

Significance of Rural Development

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Abstract

In India, majority of the population, resides in rural communities. The development of all aspects within rural communities is vital for the effective development of the country. These include, education, employment opportunities, infrastructure, housing, civic amenities and the environmental conditions. Furthermore, rural individuals need to be aware of all modern and innovative methods and techniques that are vital to augment productivity. Within the country, the rural communities are still in an underdeveloped state. The individuals are residing in the conditions of poverty, they are illiterate and unemployed. Due to these factors, they are unable to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner. It is essential to formulate programs, schemes and measures that have the main objective of bringing about improvements in rural communities. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper include, concept of rural development, approaches to rural development, problems experienced by rural individuals, programs initiated by the Government for rural development.

Keywords: Approaches; Communities; Programs; Rural Development; Rural Individuals

Rural development involves the building of human life, which includes social, cultural, religious, political and economic conditions. In India, more than 70 percent of the population resides in rural communities. When the concept of development of the country is taken into consideration, then two main areas need to be emphasised upon, urban and rural. The development of both the areas is necessary in order to lead to effective growth and development of the country. Therefore, the government is putting into operation the measures that would lead to development of rural areas. There has been recognition of the needs of the rural communities by the government of India and has adopted the development planning measures, which have been implemented through the Five Year Plans. The initiation of schemes and programs have enabled the rural communities to bring about improvements in their living conditions. The development of the country is correlated with the development of rural communities [1].

The basic objective of rural development is to organize, develop and utilize the available resources of land, water and human resources in such a manner that an entire population is dependent upon these resources and have an equitable opportunity to fulfil

basic needs. Rural development takes into account, both the economic development and a greater transformation of the individuals. With the purpose of enhancing the livelihoods of the rural individuals, there is a need to increase the participation of the individuals in rural development programs, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and larger access to credit. Working on these aspects will abridge the gap between rural and urban divide and upgrade the standards of living of rural communities. The rural development involves the development of number of aspects, these include, irrigation facilities, expansion of electricity, improvements in the techniques of cultivation, enhancements in the system of education, health care and medical centres and so forth [1].

The individuals belonging to rural communities lead a simple lifestyle. They are less aware of modern and innovative methods and approaches and are less communicative in nature, as compared to individuals, belonging to urban communities. The rural communities, normally lead their lives in accordance to the traditions, customs, values and norms. In the past decade, large amount of efforts and resources have been spent upon projects and programs that are put into operation, with the main purpose of development of

rural communities. Although improving the quality of living conditions is regarded as an acceptable strategy to achieve the goal. There is a difference between bringing about improvements in the quality of life and living conditions of the individuals. It is vital to focus upon the problems that are experienced by the rural individuals and the various measures that are formulated to eliminate these problems [1].

Concept of rural development

The concept of rural development is a comprehensive aspect, which takes into consideration, number of factors. This term is used to mean organizing things, which bring about changes in the existing conditions in favour of a better state. For several decades, the concept of rural development focused solely upon economic change. But at a later stage, the concept got extended to take into account, economic, political, social, cultural, technological and psychological frame of the society [2]. In other words, when focusing upon rural development, it not just takes into consideration, the development of rural infrastructure, individuals and their overall living conditions, but it focuses upon the development of social, economic, political, cultural, technical and religious aspects as well. In promoting development of these aspects, it is vital to put into operation, modern and innovative strategies, methods and approaches that are considered essential in augmenting progress in the overall quality of life of the individuals. In addition, individuals should be trained in terms of usage of technology to bring about technical progress.

The term 'rural development' is of major concern, particularly when one is focused upon promoting effective growth and development of the country. In India, rural areas are still in a backward state and number of programs and schemes need to be formulated to bring about improvements. The term 'rural development' can be used in a divergent state. As a concept, it can promote overall development of rural areas. It has been acknowledged on a comprehensive basis that improvements in the overall quality of life of the rural individuals can lead to augmentation of rural communities. Apart from enhancing the overall quality of lives of the individuals, the other areas that need to be taken into consideration are, agriculture, farming practices, industries, factories, craftsmanship, skills and abilities of the artisans, health care facilities, medical centres, socio-economic infrastructure, and financial and human resources. Development primarily takes place, when there is interaction between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. It is necessary for rural individuals to generate awareness and put into practice the measures that would promote effective growth and development.

Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of individuals to acquire opportunities for themselves for the purpose of sustaining better livelihoods for themselves and their families. The poverty stricken and underprivileged sections of the society cannot accomplish their desired goals and objectives on their own. They do need help and support from other individuals, organizations, agencies and programs. Hence, making provision of assistance to rural individuals to bring about improvements in their living conditions and in the promotion of welfare and goodwill is regarded as rural development. When improvements need to be made in rural areas, it is essential to develop and utilize natural and human resources, technologies, infrastructural facilities, institutions and organizations, and government policies and programs. These aspects are wholeheartedly dedicated towards promoting economic growth, employment opportunities, education, technical knowledge, participation in social, economic, political, cultural and religious activities and bringing about transformations in the overall quality of life [1]. Alleviation of the conditions of poverty is an important concern. For this purpose, it is essential for the farmers and agricultural labourers to possess adequate knowledge and information in terms of usage of modern and innovative strategies and methods in agricultural and farming practices.

Approaches to rural development

There are not any universally accepted approaches to rural development. It is a choice that is influenced by time, space and culture. Rural development is a comprehensive and a multi-dimensional concept. In rural areas, there are number of aspects, which need to be improved. These include, agriculture, small-scale industries, village and cottage industries, community resources and facilities and above all the living conditions of the rural individuals [3]. In the Indian framework, the development of rural areas promotes the production of the agricultural sector. Research has indicated that farmers and agricultural labourers are in a deprived state and experiencing problems in the adequate sustenance of their living conditions. Hence, number of programs and schemes need to be introduced to generate awareness among them in terms of modern and innovative strategies and methods that would augment productivity and profitability.

The main purpose of approaches to rural development are to acquire information in terms of the programs and schemes that have been initiated. Since 1951, there have been formulation of approaches, with the main purpose of bringing about development of rural areas. The main areas that have been taken into account, are, rural prosperity, equality and employment of rural individuals. The approaches have been stated as follows: [4].

Multi-purpose approach

The major purpose of the multi-purpose approach is to lead to all round development of the villages, based on self-help and self-reliance. It is regarded as a significant approach, which laid the foundation for the up-liftment of rural India. During the early 1950s, rural development efforts began with the multi-purpose approach, which include the activities related to agriculture, animal husbandry, co-operation, irrigation, village and small-scale industries, health care and sanitation, housing, transport and communication, welfare of women and children and rural employment. The Community Development Programs (CDPs) and National Extension Service (NES) launched in 1952, came under this approach.

Sectorial approach

The main purpose of this approach was to promote intensive development of the selected sectors, namely, age, and culture with concentration in the areas of comparative advantage. By 1960s, the situation was rather critical on the food front. The need for the greater concentration for the production of food led to the strategy for locating the potential sectors and well-endowed districts and areas, capable for yielding higher agricultural production. Attention was paid towards enhancing productivity per acre than on the extension of the acreage. Therefore, the Intensive Agriculture Development Program (IADP) in 1960 and Intensive Agriculture Area Program (IAAP) in 1963 were initiated. Both IADP and IAAP were benchmarks in the development of agriculture. The programs put emphasis upon agriculture on a qualitatively different footing with a wide ranging repercussions on rural scenario. With the advent of these programs, there were augmentation in the agricultural sector.

Target group approach

The main purpose of this approach is to augment growth with social justice among the socio-economically backward sections of the society. In order to accommodate the lagging sectors or regions, the development of rural areas was re-conceptualized to highlight the improvements in the social and economic lives of the individuals. These individuals mainly included, marginal and small farmers, agricultural labourers, for whom, special programs, such as, Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers Development Agency (MFALDA) were initiated. It was observed that the target group approach showed better results, where information facilities were satisfactory and adequate. Furthermore, administrative and organizational facilities were also well-developed.

Area development approach

The main purpose of this approach is to promote spatial planning and reduction of regional imbalance. In order to bring about correction in the regional imbalance, area development approach was put into operation. The programs that were initiated include, Tribal Area Development Program (TADP, 1972), Hill Area Development Program (HADP, 1974-1975), Drought Prone Area Program (DPAP, 1970), Desert Development Program (DDP, 1977-1978) and Command Area Development Program (CADP, 1975). These programs were successful in implementation.

Basic needs approach

The basic needs approach gives primacy to the needs for a minimum standard of living of the poverty stricken individuals, as a major concern for development planning. It aims at the equalization of social consumption. It therefore renders a significant contribution in the formulation of the development strategy, which aims at leading to a decline in poverty and inequality, promoting growth of employment opportunities and distributive justice. The other areas that have been included in this approach include, personal and social consumption, human rights, people's participation and employment and growth with justice.

The Minimum Needs Program (MNP) within the country was introduced in 1974, during the first year of the fifth plan period. The fifth plan proposed MNP with the objective of establishing the network of basic services and facilities of social consumption in the areas of up to the nationally accepted norms within the specified time frame. It is a program of investment in human resource development and seeks to upgrade the consumption of those, living below the poverty line. Bringing about improvements in the productive efficiency of people and their quality of life is regarded as one of the significant aspects. The major components of MNP are, rural health, rural education, rural roads, rural drinking water, rural electrification, house sites for landless, environmental improvement in slums and nutrition.

Employment-Oriented integrated approach to rural development

The main objective of this approach was focused upon the removal of unemployment, and poverty, through sectorial and area integration. With the purpose of overcoming the limitations of earlier approaches and to bring about improvements in the overall quality of lives of the rural individuals, a multi-sector, multi-level, with the

multi-section concept of the integrated rural development was initiated in 1978-1979. Different programs were initiated under Integrated Rural Development Programs (IRDP). It aimed at ensuring accelerated well-being and progression of the deprived, based on the Gandhian concept of Antyodaya. Several programs that aimed at making provision of employment opportunities to the rural poor included, rural works program, rural employment guarantee program IRDP, Training Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DW CRA) and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY).

Problems experienced by rural individuals

The individuals residing in rural communities are experiencing number of problems and challenges that are proving to be impediments within the course of bringing about improvements in their living conditions. India was under the British rule for more than two centuries. The policies formulated by the British aimed at collection of revenue and they were not concerned with the development of rural communities (Agarwal, n.d.). Furthermore, the major problems that have been experienced by rural individuals have been stated as follows:

- **Zamindari System:** By the introduction of the zamindari system, the Britishers collected as much revenue as they could from the farmers. This system enabled the peasants to remain in a deprived condition. The zamindars did less to augment the conditions of the farmers and rural communities. The Britishers extracted minerals from rural land to make use of in their country Britain. They compelled the farmers to grow indigo for their own benefit. One of the most critical problems was, they did not put into operation any strategies or resources to bring about improvements in rural areas, but exploited the resources. With the prevalence of this system, the conditions of the farmers led to further deterioration and there was augmentation of poverty among them [1].
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** In rural communities, still there is lack of infrastructure and other facilities. Individuals are experiencing shortage of electricity, poor communication, improper roads and other infrastructural facilities. Within homes, shortage of electricity and water are regarded as major problems that are imposing detrimental effects upon the lives of rural individuals. In order to facilitate ones living conditions, individuals need lighting, heating and cooling equipment in accordance to the weather conditions, restrooms, clean drinking water and so forth. Improvements in roads and communication is necessary for the individuals

to transfer and form links with the wider community. Agricultural infrastructure has the potential to bring about changes in the traditional agriculture or subsistence farming into advance, innovative, and dynamic farming system within the country [5]. Hence, when there is lack of infrastructure, the individuals certainly encounter major impediments within the course of bringing about improvements in their living conditions and overall quality of life.

- **Use of Traditional Cooking Methods:** The rural individuals, particularly belonging to remote areas, have developed their own traditional methods of cooking and food preservation, primarily to survive in extreme weather conditions. The communication that they have developed with other individuals and local authorities, has rendered a significant contribution in leading to an increase in the utilization of better techniques to prepare and store food [6]. In the traditional cooking methods, they make use of mud stoves. In mud stoves, wood is used to light the fire and meals are usually prepared in earthen pots. The main reason behind the use of traditional cooking methods is, rural individuals usually do not possess the resources to make use of modern methods. One of the major disadvantages of the use of traditional cooking methods is, around 300000 deaths have taken place, due to pollution [1]. But when these individuals cannot afford gases, then they need to depend upon traditional methods.
- **Lack of Health Care Facilities:** In rural communities, health care facilities too are not in a well-developed state. When the individuals experience any health problems and illnesses, then they are required to transfer to distance regions or cities to obtain medical facilities. Due to lack of health care facilities, the rural individuals normally remain unaware of the approaches and strategies that are necessary to take care of their health and well-being. Furthermore, they also remain unaware of what essential nutrients, they need to consume to facilitate physical and psychological growth and development in an effective manner. Hence, this is one of the major problems that leads to deprived health conditions among rural communities.
- **Lack of Education:** In rural communities, the system of education is not in a well-developed state as compared to urban areas. There is prevalence of illiteracy among the rural communities. Though these individuals recognize the significance of education, but due to number of factors are unable to get enrolled in schools to acquire educational skills. The number of factors that lead to prevalence of illiteracy among the individuals are, distance of schools from homes, lack of transportation facilities, lack of financial resources, shortage of teachers

in schools, inappropriate teaching-learning methods, lack of school infrastructure, lack of facilities within homes, discriminatory treatment, particularly against the girls and inadequate development of extra-curricular activities.

- **Lack of Technical Knowledge:** In the present existence, technology has gained prominence. The individuals, belonging to all categories and backgrounds are making use of technology for the implementation of various tasks and activities. Among the rural individuals, there is lack of technical knowledge. Still, rural entrepreneurs as well as the individuals residing in rural communities do not possess adequate knowledge and information in terms of usage of technology. Lack of technical knowledge has proved to be a major impediment within the course of implementation of various tasks and activities. But there have been establishment of training centres that are providing knowledge to the rural individuals, regarding technology. After acquiring knowledge in terms of usage of technology, they are making use of it for augmenting their overall quality of life. Modern methods and technology is used in the agricultural sector, farming practices and so forth. Furthermore, rural folks make use of it for communication and leisure and recreational purposes as well.
- **Lack of Employment Opportunities:** The rural individuals are in most cases employed in the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector does not generate sufficient income for the farmers, with the purpose of sustaining the living conditions of themselves and their families. Apart from agricultural sector, the other areas, which they get engaged into for the purpose of sustaining their living conditions are production of handicrafts, jewellery, garments, food items, animal husbandry, marketing and selling, and so forth. When rural individuals are involved in the production of these items, then they usually market their products, especially at the time of festivals. But one of the unfortunate aspects is, there are lack of employment opportunities among them to a major extent. This is also regarded as a major cause of poverty.
- **Unawareness:** As it has been stated that rural individuals put into practice the traditional values and methods in the implementation of various tasks and activities. The main reason being, they are unaware of modern and innovative methods, strategies and approaches. Research has indicated that individuals in rural and tribal communities are dependent upon the natural environmental conditions to a major extent. They even obtain herbs and medicinal plants from the forests to treat their wounds and illnesses. Therefore, it can be stated that unawareness and lack of information enables them to adopt traditional

methods and practices in the implementation of daily life tasks and activities. Unawareness is regarded as the major cause of their backwardness.

- **Malnutrition:** Malnutrition is the condition, when the individuals do not obtain proper diet and nutrition. In other words, when their intake of food is less than what is required, then the individuals are experiencing malnutrition. There are two aspects of malnutrition, i.e. over-nutrition and under-nutrition. Over-nutrition is the state, when an individual consumes more diet, then what is required. Whereas, under-nutrition is the state, when individuals consume less diet, then what is required. In rural communities, individuals are mostly under-nourished. They experience problems and challenges within the course of fulfilling their adequate diet and nutritional requirements. The major causes are poverty and lack of financial resources. Due to malnutrition, these individuals, belonging to all age groups experience severe health problems and illnesses.
- **Discriminatory Treatment against Girls:** In some rural communities, the birth of the girls is not appreciated and they are discriminated against. Strong preference is given to male children and when there are male children within the family, then more attention is paid to them. Male children are encouraged towards acquisition of education and are enrolled in schools. Whereas, girls are compelled to remain confined within their homes and trained in terms of the implementation of household responsibilities. It is usually believed by the individuals that when the male members of the family will be educated, then they would be able to enhance the status and bring about well-being of their families and communities. Furthermore, more attention is paid towards the health care needs, and diet and nutrition of males more as compared to girls. Girls in rural communities usually remain deprived of number of aspects. Hence, it is vital to formulate measures to generate awareness among them that girls should be provided equal treatment as boys.

Programs Initiated by the government for rural development

The department of rural development has implemented number of programs in rural communities through the State governments for causing reduction in poverty, generation of employment opportunities, development of rural infrastructure, and provision of basic minimum services. The policy makers have recognized the significance of rural development. The programs and measures formulated have the major objective of bringing about progression of rural areas. The community development program was the first organized attempt for rural development. The program was launched

on 2nd October, 1952. It was focused upon the overall development of rural areas, including, agriculture, animal husbandry, roads, communication facilities, health care, education, housing, employment and nutrition [1]. The programs initiated by the Government for rural development have been stated as follows:

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadhak Yojana (PMGSY)

The roads are considered vital in any region. The development of roads enables the individuals to promote economic growth and alleviate poverty. Government has launched a centrally sponsored scheme, which is known as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadhak Yojana. The main objective of this program is to provide connectivity to all the unconnected habitations in rural areas, through the construction of roads by the end of the tenth plan period. The rural areas usually have the population of more than 500 individuals. PMGSY is a special central intervention as part of the poverty reduction strategy. Though rural roads is a state subject, the central government is making provision of financial assistance as a centrally sponsored program. The main objective of road connectivity is to ensure that essential services, such as education, employment opportunities, health care and medical, markets etc. are available to all citizens. State Government agencies and Panchayati Raj institutions will ensure that all the related programs focus upon making provision of services to habitations, connected under PMGSY [7].

Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

This program is the single self-employment program for rural individuals, who are poverty stricken and belong to underprivileged and marginalized groups. It came into effect on 1st April, 1999. The main objective of this program is to cover all the aspects of self-employment, like the organization of rural poor into self-help groups. In addition, the other areas that have been taken into account are, capacity building, training, skills development, infra-structural development, planning of tasks and functions, provision of financial assistance through bank credit and subsidy, and marketing support.

Rural Housing (Indira Awaas Yojana)

For the survival of the individuals, housing is regarded as the basic requirement. Therefore construction of housing is one of the major activities under the National Rural Employment Program, which began to get initiated in 1980. The Government of India in 1998, announced a National Housing and Habitat Policy, which aims at providing housing for all and facilitating the construction of 20 lakh, additional housing units (13 lakhs in rural areas and seven in urban areas) with emphasis put upon providing standing benefits to the deprived. The action is being put into practice

through the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), Credit cum Subsidy Scheme for Rural Housing, Innovative Scheme for Rural Housing and Habitat Development, Rural Building Centres, Equity Contribution to the Ministry of Rural Development by HUDCO, and National Mission for Rural Housing and Development.

DRDA schemes

DRDA administration has been introduced from 1st April, 1999. The primary objective is to effectively manage the schemes and augment their professionalism. It is based on the recommendations of the inter-ministerial committee, known as the Shankar Committee. The scheme replaces the previous practice of allocating a percentage of program funds to the administrative costs. Under this, the separate provision has been made to meet the administrative expenses of the DRDA.

Training schemes

In the rural development tasks, primarily concerning the alleviation of poverty, training schemes have been acquiring significance. The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) has been conducting training programs, seminars and workshops. In addition, support is provided to a number of training and research institutions, with the main objective of dealing with issues and problems, relating to rural development.

Integrated Rural Development Programs (IRDP)

The IRDP was launched by the government in March, 1976. It is regarded as the major instrument of the government to alleviate the conditions of poverty. Its primary focus is to enable the selected families to cross the poverty line within a given frame of time. It is facilitated by taking up self-employment opportunities in various areas. These include, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, weaving, handicrafts, services and business activities. Integrated development cannot get implemented in isolation, through the project approach or the program approach. But it is integrated to take into account mutual interactions and linkages that need to be created to achieve the desired objectives. Integrated Rural Development is a multi-faceted framework involving a multi-disciplinary approach. It implies spatial, functional and temporal integration of many parameters [8].

Food for Work Program (FWP)

The FWP program was introduced in 1977 by the Janta government with the objective to make provision of employment opportunities to the rural individuals. These individuals are particularly, unemployed and underemployed. The wages paid to the workers were in kind, i.e. food and grains.

National Rural Employment Program (NREP)

NREP is a redesigned program for the FWP. It has been initiated with the objective of creating additional employment opportunities for the rural individuals, mainly with the help of surplus food grains. This program was primarily meant for those rural individuals, who are dependent upon wage employment to a major extent. During the lean agricultural period, they did not have any income. This program was merged with the Jawaharlal Rozgar Yojana (JRY).

Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program (RLEGP)

Some of the states, such as, Maharashtra and Gujarat formulated schemes with the main objective of making provision of employment opportunities for the rural individuals, especially the landless. When the individuals, in rural communities are landless, they would be unable to get engaged in agricultural and farming practices. Thus, they would encounter major barriers in augmenting their living conditions. Hence, this program puts emphasis upon creating employment opportunities for them.

Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)

JRY came into existence in April 1989 with the amalgamation of NREP and RLEGP. Under this scheme, it was expected to provide at least one member of each poor family (BPL family) an employment of 50 to 100 days in a year at a work near his or her residence. About 30 percent of the jobs, under this scheme were reserved for women. This scheme was implemented through the village panchayats.

Antyodaya Yojana

Antyodaya is a term that is formed by the combination of two words, ant means bottom or end and udaya means development. Therefore, it is referred to the development of the individuals, belonging to poverty stricken, deprived, marginalized, underprivileged and economically backward sections of the society. These individuals, primarily belong to rural communities and it is vital to formulate measures, focusing upon their development and well-being.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

Research has indicated that 70 percent of the individuals, belonging to rural communities are experiencing problems in fulfilling their daily needs and requirements. The new scheme was launched with the purpose of initiating benefits to rural individuals. A new scheme was launched and a legislation was enacted under the name of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

(NREGA). It guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household, whose adult members are willing to perform unskilled manual tasks. The act came into operation in 200 districts and was extended gradually to the other districts as well as notified by the government.

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