

IRDP to NRLM: A Brief Review of Rural Development Initiatives in India

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ABSTRACT: *India is a country which is basically rural in nature and the bulk of the population live in rural areas. About 72.22 percent of the total population lives in rural areas (2001 Census). Along with this, 25 percent of the world's poor live in India. They have very limited access to education, health, communication and other amenities of life. But a nation can not achieve all round development unless its villages are developed. Once Mahatma Gandhi said, 'India Lives in Her Villages' which directly indicates the importance of rural development. Thus, the development of rural areas is crucial to the process of development of India. A sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. In addition to this, rural people should provide better prospects for economic development. Along with this, there should be decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit for the rural poor people. The present paper aims to analyze different rural development schemes introduced in India.*

KEY WORDS: *Rural Development, IRDP, SGSY, NRLM, MGNREGA*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a country which is basically rural in nature and the bulk of the population live in rural areas. About 72.22 percent of the total population lives in rural areas (2001 Census). Along with this, 25 percent of the world's poor live in India. They have very limited access to education, health, communication and other amenities of life. But a nation can not achieve all round development unless its villages are developed. Once Mahatma Gandhi said, 'India Lives in Her Villages' which directly indicates the importance of rural development. Thus, the development of rural areas is crucial to the process of development of India. Rural Development is a multidimensional concept which covers all the various aspects of life. In short, rural development means overall development of rural areas which ultimately improve the quality of life of rural people. It aims at both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. Rural development strategies in India want to improve rural income and generate employment opportunity for rural people. However, India has been a welfare state ever since her independence and the primary objective of all the governmental schemes are welfare oriented. In this context, planning has occupied a significant place since independence. The policies and programmes of the different five year plans have been designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty. It was also realized that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. In addition to this, rural people should provide better prospects for economic development. Along with this, there should be decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit for the rural poor people.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the secondary data. Books, journals, periodicals, magazines, project reports and internet have been consulted for the purpose of gathering data.

III. NATURE AND TYPES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Development in India wants to achieve a number of objectives namely, changing the attitude of the people towards the development of the rural community, establishment of grass root democracy with Panchayati Raj Institutions and fulfillment of basic needs e.g., drinking water, health care, better sanitation and housing. From the above mentioned objectives, rural development programme can be divided into four categories. These are: (i) Programmes for self and wage employment (ii) Programme for rural infrastructure and minimum basic needs (iii) Programmes for natural resource management and (iv) Programmes for social security. Under these four broad categories there are several programmes of the government. Following are the some of the programmes:

- Category 1: a. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and
b. Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY)
- Category 2: a. Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) b. Swajaldhara c. Central
Rural Sanitation Programme d. Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas
(PURA) and e. Integrated Rural Housing Scheme (IRHS)
- Category 3: a. Integrated Wasteland Development Programme b. Land Reforms c. Land
Consolidation and d. Computerization of Land Reforms
- Category 4: a. Old Age Pension b. Widow Pension c. National Maternity Benefit Scheme
d. ICDS and Allied Services e. Subsidized Food for Old and Destitute
f. Annapurna and g. Antodaya

IV. FIVE YEAR PLANS AND MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning has been one of the pillars of India's policy since independence and the country's development is directly linked with the achievement of planning. With this aim in view, Planning Commission was established in 1950. The First Five Year Plan (1951-55) aimed at balanced economic development. Agriculture, irrigation and power generation received priority in this plan. On the other hand, the Second Five Year Plan (1956-60) emphasized on industrialization and improvement on industrial infrastructure. It also wanted the extension of the benefits of economic development to the larger number of disadvantaged people. Third Plan (1961-65) again stressed on agricultural development. Progressive reduction of poverty has been one of the major goals of India's economic policy since the beginning of Fifth Plan (1974-78). Although, group specific and area specific rural development programmes were initiated during the Fourth Plan (1969-73). Major objective of the Sixth Plan (1980-84) was to increase employment in rural areas. Poor people were also given cows, bullock carts and handlooms. Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-89) envisaged a greater emphasis on the allocation of resources to energy and social spending at the expense of industry and agriculture. Eighth Plan (1992-96) not only stressed on agriculture and rural development but also emphasized on pure drinking water. Ninth Plan (1997-2002) stressed on eradication of poverty. Tenth Plan (2002-2007) and Eleven Plan (2007-2012) also envisaged on rural development.

In 1999, Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment was renamed as Ministry of Rural Development and its basic objective is to alleviate rural poverty and ensure improved quality of life for rural population especially those below the poverty line. Therefore, it can be said that the Ministry of Rural Development has been acting as a catalyst affecting the change in rural areas through the implementation of wide spectrum of programmes which are aimed at poverty alleviation, employment generation, infrastructure development and social security.

V. A BRIEF REVIEW OF DIFFERENT RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Rural development in India is a strategy for changing the attitude of the rural people towards development. It also wants peoples participation in the development process and greater access to credit are also envisaged. Some of the rural development initiatives in India are discussed below:

- 5.1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP): Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched in the year 1980 with a view to provide income generating assets and employment opportunities to the rural poor so that they could improve their standard of living. At the District level, an autonomous agency called the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) was responsible for planning, implementing, coordinating, supervising and monitoring the IRDP. Selection of IRDP beneficiary was expected to be made by Village Level Worker (VLW) by following the Antodaya i.e., selecting the poorest of the poor first. As far as working of the IRDP concerned, the most reliable evident was provided by the survey conducted by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in 1984. According to the survey, 47 percent of the sampled beneficiaries had been able to increase their family income. Another study was conducted by the Institute of Rural Management in two blocks of Sabarkantha District of Gujrat. It was found that with the average investment of Rs. 2,337 per beneficiary family, nearly 40 percent of the beneficiaries were assisted with milk animals and they also crossed the poverty line. In spite of all these positive impacts it was found that in the selection of IRDP beneficiary, 'antodaya' principle was not strictly followed. Along with this, inability of the poor people to manage the assets, bank loan and IRDP subsidy was created a big hurdle. Besides this, a new scheme called 'Training of Rural Youth for Self- Employment (TRYSEM)' was initiated in 1979 with the objective of removing unemployment among rural youth. TRYSEM was an integral part of IRDP and concerned with equipping rural youth.

5.2. Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY): Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY) was launched in the year 1999 merging self employment programmes like Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) etc. It organized the poor into Self-Help Groups through the process of mobilization, training and capacity building. SGSY is implemented by District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) through Panchayat Samitis and achieve involvement of other Panchayati Raj Institutions, Banks and NGOs to help the smooth functioning of SHGs. Under the scheme, the SGSY is entitled to monitor the performance of Swarajgaris and the repayment of loans by them which are provided by the bank at a minimum rate of interest. The loan allocation to SHGs is financed both by the central government and the state government. The ratio of finance between the central and the state government is 75:25 respectively. It was found that almost 2.5 crore rural Below Poverty Line (BPL) households have been organized and brought into SHG network. In spite of that several studies revealed certain shortcomings like lack of capacity building of the beneficiaries, less number of community institutions and weak linkages with banks. It was also found that several states have not been able to fully utilize the funds provided by the SGSY scheme. Along with these shortcomings, in many places the SGSY scheme has been relatively successful in alleviating poverty in rural areas where there were systematic mobilization of the poor into Self-Help Groups and capacity building and training facility. In other places the impact of SGSY was the minimum.

5.3. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM): To mitigate the shortcomings of SGSY, the Government of India restructured the SGSY in to National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and it is effective from 1 April, 2013. NRLM wants “To reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots institutions of the poor” (www.bihan.gov.in). By analyzing the initial stage of NRLM, it is found that the growth of the mission is not even throughout India.

5.4. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): Another important initiative of Government of India towards rural development is the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005). The Act initially came into force in 200 economically backward districts of the country from February 2, 2006. MGNREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the entire country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Implementation of the programme has been entrusted to Panchayati Raj institutions which are the main planning and implementation authorities. Gram Sabhas have been assigned a pivotal role in planning, monitoring and social audit of projects under the Act. It is a holistic approach not only to generate employment opportunity but also to ensure infrastructural development like water conservation, water harvesting, irrigation and so on. In spite of several positive aspects of MGNREGA, different studies have revealed that the popularity of this act varies from place to place and prevalence of corruption also creates hurdles in the implementation of MGNREGA.

VI. CAUSES OF FAILURES OF DIFFERENT RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Following are the some of the causes of failures of different rural development schemes initiated in India:

- Though there was the provision of peoples participation at the grass root level after the 73rd Constitutional amendment, in spite of that majority of the rural people are unaware about the rural development schemes and they have also less participation in the process.
- In the absence of proper knowledge and awareness, the villagers are generally trapped by the middleman. They became the messenger and all the fruits of rural development are being eaten up by these people. With rampant corruption, they also become the part and parcel of this corrupt system for which India’s rural development schemes are not able to reach to the desired level.
- India is a country where there is the prevalence of poverty and illiteracy. This situation is more acute in village areas. It is for obvious reason that people living in rural areas are unaware about the rural development schemes.
- Rural development schemes in India are not meant for make the people self-sufficient. Basically these schemes are like charity which could not bring remarkable changes in the lives of rural people.

VII. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be concluded that rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In this context, rural people should provide better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are also envisaged. Along with this, eradication of corruption and poverty are the urgent need of the hour. Last but not the least important factor for rural development is the control of population growth so that employment opportunity could be sufficient for the overall population in the country.

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