



POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN INDIA



Phulan Kumar Singh

Assistant Professor ,Dept. of Commerce ,
R.B.S. College, Teyai.

ABSTRACT :

Rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighbourhoods, countryside, and remote villages. These communities can be exemplified with a low ratio of inhabitants to open space. Agricultural activities may be prominent in this case whereas economic activities would relate to the primary sector, production of foodstuffs and raw materials. (Kidwai, 2014:139) The objectives of development include sustained increase in per capita outputs and incomes, expansion of productive employment and greater equality in the distribution of the benefits of growth. Rural Development over the years has emerged as "a strategy designed to improve the economic, social and cultural life of a specific group of people living in the rural areas" (Desai: 20101:). The objectives of rural development are multi-dimensional as well as multi-directional. It aims at increased employment, higher productivity, higher income as well as minimum acceptable levels of food, clothing, shelter, education, health and building up of a sound value system which is in keeping with the high cultural heritage of the country.

KEYWORDS : economic activities , production of foodstuffs and raw materials.

CONCEPT OF RURAL:

According to Whitaker(1982), „rural? was first used by the US Bureau of the Census in 1874 when it was defined as indicating the population of a country exclusive of any cities or towns with 8000(eight thousand) or more habitants. Modified over the years, by the 1980 census, a specific definition for rural had been dropped. Instead, the urban population is now defined as all persons living in urbanized areas and places with population of 2,500 or more located outside urbanized areas; all population not classified as urban constitutes the rural population.(US Bureau of Census, 1983). The Farmers Home Administration considers rural areas to be open country communities of up to 20,000 in non-metropolitan areas, and towns of up to 10,000 with a rural character in metropolitan areas (US department of Housing and Urban Development, 1980). The Rural Highway Public Transportation Administration defines rural as indicating areas with population of 5000 or more.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of the present study are-

- (i) To understand the concept of rural development.
- (ii) To examine the poverty eradication policy initiatives and rural de.
- (iii) To examine the constraints of rural development especially in North East India.
- (iv) To suggest some strategies for rural development in NEI.

Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, the present study is divided into four parts- theoretical concept, policy initiatives for poverty alleviation and rural development, issues and challenges, rural development & poverty eradication in Northeast India, and strategies to be adopted for rural development.

DISCUSSION

Rural development involves raising the socio-economic status of the rural population on a sustainable basis. It denotes overall development of the rural areas. Its aim is to improve the quality of life of the rural people. Rural development can be achieved only when the rural people actively participate in the development process strategy.

According to South African Rural Development Framework (SARDF) (1997:9), rural development can be defined as helping rural people set the priorities in their own communities through effective and democratic bodies, by providing the local capacity: investment in basic infrastructure and social services, justice, equality and security: dealing with the injustices of the past and ensuring safety and security of the rural population, especially that of women.

The SARDF points out the following indicators for rural development-

- ? Involve rural people in decisions that affect their lives through participation in rural local government.
- ? Increase employment and economic growth in rural areas
- ? Provide affordable infrastructure.
- ? Ensure social sustainability in rural areas

METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive and analytical methods have been followed for the purpose of the study. Materials and data have been collected largely collected from the secondary sources. Statistical Reports have also been consulted. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, every possible effort have been made to make the study meaningful and significant.

NECESSITY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

For centuries, the village socio-economic fabric has undergone many changes. Besides, over 31 crore of rural people do not have adequate income, employment opportunities, fall short of demand, coupled with illiteracy, ignorance, land under cultivation is not only diminishing but also gets further fragmented, ecology degraded, infrastructural facilities do not match with the rural population. In addition, rural population is unorganized. To lift the people from these moorings, integrated rural development is the only answer. Though man cannot overcome all the limitations his environment imposes upon him, he can always attempt to modify it to suit his convenience. In this matter of gradual adaptation, man has brought about many changes. In this direction, rural development is the core of development and is a continuous process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL POVERTY:

Poverty in the rural India is characterized as-

- (i) Increasing landlessness and no alternative provided to earn meager livelihood.
- (ii) Fragmented division of land and size of land holding has gone up to an alarming level.
- (iii) Per head land has decreased from 0.5 hectare in 1951 to 0.12 hectare by the end of the century.
- (iv) Local infrastructure both at the regional and village level is not sufficient to start any other economic activity.
- (v) Lack of secure housing in terms of many natural disasters.
- (vi) Poor location in terms of basic amenities and facilities.
- (vii) Poor availability of health facilities, basic education, transportation and food security.
- (viii) Poor employment opportunities.
- (ix) No freedom from violence and intimidation on the basis of social identity based on caste, community and

religion.

The main issues of rural development are rising poverty, growing population, inadequate infrastructure, negation of basic amenities, ill-health, fragmentation of land, illiteracy, ignorance, deep-rooted apathy, debased value systems, under employment,, rampant unemployment,, lack of direction and motivation, social pressures and compulsions, social evils, destruction of eco-system, lack of awareness , lack of organized efforts etc.

DIMENSIONS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

Few dimensions of rural development may be pointed out directly helps in poverty reduction in the rural areas are -

(i) Human Development: The basis of all rural development is people centric. The human dimensions include educational levels, health, cultural identity and their social structure. Human factors equally important in the urban areas and its impact in different aspects of rural masses.

(ii) Natural Resources and Environment: Rural areas are rich in natural resources such as forests, fertile soils, or rivers that can be used as if not large but mini hydropower, coal or oil has always attracted human population. But in the long run rural development based on natural resources is only possible, if it does not over exploit these resources, if it preserves the cultural landscapes, if it avoids the pollution of soils, water and air, if it preserves the biological diversity of plants and animals. Every new policy of rural development has to be evaluated in its impact on the natural environment.

(iii) Economic growth: In recent years there have also been economic development in rural areas that could be summarized under the term 'new economy'. These include not only facilitates and services of the IT industry, but also biotechnology forms. These new economy' is sometimes combined with traditional production and tourism, such as in the direct marketing projects on the Internet for originally produced agricultural products.

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