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## Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in India

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**Abstract:** Rural Development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. India is primarily an agriculture-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development and poverty alleviation in India. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulations and acts pertaining to the development of the rural sector. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and dairy are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Poverty, Alleviation, Rural Development, Formulating Policies, Regulations, Acts Pertaining.

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### INTRODUCTION

Rural development in India has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies, and programs. It has assumed a new dimension and perspectives as a consequence. Rural development can be richer and more meaningful only through the participation of clientele of development. Just as implementation is the touchstone for planning, people's participation is the centerpiece in rural development. People's participation is one of the foremost pre-requisites of development process both from procedural and philosophical perspectives. For the development planners and administrators, it is important to solicit the participation of different groups of rural people, to make the plans participatory.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in a 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.

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

### ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Government's policy and programs have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulations and acts pertaining to the development of the rural sector. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and dairy are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy. The introduction of Bharat Nirman, a project by the Government of India in collaboration with the State Governments and the Panchayati Raj Institutions is a major step towards the improvement of the rural sector. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development, for improving the living conditions and its sustenance in the rural sector of India. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is engaged in legislations for the social and economic improvement of the rural populace. The ministry consists of three department's viz., Department of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources and Department of Drinking Water Supply. Under the department of rural development, there are

three autonomous bodies viz., Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and National Rural Road Development Agency (NRRDA). The objective of the ministry can broadly be elaborated as to encourage, promote and assist voluntary action in the implementation of projects for the enhancement of rural prosperity, strengthen and promote voluntary efforts in rural development with focus on injecting new technological inputs, act as the national nodal point for coordination of all efforts at generation and dissemination of technologies relevant to rural development in its wide sense and assist and promote programmes aimed at conservation of the environment and natural resources.

However, various ministries in the central government are engaged directly or indirectly for implementation of many programs and schemes for the development of rural areas like Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, New and Renewable Energy, Science and Technology, Women and Child Development and Tribal Affairs etc. In addition, to strengthen the grass root level democracy, the Government is constantly endeavoring to empower Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of functions, powers, and finance. Grama Sabha, NGOs, Self-Help Groups and PRIs have been accorded adequate roles to make participatory democracy meaningful and effective.

### **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 an 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 a 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, and 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 Chhattisgarh, 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 the 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 the promotion of science & technology in the country. The departments have 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 the 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 Appendix I.

Government schemes focusing on Science and Technology are:

**S&T Application for Rural Development (STARD):** Aims at facilitating the development of promising S&T based field groups and innovative technologies related to rural development.

**S&T for Women:** To promote research, development, and adaptation of technology, improve the life, working conditions and opportunities for gainful employment of women especially in rural areas.

**S&T Application for Weaker Sections (STAWS):** Aimed at the development of economically weaker sections of the society in rural and urban areas.

**Tribal sub-plan:** Aims at improving living conditions of scheduled tribes based on sustainable science and technology activities

**Special Component Plan (SCP):** Aims at improving the lot of the poor sections of SC community through the intervention of Science & Technology.

### **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, ultrapure 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.

It needs to be mentioned here that in a collaborative project jointly initiated by the Andhra Pradesh Government and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in Karim Nagar, Central Food, and Technological Research Institute, Mysore played a key role in establishing small-scale agro-based industries in that district for better livelihoods of the rural communities and promote the setting up and modification of existing rice mills units at Mulkanoor for better yields. Rural Development is the main pillar of Nation's Development. In spite of rapid urbanization, a large section of our population still lives in the villages. Secondly, rural India has lagged behind in development because of many historical factors. Though the 11th Plan began in very favorable circumstances with the economy has grown at the rate of 7.7% per year in the X<sup>th</sup> Plan period, there still exists a big challenge to correct the developmental imbalances and to accord due priority to development in rural areas. Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a number of programs aimed at sustainable holistic development in rural areas. The thrust of these programs is on

all round economic and social transformation in rural areas, through a multi-pronged strategy, aiming to reach out to the most disadvantaged sections of the society. The actual realization achieved during the Xth five year plans and the proposed target and strategy of the XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan have been highlighted and presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

#### **Rural development - Review of X<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan**

- The approved outlay for X<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan was Rs. 1, 41,320 lakh. An expenditure incurred during the plan period was Rs. 30,580.31 lakh in 2002-03, Rs.33, 234 lakhs in 2003-04, Rs.69, 610.07 lakhs in 2004-05 and Rs.70, 299.70 lakhs in 2005-06.
- Approved outlay for Annual Plan 2006-07 for various schemes/programmes was Rs. 92, 070.39 lakh against which an expenditure of Rs. 1, 01,168.63 lakhs is anticipated.
- The target of constructing 2.83 lakhs houses was fixed. Against this target, 3.10 lakh houses were constructed under Indira Awas Yojana. During Tenth Plan period 2.11 lakh families have been benefited under Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana. Out of this, 1.23 lakh beneficiaries i.e. about 58 % are from SC/ST category. Under Integrated Wasteland 89 Development program, 82 projects were sanctioned for 3.93 lakh hectare of land. Out of this, 1.50 lakh hectares land was treated
- During plan period, 1466 Micro Water sheds were sanctioned and 4.28 lakh hectares land has been treated. In Sampoon Grameen Rojgar Yojana, the GOI has allocated 17.28 lakh MT of food grains out of which 15.04 lakh MT food grains have been utilized. 6.95 lakh works were sanctioned out of which 6.25 lakh were completed and 176.23 lakh man-days were generated.
- Under PMGSY 13,500 Kms roads were completed. In Rastriya Sam Vikas Yojana, 12,504 works were sanctioned. Out of this, 11,496 works were completed. Under DPIP, 41,978 common interest groups of 2.84 lakh families were benefited during the plan period. M.P. Rural Livelihood Project is under implementation in 827 villages of 8 districts. Under this scheme, 4,000 families were benefited during the X<sup>th</sup> Plan period.
- The state has been a frontrunner in the implementation of NREGS. Nearly 1500 lakh man-days have been generated under Madhya Pradesh Grameen Rojgar Guarantee Yojana.

#### **Rural Development Review of the XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012)**

- Adequate provision has been made for the state share in continuing Centrally Sponsored Schemes like Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SAGSY), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Integrated Waste Land Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, DRDA Administration and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).
- Besides these, World Bank aided DPAP project is being implemented in 14 districts for the last 6 years. Support for this will continue under the second phase of the scheme in the eleventh plan. Similarly, M.P. Rural Livelihood Programme (MPRLP) is being implemented with the help of Department of International Development (DFID). Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI), DRDA Administration Yojana, Gokul Gram and Godan Yojana and community development program are proposed to be continued into the XI<sup>th</sup> Plan.
- Besides these, the State Government is supporting 5 new schemes namely, State Rural Road Connectivity Scheme, C.M. Rural Housing 90 Scheme, Master Plan Scheme, SGSY scheme, Training IEC scheme and Sutradhar scheme.
- As a successor to Rashtriya Sum Vikas Yojana (RSVY), Backward Regional Grant Fund (BRGF) scheme will be implemented in 24 of the 48 districts.

#### **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)**

- State of Madhya Pradesh has been the frontrunner in the implementation of this scheme. NREGS was launched in 18 districts of M.P. from 02.02.06. The central share of the scheme is 90 %. The objective of the scheme is to provide a minimum of 100 days unskilled employment to adult members of rural families. 44.19 lakh families have registered, out of which 44.10 lakh families have been provided job cards.
- During the financial year, 1, 48,229 works have been sanctioned up to 31.12.06, out of which 74,185 works have been completed and 74,044 works are in progress. Of the total sanctioned works, 1, 11,327 works are of water conservation, while 22,593 are of rural connectivity. In this scheme, a provision of Rs. 282.29 crores and Rs. 1998.82 crores have been provided for the annual plan 2007-08 and 2007-2012.
- The man-days for the year 2007-08 are 2,600 lakhs and for the XI<sup>th</sup> five-year plans, it is 17,300 lakh man-days.

#### **M.P. Rural Livelihood Programme (MPRLP)**

- An amount of Rs. 23.15 crores were available in the scheme for the year 2006-07 as per previous balance and other receipts in which state share is Rs. 0.49 crores out of which up to November 2006 Rs. 22.42 crores spent which is 96.05% of the total available fund. For the year 2006-07, the target for livelihood program is 25,000 families against which up to November 2006, the achievement is 16,700 families and the percentage is 66.80.
- For the year 2007-08, Rs.31.40 crores ceiling is proposed in which Rs. 0.80 crores is stated share. Hence, accordingly for the XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan ceiling is proposed for Rs. 224.80 crores.
- For the year 2007-08, the target is 80,000 families, hence, accordingly, for the XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan the number of beneficiaries is 3.20 lakh families.

#### **District Poverty Initiatives Program (DPIP)**



- The DPIP program, which focuses its activities on over 53 Blocks in 14 districts of MP, will alleviate poverty by improving the capacity and opportunities for poor and disadvantaged people with special focus on women. The project period is 5 years. The overall project cost is Rs. 600 crores out of which World Bank loan would be Rs. 500 crores and the remaining amount will come from the Government of Madhya Pradesh and from rural communities as their contributions during project implementation.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**

- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna is being implemented in the state with effect from 25.12.2000. For the proper monitoring and implementation of the scheme, M.P. Rural Road Development Authority was formed. The objective of the scheme is that by the end of X<sup>th</sup> five year plan, all villages having more than 500 habitats should be linked with major roads having 12 months connectivity. A distance of 26,544 km long road construction works was sanctioned up to September 2006 out of which 11,153 km roads constructions completed. A number of 2,115 villages having more than 1,000 habitants and 576 villages having 500 habitants are linked with 12-month connectivity roads. Now, this scheme is included in Bharat Nirman Scheme from 2006-07 onwards. Under this scheme, new and up gradation of 48000 km roads is proposed. By the end of 2009, all villages having 1000 habitants will be connected with newly constructed roads.
- Rs.100 crores allocated for the year 2007-08 and for the XI<sup>th</sup> Five year plan, an amount of Rs. 500 crores are proposed. The state government target for the year 2007-08 is 4,000 km and for the XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan 20,000 km accordingly.

#### **Backward Regional Grant Fund**

- The scheme is sanctioned by the Ministry of Panchayatraj in 2006-07. The duration of the scheme is five years. For each district, every year about Rs. 15 crores will be sanctioned and this program will cover 24 backward districts of the state. Total fund for this scheme is provided by the Panchayatraj Ministry, Government of India.
- For the year 2007-08, the plan outlay is Rs. 423.39 crores and for XI<sup>th</sup> five year plan outlay is Rs. 2,256.95 crores are proposed.

**Table- 1**  
**The XI<sup>th</sup> plan allocation under various schemes/programs**

S. No.	Scheme/Programme	Proposed outlay XI <sup>th</sup> Five Year (2007-2012) (Lakh Rs.)
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 Ajjivika Pariyaojna	22480.00
10.	National Rural Rojgar Guarantee 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.	Raod maintenance	2030.00
17.	State rural road Connectivity	8647.60
18.	CM Avas 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
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>7,64,478.50</b>

*Source: Ministry of Rural Development*

**Table- 2**  
**Scheme-wise physical Allocation for XI<sup>th</sup> Five year plan**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Scheme/Programme</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Proposed target XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year (2007-2012)</b>
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	Road maintenance	Kms.	20000
11	M.P. Rural Livelihood Project	No. of families	320000

*Source: Ministry of Rural Development*

### CONCLUSIONS

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 a demand-based-technology market for rural communities. Besides, there is also an imbalance between strategies and effective management programs. Propagation of technology/schemes for rural development is slow and there is a lacking in the 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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