

## **Rural Development efforts in India**

### **Rural Development before Independence:**

Rural development before independence can be analysed under two broad heads:

- (i) development efforts made by British Government, and
- (ii) efforts made by voluntary organisations.

### ***Development Efforts Made by British Government:***

The traditional barter system received a severe set-back during the British period. Introduction of cash economy by the Britishers enabled the peasants to adopt commercial crops. In this way agricultural subsistence economy gave rise to commercial crops.

During the British period, the famines took place at regular intervals. The colonial rulers felt that the challenge of famine could be successfully met only through irrigation. Subsequently, the government appointed the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India in 1926. The Commission submitted its report in 1928.

Some of the major recommendations of the Committee were putting a ban on fragmentation and sub-division of land, establishment of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research etc.

To combat the agricultural crisis during the British period, the government adopted several measures such as provision of irrigation facilities, setting up of cooperative societies, creation of a research committee for the comprehension of problems in agriculture etc. In this way the colonial rulers evinced keen interest in improving the agricultural situation in rural India.

### ***Efforts Made by Voluntary Organisations:***

With the arrival of Gandhiji into Indian political arena, rural development received a Philip. The non-cooperation movement spearheaded by him in 1920 was the first political attempt to awaken the ruralites. Several voluntary organisations emerged in the countryside. Inspired by profound humanism, Rabindranath Tagore's experiments at Sriniketan in 1921 was aimed at both the economic as well as the moral rehabilitation of the rural community.

Rural development programme was initiated by Spencer Hatch at Martandum in 1921. Martandum rural reconstruction centre was opened with a five-sided programme comprising spirit, mind, body, economic and social side. To meet the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the people, social activities were initiated in health centres, libraries, boy scouts and girl guides, and in sports club.

Special emphasis was placed on folk-dances and folk-singing. Co-operation in work, in play and in all activities of life was successfully emphasised. The Gurgaon experiment

started by F.L. Brayne in 1927 aimed at promoting thrift, self-respect, self-control, self help, mutual help and mutual respect among the ruralites.

In 1932, the princely state of Baroda launched a broad based programme with a view to promoting the will to live better and a capacity for self help and self-reliance among the rural people under the dynamic leadership of V.K. Krishnamachari. The Seva Gram Ashram established by Gandhiji in 1935 at Wardha undertook several development programmes for the ruralites such as sanitation, adult education, promotion of village industries, manual work etc.

They were encouraged to meet their own needs without depending on the government. In this way several voluntary organisations played important roles in preaching the message of self-sufficiency among the villagers.

### **Rural Development after Independence:**

Rural development has acquired special significance in the countries of the Third World. Since independence the Government of India has launched various programmes of 'planned change' encompassing social, economic and political processes. There are two approaches adopted by the government with regard to the patterns of development. These approaches are (a) the 'transformation' approach and (b) the 'improvement' approach.

#### ***The Transformation Approach:***

The 'transformation' approach attaches importance to a radical change in the existing system in terms of scale of operation, production techniques, and socio-legal reforms. Implementation of land reform measures comes within the purview of this approach. So far as the land reform measures are concerned, a large number of tenants or farmers have now become the owners of the land that they are cultivating.

The slogan "land to the tiller" has been successfully translated into reality in most of the States of India. The tenancy rights are more secure now. The Zamindari abolition laws have succeeded in eliminating the intermediaries.

Tenancy legislations have been passed in most of the states to regulate rent and also to make the rent fair and reasonable. Eviction of the tenants from the land which they have been cultivating becomes an uphill task now.

Most of the states have enacted ceiling laws to fix the maximum amount of land that an individual or family can possess. Needless to state that this is a step in the right direction of achieving social justice. Attempts have been made for consolidation of holdings. So far 51.8 million hectares of land have been consolidated in the country.

The evil of absentee landlordism associated with the Indian agriculture has been removed. Co-operative farming has been advocated to solve the problems of sub-division and fragmentation of holdings. Through the Bhoodan movement efforts are being made to provide the landless labourers with land. Efforts are also being made for the compilation and updating of the land records.

### ***The Improvement Approach:***

The 'improvement' approach seeks to bring about agricultural development within the existing peasant production system. It attaches importance to the programmes of rural development such as the Community Development Programme, Panchayati Raj Institutions and other programmes and agencies related to the process of development in rural India.

According to the Planning Commission, community development is the process of changing the life of a community from backwardness to a new economic and social order through its open efforts. The Community Development Programme undertaken by the government of free India on 2nd October 1952 – the day of Gandhi Jayanti – constitutes the biggest rural reconstruction scheme.

The programme is instrumental in raising the standard of living of the ruralites and in reconstructing the rural India. Prof. Carl Taylor rightly observes that the programme signifies active co-operation and involvement of the ruralites in formulating and executing their own plans and programmes.

The programme has attained considerable success in the field of agriculture, education, employment, health services, communication, vocational training, supply of drinking water, social welfare. With the passage of time the Community Development Programme has started losing its importance. It has suffered from several draw backs.

Various factors such as lack of clearly defined priorities, cornering of the benefits by the rich and big farmers, a dismal lack of coordination among different development departments, lack of commitment, administrative inefficiency and corruption at the bureaucratic level etc. contribute to the failure of the programme. Despite these shortcomings, the CDP has contributed a lot in arousing the consciousness and awareness of the ruralites about the modern means of agriculture.

The Community Development Programme was launched with a view to obtaining people's participation in the development process. But this objective of the CDP was not materialised. To ensure the involvement of the people in the development of villages, the Government of India appointed a committee headed by Balwant Rai Mehta in January 1957. Consequent upon the recommendation of the committee, the Panchayati Raj through the organization of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad received special attention of the committee.

Panchayati Raj has been viewed as an attempt to implement the process of democratic decentralization. This has broken the long standing practice of centralised authority. The system has made an average citizen more conscious of his rights than before. He has become a significant determinant of Indian politics today.

So far as the administrative implication of the Panchayati Raj system is concerned, it has bridged the gulf between the bureaucratic elite and the people. Socially the Panchayati Raj system has generated a new leadership having a modern and pro-social outlook. Finally, viewed from the developmental angle, the Panchayati Raj system has enabled the ruralites to cultivate a progressive outlook.

Several reports have hinted at the lack of effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The important reasons attributed to its ineffectiveness are the structural inadequacy of the institutions, administrative inefficiency and corruption at the level of bureaucracy, absence of conceptual clarity and lack of political will.

Despite these shortcomings, it cannot be gainsaid that the Panchayati Raj Institutions have administered enormous economic funds and resources to accelerate the process of rural development.

Green revolution denotes the well-marked improvement in the agricultural production in a short period and the sustenance of a high level of agricultural production over a fairly long period of time. But viewed from the angle of crops, green revolution has been confined largely to wheat. Hence, it is often referred to as “wheat revolution” rather than green revolution. The success of green revolution, for the most part, depends upon adequate irrigation facilities.

But in the Indian context, a large proportion of the agricultural land is without irrigation facilities. This vast area naturally falls outside the orbit of green revolution. So far as the dry areas are concerned, the applicability of the new agricultural strategy is simply out of question. Furthermore, the adoption of new technology is confined only to some developed areas like Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh.

The states of the Eastern region covering West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have not been benefitted by such HYV technology. The other parts of the country have remained untouched by the new agricultural strategy. Some important commercial crops like sugarcane, oil seeds and pulses have not been covered by the new technology. Only the large farmers and landlords have been immensely benefitted by adopting green revolution.

There is hardly any appreciable development in the economic condition of the small and marginal farmers as they have no capacity to adopt NAT. Despite these limitations, it

cannot be gainsaid that green revolution has brought in its wake some beneficial effects for the Indian agricultural setting.

Increase in agricultural production, decline in import of food-grains generation of more employment opportunities in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector, expansion of agro-based industries, increased standard of living of the farmers constitute the positive aspects of green revolution. Several poverty alleviation programmes have been launched by the central government for the rural poor, comprising small and marginal farmers, landless labourers and rural artisans. They are as follows:

### **1. IRDP:**

The Integrated Rural Development Programme signifies a programme for improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor living in rural areas and for making the process of rural development self-sustaining. Initiated in 1978-79, the programme was extended to all development blocks in the country in 1980-81.

It is based on “the local needs, resources endowments and potentialities.” Its objective is to enable selected families to cross the poverty line by taking up self-employment ventures in a variety of activities like agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry in the primary sector, weaving and handicrafts in the secondary sector, and service and business activities in the tertiary sector.

IRDP employs the cluster approach to select villages for implementing various components of the programme, the antyodaya approach to select beneficiaries within the selected villages, and the package approach to assist the selected beneficiaries. The cluster approach ensures that the supporting infrastructure is either already available in the selected villages, or can be made available at a relatively low cost.

The antyodaya approach makes sure that the poorest of the poor are selected first, and the package approach assures the beneficiary full benefits from the complementarity between various inputs and services. In this way, IRDP strategy represents a synthesis of the various approaches tested and found effective in India’s rural development programmes.

The central and state government provides financial resources for the programme and lay down broad guidelines for its implementation. However, the main administrative unit of its implementation is the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs). At the Block level a number of extension officers are provided for programme implementation.

IRDP has some drawbacks. They are cumbersome procedure involved in availing of this facility, widespread corruption, and lack of integration with development needs. Despite these drawbacks it cannot be denied that the Integrated Rural Development Programme

has attained considerable success in terms of the number of beneficiaries covered and the amount of subsidies and loans disbursed.

## **2. NREP:**

National Rural Employment Programme was launched in October, 1980 as a centrally sponsored scheme on 50:50 sharing basis between centre and states. Generating additional gainful employment opportunities, creating durable community assets and improving the overall quality of life in rural areas constitute the three -fold objectives of the programme. The programme is implemented through DRDA. It has been merged with the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna from April, 1989.

## **3. TRYSEM:**

The scheme of Training Rural Youth for Self- Employment was initiated in August, 1979, with the primary objective of providing technical skills to the rural youth to enable them to seek employment in fields of agriculture, industry, services and business activities.

Only youth in the age group of 18 – 35 and belonging to families living below the poverty line are eligible for training. Priority is given to persons belonging to SCs and STs, ex-servicemen and women. The effectiveness of the scheme is affected by several factors such as inadequate coverage, low level of skill, inadequate stipend given to the youth etc.

## **4. RLEGP:**

Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme was launched on 15th August, 1983 to generate additional employment in rural areas particularly for the rural landless workers. Under this scheme employment is given to at least one member of every landless family upto 100 days in a year. So far as this programme is concerned, preference in the employment is given to the landless labourers, women, SCs and STs.

Financed exclusively by the Central Government, the programme undertakes several activities such as construction of wells, roads, houses, social forestry etc. Several factors like absence of systematic selection of workers, failure to guarantee minimum of 100 days of employment to workers and malpractice by the contractors stand in the way of the successful functioning of this programme. Like NREP this programme has now been merged into the JRY.

## **5. JRY:**

Jawahar Rozgar Yojna was launched in April, 1989. It is pre-eminently a wage employment programme. Under the scheme, it is expected that at least one member of each poor family would be provided with employment for 50 to 100 days in a year at a work place near his / her residence. About 30 per cent of the jobs under this scheme are reserved for women. The scheme is implemented through Village Panchayats. It covers 46 per cent of our population.

So far as the impact of JRY is concerned, Ruddar Datt and K.P.M. Sundharam rightly opine, "The overall impact of the JRY in generating employment has been much below the target laid down. JRY has helped the weaker sections to acquire a house or provided access to drinking water or improve sanitation, but yet much remains to be done to make a perceptible improvement in the quality of life. Obviously, this necessitates larger devolution of resources – both financial and human." At present Jawahar Rozgar Yojana is not in operation.

#### **6. JGSY:**

The Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojana is the restructured form of Jawahar Rozgar Yojna. This scheme is in operation from 1999. It is implemented only at the village level to create village infrastructure and generates employment opportunities to alleviate poverty. The cost of this programme is shared between the centre and the states in the ratio of 75: 25.

#### **7. Antyodaya Programme:**

Antyodaya means the welfare of a person standing at the end of the queue. In other words, the programme is oriented to uplift the poorest of the poor in the countryside. The scheme was introduced during the regime of Janata Government in 1978. So far as the operation of this programme is concerned, every year five poorest families of every village are identified and selected. Efforts are made for the economic betterment of these families.

#### **8. DPAP:**

The Drought-Prone Area Programme was launched at the time of the mid-term appraisal of the Fourth Five Year Plan for drought prone areas. Reducing the severity of the impact of drought, stabilising the income of the weaker sections of the rural community and restoring the ecological balance constitute the basic objectives of the programme.

During the Fourth Plan, DPAP was purely a central sector scheme with 100 per cent financial assistance from the centre. From the Fifth Plan onwards, this scheme has been operating with funds being shared between the centre and the states on a 50: 50 ratio. As of 1996 – 97, the programme was in operation in 947 blocks of 155 districts in 13 states.

#### **9. DDP:**

The Desert Development Programme was launched in 1977 – 78 on the recommendation of the National Commission on Agriculture in the hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat, and the cold desert areas of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. It was a central sector scheme with cent per cent financing by the centre.

However, with effect from 1979-80, it has been operating as a central sector scheme with funds being shared between the centre and the states on a 50: 50 ratio. As of 1996- 97, the programme was in operation in 227 blocks of 36 districts in seven states.

#### **10. FFWP:**

The Food for Work Programme was launched in April, 1977. It aimed at making wage payment in food grains at subsidised prices to the ruralites living below the poverty line. FFWP was implemented by the development administration, without any help from labour contractors. Huge buffer stock of food grains at the disposal of the government prompted it to start this scheme. FFWP continued till 1980.

#### **11. DWCRA:**

The scheme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas was introduced in 50 districts in 1982-83. The major thrust of DWCRA is to improve the socio-economic status of rural women through the creation of income-generating activities in a district on a self-sustaining basis.

#### **12. EAS:**

The Employment Assurance Scheme was launched in 1983 and expanded in phases to cover the whole country in 1996. It aims at providing 100 days of employment to two members of a rural family in a year. The secondary objective is the creation of economic infrastructure and community assets for sustained production and employment generation. The expenditure under EAS is shared between the centre and the states on an 80: 20 basis.

#### **13. SGSY:**

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana was launched in April 1999 replacing earlier programmes like the IRDP, the TRYSEM etc. This programme is instrumental in the setting up of a large number of industries through bank credit and subsidy. It plays an important role in enabling the poor families to rise above the poverty line in three years.

#### **14. PMRY:**

The Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana is a self-employment programme for the educated unemployed youth. This programme has been implemented since October 2, 1993 to provide employment opportunities to the educated unemployed youths in the country.

The minimum qualification required under the scheme is matriculation (passed or failed) or having undergone a government sponsored technical course for a period of six months or ITI passed. In this scheme the youth between the age of 18 and 35 belonging to families having income less than Rs. 25,000 per annum are provided assistance.

The educated unemployed entrepreneurs are given subsidy of 15 per cent subject to a ceiling of Rs. 75,000 each for starting small projects. They are required to bring 5 per cent of the project cost as margin money. Each entrepreneur is eligible for a loan upto Rs. 1 lakh. A reservation of 22.5 per cent for SC/ST and 27 per cent for Other Backward Classes has been provided. Preference is given to women.

**15. JPRGY:**

The Jai Prakash Rozgar Guarantee Yojana has been launched in 2002 to provide employment guarantee to the unemployed in the most distressed districts of the country.

**16. NSAP:**

The National Social Assistance Programme was conceived by the central government to provide social assistance to poor households. The programme came into force from 15th August 1995 and includes three schemes as its components such as National Old Age Pension Scheme, National Family Benefit Scheme and National Maternity Benefit Scheme.

**17. Rural Housing Scheme:**

Indira Awas Yojana was launched by the government in 1985. Under this scheme house is given free of cost to SC/ST families and free bonded labourers. The cost norms under IAY have been changed from time to time. With effect from 1st August 1996, the ceiling of assistance for house construction under IAY is Rs. 20,000 per unit in the plains, and Rs. 22,000 per unit in hilly and other difficult areas.

The scope of IAY has been extended to include non-scheduled rural poor. Under the Ninth Five Year Plan, Samagra Awas Yojana has been launched to ensure integrated provision of shelter, sanitation and drinking water to poor rural households.