFTP.

A mango grower had heard of NFTP but didn't know anything about this policy.

Regarding **awareness about any pro poor policies / schemes** it seemed that the exporters read newspapers regularly and watch TV everyday. They get information mainly from visual media and felt that the media plays a major role in dissemination of information. He also came to know about different schemes from websites (not specifically about any particular scheme). They have access to newspapers like Ananda Bazar Patrika, Aajkal, Pratidin and watch news channels in TV like Star Ananda, Aajtak.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

According to the exporters, *the government officials themselves are not updated so we cannot expect them to generate awareness on these policies among others*. Though the government policies incorporate the needs and demands of the grassroot people, there is no proper implementation and this may be due to the lack of interest of the government officials in disseminating the information to the grassroot people.

On the question, **why the government Policies do not deliver the desired result**, the Project Director of the District Rural Development Cell, observed that, there is a huge gap between policy making and implementation. Because policy makers frame the policy with the best of intentions, theoretically policies are attractive but implementation has not been done properly. It happens because *policy makers' donot have any field experience*. So in order to implement the policies adequately it is necessary to base policy formulation on proper field study by the policy makers for a sustained period in order to gauge the needs and aspirations of the people at the grassroot level. A grower of Murshidabad said "second name of Murshidabad is *crop museum*". Soil is very fertile in Murshidabad but the Govt.'s initiative in promoting export leaves a lot to be desired.

Regarding **Perceptions about RTI**, Mr. Haque was aware of RTI Act. He said general people still don't know how to utilize RTI Act. *Public awareness regarding RTI Act is very less. RTI's main objective is to suppress the dictatorship of the bureaucrats and to reach grassroots level. But the implementation of RTI Act is far from realizing its basic objectives.*

Exporters, generally speaking, did not seem to have any idea about the formation and functioning of WTO Cell, NFTP and other export related policies. Though they were aware of the RTI Act but did not benefit by way of operationalizing it in any way.

Mr. Amar Mallik, grower, did not have any idea about WTO cell. He was aware of RTI Act but he never tried to use it. However he did recall some seminars being held for informing people about RTI Act.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

Regarding discussions on Trade and Economic Issues at the Local / Panchayat Level

Mr. Haque observed that Govt. offices organize public hearings for informing people about RTI Act. He attends panchayat meetings quite regularly. Panchayat organizes awareness generating campaigns but he was in doubt as to much of popular awareness was buttressed by these programmes.

Like other interviewees, Mr. Balam Kairy, an exporter pointed out that Panchayat members or parties hardly discussed export related issues. There has been no Jan Sunani (public hearing) on export related issues but a lot of work has been done on public health as the health department is very active. Information should reach the Panchayat office in the form of literature so that the grassroot people can access those documents. Political parties can also disseminate information easily to the grassroot people. Government infrastructure is weak. *MPs/MLAs discuss about trade related issues but do not involve the local people in the discussions.* There has been some discussions on the export related issues and other economic policies. Export of silk, mango and vegetables were also discussed. But there is a doubt whether the grassroot people are benefited by the government policies. A marketing outlet is required for proper marketing of their products.

Mr. Amar Mallik, a grower stated that *export and trade related policies are discussed in seminars only but there is no practical implementation of those policies. Lots of seminars had organized in Murshidabad but there is no progress.* Result is ultimately zero. Seminars are mainly held in Zila Parishad. Horticulture Minister was present in that seminar. But after that no initiative has been taken by the Govt. to promote export. He attended Panchayat meetings. He observed economic and trade related issues have but discussed in the meetings but result is insignificant. Proper implementation of the policies has not done yet. Public hearings were never held in his area. *What is necessary is to develop an ethos of result orientation whenever a policy contemplates meaningful change.*

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

Mr. Adhir Chowdhury, an MP, emphasized that Agriculture is the main source of our economy but agriculture has become saturated. In Murshidabad population, education and employment have increased simultaneously. Trafficking and smuggling have also increased at a higher rate. Girl trafficking becomes a major problem in Malda and Murshidabad, he added. Illegal trade with Bangladesh has also increased very much.

Govt. has introduced 3 tier systems. But *people's participation is very less for implementing Govt. policy properly.*

From the view point of an exporter ,it has come out that lack of market opportunities along with information gap create hurdles for exporting Indian products in foreign markets. According to him *mainly big business houses and big exporters have benefited from export policies because they can get adequate information very quickly.*

However, the Representatives of the growers felt that *local demands have never been incorporated in national policies.* There is a conflict between political leaders and civil servants. If political leaders want to do good work civil servants become barriers and vice versa. Fund is not a problem for export promotion. *Major problem is lack of infrastructure.* Govt. gives subsidy for chemical fertilizer. Crores of rupees have been funded by the Govt. but it has no utilization. *Farmers are not being informed about the different techniques and methods of organic farming. As a result they are reluctant to use that method for production.*

On the question of **How can the up-linking and down-linking be facilitated between the Grass root stakeholders and the policy makers**, the M.P. opined that policies are basically based on grassroots demands but implementation is not proper. Regarding dissemination of information he opined that the policy could be made to trickle down from Govt. officials to grassroots levels.

On the issue of identifying who **are the key players in framing policies**, Mr.Haque observed that in the process of policy implementation a draft frame needs to be sent to Govt. executives for expressing their views. For e.g.. at the time of NREG, he got a draft and he sent a and his feedback had been adopted by the policy makers.

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

In Mr.Haque's view there is a problem in Govt. planning otherwise mango, litchi can be exported from Murshidabad. Silk also can be exported but the quality of silk has been deteriorating. Silk artisans are also very poor. So ***up-gradation of the present level of quality of the products is necessary***. State and Central Governments have to take initiative together for export promotion. ***Private entrepreneurs should also take initiative for exporting indigenous products abroad.***

The M.P. opined that Credit ***support is needed for export promotion. Lack of technology is a big problem. There is no market opportunity for agricultural production along with communication problems. Once again the need for infrastructure development was clearly highlighted.***

Jute can be exported to different foreign destinations as developed countries are quite health conscious, particularly in western world. To export Jute, technology up gradation is an imperative. Again silk can become an export product because there are lots of good artisans in Murshidabad. ***In other words, even in the field of exports there is a lot of scope for diversification, which is in line with the twin objectives highlighted by the NFTP, namely, economic development and employment generation.***

Local resources have to be utilized properly. Murshidabad has fertile lands which can be used for agricultural production. So that vegetables can also be exported to foreign markets. Crop diversification is also necessary. Unfortunately, however, the farmers are not being informed about the different techniques and methods of organic farming. As a result they are reluctant to use that method for production.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Regarding **the role of the Media**, Mr.Haque expressed the view that the media is becoming commercialized. Media don't give importance to grassroots news. They mainly target political parties. This was reiterated by the M.P. who felt that the media was not playing the desired role in generating awareness among people.

The exporters believed that the ***Media can really play a vital role in generating awareness among people but media have become politically biased.*** Local media have not covered any news or issues on export and livelihood of farmers. . Local NGOs are not aware of all these issues; their main focus is on revenue collection. SHGs exist and they function well.

Mr. Mallik, a grower, pointed out media always neglect agriculture and trade related issues. Though our economy is mainly agriculture oriented but agriculture has always been neglected by

every sector. No program has been organized by visual media regarding rural development. So media's role is very doubtful in generating awareness among people about trade and export related issues.

So far as **the Role of Political parties is concerned**, Mr.Haque opined that the existence of political parties is very important for a democratic country. There are limitations of political parties but media's criticism should be composed and responsible. And political parties have a great role to play in information dissemination but in reality it has not happened. Govt. officials also have to play a prominent role in generating information regarding development issues but they are also self concerned and pay lip service to development concerns of the rural folk. But if somebody wants to do good work he/she can do it. Panchayat, NGOs and local media can articulate their demands and needs to the government.

In short, given the way in which media agencies have functioned thus far, *various cross-sections are skeptical about the role of the media in functioning as a tool of advocacy in providing inputs for the policy-making process. A climate and ethos of social commitment and responsibility needs to be cultivated for different sections to play a positive and complementary role in policy-making.*

DARJEELING

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

In relation to **Export Promotion measures**, Mr.S.Chhetri , D.H.O.,Darjeeling, informed that a number of products are exported from Darjeeling. According to him, tea is exported from Darjeeling to mostly Russian countries. Orange is exported through Siliguri to Bangladesh. Cardamom goes to Delhi and from Delhi it is exported to the Middle East countries. Various types of flowers are exported from Darjeeling district, particularly from Kalimpong sub-division. Orchid, Cactus and other type of plants are exported to different foreign countries from Kalimpong's nurseries by the private traders.

Schemes are available, but the subsidies granted to the poor farmers are insufficient:

Four hundred hectares of land for **orange** production had been provided by the NHM for the farmers. But the number of farmers who applied for the land to NHM is very less. For protected cultivation, NHM will provide two poly houses. For establishment of these poly houses, Rs. 62,500 will be provided by the mission. 50% subsidy will be given for vermin composed. These schemes are in progress.

He also stated that cost of cultivation per hectare for a particular plant is Rs. 90,000. Govt. will provide 50% subsidy for this plantation. According to him, this is a very meagre subsidy for the poor farmers. If they cultivate liliun, it will cost Rs. 4 lakh per hectare. 40,000 liliun plants can be cultivated on 1 acre of land. ***Fund is a big problem for the farmers to cultivate these costly flowers which have demands in foreign countries.*** There is 50% subsidy for organic farming. i.e. for two and half acre organic farming, a farmer can get Rs10,000.

NHM should increase the amount of subsidy so that poor farmers can benefit more. Because of poor condition farmers can't improve their livelihood through Govt. schemes. So if subsidy increases, farmers will benefit more.

Mr.S. Chhetri, ADM (Development),Darjeeling initiated the discussion by stating that concept of NFTP comes from 1990s economic liberalization policies of Indian economy like promotion of EXIM policy in 1993 which came into force in 1998. According to him, the concept of open economy is basically opening our door to foreign countries. Govt. is not doing justice to its

people because as a result of such policies foreign countries or rather foreign companies are benefited.

He also stated that *tea is the main export product of Darjeeling. But simultaneously politics exist in exporting tea and labour problem is also a big problem.* For Cinchona plantation, more than 25 scientists and 100 staffs have been provided by the Govt. in Darjeeling. He is in additional charge of Cinchona plantation.

Mr. Manoranjan Roy, Panchayat Pradhan, informed that **Pineapple** from Bidhan Nagar is exported to Russian countries. Calypso had established a Pineapple factory at Bidhan Nagar for export promotion. But Calypso's aims have diverted, he said. According to him *Govt. policies are good but public are unable to implement those policies properly.* For Pineapple production Govt. provides Rs6000 for 1 acre land. 200-300 people have already got the subsidy and the Panchayat is expected to provide subsidy to 600 more applicants.

Farmers are basically used to traditional modes of cultivation so govt. organizes training courses on organic farming. At Bidhan Nagar, panchayat attempts to inform farmers through meetings about govt. policies and other development oriented works. These meetings can be called jan sunani.

Dr. Nabin Prakash Pradhan, Agricultural Development Officer, Potato, Darjeeling, informed that Potato is mainly exported from Darjeeling. Here, summer potato is produced whereas in other parts winter potato is produced. There is no initiative from the government regarding potato export. Besides potato, orange and spices particularly large cardamom, are exported from Darjeeling.

Mr. Biswajit Das, from FOCIN (Federation of Chambers and Industry) informed that Pineapple is mainly exported to Nepal and Bhutan. Within India it also goes to Delhi. They are mainly aware of various government policies from the newspaper. They know that government has declared this area as one of the AEZs of West Bengal. Dabur and Calypso are the food processors of this region.

Dr. Farnish, President of the Horticultural Society, Kalimpong, pointed out that Floricultural items, handicrafts are exported to European countries, South East Asia, American countries. Darjeeling orange is exported but through out the year quality production is not available, so they are mainly used for local consumption, some go down to the plains of Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. They have started exporting horticultural products from 1950; their exporters have not availed the facility. The facilities that they got from the government are banking and finance. But there is limited backup which is given to the exporters. *As far as horticulture is concerned, because of globalization the quality of products has improved and they have also streamlined their products as they have to export globally.*

Mr. Ghulam Mohammed, an exporter, was found to be aware of various export related schemes such as VKUY (5% subsidy on FOB), DFIA (Govt. incentive) and other subsidies on textile/leather export. Being an exporter, he has utilized the benefits such as VKUY, DEPB from Govt. schemes. He opined that big and small exporters can derive maximum benefits from export policies. His organization is mainly involved in the export of flowers all over the world in USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Thailand, France and other South East Asian countries. **But he has not heard about NFTP.** They have exported all on their own effort without taking any help or subsidy from the government. But they have exported their products following the export policy.

With respect to possibility of export promotion, Siliguri, is the ideal export zone in West Bengal as many agricultural products like pineapple, tea, fruits, and flowers can be exported from here. All these products have huge demand in the foreign markets. But *infrastructure is inadequate.* Therefore, farmers with their own initiative try to sell their products outside the local markets. *But taking advantage of the economic condition of the farmers and also lack of access to outside markets a section of middlemen are purchasing the output from the farmers and selling them in the wholesale market at a much higher price thereby gaining higher profits.* Thus, the

farmers are the worst victims in this entire value chain. Moreover, government has also been deprived from earning revenue.

The media representatives were found to be aware of NFTP and RTI Act. They were talking about AEZ, PEZ, and NREGS. Exports mainly take place through Phoolbari border (Nepal), Kalimpong, Changrabandha, Hilli, Jalapel (Tibet i.e. the silk route) and through Nathula border. The SAARC countries have opened their economy for better trade opportunities and the visa process has also been simplified with a view to promotion of regional cooperation. They said ***though the main objective of NFTP is export promotion but inadequate infrastructure is one of the major constraints hindering enhancement of exports.*** Exporters have to visit Kolkata for every little purpose. They observed further that the media has not played any role in dissemination of information regarding export policies. Siliguri had been declared as Pineapple-Export Zone and Darjeeling had been declared as Tea-Export Zone, he said. Though Bidhan Nagar has been declared as PEZ but infrastructure has not been made till now. More or less 15 acre lands have already been handed over by the state govt. But till now farmers and traders have not derived any benefit.

In respect of **specific awareness about NFTP 2004-09**, the DHO was found to be unaware of the term NFTP. Nobody had consulted him in the making of national policies such as NFTP. The Panchayat Pradhan was found to be unaware of NFTP, WTO Cell and RTI Act. Level of awareness regarding export policies was rather low.

He has heard the term NFTP but no knowledge about it in details. He has no idea about WTO cell.

Mr. Biswajit Das opined that the farmers actually do not get any benefit from Pineapple Export Zone. ***Due to globalization, new market opportunities have come up but they are unaware of NFTP and RTI. They are completely ignorant of any government policy.***

The President of the Horticultural Society of Kalimpong pointed out that they have heard about NHM, they access internet and update themselves. The directives of the NHM has percolated to the district level from the State but has not reached further to the lower levels. Government has already sent 1 crore 25 lakhs over the year. Good mixture of people in horticulture and it is important that all the members involved should be able to avail any new scheme. ***Employment has decreased as all the rural people together cannot be employed at the same time but if priority is given more on horticulture, floriculture, then young people would prefer to stay back.***

The exporters were not aware of the terms 'NFTP', 'RTI Act' and 'WTO' Cell. According to them ***media is playing a very good role in dissemination of information. Exporters get information on economic and trade issues from media. There is local newspaper like Janpath Samachar and local news channel like CCN.***

Regarding **Awareness about any pro poor policies / schemes**, it seemed that there is lot of local politics related to NREGS, otherwise poverty will be eliminated within 3 months by implementing NREGS properly. This scheme is basically political party oriented. Political members are getting maximum benefits from this scheme.

Regarding employment generation he said there are two aspects- (1) if someone goes by the figure employment has increased, (2) if someone go by the actual grassroots level livelihood, there is hardly any improvement. Some facilities are there for the villagers but not 100%. What Govt. is spending is only 15%-20% of the total funds allocated for the people.

Regarding the **Source of information**, the exporters get their information about export and business including market opportunities through agents from Kolkata. The agents get to know about various policies and benefits from DGFT and inform exporters through phone and e-mail or

by personally meeting them. Exporters have to fill up the registration form of APEDA for VKUY and DEPB and also for exporting products to different countries. According to them, these 2 above mentioned schemes are enough to export in Bangladesh. Politicians never play any role in informing exporters about such policies. They have no time to inform people about economic issues. Might be they are not aware of such policies. They are mainly concerned about development related issues such as roads, water; sanitation etc. Exporters get every type of information from agents only. Whatever information they get on trade issues is from media. According to the media personnel, farmers are not benefiting from export or trade policies. Ananda Bazar Patrika publishes articles on export-import policies on regular basis. It also publishes business related news in the context of north Bengal

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

On the question **Why the government Policies do not deliver the desired result**

The media personnel suggested that govt. officials should be accountable but in reality they are not responsible for their work. This view was reiterated by the DHO:

“Govt. officials should be accountable and answerable to the public as they are public servants”.

The Panchayat Pradhan felt that one of the reasons for improper implementation of govt. policies is natural disasters. Policies are drafted often without an eye for local conditions and possible calamities like floods or rains, and are therefore often abandoned in the event of impending disasters like natural calamities. Mr. Biswajit Das observed that since the number of food processing industries is less, so they send their products to North India. But the bridge through which they used to transport their materials was broken and for that reason they suffered a loss. The government was supposed to compensate 20% of their losses but they were not given any amount. Therefore, *there is a huge gap between the policy formulation and policy implementation.*

Representatives from the Traders’ Association pointed out that the various stakeholders have no clear idea about how their demand and needs would reach the highest levels of authority. Tax paid is 1% of their sale. Above 1 crore revenue is collected from the regulated market. But the Govt. cannot spend even 10% of 1 cr. for developmental purposes. Government is ignorant of how to utilize the money in the regulated market in different government departments.

The view seemed widespread that Government gives partial importance to the public needs but all the projects of the government are not relevant to them always.

On the issue of **Perception about RTI**, the DHO held that it could help the farmers or any other person. If properly enforced the RTI will bring transparency and clarity in governmental activities and provide a crystal clear picture. People can know everything about Govt. activities like how much money is provided by the Govt. and how much it exactly spends for the people. The money which people get from Govt. for development purpose, that money is paid by everyone like farmers, officers, businessman in the form of taxes. So it is people’s right to know about every Govt. scheme and activities.

Some like the Agriculture Development Officer have an idea about RTI Act but no cases of RTI have been recorded till now.

The media personnel felt that even if they were very much clear about RTI Act people, by and large, are not aware about RTI Act. There is lack of publicity, that’s why people are not aware of this act till now. Though media had published articles on RTI act but common people were not that much benefited by those articles.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

So far as **Discussion on Trade and Economic Issues at the Local / Panchayat Level** goes Panchayat and govt. officials along with Achash (NGO) discuss people's needs and demands. But these discussions mainly take place on promoting organic farming.

Monthly meetings have been conducted by the panchayat regarding govt. policies, the Pradhan pointed out. In this meeting panchayat takes resolution on the govt. policies. Annual action plan of the panchayat comes from grassroots level. Sansad meetings were held twice annually where villagers could participate. From these meetings proposals were sent to block levels and mahakuma parishad.

People's participation is needed during policy formulation but in practice policy is formulated without any meaningful popular participation. Though policy exists but implementation is often compromised due to corruption. Janasunanis do not take place here.

MLA/MP, political parties never discuss these issues. Only once S.D.O. came to meet them.

GP meeting takes place but there is no discussion on pineapple export. But mainly the meetings are related to development and infrastructure facilities of the village. There is meeting on NREGS but the system of meeting has become more political leader oriented than for the common people and the main concern of the panchayat leaders seems to be how to ensure more votes. The Pradhans of Gram Panchayat are not even aware of the grassroots level situation and their cultivation practice.

The bridge linking the market and the main road for transportation of pineapples collapsed and the produce perished but government did not pay any heed to it. Government is completely ignorant about the situation of the farmers. There is a grievance that the people are not getting the required help from the government and instead government has been using armed forces to keep them away. ***The meetings held by both the State and Central Government do not take into account the demands and needs of the local people. There is no dearth of schemes but the extent of implementation of these schemes is doubtful.***

Dr.Farnish observed that the Horticulture Society is the pioneers in horticulture department as they were the first to convince the government of West Bengal and Darjeeling Hill Council to establish a horticulture department both in Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

Horticulture Society had placed an Export potential scheme on Floriculture and the government appreciated their concept. Even they played an active role in establishing the export oriented zones in Darjeeling. Uttar Banga Krishi Bishwa Bidyaalya constituted a governing body with the government and Darjeeling Hill Council. There had been no backup support but horticulture and floriculture is still standing. There has been no public hearing in Kalimpong so far.

The exporters emphasized that MLA and political parties never discuss economic problems and trade related issues. They do not have any idea about decision making process of economic policies. ***They affirmed that at state, district and panchayat levels, discussions must take place on economic and trade issues otherwise development can't be possible.*** Exim Bank had organized a conference on export related issues. It is evident that exporters have never been consulted in the making of economic policies such as NFTP. Public hearings on trade related issues never occurred in his area. Whatever information they get on trade issues is from the media.

The manager of the Holombo Nursery in Kalimpong emphasized that ***MP/MLAs discuss about economic or trade related policies but at an official level. We need more public representation from them. Besides MP/MLAs, other local functionaries are non-existent.***

Regarding local inputs in NFTP, the DHO felt convinced that they have no role in the framing of Govt. policies.

During policy formulation at the Central level the government officials at all levels are not consulted but in case of schemes at the district level, they get a chance to participate in the policy making process. Therefore, their participation as a whole is less in the process of policy making. Political leaders, different line departments of the government, also participate in the policy making. But others have generally not been consulted ever for policy making.

On the question of **Impact on livelihood** there is no significant impact of globalization on the livelihood of the people as most of them are unaware of this concept. The floriculturists of Kalimpong have a very clear and good knowledge about globalization and its impact. Due to pineapple production, market economy has improved. ***Employment opportunities have not increased and government employment is nil. People on their own have generated employment opportunities for themselves. They did not get any government help in this regard.*** Government policies do not directly address livelihood concerns but the local NGOs, Horticulture Society are trying to do this. Handicrafts, horticulture are some of their livelihood options. Through the NGOs these are done. NGOs are very active in Kalimpong.

They used to get export concessions but now that has been removed. There has been a sharp decline in the employment rate. The most important sector to be emphasized during policy formulation is agriculture as it is the foundation.

Siliguri is experiencing economic development because globalization has a good impact on its trade and economy. The impact can be seen on industrialization in Siliguri. Employment has also increased in Siliguri. Regulatory committee is mainly businessmen oriented. Small farmers have not been benefited from this committee. Livelihood of pineapple farmers has not been changed at all in Bidhan Nagar. For export promotion Govt. has to take initiative. Though it is true Govt. officials are quite active than before. They should be accountable to the Govt. and Govt. should be accountable to the people.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

There is a gap between policy formulation and implementation. The policy does not include people's needs in the hills. Therefore, it is important for the policy makers to go down to the grassroot level before policy making. Even after 60 years of independence, lack of infrastructure remains a persistent problem.

Exporters are not directly involved in decision-making process. They are not consulted during policy formulation. The policies are mainly formulated at the Central or State level. Organizations like Horticulture Society placed different projects and schemes to the government directly but often it is better to approach the MP first and then may be he can help in interacting with the officials of concerned departments. ***It is generally felt that lack of proper communication is one of the factors for which the local demands of the people could not be incorporated into policy making. They are not interested to use any specific mechanism so that their voice reaches the government officials as they do not have time for advocacy.***

Most of the time it is seen that due to communication gap the local peoples' representatives implement policies without considering the grassroot people needs. But they cannot be fully responsible for this because of the bureaucratic decision-making framework conferred by the Indian Constitution. The demands originating from the grassroot level are not being effectively

addressed due to bureaucratic and unnecessary delays in the decision-making process and conflicting political interest of the MPs/MLAs operating at the back of their minds.

Regarding **How can the up-linking and down-linking be facilitated between the Grassroot stakeholders and the policy makers**, the media personnel believed that, the effective mechanism of translating grassroot demands to the policy makers is awareness generation where again media can play an active role. They also stated that all the grassroot people should be able to put forward their problems to the concerned department in an organized manner. ***The linkage between the common people and Peoples' representatives needs to be stronger.***

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

The DHO believed that the people always demand but they are not actually aware of their actual needs. The Agricultural Development Officer opined that all the policies are being formulated after consulting the needs, advantages and disadvantages of grassroot people. But implementation is faulty. As regards facilities provided to the farmers, mini kit and potato seeds are supplied to them by the government. Government has also fixed the price of potato at Rs10 per kg. He has no idea whether farmers apply for loans from the bank.

The Manager of the Holombo Nursery pointed out that the mechanism used to communicate grassroot needs to the government machinery is that each department would address the concerned problems like if it is related to horticulture, then Horticulture department is there to solve those problems but there is no need to have a separate department to make the policies for that area. He has repeatedly stated that ***lack of infrastructure is one of the biggest gaps in these areas.*** Due to communication gap need of the people do not reach the concerned government department. Whatever the government feels right is right but when it comes to grassroot level, the priority changes slightly. Therefore, before formulating or implementing any schemes it is very necessary to do field work, interact with the grassroot community. The most effective mechanism in his opinion to translate your demands into government policies is to set up a grievance cell where people can put forward their problems and grievances related to various policies and schemes.

An exporter stated that he wants to translate his demands into Govt. policies through DGFT. He will send application to DGFT from where the demand will be forwarded to the Ministry of Commerce. According to him, ***whatever facilities they get, all from DGFT. It is playing a very good role in export promotion. Political parties are not active in generating information or in helping exporters to export more.***

The media personnel drew attention to the fact that **Siliguri** has been the Export Zone for pineapple which has warehouses, cold storage, packing facilities, Food Park etc. Many such policies and schemes have been undertaken by the government to increase exports from Siliguri and all these have been possible through public-private initiative. This would smoothen the process of work as government system is constrained by bureaucracy. The geographical location of Siliguri can be used as an advantage for export purpose and this is possible through ***public-private partnership.***

They stated that MPs/MLAs had never played any role in generating information among people. They meet public only at the time of elections. He added that ruling party along with the help of MPs/MLAs takes decision about economic policies. Bureaucrats do not frame policies. They have the role to implement policies properly.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Reflecting on **the Role of Media**, the DHO held that in the hills, readers of newspapers are very few. He stated that he had not been consulted by anyone in the making of any policy. Govt. officials mainly have to implement Govt. policies. Those who read newspapers come to know about Govt. policies and schemes. *In rural areas, TV is the mass media. Electronic media has played a prominent role in generating awareness among people.*

Regarding media's role in dissemination of information the Panchayat Pradhan informed that local news channel CCN and local print media come to Panchayat office for collecting news of villages. Media and NGO do not play any active role in information dissemination on these issues to the general mass. People came to know about schemes of National Horticulture Mission from the local newspaper. Media or newspaper does not play any active role and most of the news is related to the incidents of Kolkata. *Media has become very commercial and is not interested to generate awareness on these issues.*

However, the media personnel differed and held that the Media has a significant role to play though some of *the newspapers and TV channels are very commercial but still they have a separate column for farmers and grassroot people.* Media also has some constraints and limitations like space crisis in newspapers, competition etc. They felt that **it** is difficult to incorporate grassroots level demand into govt. policies, he said. In this regard media can play a good role in translating people's demand into national/state policies. Media basically publish articles on the drawbacks of the policies. Media also inform govt. by publishing those articles that though policies are good but there is implementation problem.

On the **Role of Political parties**, the DHO opined that, as political parties are elected representatives, they make rules and regulations. So development depends on the idea and future look out of the political parties. Political leaders sometimes take an initiative to disseminate information about new schemes and policies to the local people. The process of policy making should start from the grassroot i.e. the grassroot demands should be incorporated during policy formulation but in reality this does not happen though in Darjeeling, some of the government departments consult the grassroot community, discuss their problems and communicate those to the higher authority responsible for policy making.

An exporter stated that politicians never play any role in informing exporters about such policies. Politicians have a role to play because they are the policy framers. Policies should be based on grassroots level demands and grassroots level participation in policy making process is needed. He stated that every political party is self-concerned, not grassroots level oriented. That's why policy implementation has not been done properly. That is the reason for which govt. has to take poverty elimination policies like mid-day meal, NREGS for BPL families after 60 years of our independence. Again there is found to be corruption while implementing these policies.

On the **Role of Government**, the DHO held that the people should educate themselves first and should become aware of their developmental needs and the Govt. also should come forward and improve education, health and economic conditions.

The ADM emphasized that most of the bureaucrats pay only lip service to the people's concerns but they are not actually going to the depth of the policies. Maximum benefit from Govt. policies will come if Govt. officials feel for the people and work for it. It depends on individual to individual. There is dearth of pro-poor schemes. But implementation of those policies/schemes should be proper.

Mr. Chettri gave some suggestions for improving the policy making procedure. He said Govt. is going to implement national/state policies through Govt. officials. So selection procedure of the bureaucrats should be proper. Govt. should select those people who are actually committed to the satisfaction of people's wants and needs.

Policy makers sitting at a bungalow will never have a clear insight into popular aspirations and needs. Field work is needed for proper policy. He also added that politicians don't have anything to do with the implementation. It is the bureaucrats who are in charge of implementing it from upper level to grassroots level. So long the procedure is not correct, development will not take place. Govt. officials are also self-centred. At least politicians and Govt. officials should be proactive and well educated.

Since the cost of seeds is rising, so government should give subsidy on those seeds so that even the small farmers are able to purchase them. Thailand, Philippines have huge production of pineapples. In India also, we have to focus more on the infrastructural development. The capitalists get a large share if the processed food is exported to foreign countries. Therefore, after production on small scale the processed foods can be sent to the foreign countries. Pineapple should be included under Crop Insurance Scheme. The need for security nets like crop insurance schemes was emphasized.

Government should give more priority to the grassroot level associations. Pineapple Development Cooperative Society has also been formed. Government has disbursed fund of Rs.3 crores for Pineapple AEZ. But in Bidhannagar, transport and communication is not developed. Government collects revenue more than one crore from Bidhannagar Pineapple regulated market and the Chairman of this regulated market is the DM himself.

According to Arun Mondol, President, ACHAS (NGO) the marketing mechanism should be such that a person in USA can have a glass of pineapple every morning in his breakfast. Government should give focus on proper infrastructural development. He also stated that the fresh fruits should gradually capture the foreign market-this would help in overall development of the farmers.

Pineapple market is gradually expanding but the big exporters benefit most, the small traders and exporters are not getting any benefit. If the traders or exporters want to expand their market they need help from the government.

During policy formulation government should consult and discuss more with the grassroot level associations instead of Chamber of Commerce etc. The former should be given more priority. Formation of co-operatives has been emphasized for development. The traders are purchasing from the farmers at a lower rate and selling them at a much higher rate. The regulated market is for the big businessmen and not for the farmers.

Pineapple and tea are the main crops produced in Bidhannagar. Though rice is cultivated in some areas but mainly for self consumption. The Government ought to address the problems faced by the farmers of Bidhannagar and these specifically include: (1) Need for more research to enhance quality production of pineapple. (2) Information on right technology, methods of production not informed to the farmers; (3) Good seed, soil fertility, are also important factors to be considered during production.

It is important that the policies should be able to adapt to the world scenario. It should take into account the changes taking place around us and accordingly may be revised. West Bengal is lagging behind all other states in India in terms of trade so it is difficult to access any facilities in West Bengal.

Though political parties can serve as an effective link between local needs and national policy making but they have their own pre-determined agenda. Local people come to know about various government schemes initially through media. Therefore, it is important for the government to inform media and equip them more with the latest policies and schemes. They should also provide information on how a particular policy would benefit the local people. It has been found that policies are formulated properly but in times of implementation they do not reach the masses because these discussions remain within a particular circle of peoples representatives.

Therefore, the government should first identify and shortlist the exportable products and set up the infrastructure in a scientific way and accordingly frame the policies. This would benefit the farmers as well as the government in earning their revenues. Recently a trade route has been opened through Nathula Pass to China but now only border trading has been taking place, export has not been initiated yet. This has given a great opening for Siliguri to enhance its export.

So far as the **role of the common people** is concerned, increase in the number of participation of farmers is needed in the training programmes conducted by the government. In Darjeeling, the farmers are imparted training whenever a new scheme or policy is introduced in that area. More awareness on WTO aspects is needed to face the challenges in world trade.

The Horticulture Society has always raised its voice on behalf of the grassroot people in different workshops and seminars. As regards lack of grassroot participation in the policy formulation or decision-making process the manager stated that during policy formulation it is very much essential to consult each sector of economic development like people from sub-divisions, blocks, Gram Panchayats and then at the ward levels. Therefore, ***area wise needs of the people should be considered while formulating any policy.***

Media agencies do have a role in the sense that if right information is given it will definitely create an impact. The most effective way to translate grassroot demands to the government is everything should be taken into consideration, media, political parties, NGOs and we can just mark out the priorities from all concerned. The WTO regime holds an interesting aspect today; as India has become a global nation and lot of export-import happen to take place. We are already in the bandwagon, only thing is awareness has to be created among the general public to face the eventualities and challenges of globalization, how to make quality products and its maintenance. For this, backup support from all concerned govt. departments should be available to us to come to that standard of globalization and for exports.

NADIA

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

Regarding awareness about **Export Promotion measures**, the DHO, Mr. Chatterjee stated that among the agri export zones, Nadia district was declared as a vegetable export zone. But farmers didn't know what type of vegetables can be exported from Nadia district. In Nadia district mango, banana, litchi, guava are main cash crops. Mainly fruits and flowers can be exported from Nadia. Litchis are mainly produced at Krishnaganj, Nakashipara, Krishnanagar and Ranaghat.

Mr. Dipankar Saha, Sub-division Agricultural Officer, informed that Organic farming is being promoted and people are informed about the integrated and balanced use of fertilizers. Recently production has deteriorated as soil fertility has reduced due to indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers. So organic farming is gaining importance now and they are achieving the target very slowly. As US or European countries want the products free of any chemical fertilizer, so the

farmers should be motivated to adopt organic farming practices so that they can easily export good quality products to the European markets.

Representatives of NGOs and SHGs were found to be unaware of export related policies. Two persons are interested in exporting vegetables from Nadia i.e. Sudhanshu Sil, MP and Anup Dutta, businessman. Flowers like rose, tube rose etc are exported from Nadia. . Main problem of export from West Bengal was that cost of exporting vegetables from Kolkata Port to European countries is 4 times greater than cost of export from Mumbai port. But now this cost has been somewhat reduced because of the initiative taken by the MP. A counter for Indian vegetables and flowers has also been established in London. Such information were availed from unofficial sources and the media.

Once honey from India was exported to different countries. But now the scenario has changed. China has become the major honey exporter .India and Bangladesh now import honey from China.

Mr.M.K.Dutta, Assistant Director of Handloom was aware of the government of India scheme for export promotion, DEPM. He said that the co-operative societies at the district level which are under the handloom officers would implement these schemes.

Handloom offices implement different welfare schemes by the handloom office and the weavers are benefited by these welfare schemes through the co-operative societies.

In India on an average, 70% weavers are outside co-operative, in Nadia district also, many are outside co-operative. They work under Mahajans. A separate scheme has been made for the dormant co-operatives. In Nadia 20% of the co-operatives are active. This has led to the emergence of the concept of **cluster development**. There are 300-500 weavers in a cluster and each cluster consist of 10 groups. A new scheme has been formulated recently titled Integrated Handloom Development Scheme (IHDS) under this Cluster Development Programme. There will be 10 groups inside the cluster and the rest will form a group outside the cluster. Government has helped in these areas and handloom offices control entire cluster development programmes.

The MP **was** not aware of any export promotion scheme as such and he also stated that even today central government schemes are not that effective. The Central Government has allocated a fund of Rs.3 crores for an Export Mart in Phulia where there will be a vegetable dying cell, market Information Cell, computer designing centre etc. All kinds of updated information on manufacturing, design, price of yarn, will be available in this export mart . 50% of handloom export takes place from Phulia. This Export Mart is being set up so that the weavers can participate.

Representatives of SHGs and NGOs were generally not aware of any initiative taken by the government to promote exports, Or of different opportunities for exporting these products abroad. They do not have any idea about the procedures of export. So they have a fear of being cheated in the process if they do not have a license. This implies that they are completely ignorant of the procedures and opportunities of export.

Representatives from the media felt that one positive sign in case of West Bengal is that the exports of horticultural products have increased than before. Though this was possible because of cooperation from Indian government, but a significant drive was also taken from the West Bengal Government. There is a demand for these horticultural crops outside India and there this opportunity to increase exports to other countries. But exporters for their own benefits have monopoly pockets outside West Bengal. Much more importance has been given to these crops now and new technology has been applied for quality up gradation of these horticultural crops.In

Ranaghat a cold storage is being set up for fruit, flower and vegetable which would be convenient for the exporters. Bio-farming method of cultivation is gradually gaining importance. ***Thus export promotion is being addressed in a serious way through such means as infrastructure development, technology upgradation and the like.***

Farmers are now getting good price and also capturing the export market gradually after receiving training. Now, exporters directly approach the farmers.

Specific Initiatives taken by the government for increase of exports include: Project **Package Scheme (Special Features:**Loom modification, Training ,Sample based production) At the International Textile Fair, designer Ritu Beri was appointed to promote marketing of the handloom products. In 1990, they took this idea and even exported their products to Germany. They could participate in this International Fair with the help of the government held at Delhi. In 1999-2000 this scheme was transferred to a different scheme titled Development of Export Product and their Marketing (DEPM).

Shantipur Cluster Development Scheme was developed by textile committee, govt. of India. A prominent member of the weaver fraternity, Mr. Haripada Basak , was aware of various government schemes and has executed four government schemes from their co-operative. These schemes came up before 2004.

Due to the implementation of these schemes, new design patterns have emerged and as a result marketability has also improved. Particularly in tangail sarees, design pattern has improved a lot. Among the exportable items in Phulia 30-35% handloom is exported. Saree is not being exported, mainly scarf is exported.

The central government scheme once formulated is circulated to the handloom department and from there it gets distributed to the districts and then they get information about these schemes. They also send a guideline on the basis of which scheme is prepared.

So far as **Awareness about NFTP 2004-09** is concerned Mr. Chatterjee was not aware of the term “NFTP”. According to him, there are some rules and regulations for exporting products to foreign destinations. He said from NFTP and APEDA people can know about different export related rules and regulations in various countries. He also stated that crops which are produced in large quantity in our country have demand in other foreign countries. So while formulating national trade policy, policy makers consider these particular crops for export promotion.

Most members of government offices as well as other stakeholders had not heard the term NFTP. The MP, though unaware of the term “globalization” had heard of “NFTP” from media and friends, but not from Govt. office. He gave some ideas about the objectives of NFTP. Firstly, the national policy aims at crop diversification so that farmers can earn more from same agricultural land and can come out from traditional cultivation. Secondly, Indian Govt. can earn foreign currency by promoting export oriented policies. Southeast Asia along with gulf countries offers a big market for Indian products.

He opined that due to this foreign trade policy, we have market openness but the foreign countries are getting the benefits. We are unable to capture the market largely. Agricultural labourers are involved in multiple activities such as weaving, other miscellaneous work. Most of the time government policies are not properly executed.

On the issue of **Awareness about any pro poor policies / schemes**, the DHO observed that there is a Govt. scheme for promoting micro irrigation. It has been stipulated on paper that farmers can get upto 20% subsidy for micro irrigation but in reality the amount of the subsidy may be 5% or 10%. He said DM discussed with the D.H.O about various schemes like NREGA, Kitchen Garden Project etc. Mr. Chatterjee sent some draft projects and schemes to the DM’s

office. Under Kitchen Garden Project, women from different villages have been encouraged by the horticulture office to produce vegetables on the land adjacent to their homes. NHM will give seeds and manure to the villagers particularly to the women. He emphasized that farmers are also not motivated for better production and economic development. Many of them are illiterate. That's why they don't know what they have to do for growth and development.

The sub-divisional Agricultural Officer informed that they come to know about different government policies through official letters. People are much aware now. They attend meetings regularly. ***They are interested to know about the markets, export opportunities etc. The farmers are now much more aware than before. They search Internet and gather information on the market demand, explore more export opportunities.***

NGO representatives held that regarding any information related to government policy, they themselves collect information, though some information also comes to them from the Zilla Parishad, Block, but local Panchayat get these information much later. BDO himself comes to visit their organization. They keep contact with the officers at the district level. They also keep contact with the DEC office.

The representatives of Cooperative societies observed that they have heard about different government policies and development commissions' programme through website of Development Commissioner, Handloom, and email and also from Handloom Development Office.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

According to the Agricultural Officer, government officials are definitely accountable to the common people. He said the policies are being formulated based on the local demands though may not be implemented properly.

The media personnel felt that the government officials have now become more accountable than before as the farmers' awareness has increased.

Members of Cooperatives felt that as regards transparency and accountability of policy making, they are not accountable. The mindset up of the government officials is very bad and they treat others as servants. The policies do not percolate down to the handloom weavers. The Handloom office should help the weavers in all ways but here the situation is just the opposite. The benefits do not reach the masses.

According to Mr. Haripada Basak, government officials should be accountable. Some materials are produced in handloom while some are produced in powerloom. Government has provision of giving certain benefits for some of the handloom products like lungi. But some weavers are making lungi in powerloom and marketing them as handloom products. Therefore, every handloom sector has a vigilance department and each department has a deputy directorate who is monitoring the banned activities in the societies. In West Bengal also, there are some societies which are running powerlooms in name of handloom. ***Only if government updates the schemes then only they will be benefited. In other words, many of the schemes are dated and need to be thoroughly revamped in light of the emerging situation.***

Government officials should be accountable but in reality they are not. They do not know anything about the grassroot demands. They are only concerned with housing, infrastructure and all these. ***They feel that the officers should come directly to the weavers to know their problems.***

As to **Why the government Policies do not deliver the desired result** from the discussion it is evident that there are fallacies in rejuvenation programs. To overcome the fallacies Govt. officials have sent report to State Govt. and from State Govt. office, the report had been sent to the Central

Govt. The government policies deliver the desired results in some cases but gaps always exist. ***Therefore, it should be the endeavour of both the parties i.e. the policy makers and the grassroot people to identify the gaps and find solutions. It seemed that the general consensus was that Govt. policies do not deliver the desired results because there is lack of information among the people as well as among the Govt. officials. Another reason is the complexity of policy implementation.*** The system of administrative hierarchy in Govt. offices also hinders proper policy implementation. People don't know where to apply for trade license, fertilizers etc. In order to improve the policy making process Govt. has to remain neutral for every sector and ***grassroots level participation is needed in policy framing.*** There is only one officer in the entire district in the Handloom department whereas there are 200-300 Panchayats; so it is not possible for one individual to attend all the meetings but they sometimes attend meetings held at the Block level. Therefore, they face problem in monitoring.

Mr. Basak was emphatic that Government policies sometimes are unable to deliver desired results due to fault finding habit of the officials. They are more interested in finding fault in others rather than executing the work properly. Criticism seems to be more than guiding people in the right path. For instance, to extend the Health package scheme, government while allocating fund demands many documents from the weavers and as a result there is no progress in work. ***Policies are not being framed in consultation with the grassroot people. The policy makers have no link with the grassroot people, so they are unaware of their needs and demands. They do not have technical knowledge about handloom, textile.***

So far as **Perception about RTI** goes, the DHO was found to be unaware of WTO cell. He said he is the principle information officer of his district. Regarding RTI act he opined people, by & large, have the right to know about any Govt. policy or any information and Govt. officials are accountable to every one. They have to inform people about their queries within a time limit. Govt. gave advertisements in newspapers regarding RTI act. Lack of employees is a big problem of Govt. offices.

The Agricultural Officer as well as the Director of Handlooms were also not aware of the WTO Cell and its function. Though they know about RTI but they did not handle any such cases yet. According to the NGO representative, WTO cells have been established in other states but not in West Bengal. He heard of RTI act from media and unofficial sources. He stated that D.D.Os (Drawing and Disbursing Officer) are P.I.O (Principle Information Officer) of RTI act for respective depts. He sent an application to RTI block level officer but didn't get the reply within 30 days. Then he sent application to the Kolkata office and got the answer within 7 days. However some other NGO representatives held that RTI is not known to them. They do not know about the procedure of collecting any information from the government. Our survey team has explained them the concept of RTI and its details. In case of WTO Cell also, they have heard the term but they are completely ignorant about the functioning of WTO Cell.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

The DHO stated that recent policy involves participation at all levels including grassroots, district, state and central level. i.e. decentralization of policy making has been adopted. ***But still proper implementation of national policies has not occurred. He advised that Central and State Govt. should organize some training programs for the Govt. officials regarding Govt. policies. Govt. officials should be educated properly about national and state policies.*** NHM mainly gets fund from Central Govt.

The Agricultural Officer informed that ADO, AEO, KPS together have taken the initiative to mobilize the mass through meetings. DHOs give some suggestions to the Planning Committee where the farmers' views are also considered. The issue of security nets has been highlighted, and insurance facilities have been discussed. Therefore, in this case if 2-3 Mouzas get affected the farmers do not get the money. If they can have more individual insurance policies then they can get the compensation. They have informed about these kinds of problems to the higher authorities.

The general opinion seems to be that Janasunani as such do not take place. Government planning should percolate down to the grassroot people but in reality this does not happen and it is difficult for them to state the reason behind this. Mainly political parties along with civil servants take decisions about national policies. No economic and trade related issues have been discussed at Panchayat meetings. As regards incorporating grassroot needs and demands most of the government policies are prepared at the top level and naturally they do not consult the grassroot community, their needs, and local demands for policy making.

The media personnel informed that Murshidabad, Nadia, Uttar Dinajpur has been declared as the vegetable export zones in West Bengal. Agricultural department and Kalyani Krishi Bishwa Bidyalaya have organized training programs for the farmers. They were given training, information and knowledge on the production methods of export quality products as well as techniques of protecting their crops. Kalyani Agricultural University in collaboration with the Agriculture Department of Government of West Bengal has imparted training to the farmers in different Blocks, Panchayat and villages of Nadia. Therefore, the farmers have now become aware of the opportunity pockets and are availing this opportunity for exporting their products.

Regarding **Discussion on Trade and Economic Issues at the Local / Panchayat Level** the DHO informed that some export related awareness generation training programs had been organized by the Govt. through horticulture office. University's experts and experts from horticulture department conducted these awareness trainings. . He added though Govt. officials failed to make a link between the exporters and the farmers but now they are trying to contact the exporters so that farmers can come closer to exporters. These meetings had mainly been conducted at district levels. Although Mayukh Bhaban also organized some meetings where exporters were present and they had shown interest for exporting vegetables from Nadia but in practice it had not been implemented. According to him elected representatives organize some fairs for the farmers and invite govt. officials to attend those fairs and vice versa. He said govt. officials have to be more active.

It appears that the Panchayats mainly discuss with the villagers about the possible natural calamities. The Panchayat system functions properly. Mainly political parties along with civil servants take decisions about national policies. No economic and trade related issues have been discussed at Panchayat meetings. Public hearings about any policy were never held in this area. Meetings on developmental issues take place at the Panchayat and Block level. MP/MLAs mainly visit the villages but they are not sure whether they discuss economic and trade related issues . In Phulia, there was a fair on Tant where Sabhadhipati, Zilla Parishad were all present ***In any work, importance is given to the Panchayat Samity, Sabhadhipati, Zilla Parishad and people with political power. But they do not want to interact with the political party for any work as everything will be controlled by them. Even the leaders want that they should be consulted before starting any activity in his area.***

MP/MLAs and Panchayat functionaries have no active role in the making of economic policies. They do not know when the Panchayat meetings are held and so could not attend the meetings. There is very limited discussion on trade and economic policies. Though MPs give more importance to the grassroots demands but MLAs are completely ignorant. Handloom is mainly controlled by the co-operative society. An MP has taken the initiative to establish an export mart in Phulia. ***The consultation of MPs/MLAs is totally politically biased. They prefer those areas from where they get maximum votes.*** But in case of Phulia, the MP does discuss with the weavers regarding their needs and demands. The MLA of Shantipur is also the Chairman of Shantipur Municipality, as a result if he gets maximum votes from Shantipur then his position is assured and therefore, he would take initiatives for development of Shantipur. But the weavers of Shantipur are not well off.

On the issue of **local inputs in NFTP**, ***it seems that employment has increased quite lot and economic development has also taken place. Standard of living has also improved in Nadia.*** There has been an overall development of the villages. Road condition has improved. Even the overall infrastructure has improved. Regular meetings take place and the standard of living of the rural people has been enhanced. But it is felt that proper employment opportunities are often not provided to the farmers at the right time. People are getting employment due to the implementation of NREGA. Though employment has not increased but wage rate has increased to some extent.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

The DHO clarified that some central and state policies incorporate local demands. But, by and large, the plans and policies do not take into account the needs of the grassroots people. Sometimes policies are formulated which are of no use to the farmers. ***The reason for non-participation of grassroots level in national/state policies is that political parties are self concerned and vote oriented. They are not concerned about people's needs and demands.*** Janasumanis are held in the district level. There are various welfare schemes like health insurance, health package schemes which incorporate the local needs and demands of the weavers. The process of Cluster Development Programme has incorporated the local needs and demands of the people. Thus, this can be a success story revealing that local needs of the grassroots people are taken into consideration.

But as Mr. Haripada Basak observed, the government policies in all cases do not incorporate the local needs and demands of the grassroots community. On the other hand, there are some schemes which are not even appropriate for the farmers i.e. those schemes are not formulated considering their needs. ***The government has introduced new schemes and policies for the farmers but they have a typical traditional mindset. They are not ready to accept any new machine for production; therefore apart from introduction of new government schemes and policies, a psychological survey of the farmers is also required.*** Last year there was a havoc loss in potato due to lack of seed treatment but now the farmers is more aware on this issue.

The main reason for the lack of grassroots inputs in the policy making process is the ***information gap among the grassroots people.*** The officials do not give time for the common people; they always remain busy with the government activities. The weavers are not aware of their demands and problems and so they cannot articulate their problems and needs to the higher authority. Their views and demands get adequate hearing sometimes and some developments have also taken place in the villages but this is still much lower than their expectation.

The question is **How the up-linking and down-linking can be facilitated between the Grassroot stakeholders and the policy makers.** According to the Agricultural Officer, *planning should follow a bottom up approach. Planning should be region wise and official legacy needs to be minimized. There should be a defined timeframe for the execution of a scheme. Hierarchy is a problem at times.*

The Assistant Director of Handlooms suggested that the policies are all formulated in the Planning Commission and he said that the local needs and demands of the people are incorporated during policy formulation. They also give their feedbacks during this process. ***MP/MLAs have a significant role in policy making, but people's participation is needed which in most cases is absent. If they consult local people then the policy would be more effective.***

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

The DHO observed that the export from Nadia district is not good or may be negligible, he added. But people are now aware of the term “globalization” etc.

Mr. Ishwar Chandra Mondol looks after the Agricultural Sub-division marketing department where he is the only person in the office with two chairs and one table. When he is not present in the office then if any farmer needs any kind of information he would not get it. ***An important requirement is addressing the information requirements of the stakeholders.***

The Government has some general schemes but now cluster development programs are taking place through which development would take place. The weavers will be directly benefited through cluster development. They do not have a meaningful role in economic policy making; it is mainly done by state level and planning commission. They are mainly implementing department, while implementing the policies if they have any problem or difficulty they approach the directorate office for solution. They also have monthly meetings where these issues are discussed. But due to lack of interest, different types of problems, development is less than expected. ***The two major failures of the government schemes are: they are organizing training for the weavers based on their demand but in reality it has been seen that the weavers are not interested to attend the training programmes and even if they attend the training workshops they are reluctant to apply it in their own activities.***

The MP visited a village in Murshidabad district recently and found that handloom weavers there are very poor. They are earning Rs.700-800 per month. In Dhulian handloom co-operative under Berhampore Handloom office, if villagers are engaged in Handloom work they earn Rs.1000 whereas if they involve their family members in other work they are earning Rs.3000-4000. Therefore, Handloom industry in Murshidabad is in a dormant stage. He is aware of NFTP and said that due to this foreign trade policy, we have market openness but the foreigner countries are getting the benefits. He said that there are schemes for the organized sector but then the question is if there are 1500 weavers within the organized sector then there are 3500 weavers in the unorganized sector. There is no scheme for them as such. Their problems and queries remain unanswered. There should be some mechanism to address their problems. This can be approached through cluster formation, SHG formation etc.

NGO representatives observe that they are facing problems in village development activities due to lack of fund.

Members of cooperative societies highlighted that proper infrastructure and quality product is needed for export, they mainly prefer organic farming and other criteria like proper size, weight, good quality taste should also be satisfied before exporting in overseas market. In West Bengal position of agriculture is not favorable as farmers do not reap much profit from cultivation of any crop. Cereals are badly affected and productivity has started decreasing. ***All these are due to lack***

of a proper management system. Even if updated technology is used in farming but still productivity is not increasing due to the traditional practice of using sustained chemical fertilizers. This scenario is not only in West Bengal but also found in other states.

With respect to ascertaining grassroots demands and needs in the next phase of NFTP they have mentioned that weavers should be trained on time management so that more production can be done in less time. More entrepreneurs, exporters are needed in villages. Bank finance should also be enhanced.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Media plays a good role in dissemination of information. There are few NGOs in Nadia like Usha Gram Trust, Srma Mahila Samiti. Agriculture and Horticulture depts. are also very active in generating information through demonstration and various training programs. Horticulture dept. with the help of NGOs organizes awareness campaigns.

More than 4,000 NGOs are working but Govt. always avoids social workers and never consults with them.

The MP pointed out that recently they have formed 3 farmers club with the help of NABARD and have imparted training to them on various issues. He said that first we should make ourselves aware then only we can generate awareness among masses.

No local media who has covered issues on NFTP. Generally they cover issues on agriculture. Media can play an active role as a mediator between the grassroots people and the higher level authority.

On Role of Political parties it was widely felt that Political leaders should know the fact that they are people's representative, not only a member of political party. Then they can serve as a link between local needs and national policy making.

Instead of making local people aware, the political parties should be first made aware of the policies. Political parties also do not serve as an effective link between the local needs and national policy making. The most effective way to make economic and social development could be a combined initiative taken by every level of our society.

While formulating a policy Govt. should consult NGOs, Panchayats. The Govt. officials must come in direct contact with the villagers so that they can translate people's demands into national/state policies. Micro and small scale enterprise and Textile Industry do not appear to be proactive in the policy making process.

The weaving fraternity still has a belief that producers cannot directly export due to lack of communication power with other countries; production unit and selling unit together will not run successfully. Recently they have realized that it is not possible for the primary co-operatives or individual producers to export but if they depend on merchant exporters then their wages will not be maximized. So they sell their products to some agencies like Speed of India, PMA Hand weavers etc at a profit of about 15%. These agencies then further market and sell these products at a total profit of about 65% on the original price.

They want a Central Export wing through which they will export directly. There will be two separate groups, producers and sellers, and there will be an apex society who will take the products of all the producers and market them. With this view they have formed the Handloom Export Multipurpose Co-operative Society at the district level, a textile mart. In Nadia, the work

has progressed and the construction is expected to start from March, 08. The total outlay for this project is 11 crores 44 lakhs of which 7 crores has been given in Phulia itself. Training will be imparted on different technical issues related to production and export of handloom in this mart. It will be mainly the export mart for the merchants. The main function of this mart will be to co-ordinate with the exporter, design to be given to the members of the co-operatives, and to arrange for all the requirements for the sale of the products. Besides, export mart would also impart training to the weavers; promote design development, assisting the primary producers or individual producers. Export mart would act as a merchant exporter for them. It would also provide the raw materials, dye required for production and such other facilities.

Whatever loan has been sanctioned for a particular activity by the government officials that will be given to the weavers and local designers. The communication channels of handloom department to the grassroot people are weak because if we analyse the political structure then it is seen that the information reaches till the handloom development officer. The handloom co-operative societies get the information either from the handloom development officers or from the director through meetings.

HOOGLY

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

Regarding **Export Promotion Measures**, Mr. Ali, Sabhapati of Panchayat Samiti, emphasized various training programs organized by the Govt. for potato export such as bio-pesticides related training program, export policy related training program. According to him, *farmers are more aware of trade related issues than before*. Mr. Ali was aware of the term “NFTP” but was not aware of WTO cell and its functioning.

A trader by profession, Mr. Rehman heard the term “NFTP” from paper, radio. He also has not heard about WTO Cell.

A person from the Horticulture department said that he is aware of different export promotion schemes. They even impart pre-harvest and post-harvest training where APEDA, NABARD are present. He is aware of NFTP. Extension work is less now as potatoes are no longer brought from Punjab for industries, here production is sufficient. 15000 metric tones of potato are exported.

The MLA said there is no Govt. scheme for the weavers. Hoogly’s weavers are not under cluster development. MLA didn’t raise this question in Bidhan Sabha. He has no idea about NFTP, WTO Cell and globalization.

According to the DHO of Hoogly there is no export promotion scheme for the farmers. He knew about AEZ. He had no idea about WTO Cell. He emphasized that farmers will be benefited from ATMA, NHM. Seminars had been occurred for promoting micro-irrigation system. He was talking about organic farming, bio-village.

The media representative has not heard about NFTP but he is keen to know about NREG Scheme. Unfortunately he could not get information on this neither from the government officials nor from the Panchayat members.

Horticulture dept. comes to know about Govt. schemes from Govt. order. Then it distributes and implements those schemes at district level and at the village level with the help of panchayat.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

The Panchayat member had a clear idea about RTI Act. Some training programs regarding RTI act had been organized for the Govt. officials and Panchayat members. ***He opined more awareness generation programs are needed to be organized for grassroots level. He also added Govt. officials should inform Panchayat members and people, by and large, about various Govt. schemes and policies. He emphasized that though Govt. policies are grassroots level oriented but there is a gap between policy framing and implementation. He felt that Panchayat have to be more active.***

The representative of the Trading community knew about RTI act. He went to Writers building and got a license for potato export but because of the ignorance of the Govt. officials he had ultimately failed to export potato to foreign destinations. Like other traders he also opined govt. officials are of course accountable but they never take their responsibilities to help people and never do their duty properly. There is little faith in the government officials as facilitators of export.

Mr. Naushad Mallik, an NGO representative, added that the system of decision making in our country is very centralized, bureaucratic and involves cumbersome procedures. There is also the problem of *Red Tapism*. In the government offices there are a number of officials and staff but most of them are of no use to the common man. Moreover the policies framed nowadays carry the political intent of the ruling party. For example, he cited the case of *Crop Insurance*. As pointed out by him the farmers attached with the cooperatives should receive crop insurance as they pay a premium for the loan availed from the cooperatives. *Though this is mandatory and supposed to be paid to the farmers as early as possible but there are farmers in his district who had experienced crop failure due to hail storm, one and half years ago but have not received any crop insurance* The survey to assess the crop loss to the farmers is over and the report has been submitted long ago, but the farmers are yet to receive what they deserve. This in turn is forcing the small farmers to sell their lands to repay past loans taken for agricultural activities.

In another example he informed about an advertisement published in one of the reputed dailies. It says that government has undertaken schemes for the development of the minority community. After going through the advertisement Mr Mallik had called up the Joint Secretary of the department. The Jt Secy sent him to the Director, who informed that though it came out in the newspaper but it is still under consideration, probably it will be finalized before the Panchayat election.

It is clear from the above two examples that ***bureaucratic decision making still exist with all its disadvantages. In addition there is a severe lack of responsibility on the part of the news media also. In his own words “I don’t know when will the ‘under consideration’ components of decision making be over”.***

There seemed to be a general lack of awareness about the RTI Act. The MLA had heard of RTI but didn’t have a clear idea. Hoogly Jela Weaver’s Co-operative Union is the main source of information from where information has been disseminated into local level. The media representative observed that though he has heard about RTI Act but does not know in details and government has not issued any notification on this. He also did not hear about WTO Cell and globalization issues. The effect of globalization has been felt in the villages also. Due to this the small scale industries is suffering losses.

Mr. Naushad Mallik was emphatic that only sheer “*developmental goodwill*” is required on the part of the government machineries, otherwise all attempts at benefiting the poor will be failure like the “*Sarva Shiksha Aviyan of the Government*”. To give crop insurance to the affected requires **speedy and prompt** action to be taken by the bureaucrats and the political parties. All

they need is the good will to provide relief to the affected farmers. Also there should not be any political bias while selecting the beneficiaries.

The media personnel emphasized that local people can be made aware of these issues through Panchayat Samity, local media. Ignorance of political parties and lack of awareness of grassroot people poses a problem. In most of the cases politicians at the grassroot level are opting for creating a political space for themselves rather than for development.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

The Block Sabhapati is a member of CPM. He said, development related issues have been discussed at Panchayat meetings. Regarding economic issues, several topics were raised at Panchayat meetings like schemes for unemployed people, NREGA etc. He stated in the process of policy making, policy makers consulted the Panchayat Sabhapati. He sent his feedback and it had been implemented. According to him, there are more than 300 SHGs and few NGOs. NGOs are mainly concerned about their own profit making business, he felt. There are three NGOs in his area namely, Nibedita, Madra Unnayan Samiti and Dulal Smiti Sansad. In his opinion, Panchayat is very active in his area. Public hearings regarding Govt. schemes are mainly held at block areas but not in villages.

The trader representative is a regular voter and a member of congress party. He said there is political disturbance in Hoogly. Mainly political members have benefited from various govt. schemes. He said economic problems and trade related issues have been discussed at state/district level meetings. He opined that the central govt. along with state govt. aided by the views of the DM and panchayat institutions, take decisions about economic policies. ***Grassroots level has no role in the making of economic policy.*** He never attends panchayat meeting as he is the member of opposite political party. And he added public hearings were never held in his area.

Mr.Naushad Mallik opined that the elected legislators and politicians are only good at giving long and useless lectures without addressing the key economic problems that will be more beneficial to the mass. Moreover the MPs and the MLAs seem to be busier with their own work which does not encompass local problems. As for representatives at the grassroot (Panchayat) are concerned, they are illiterate and unaware of the current developments in the State or at the Centre.

The MLA affirmed that no jan sunwai was ever held in his area. He attends panchayat meetings regularly. According to him elected representatives along with local panchayat organize seminars on various development issues. He said discussions on trade related issues take place at panchayat level meetings.

The media representative pointed out that instead of Jana Sunani they have an apex body titled Lok Adalat at the Panchayat level. Local people come up with their problems of bank loan and they were given a specific time for repaying their loan. Panchayat meetings take place at the Block level. Gram Sansad activities are discussed and issues related to agriculture also discussed. Employment rate has increased.

Regarding **Decision about economic policies**, Mr.Naushad Mallik observed that it is the politicians who frame the policies and the bureaucrats have the responsibility to implement those. As for NFTP it must be the Ministry of Foreign Trade and its various line departments who were involved in the policy making process.

The MLA did not know who the policy makers are. On **the Role of MP/MLA/Panchayat level functionary in the making of the economic policy**, Mr.Mallik held that MPs and MLA's are member of different committees of the government and even attend them very rarely. Other than that they are involved in their *own* works. He had been to the Gram Sabha meetings organized by the Panchayat Samiti, but they are of no use. The meetings are always one sided which start with long lectures from the peoples representatives (if present) and genuine problems are discussed only very rarely. The GS meeting only takes into account the IAY, minikit etc. nothing related to exports or schemes for export promotion. Regarding **frequency of discussions on economic and trade issues at the state, district and panchayat levels**, no one is aware of the trade issues. If you are talking about globalization, no one knows about it and thus raises no question about those. The farmers even do not raise questions like why is the input cost rising – they are only concerned about why they have not received IAY.

On **Whether consulted during the making of NFTP** he pointed out that though I have been working long in the local area but I was never consulted about NFTP. However, the DHO confirmed that the Political party leaders are quite active. Horticulture Dept. always consults political leaders regarding implementation of Govt. schemes at village level.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

The Block Sabhapati observed that Govt. Schemes are mainly grassroots level oriented. But big business houses have benefited most for NFTP. Govt. policies should give priority to grassroots level. According to him, loan is quite available for the farmers. Better roads are needed for further agricultural development.

The trader representative opined that the reason for the lack of grassroots participation in the formulation of govt. policies is mainly because national policies never incorporate grassroots needs and demands.. Might be **govt. is funding lots of money for grassroots level but the money has not been utilized for the sake of grassroots**. He firmly said people's views/demands never get adequate hearings at govt. office. In this regard, he stated that when he seeks help from the government officials then instead of getting help from the department he was harassed by the officials.

Mr.Naushad Mallik asserted that to incorporate grassroot demands what is required is that the common people should be heard by the higher government officials. Unfortunately there are either no such options or the options do not work as desired.

The MLA observed that the Govt. policies are grassroots level oriented. Many Govt. policies incorporate local needs and demands. But it varies area to area.

Regarding **mechanisms to communicate needs to the government machinery**, the NGOs suggested Mass petition, deputation to the Pradhan the Block Sabhapati, the BDO, the MLA etc. These have been instrumental in improving the condition of roads, repairing the sewage system and many other cases. But such instrumentalities are adequate and workable only when we act in a united and an orderly fashion.

The Agricultural Development Officer felt that farmers have improved their quality of production by using upgraded technology. Cost of production has also decreased as a result the farmers are being benefited. This is a positive side. But on the other hand the negative side or hindrance also

exists. Potato is produced on 3.5 hectares land but good quality seed is not available for potato production. Therefore ***access to seeds is a big threat to good quality production and export of potato. The government officials are trying to train the farmers so that good quality potato seeds are produced. Private investment along with government support can be needed to ensure availability of good quality potato seeds.***

Industries are mainly profit oriented and the farmers are not benefited from them. Some government policies are formulated for the poor but most of them are being formulated without incorporating the needs and demands of the grassroot people.

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

The Block Sabhapati opined that the employment rate needs to be increased and they raised issues on schemes for unemployed and NREGA etc. Though policies should give priority to the grassroot people, big business houses have benefited most for NFTP.

Since the trader representative was not that much aware of NFTP so he was unable to tell whether this type of policy addresses grassroots livelihood concerns. He emphasized that Pailan group established a potato bi-product factory in Hooghly. Reliance is also planning to establish a factory in Hooghly. Hooghly's economy is mainly agriculture based. Nowadays potato production is not so profitable because of the increase of production cost. Price of fertilizers is also increasing. Kolkata, Burdwan, Andhra Pradesh, Dhanbad, Assam and Orissa are main markets of Hooghly's potato. Also, ***the dependence on climate continues. Untimely rainfall has often resulted in crop failure.***

Every sector, particularly grassroots level, should be given priority by the policy makers in formulating national policies, he opined. Otherwise there would be a gap between policy framing and implementation. Farmers are suffering for poor road structure, lack of loans etc. so govt. should look after these issues. ***Infrastructure and social security are two prime needs which any future policy ought to address.***

Mr. Naushad Mallik observed that he was not aware of any export promotion scheme taken by the government. We are never informed from the government departments.

The DHO informed that employment has been increased and livelihood has also changed. SC, ST & OBCs are getting benefited most from various Govt. schemes. NREGA Scheme has been prepared for the grassroot people and according to him if this is implemented properly then people would have been much more benefited.

There seems to be ***Specific demands from government to improve livelihood requirements/exports of the grassroot community For E.g. soft loans, better roads, infrastructure, etc.***

Also, there should be strict evaluation system about the panchayat activities and that those should be properly monitored. Along with this the government must ensure that the beneficiary committee is free from any political bias and that they must understand what development is.

Awareness among grassroots level has to be improved. New market opportunities are needed to promote export. To improve production formation of more cooperatives are necessary. Govt. has to take initiative to increase literacy rate.

The DHO pointed out that there is no sub-division block level agriculture office. Infrastructure should be developed and block level agriculture has to be established for export promotion. Technical assistance is needed.

There is no cold storage for potatoes. Even processing units are also less in number. Potatoes are available at Rs.2 and recently Pailan Group has established a Modular Park for export of potatoes. The education system is more or less stable but more improvements is needed. Government policies should reach the desired section of people. Government system needs to be moderated and the system of work procedures needs to be simplified. Though their livelihood has improved but it is becoming difficult for them to maintain their status.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Media is quite active in generating awareness among people, the DHO felt. He informed about two agriculture related programs on national TV namely, Krishi Darpan and Annadata. He also pointed out that political parties are active in translating local needs and demands into national policies.

However, the trader representative felt that Media is not active in generating awareness about national policies including NFTP. There are some NGOs working in Hoogly such as Madra Unnayan Sanstha etc but they are not concerned about economic and trade related issues. While working on development issues like water, sanitation etc NGOs are facing problem as Panchayat repeatedly hinders their activities. *According to him, political parties can be an effective link between local needs and policy making. But they are not active at all. In his opinion demonstration is a good way to translate people's demands into Govt. policies.*

NGOs organize various small programmes for information dissemination.

The ADO pointed out that they need more infrastructure development for export. Government does not have sufficient machinery required for export of quality products. *Till now all the exports are mainly take place from private companies. Lack of investors is also a problem. The ports ought to be renovated and improved. A laboratory is needed in the ports. Exporters should possess phyto-sanitary certificates for exporting their products. Export subsidy needs to be continued.* Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI) has been given the responsibility of potato seed research. But they do not have any branch office in West Bengal; therefore it is difficult to carry out research. Mr. Jairam Ramesh said at the International Potato Expo that a branch office of CPRI would be set up for this purpose.

Local media attends seminars that have been organized by political parties and panchayats. Local media's coverage on trade and economic issues is less but it is also true they are active than before. He said local demands can be translated into national policies if Horticulture Dept. along with Jela Prasashan,(District Administration)lected representatives and media take a combined initiative.

Media can play a significant role in generating awareness. Even government and Panchayat should also take more initiative in this regard.

In addition several Focused Group Discussions were carried out across several districts of West Bengal for ascertaining the views of farmers and weavers on the question of awareness about the implementation of the NFTP 2004-2009 :

MURSHIDABAD

Block: Nabagram

Villages: 165

Population: 2 lakhs people

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular :

Export Promotion measures

Most of the villagers present in the discussion read newspapers regularly but very few get scope to watch television. Among the participants a few villagers were illiterate. They get various help from horticulture department.

The farmers mainly the cultivators of Tut, Panchayat Upopradhan, cultivators of sericulture, Local media persons, were present in the FGD. Palsa Pally Unnayan Samity, a local NGO of Murshidabad took active participation in the discussion. The people are mainly involved in cultivation of rice and tut, mainly silk. They are interested to export their produce. They sell their produce in the markets but are not aware whether their products are at all being exported from the markets.

Awareness about NFTP 2004-09

No one knows about NFTP, WTO cell. They are not only unaware about export and trade related policies they do not even have any idea of any type of Govt policies. Among the participants some school teachers were also present in the discussion. Some of them said they heard of NFTP & RTI Act but people don't want to keep faith on such acts as they have never been benefited from these policies and acts. Most of them agreed that in the last few years, employment rates have increased and economically they are in a good position than previous years. Women are also working because SHGs give loans and other facilities to make them self dependent.

Awareness about any pro poor policies / schemes

They have mentioned that under NREGA, after working for 100 days, they get the payment after 6 months. It has also evolved from the discussion that when they work for 10 days they are paid for 5 days work and the rest 5 days work remains unpaid.

They came to know about any relevant information or news on agriculture and other allied issues through Television. Panchayat is supposed to inform them about these acts but unfortunately the Panchayat officials did not discuss this issue.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

Few people have heard about RTI through TV. They came to know about any information or news on agriculture and other allied issues through Television.

Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

There is a problem of consensus among the farmers. Farmers are not united in that area and they are unaware about their rights. Panchayat is supposed to inform them about these acts but unfortunately the Panchayat officials did not discuss this issue.

Though there are meetings in Gram Sabha once in a year but the discussions are mainly centred on infrastructural development like roads, health, proper sanitation etc. and allocation of fund allocated for these activities. No discussion was held on economic or trade related issue. The political parties organized their own meetings where villagers are not present. They have not heard of the term globalization. They have less access to local newspapers. There is no jana sunani, no awareness programme or any kind of initiative from the government regarding existing schemes and policies.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

According to them Govt. policies do not deliver the desired results because the policy makers do not have any field experience and Govt. structure is also not organized and composed. If policy makers visit the villages only then policy implementation could be successful. MLAs/ MPs hardly visit their area. They visit only at the time of elections. Local MP/MLA/political parties never discuss economic problems and trade related issues. They said they never get invitation for panchayat meetings. In their area, public hearings have never been held.

Grassroots demands have never been incorporated in national policies. If they visit any Govt. office they hardly get any justice for their cause and it's very difficult for them to contact any Govt. official. According to one villager when farmers visit Govt. office, Govt. employees immediately close the door.

When the small farmers were asked about their problems in exporting their products, then they told that since the quantity produced by them is low, therefore they could not export such low quantities of their produce. They are basically small and poor farmers, so they do not have sufficient resource for production. This reflects that there is a huge gap between policy formulation and policy implementation. Though policies exist but they are not being implemented in a proper manner. The cost of production of tur is Rs.600/kg and the selling price 500-700/kg. They usually produce 5-10kg.

In this village, Self-help groups are very active. They have initiated the concept of micro credit in their area. *Though they have agreed that government policies are formulated incorporating the needs and demands of the grassroot people, but the main problem is proper implementation of these policies.*

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

Rice and Jute cultivation is basically the main source of livelihood of the farmers. According to them if Govt. bodies take initiative for implementing the existing export policies in Murshidabad then vegetables, mangos, liches can be exported to foreign countries. Marketing problem is a big problem. Lack of technology is another problem. There is information gap among the farmers. From the FGD it is very clear that there is a gap between policy making and its implementation. Another problem is lack of infrastructure. Poor roads also create big problem for export.

Specific demands from Govt. – better roads, infrastructure and awareness generating programmes, drinking water etc.

One of the major constraints regarding exports of their products with the small farmers is quality production. They are unable to produce good quality products and as a result, tur is being imported from China. Therefore, exports as well as domestic market both are being affected as imports have increased. The production technology is poorer and there is no initiative to upgrade the technology from the government. Sometimes due to natural disaster, their production gets affected and they are unable to export. Another important factor is the existence of market. Lack of any established market has aggravated the problem of export. Mr. Abdul Rejjak said improved technology; new machines are required for good quality production. The quality of Murshidabad silk is losing its importance and reputation in the market gradually. Therefore, *quality has to be improved and upgraded through latest technologies in order to promote export. The farmers have to purchase those machines from the government may be at a lower price. They are not getting good markets where their produce would be appreciated.*

The system of Kishan credit would help the farmers to avail loans at a lower interest rate from the bank. But money lending system is still going on in these places. The grassroots community has agreed that the government policies do incorporate their needs and demands but proper implementation of these policies has become a major problem. The farmers are not being benefited in any way from the government policies/schemes. They have a complain that government is allocating fund for tut cultivation but still the farmers are not getting any benefit from such investment. Even if they produce high quality tut, they do not get the desired price, hence their cost of production rises. So they incur loss if they produce high quality tut. Here, government needs a lot of intervention. If government schemes and policies provide them with adequate benefits then they can produce good quality tut. Their problems do not percolate down to the government officials; since they are small farmers they do not get importance in any government office. ***Education, awareness regarding the safety measures, precautions during production are the two major requirements of the farmers.***

Education system has improved as more or less all children go to school. There are high schools in these villages. Weak economic infrastructure is an obstacle in exporting their products.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Media's role is very less in generating awareness about NFTP (according to them). NGOs are working for different issues such as health, education but they are not working on trade related issues.

Even the local NGOs are also not involved in any kind of economic or trade related issues. Lack of education has been a persistent problem though some developments have taken place in the education system. According to the villagers, "even media is also interested in sensational news". The grassroots people are aware of organic farming and have heard about its techniques and other details from Radio. But they have certain demands from the government like training for cultivation of tut, grant of agricultural subsidy, education and awareness generation, reducing the number of dropouts. The villagers want industrial development along with agriculture, particularly, sericulture.

MALDA

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

Export Promotion measures

The villagers mostly export their produce mango, to the neighbouring Bangladesh. But they do not always get good and assured returns. Much of their outstanding claims remained unsettled indefinitely. Demand for the latest technology, already available in the market, for scientific plucking of the Mangoes was also voiced by the villagers.

The farmers heard that Mangos will be exported to US, China but they don't have any faith in these economic policies because they are unsure about Govt.'s role and they also think what ever be the policies, implementation of those policies will not done properly.

Awareness about NFTP 2004-09

The villagers (growers)informed us about their total ignorance about NFTP **FGD 2** - No one is aware of NFTP 2004. They remained very silent when asked about NFTP. A major source of information for the villagers regarding export facilitating schemes was reported to be the district horticulture office. Many of them said they get to know about the taxes/ import duties related to foreign trade of Mangoe s from the importers of the other countries, particularly Bangladesh. They said they read newspapers everyday and watch TV regularly. Only one farmer mentioned he

never watched TV. But both print and visual media is not active in generating awareness among them.

They have often been informed by the Horticulture Dept. regarding organic farming. They also heard that abroad irrigation is mainly based on organic processes. But they complained if they will start organic farming then they need 10 years for constructing this organic farming and production will start after 10 years.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

Why the government Policies does not deliver the desired result

Villagers expressed their dissatisfaction and said that the MLAs and MPs visit the villages very rarely and play an insignificant role as a link between the grassroots people and the policy makers.

Perception about RTI

Villagers didn't have any idea about RTI Act and WTO cell. Only one person replied he heard people have the right to know any information but don't have any idea from whom they can get those information. A camp had been organized regarding RTI Act but they did not get time to attend that camp. They pointed out it is their democratic right to know anything about Govt. policies.

Public Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

Discussion on Trade and Economic Issues at the Local / Panchayat Level

Several growers emphatically mentioned that meetings/ seminars organized through the local panchayats were not duly informed to the villagers at large. Many of the villagers could get to know about the meetings after these were held. Panchayat meetings are sparsely attended allegedly because of selective dissemination on information "in a partisan manner". Gram Sansad meetings were held several times but trade related issues have never been discussed in these meetings. Those meetings mainly target on discussing about roads construction, health, education etc.

Any local inputs in NFTP

Villagers were unanimous in their observation that with regard to formulation of any policy regarding livelihood, economic development or export, trade their opinion is never taken into account. In fact their opinion not even solicited.

Impact on livelihood

Villagers were divided in opinion regarding some improvement, however small, with regard to employment and economic growth of the recent spurt in export of Mango.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

National policies do not incorporate local demands. They don't have any connection with the MPs. Mps visit their villages only at election time and beg for vote. Most of them mentioned that Gani Khan Choudhury (according to them Barkat Saheb) was very active and he worked for the people. MLA visits their area quite regularly. He discusses about roads, development etc but he has never discussed about economic policy or trade related issues. The villagers have doubt

whether the MLAs/ Mps are aware of NFTP or any other policies or not. According to them, whatever is the policy, and marginalized farmers have suffered the most because they never get any facility from Govt.

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

Some of the villagers also pointed out the need of an airport in the district to facilitate air transport of the Mango exports to other countries.

Villagers also stated that primary dissemination of Govt. policies regarding economic development and trade in particular through Television and Newspapers followed by meetings involving farmers, Govt. officials and traders would be most effective in the proper implementation of the Govt. policies.

The villagers who sell their produce to the Bangladesh exporters directly also suffer from significantly high import duty imposed by the Bangladeshi Govt. They advocated/ pleaded that Govt. of India should take up the problem with our neighbouring country on a bi-lateral basis and reduce the import duty reasonably.

Some of them expressed the view that a fruit processing industry in Malda would be very useful to boost export of Mango pulp, pickles, jam jelly and the other processed products which are less perishable than the food per-se. *The villagers also complained about inadequate market information.*

They said it is Govt.'s duty to look after farmer's problems. . Malda Mango market is becoming saturated. So Bangladesh can become a big market for Malda mangoes. That's why India Govt. should take a policy to address this phenomenon. They opined if Govt. officials conduct some seminars and meetings regarding export and trade related issues and inform the villagers about economic policies then the villagers will be benefited.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

The villagers said most vocally that if they would have their own association irrespective of party or religious demand, they could have raised their voice together to be heard by the policy makers of the top. Regarding dissemination of information they opined that the policy could trickle down from top to bottom through different layers such as DMs, BDOs and Panchayat functionaries. *But a bottom up initiative was also proposed by them to take into account their opinion prior to policy formation regarding such issue as rural livelihood and rural development.*

SILIGURI

(BIDHAN NAGAR)

Participants: Pineapple growers and farmers along with traders, Panchayat Pradhan, KPS, politicians participated the focus group discussion.

Level of awareness in general and NFTP in particular

Farmers and traders were found to be unaware of export related policies including NFTP. They didn't have any experience about export. They are completely unaware of the formation and functioning of WTO Cell. They didn't have any experience about export.

Transparency and accountability in policy making, especially NFTP

They are not aware of RTI Act. Farmers opined that profit is very less in pineapple production. Most of the farmers are suffering from loss. Govt. can fix a particular price for pineapple.

Participation in policy making process in general and NFTP in particular

Farmers and traders said discussions on economic and trade related issues never occurred at state/district level. But the Panchayat pradhan said discussions take place at different panchayat level meetings (not on trade issues) but grassroots participation is less.

The local growers complained about Govt. official's ignorance of and indifference to their demands. Policy implementation is also not proper. Three types of problems were highlighted as depicted in the table below :

Case 1
<i>Gap between promise and performance :</i> Previous year pineapple farmers and traders had loss due to road problem. That time SDO met them and assured that Govt. would give 20% subsidy for the farmers. But till today not a single one have got the subsidy. Last year some farmers got 50% subsidy for per acre pineapple production. At Bidhan Nagar, NHM is not at all playing an active part. They said NHM should educate them about Government schemes. They stated that although Govt. frames various policies but people should be educated first so that they can understand those policies. Lack of education is a big problem.
Case 2
<i>The playing field is very uneven :</i> Govt. takes tax from pineapple traders through Regulated Market Committee but never spends 1% of the tax for pineapple production. Central govt. said it would establish a market for pineapple traders through auction. It was also said 14 crores would be provide for this market. But they didn't get that market till then. According to the participants capitalists are getting benefits from Govt. policies. Farmers will never be benefited from such policies.
Case 3
<i>Lack of rural credit facilities :</i> Government did not provide loan to the farmers for pineapple production. Calypso convinced the farmers to take loan from the bank and also assured them to repay back the loan on their behalf to the bank. But till now it has been found that Calypso has not repaid the loan and the farmers will be completely ruined if Calypso fails to keep their promise.

Their participation in policy making process is nil. Panchayat Pradhan said Govt. took initiative to provide subsidy for farmers. Govt. provides Rs.2,500 for vermicompost. Meetings occurred to teach farmers about organic farming.

Identifying bottlenecks that hinder grassroots inputs in policy making in general and NFTP in particular

They complained that cost of seeds is continuously increasing. Sometimes food processing companies stop buying pineapples from farmers. Roads are also not good through which

pineapples have sent to north India. Govt. basically didn't help farmers and traders to improve pineapple production or for promoting export.

Ascertaining grassroots needs & demands with respect to next phase of NFTP

Regarding policy framing and implementation they said ministers frame policies but they are not concerned about its functions and implementation. Calypso informed farmers that in order to export pineapple to foreign countries farmers have to obey TSS & PH value rule. Farmers follow traditional cultivation techniques and are not familiar with organic farming that's why they are not able to export pineapple. That company is concerned with its own profit making but do not think of farmers. Calypso's main market is in Delhi.

Identifying suitable advocacy tools for grassroots inputs into policy-making

Media can play a good role in dissemination of information but they are not that much active. Political parties are least interested in various economic issues and they also do not have any role in linking the grassroot people and the policy makers.

It is evident that proper information dissemination is a prime need, if the twin objectives of national economic development and employment generation, identified by the NFTP are to be accomplished. One can therefore foresee a crucial role on part of the **media**, and an equally vital supportive role on part of the **CSOs**.

Media Advocacy Strategy

- 1) Media has a very important role of information dissemination and also set up a two way connection between the policy makers and the grassroot stakeholders. But there is a common complain that media is turning a deaf ear to the local problems which could not be commercialized. For this the CSO needs to play a very proactive role such that even the media could not ignore viz. organize protests, march, mass campaign. Moreover the issues taken up must be of common interest.
- 2) The CSOs can develop documentary films and circulate among the media representatives. If the issues are dire then there is no reason why the media will overlook the matter. In this way one can also involve the local media in their Plan of Actions.
- 3) In general the media likes "negative stories with a positive purpose". In this case it is duty of the CSOs or relevant stakeholders to identify case studies both a success and failure and circulate them. The cases should not be a rare event but one which is occurring regularly but none has been able to bring it to the public eye.
- 4) Media can publish cases but not Provisions or Acts. They cannot publish a whole Act but will show interest in cases where an Act has been violated.
- 5) There is a Government Department – Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity which has the responsibility to disseminate information on flagship projects and also organizes meetings to disseminate. One can also ask them about their functions and even involve them in different programmes organized by CSOs.
- 6) It is very important for the CSOs to set objectives before the media representatives and at the same time give clues to them, especially before the local media.
- 7) It is also important to represent news in an interesting way.
- 8) Prioritize the role of local media.