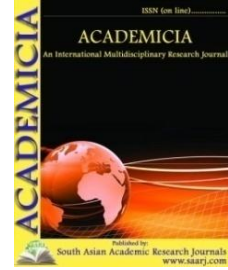


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A STUDY OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological and social capital), and services, and control over productive capital (in its financial or economic and political forms) that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological and social capital), and services, and control over productive capital (in its financial or economic and political forms) that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis.

The basic objectives of Rural Development Programmes have been alleviation of poverty and unemployment through creation of basic social and economic infrastructure, provision of training to rural unemployed youth and providing employment to marginal Farmers/Labourers to discourage seasonal and permanent migration to urban areas.

STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The rural economy is an integral part of the overall Indian economy. As majority of the poor reside in the rural areas, the prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment and wage employment programmes, by providing community infrastructure facilities such as drinking

water, electricity, road connectivity, health facilities, rural housing and education and promoting decentralization of powers to strengthen the Panchayati raj institutions etc. The various strategies and programs of the Government for rural development are discussed below:

Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP): First introduced in 1978-79, IRDP has provided assistance to rural poor in the form of subsidy and bank credit for productive employment opportunities through successive plan periods. Subsequently, Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) and Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) were introduced as sub-programs of IRDP to take care of the specific needs of the rural population.

Wage Employment Programs: Anti-poverty strategies, like assistance to the rural poor families to bring them above the poverty line by ensuring appreciable sustained level of income through the process of social mobilization, training and capacity building. Wage Employment Programs have sought to achieve multiple objectives. They not only provide employment opportunities during lean agricultural seasons but also in times of floods, droughts and other natural calamities. They create rural infrastructure which supports further economic activity. It encompasses Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) etc. NREGA is an act of parliament. It is not merely a scheme or policy. It aims at enhancing the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year, to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The objective of the Act is to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor.

Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS): EAS was launched in October 1993 covering 1,778 drought-prone, desert, tribal and hill area blocks. It was later extended to all the blocks in 1997-98. The EAS was designed to provide employment in the form of manual work in the lean agricultural season. The works taken up under the program were expected to lead to the creation of durable economic and social infrastructure and address the felt-needs of the people.

Food for Work Program: The Food for Work program was started in 2000-01 as a component of the EAS in eight notified drought-affected states of Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttaranchal. The program aims at food provision through wage employment. Food grains are supplied to states free of cost. However, lifting of food grains for the scheme from Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns has been slow.

Rural Housing: Initiated in 1985-86, the IAY is the core program for providing free housing to families in rural areas. It targets scheduled castes (SCs)/scheduled tribes (STs), households and freed bonded laborers. The rural housing program has certainly enabled many BPL families to acquire pucca houses. The coverage of the beneficiaries is limited given the resource constraints. The Samagra Awas Yojana (SAY) was taken up in 25 blocks to ensure convergence of housing, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and common drainage facilities. The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has extended its activities to the rural areas,

providing loans at a concessional rate of interest to economically weaker sections and low-income group households for construction of houses.

Social Security Programs: Democratic decentralization and centrally supported Social Assistance Programs were two major initiatives of the government in the 1990s. The National Social Assistance Program (NSAP), launched in August 1995 marks a significant step towards fulfillment of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The NSAP has three components: a) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS); b) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS); c) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). The NSAP is a centrally-sponsored program that aims at ensuring a minimum national standard of social assistance over and above the assistance that states provide from their own resources. The NOAPS provides a monthly pension of Rs. 75 to destitute BPL persons above the age of 65. The NFBS is a scheme for BPL families who are given Rs. 10,000 in the event of the death of the breadwinner. The NMBS provides Rs. 500 to support nutritional intake for pregnant women. In addition to NSAP, the Annapurna scheme was launched from 1st April 2000 to provide food security to senior citizens who were eligible for pension under NOAPS but could not receive it due to budget constraints.

Land Reforms: In an agro-based economy, the structure of land ownership is central to the wellbeing of the people. The government has strived to change the ownership pattern of cultivable land, the abolition of intermediaries, the abolition of zamindari, ceiling laws, security of tenure to tenants, consolidation of land holdings and banning of tenancy are a few measures undertaken. Furthermore, a land record management system is a pre-condition for an effective land reform program. In 1987-88, a centrally-sponsored scheme for Strengthening of Revenue Administration and Updating of Land Records (SRA & ULR) was introduced in Orissa and Bihar.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Ministry of Science and Technology plays a pivotal role in promotion of science & technology in the country. The departments has wide ranging activities ranging from promoting high end basic research and development of cutting edge technologies on one hand to serving the technological requirements of the common man through development of appropriate skills and technologies on the other. Appropriate rural technology focuses mainly on those technologies which are simple and within the reach of the ordinary people for their own benefit and the benefit of their community and harness the local or regional capacity to meet local needs without increasing dependence on external factors. A large number of governments, public and private non-government organizations are involved in developing technologies for rural areas. However, these technologies have hardly touched the lives of the rural population. Apparently, the problem lies not only in the generation, diffusion and adoption of technologies but also in poor documentation. Recently, efforts have been made by several organizations like NRDC, CAPART, TRCS, NIRD, DST, DBT, CSIR, ICAR, KVKs and other voluntary organizations etc. to bring out a compendium of technologies for rural areas for wide information dissemination and public awareness. A brief account of technologies which are low cost, energy-efficient and environment-friendly as well as appropriate and sustainable for application in rural areas is presented in the Appendix I.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS BY CSIR)

- Swaraj- India first indigenous tractor to facilitate mechanized agriculture.
- Value addition through post-harvest technologies like essential oil / menthol production.
- Cheapest water purification technology including terracotta purification disc, portable arsenic detection kit, ultrapore membrane-based purifiers for removing virus & bacteria.
- Over 365 technologies passed on to the rural masses through publications, training sessions, etc.
- Construction of around 30,000 dwelling units using cost-effective construction technologies.
- Reverse Osmosis plant for desalination in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

TARGET AND STRATEGY OF THE XITH FIVE YEAR PLAN (2007-2012)**TABLE 1: THE XITH PLAN ALLOCATION UNDER VARIOUS SCHEMES/PROGRAMMES**

Sr. No.	Scheme/Programme	Proposed out lay XI th Five Year (2007-2012) (Rs. In Lakhs)
1.	SJGSY	29656.12
2.	SGRY	18016.64
3.	DPIP9SS (EAP) / EAPII Phase	23158.72
4	Rural roads	50000.00
5	Indira Avas Yojana	27766.71
6	IWDP	10598.56
7	DRDA	6012.36
8	DPAP	21294.84
9	Gramin Ajivika Pariyaojna	22480.00
10	National Rural Rojgar Gurantee Scheme	199881.85

11	MP Rojgar Gurantee Council	3800.00
12	Mid day meal	69.462.00
13	BRGF	225695.00
14	Community Development	29265.20
15	Walmi	1250.00
16	Road maintenance	2030.00
17	State rural road Connectivity	8647.60
18	CM Awas Yojana (Apna Ghar)	6200.00
19	State SGSY	1800.00
20	Training	50.00
21	Master Plan	1363.00
22	Sutradhar scheme	50.00
23	Gokul Gram adhosanrathan	5000.00
24	Godan Yojana	1000.00
Grand Total		7,64,478.50

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

TABLE 2: SCHEME-WISE PHYSICAL TARGETS PROPOSED FOR XITH FIVE YEAR PLAN

Sr. No.	Scheme/Programme	Unit	Proposed target XI th Five Year (2007-2012)
1.	SJGSY	No. of beneficiaries in lakhs	4.52
2.	SGRY	Lakhs employment	900
3.	DPIP(SS with WB support)	No. of groups in lakhs	2.05
4	Rural roads (PMGSY)	Kms.	20000
5	Indira Avas Yojana	No. of houses in lakhs	4.44
6	Gramin Ajivika Pariyaojna	No. of household in lakhs	3.20
7	National Rural Rojgar Gurantee Scheme	Lakhs mandays	17300
8	Mid day meal	Students in lakhs	466.35
9	BRGF	No. of workers	20000
10	Raod maintenance	Kms.	20000
11	M.P. Rural Livelihood Project	No. of families	320000

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

SUGGESTIONS

Although concerted efforts have been initiated by the Government of India through several plans and measures to alleviate poverty in rural India, there still remains much more to be done to bring prosperity in the lives of the people in rural areas. At present, technology dissemination is uneven and slow in the rural areas. Good efforts of organizations developing technologies, devices and products for rural areas could not yield high success. Experiences of many countries suggest that technological development fuelled by demand has a higher dissemination rate. However, in India, technology developers for rural areas have been catering to needs (with small improvement), rather than creating demand. There is no industry linkage machinery to create demand-based-technology market for rural communities. Besides, there is also an imbalance between strategies and effective management programmes. Propagation of technology/schemes for rural development is slow and there is a lacking in wider participation of different

stakeholders. An ideal approach may therefore, include the government, panchayats, village personals, researchers, industries, NGOs and private companies to not only help in reducing this imbalance, but also to have a multiplier effect on the overall economy.

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