

## Livelihood Opportunities in Rural Areas

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### Abstract

Livelihoods opportunities are referred to the opportunities that the rural individuals get engaged in with the main purpose of sustaining their living conditions. The individuals, belonging to all categories and backgrounds and irrespective of factors, such as, class, caste race, ethnicity, religion, gender and socio-economic background are required to look for livelihoods opportunities. The educated and wealthy individuals are able to acquire reputed livelihoods opportunities. Whereas, the individuals, belonging to deprived and underprivileged sections of the society are able to acquire lesser paid livelihoods opportunities. In rural communities, agriculture is stated to be the major occupation of the individuals. Apart from agriculture, they are engaged in number of other activities as well. These include, handicrafts, artworks, silk weaving, pottery making, small scale and cottage industries, and so forth. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper include, need for improvements in livelihoods opportunities, National Rural Livelihood Mission, aspects signifying rural livelihoods, role of agriculture in improving livelihoods opportunities, and measures to enhance rural livelihoods.

**Keywords:** Activities; Agriculture; Improvements; Livelihoods Opportunities; National Rural Livelihood Mission

The concept of livelihood strategy is regarded as one of the central aspects of the development policies, practices and programs, not only in India, but in other countries of the world as well. Adequate and secure livelihoods are regarded as a concern to the well-being of rural individuals [1]. Livelihood is a set of economic activities, involving self-employment and or wage employment by making use of one's endowments, which can be human and material. The use of human and material resources are primarily made use of to generate adequate resources, which can be either cash or non-cash. These resources are made use of by the rural individuals to sustain their livelihoods in an enhanced manner. Government of India has rendered a significant contribution in promoting livelihoods opportunities among rural individuals. There have been implementation of various rural development programs, including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). In rural communities, individuals experience number of problems and challenges in meeting livelihoods opportunities in an appropriate manner [2].

The basic inequalities in the livelihood security, in the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter lead to prevalence of destitute conditions among rural population. Furthermore, the environmental effects of poverty, i.e. deforestation, declining land productivity, erosion and other environmental hazards are regarded as factors that have a negative influence upon the livelihoods opportunities of rural individuals. For the sustenance of livelihoods opportunities, in most cases, rural households depend upon agriculture, farming practices, animal husbandry and management of livestock. Some of the livelihoods strategies are wage labour, social pension, remittances from the members of the households, who are employed in urban communities, unpaid domestic and farm labour and other activities, which include, production of handicrafts, pottery making, jewellery making and so forth [2]. In these communities, individuals possess traditional viewpoints and follow customs, norms and practices. In other words, their livelihood opportunities are fundamentally based upon their jobs and cultures.

### Need for improvements in livelihoods opportunities

The individuals are required to work diligently and implement practices and approaches to bring about improvements in their livelihoods opportunities on a continuous basis. The most serious problem that the rural society faces within the country is poverty. The major causes of poverty are unemployment, underemployment, low wage rate and reductions in the agricultural sector and so forth. The conditions of poverty are regarded as major impediments within the course of sustenance of adequate livelihoods opportunities. When the rural individuals experience severe problems as a result of poverty, then they form this major goal to get engaged in different types of employment opportunities in accordance to their skills and abilities. The rural communities are not in a well-developed state. Individuals are unable to obtain employment opportunities in these communities, therefore, they migrate to urban areas to seek employment. In some cases, when they are unable to obtain employment opportunities in accordance to their interests, then they obtain other jobs, which are not in accordance to their interests [2].

Most of the rural individuals within the country take into account the agricultural sector as the backbone of their income. But in the present existence, they can no longer be dependent upon agriculture. There are number of causes, that rural individuals no longer consider the agricultural sector as the major area to promote livelihoods opportunities among themselves. Individuals, who are employed in this sector, usually are disappointed and struggle to make ends meet due to low wage rate. The cost of production does not tally with the yield. The farmers usually turn out to be reluctant to get involved in the agricultural sector. The farmers, who are employed in other fields are not paid a fair wage. Population explosion is also considered as one of the major causes of decline in the agricultural field. As a result of population explosion, most of the fertile lands are being converted into house plots. Hence, due to this, there has been a decline in the employment of rural individuals within the agricultural sector [2].

The need for improvement of livelihoods opportunities for the individuals is primarily due to current overall endowments of the factors of production, distribution of productive assets and productive abilities are grossly out of the alignment with what is needed. The economy is not in a well-developed state, which would contribute effectively for generating employment opportunities, mainly for the individuals, who aspire to obtain them. In India, there is not any scarcity of labour power and also insufficient investible capital. A large proportion of the individuals, who need work are, uneducated, unskilled and do not possess capital. Mostly, they possess the

abilities to get occupied in unskilled manual labour. They are able to lift loads with ease. All these individuals and migrants, belonging to other countries are in the present within the age group that are required to enhance their livelihoods opportunities [2]. Hence, with the possession of certain abilities, they are able to even get involved in minority jobs, such as, cleaning, washing and so forth.

The rural individuals are effected to a major extent by the conditions of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and malnutrition. When they get affected by natural calamities and disasters, such as, drought, floods, and earthquakes, then too, they need assistance to recuperate. One of the most indispensable means to alleviate these problems is to obtain lucrative livelihoods opportunities. In this case, one is able to generate ways that would promote well-being of their living conditions. It is a fact that there is not any involvement of any other factor that would bring about improvements in various aspects of the community. These include, economic, social, cultural and educational. If the individuals, belonging to rural communities are effectively trained to make use of their skills and abilities, then they would be in a position to meet their physical needs and requirements. In other words, it is vital for the individuals, belonging to rural communities to generate awareness in terms of all areas that would render an effective contribution in the sustenance of the living conditions [2].

The state is required to put into operation the measures that are necessary to secure livelihoods opportunities among individuals. It is vital to initiate measures to organize new development policies and programs and to instigate the policies and programs, which augment economic and social sustainability of rural livelihoods. The family is regarded as the micro-unit of the community. It is the primary responsibility of the family members to ensure that proper means are provided to the individuals to sustain their livelihoods in an enhanced manner. If the economic condition of the family is in an improved state, then it would gradually lead to economic sustainability of the state. It is necessary to acquire information in terms of transformation that has taken place from mere wage employment programs to right base wage employment program Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) [2].

Within the country, there are three decades of experience for the purpose of generating wage employment programs. To create employment programs within the public, through a scheme is not regarded as a new practice. The Maharashtra Model of rural employment has existed since 1970s. As far as new MGNREGS is concerned, it has a large number of individualities, like people's enti-

tlement, and support by law. These are mandatory in nature. Many changes have not taken place in the form and substance of public works programs in the past 30-odd years. In many ways, MGNREGS is regarded as the replication of other schemes in letter or spirit and with legal guarantee. The first set of programs, the National Rural Employment Program and the Rural Landless Employment Program, began in the 1970s, with the initiation of Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme [2].

The other programs and schemes that were introduced with the main purpose of enhancing livelihoods opportunities are, Wage Employment Programs, which was initiated in 1972. The Food for Work Program (FWP) was initiated in the 1970s, to make food grains available to the individuals, particularly the ones, who are poverty stricken and landless. The other program is, National Rural Employment Program (NREP). It has the objective of creating profitable employment opportunities within rural communities. Rural Landless Guarantee Scheme (RLGS) was initiated in 1983 with the objective of expanding employment opportunities to rural landless individuals, by guaranteeing employment to at least one member of the landless households, for up to 100 days in a year, on the projects for building community assets and rural infrastructure. The amalgamation of the programs, i.e. NREP and RLGS took place in 1989 into Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) [2].

### National rural livelihood mission

The Government of India has created a new program that would bring about transformation in the living conditions and livelihoods opportunities of rural individuals. The new National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) would reach the level of the households with the aim of providing support to the formation of institutions of the poverty stricken and underprivileged sections of the society. The adequate space has been created for these individuals, so they are able to access food, health care facilities, assets, resources and are able to promote better livelihoods opportunities for themselves and their families [3].

This program is regarded as the largest poverty reduction initiative. It is the largest program for women in the world, with its goal of reaching approximately 70 million rural households. NRLM will be initiated in 12 states, which account for 85 percent of the rural poor households within the country. More than \$ 5.1 billion would be invested in NRLM by the Government of India over next seven years. It includes the expected allocation for the 12th Five Year Plan. The World Bank is committing \$ 1.5 billion through its National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP). It is regarded as the largest single investment in the poverty reduction program [3].

The major focus of this program is to alleviate the conditions of poverty in rural communities. Poverty is regarded as the major hindrance within the course of sustenance of better livelihoods. The major approach that it has adopted in reducing poverty is mobilizing rural households into representative and self-managed institutions at the grassroots level. These are known as women's self-help groups (SHGs). The tasks and activities of this program has been put into operation exclusively through women's groups and organizations. It can have a major impact upon gender issues. The poverty stricken individuals would also demand services such as, early childhood education, pensions, safety nets, and assistance and services to those in need [3].

The major goal is to stimulate the individuals to get involved in variety of ways that would enable them to sustain better livelihoods. These are, agriculture and allied sectors, animal husbandry, rearing of livestock, and inland fisheries. The program also leads to development of enterprise through making provision of training to the individuals to obtain suitable employment opportunities. In addition to these, the program also gets involved in the building and protection of the asset base. This is carried out through savings and ultimate access to financial institutions. This accessibility makes provision of room to the poverty stricken households to cause a reduction in the debt burden by retiring high debt-cost, access new credit at market prices and access products to cause a decline in vulnerability, such as, insurance [3]. Accessibility to these products also render an effective contribution in making their future secure. Hence, it can be stated that NRLM has rendered an indispensable contribution in promoting enhanced livelihoods opportunities for rural individuals.

### Aspects signifying rural livelihoods

The major aspects that are important in promoting and reinforcing livelihoods opportunities among rural communities have been stated as follows:

- **Education:** The acquisition of education establishes a base for the individuals to sustain better livelihoods. One is able to acquire understanding of various concepts and areas, which enables them to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate. The individuals are able to inculcate the traits of morality and ethics, which would enable them to implement honesty and righteousness in carrying out various tasks and activities. In rural communities, individuals are recognizing the significance of education. They possess the viewpoint that upon the acquisition of education, their children would be able to acquire good employment opportunities and augment

their livelihoods. Even when the parents are not educated, they aspire to get their children enrolled in schools and augment their academic skills. Research has indicated that rural individuals are migrating to urban areas as well to get enrolled in higher educational institutions to enhance their educational qualifications. They are acquiring masters and doctoral degrees with the objective of promoting better livelihoods for their families and communities.

- **Diet and Nutrition:** Diet and nutrition is regarded as the aspect that is of utmost significance. Individuals in rural as well as in urban communities pay adequate attention upon this aspect. When women begin to carry out the household responsibilities, then they first of all plan preparation of meals. In order to get engaged in any task or activity, it is vital for the individuals to obtain proper diet. When children go to school in the morning or when individuals go to work, then they obtain their breakfast, as they need the essential nutrients and also need to boost their energy levels. When rural women are involved in the implementation of household chores, then too, they obtain their breakfast, so they can perform their work duties better. Rural individuals are primarily engaged in manual jobs and these jobs require them to make use of their muscles. Hence, they are required to obtain nutritious and healthy meals. Therefore, it can be stated that through the acquisition of proper diet, one would be able to promote livelihoods opportunities in an efficacious manner.
- **Agriculture and Farming Practices:** Agriculture and farming practices are regarded as significant areas within rural India. Majority of the rural population is dependent upon the agricultural sector for sustaining their living conditions. In order to generate productivity, it is vital for them to possess efficient skills and knowledge. Increase in productivity and profitability can be achieved through, blending practical knowledge with scientific technologies, efficient use of natural resources, implementing time specific management practices, giving importance to technology-driven production, adopting appropriate farming systems, adoption of location-specific technology, market demand driven production and implementing low cost and no cost technologies [4].
- In these sectors, agricultural labourers and farmers are employed and work diligently, but they also need to face challenges. There are certain positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects are, the individuals are making use of modern and innovative techniques and practices in their work to augment productivity. In rural communities, there have been establishment of training centres, in which individuals get enrolled to acquire information in terms of advanced methods and technologies. The negative aspects are, when individuals and areas get effected by floods, droughts and other problems, which may hinder productivity. In these sectors, the income generated is not sufficient, hence, individuals look for other alternatives.
- **Vocational Training:** As it has been stated that being employed in just the agricultural sector is not sufficient to promote better livelihoods opportunities. The rural individuals look for other options as well. Vocational training is common among them. Vocational education, vocational education and training, technical and vocational education and training, skills development, workforce development and human resources development are often used interchangeably. Vocational education and training are regarded as the set of practices and technologies [5].
- The individuals get enrolled into vocational training centres to augment their skills and abilities, so they are able to look for other alternatives. The rural individuals enhance their skills in terms of number of areas. These include, plumbing, repair work, electric work, painting, carpentry, production of handicrafts, artworks and so forth. The individuals make selection of the fields, primarily on the basis of their interests and abilities. When they are efficiently trained in these areas, then they usually migrate to urban areas and obtain employment. In most cases, they make visits to houses and offices and implement their skills. This usually applies to electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters and repair workers. Whereas, in others, they may establish their own business. This is mostly in the case of artisans and craftsmen.
- **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Extra-curricular activities render a significant contribution in not only schools, but also in enriching the livelihoods opportunities among rural individuals. When one considers the large number of activities available, then one is able to identify the number of activities available to generate income and enhance one's living conditions. These include, athletics, publications, fine arts, student government, academic clubs, service organizations and special interest activities [6]. It has been found that rural individuals possess great interest and enthusiasm in not only production of handicrafts and artworks, but also activities such as, singing, dancing, playing of musical instruments and so forth.
- When they possess keen interest in them and aspire to get trained in any one particular extra-curricular activity, then in some cases, they even drop out of schools and join training

centres or in some cases, attend schools and training centres, simultaneously. On the other hand, when they are residing in destitute conditions and experience financial problems, then they make use of mobile phones or television or computers to augment their skills and abilities. One gains proficiency and expertise in these activities with practice. When individuals acquire proficiency in these activities, then they even establish their own training centres. Whereas, in other cases, they even participate in shows and concerts to generate income. Hence, rural individuals make use of their skills and abilities to enhance livelihoods opportunities.

- **Sports Activities:** Rural individuals depict interest in various forms of sports activities as well as make them sources to augment livelihoods opportunities. The various forms of sports that individuals depict interest in are, running, wrestling, taekwondo, badminton, tennis, cricket, boxing, swimming and so forth. Normally, individuals develop interest in sports, when their family members, particularly fathers and grandfathers have been sportspersons. In other words, rural individuals often possess the viewpoint that their children should make a career in such activities, when they are no longer able to make use of them. At the initial stage, the individuals acquire training from their fathers, grandfathers or uncles. But within the course of time, when they need to acquire proficiency and expertise to participate in competitions at the national or at the international level, they join training centres. Training centres provide efficient training and prepare the individuals to become national level or international level athletes. In the present world, rural individuals are getting involved in sports activities to a major extent to augment livelihoods opportunities.
- **Safety Nets:** In order to enhance livelihoods opportunities, individuals are required to maintain their health and safety. Safety and protection of the individuals is regarded as indispensable, particularly when they are employed in industries, plantations and other hazardous occupations. In rural areas, there have been establishment of small scale industries. Rural individuals are employed in these industries and make use of machines and tools in the implementation of production processes. The use of machines and tools are normally considered hazardous in the production of various items, such as locks. When the individuals do not have access to other options, they work in these industries. But it is vital for them to acquire appropriate training and work under the supervision of the manager or supervisor, especially, when they are novice. In various occupations, especially the ones, in which they make use of chemicals and other substances, individuals need to take adequate precautions and safety measures, such as proper attire, glasses, gloves and so forth. Therefore, it can be stated, when training is provided to the individuals, they need to be made aware, particularly in terms of safety nets.
- **Marketing and Sales:** In rural areas, individuals, men and women are engaged in the production of handicrafts, food items, pottery, jewellery, embroideries, garments, decorative items and so forth. When they are engaged in the production of these items, then they need to possess adequate awareness in terms of marketing and sales. Normally, they market their products within their own communities at the time of festivals. In rural communities, individuals have their own customs and practices, upon which their lives are centred. Particularly at the time of festivals, individuals make purchases of decorative as well as other items. Hence, they are able to market their products and incur profitability. In some cases, rural individuals migrate to urban communities, where they make visits to market places and set up stalls. The increase in visits takes place, especially at the time of festivals. During the festive season, they may also make visits to fairs for marketing and sales. Artisans and craftsmen need to be informative in terms of the time period, when demand for their products would be high.
- **Animal Husbandry:** Animal husbandry deals with the study of various breeds of domesticated animals and their management for obtaining better products and services. When it involves the study of proper utilization of economically significant domestic animals, then it is known as livestock management [7]. Animal husbandry is also regarded as one of the essential areas of rural communities. It is the branch of agriculture that deals with rearing of animals that are used for fibre, meat, milk, eggs and other products. In households, individuals keep livestock and rearing of livestock is regarded as one of the major responsibilities. In this case, individuals belonging to all age-groups and genders participate. The major functions that they are required to carry out in animal husbandry are, day-to-day care, selective breeding and raising of livestock. The individuals need to take care of diet, health care, shelter, safety and other areas of their animals.
- In rural communities, individuals in most cases, keep livestock and make use of them to generate productivity and income. In order to enhance livelihoods opportunities, they obtain products from their animals, such as, fibre, wool, meat, milk, eggs and so forth, mainly for selling purposes. Normally, when they possess efficient skills, then milk is used to produce items such as, butter, cheese, which they usually sell on daily basis. Another major use of keeping animals is, they are also able to



transport to other regions and cities. Such animals are horses, camels, and bullocks.

- **Programs and Schemes:** In rural communities, there have been introduction of programs and schemes, which have the major objective of promoting well-being of the individuals, particularly the ones, belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society. When the individuals are experiencing health related problems or illnesses or are not ambulatory, in other words, when they are not able to earn their livelihoods opportunities, then they obtain assistance from programs and schemes. Financial assistance is one of the major assistances that is available to these individuals. Micro-finance is one of the programs that makes provision of financial assistance to particularly rural women. Apart from this, the other programs and schemes are, women and child development programs, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and so forth. Furthermore, there are also formulation of programs that work towards promoting well-being of the farmers and agricultural labourers. Some of the programs are initiated to augment skills development opportunities among individuals, these are known as skills development programs. It has been found that rural individuals have been making effective use of these programs and schemes to acquire better livelihoods opportunities.

#### Role of agriculture in improving livelihoods opportunities

Within developing countries like India, majority of families in farm and non-farm sectors, regard agricultural sector as the major area that would lead to bringing about improvements in the livelihoods opportunities for rural individuals. Livelihood opportunities can be improved by the individuals, when they have adequate food and financial resources available to meet their daily needs and requirements. When the individuals have a job, when they have resources and assets to sustain their living conditions, they feel that they will be able to sustain their livelihoods opportunities in an appropriate manner. There are four principle ways of securing livelihoods opportunities among the individuals, belonging to rural communities. These are stated as follows: [8].

- **Production-based Livelihoods:** In the case of production-based livelihood, the large proportion of small and marginal farmers acquire livelihoods opportunities through production on small pieces of land. In simple terms, when the individuals are engaged in the production processes to sustain their living, then it is regarded as production-based livelihoods. For these individuals, availability or access to inputs and improved methods of production and cultivation are considered quite critical for improving livelihoods opportunities.

- **Labour-based Livelihoods:** In the case of labour-based livelihoods, the small landholders and landless rural households meet their livelihoods opportunities by selling their labour. In some cases, individuals even get employed in construction work, where they put into practice, unskilled manual labour. In the labour-based livelihood, they take into consideration, factors such as, demand for labour, wage rates and prices of food.
- **Exchange or Market-based Livelihoods:** Exchange or market-based livelihood is, when individuals or families, belonging to rural communities produce surplus food or non-food agricultural products or non-farm goods by selling of surplus within the market. For this purpose, they need to possess adequate information in terms of marketing strategies, and the costs involved in production and selling prices. They need to be aware of the fact that costs involved in production and manufacturing of the products should be less than the selling price in order to incur profitability.
- **Transfer-based Entitlements:** Transfer-based entitlements usually are meant for households, which do not possess any income-earning asset or an able-bodied person to get engaged in some type of work to sustain their livelihoods opportunities in an appropriate manner. They are the ones, who are dependent upon the transfers, available from the government or other social organizations. The Government's social security and food assistance programs are considered relevant for this group of rural households in fulfilling their livelihoods requirements. The rural livelihoods systems within the developing countries, thus include a comprehensive range of factors and depend upon several macro sub-systems of the economy.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has defined sustainable agriculture as the management and conservation of the resource base and the use of modern and innovative methods and strategies that would ensure the attainment and satisfaction of human needs of the present and future generations. It follows that sustainable agriculture is that path of development of agriculture that is environmentally non-degrading, technologically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable [8]. In other words, the rural individuals would be able to augment their livelihoods opportunities, when they would be able to make use of modern and innovative techniques and methods in the production processes.

When understanding, how the agricultural sector is rendering an effectual contribution in the sustenance of the living conditions of the individuals, it is necessary to identify that agriculture by definition is the most efficaciously managed eco-system. It is closely connected with the food system. The advancements taking place

within the agricultural sector not only leads to augmentation of productivity, but the rural individuals, who are solely dependent upon it to sustain their livelihoods are able to alleviate poverty. The agricultural labourers are able to generate income and would also not experience problems in fulfilling their nutritional requirements. It is essential for these individuals to possess awareness regarding methods and techniques, for the purpose of augmenting productivity. With the implementation of sustainable cropping and farming systems, recent trends in the profitability of farming and some new approaches, such as organic farming, and so forth would lead to augmentation of productivity [8].

A significant aspect of sustainability of agriculture and rural livelihoods is the perception of rural and urban areas. The relationship between rural and urban areas has undergone a significant change in recent years, which is regarded as an appropriate sign for reducing pressure on land and water resources. It has become difficult to define the borders between the farm lands, small and large towns, informal urban settlements, peri-urban areas and urban centres. There has been an increase of the peri-urban areas as compared to the cities at a rapid pace. The major cause of increase in these areas is, because private investments tend to be concentrated in these areas. The urban population is increasing at a rate, which is higher than that of the total population and this trend continues to exist [8].

There is strong evidence available that rural livelihoods have been far more multi-locational. The rural individuals travel to urban areas and other regions, where they feel they would be able to find opportunities to secure better livelihoods. The jobs in industries and factories are regarded as hazardous. Rural individuals, usually feel insecure, when they are to work in these places, as they do not possess the needed skills and also feel vulnerable. Individuals normally are skilled only in those areas, in which they are engaged. The rural individuals are primarily engaged in the agricultural sector and farming practices. Therefore, they possess adequate knowledge and information regarding the tasks and activities involved in this sector. When they are unable to generate sufficient income in the agricultural sector, then they look for other job opportunities. It has been found, rural individuals acquire training in terms of plumbing, electric work, repair work, carpentry, painting, welding, gardening, driving, cooking, pottery making, silk weaving and so forth. They make use of these skills and abilities to acquire employment opportunities in urban areas as well.

### Measures to enhance rural livelihoods

Livelihoods are regarded as occupations that individuals are engaged in, with the main purpose of generating a source of income. The major areas that are considered as sources of rural livelihoods within the country are agriculture, labour, production, animal hus-

bandry and so forth. A rural livelihood is defined as the capabilities, assets and activities of the individuals that they need with the main aim of sustaining their living. In order to enhance better livelihoods opportunities, the major strategies that are required to be taken into consideration are, poverty alleviation, innovative approaches in creating better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities and wage and self-employment [9].

### Poverty alleviation

Poverty is regarded as one of the major problems that rural individuals are experiencing. Due to the prevalence of poverty, they are experiencing major impediments in carrying out various tasks and activities and even in looking after their health care and well-being. The conditions of poverty are mainly characterised by lack of resources, particularly finances, which are needed to fulfil all needs and requirements. Due to these conditions, individuals, mostly women and children are experiencing the problem of malnutrition. The alleviation of poverty is the first and the foremost priority of the individuals, particularly the ones, who have the main objective of rural development.

For the achievement of this objective, there have been formulation of measures. These measures are economic and humanitarian. The measures that aim at the alleviation of poverty are social security measures, food security measures, health care and medical facilities and wage and employment opportunities. With the dawn of economic growth, there have been alleviation of conditions of poverty and individuals, belonging to rural communities are also bringing about improvements within their overall quality of life. To alleviate the conditions of poverty, one of the most significant aspects is, making provision of financial assistance. With the introduction of modern and innovative methods in the agricultural sector, there has been enhancement of productivity and profitability. In other words, rural individuals need to be aware of employment opportunities and focus upon development of skills in order to earn better livelihoods.

### Innovative approaches in creating better livelihoods opportunities

Livelihood is best understood by taking into cognizance the financial, physical, social, human and natural endowments. The human element is considered as the most critical. When formulation of measures and approaches takes place, then the first and foremost concern is addressing the problems and challenges that the rural individuals are experiencing. Taking into account this aspect, there have been number of constitutional, administrative, legal and institutional approaches [10]. The innovative approach that has been widely acknowledged in not only creating better livelihoods

opportunities for the rural individuals but also for implementing other tasks and activities is use of technology. As it has been stated that agriculture is the primary occupation of rural individuals. They are able to augment productivity and profitability with the use of technology.

In the creation of better livelihoods opportunities, BASIX has been playing a leading role within the country. BASIX is the collective representation of the group of financial services and technical assistance entities that are rendering a significant contribution in the promotion of better livelihoods. The different aspects that have been taken into consideration in BASIX are, Livelihoods Financial Services (LFS), Agricultural/Business Development Services (Ag/BDS), and Institutional Development Services (IDS). These are regarded as the means of addressing the needs and requirements of individuals, particularly belonging to deprived and underprivileged communities. The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) has shown that management and development of common property land can lead to not only restoration of the degraded forest, but also promoting livelihoods opportunities, particularly for the vulnerable sections of the society. In common lands, watershed approach is regarded as the most relevant method for the propagation of livelihoods opportunities [10].

#### Basic amenities and infrastructure facilities

In rural communities, individuals normally experience shortage of civic amenities within their homes. Furthermore, the infrastructural facilities are also not in a well-developed condition. Water is regarded as the most significant need, which is required in the implementation of various tasks and activities. In rural households, there is scarcity of water and individuals need to depend upon wells, water bodies and rivers located nearby. Apart from shortage of water, they also experience shortage of electricity. They make use of mud stoves and traditional methods in the preparation of meals and in their overall management of household responsibilities. In rural communities, the infrastructural facilities are also not in a well-developed state. The aspects that are taken into consideration in infrastructural facilities are, broadcasting, radio, transportation, public services, technology and communications, power supplies, water supplies, telecommunications, and roads and rail networks. It is vital to bring about improvements in these areas in order to promote better livelihoods opportunities. Apart from bringing about improvements in them, it is vital to generate awareness among rural individuals to make effective use of them, particularly, technology and communications.

#### Wage and self-employment

It has been found that acquisition of employment opportunities and generation of income are regarded as primary objectives of ru-

ral individuals. They are looking for means to get engaged in various types of jobs, which would enable them to augment livelihoods opportunities. The individuals are stated to be self-employed, when they are engaged in any task or job duty on their own. In other words, when they are not working under any employer. The rural individuals are engaged in various jobs, which would promote wage and living conditions. These include, agriculture and farming practices, especially, when they have their own farms, animal husbandry, production of handicrafts and artworks, pottery making, silk weaving, production of food items and so forth. When rural individuals are unable to look for employment opportunities, then they acquire training and develop their skills in any one particular area of their interest and put it into operation to augment their livelihoods opportunities. In self-employment, the earnings of the individuals usually depends upon how much their products are in demand in the market. Normally, they are engaged in the production of items that are in much demand. These include, garments, food items or other items of daily use.

#### Conclusions

Augmenting livelihoods opportunities is regarded as the primary aspect of the individuals, belonging to all age groups, categories and backgrounds in order to promote their well-being. In the present existence, the need for bringing about improvements in livelihoods opportunities of rural individuals have been given consideration. To fulfil this objective, there have been formulation of measures and programs, taking into consideration, the needs and requirements of rural individuals. NRLM is a program that was implemented, primarily to alleviate the conditions of poverty. The aspects signifying rural livelihoods are, education, diet and nutrition, agriculture and farming practices, vocational training, extra-curricular activities, sports activities, safety nets, marketing and sales, animal husbandry, and programs and schemes. The agricultural sector renders a significant contribution in promoting livelihoods opportunities for rural individuals. The four principle ways are, production-based livelihoods, labour-based livelihoods, exchange or market-based livelihoods and transfer-based entitlements.

In achieving the major objective of enhancement of rural livelihoods, the main areas that need to be taken into consideration are, poverty alleviation, innovative approaches in creating better livelihoods opportunities, basic amenities and infrastructure facilities and wage and self-employment. In rural communities, it is vital to ensure that individuals are able to generate sufficient income through which they would be able to augment their living conditions. In rural areas, individuals normally have large families, there are more than two children in a nuclear family. Therefore, in order to sustain their living conditions, the individuals are required to



adopt more than one task or activity. In most cases, individuals belonging to rural communities migrate to urban areas to acquire job to enhance their living conditions. It has been found that they not only obtain employment opportunities in urban communities, but also are seeking enrolment in higher educational institutions to enhance their educational qualifications. Hence, it can be stated that rural individuals are generating information regarding programs, schemes and measures that would lead to up-gradation of their livelihoods opportunities.

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