Evaluation of Major Centrally Sponsored Development Schemes in the Border Areas of Punjab

Abstract

Punjab has a 553-kilometer-long international border with Pakistan. At the time of partition, the three border districts (now four) of the undivided Punjab, namely Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Tarn Taran and Amritsar were the most prosperous as they enjoyed better soil fertility and irrigation facilities. However, with the passage of time, these districts have lagged behind in development due to their proximity to the border and particularly the long spell of cross border terrorism. Farmers living in the border areas face acute hardships as they cannot cultivate tall crops which can ensure them better remuneration. Moreover, the farmers of the border belt are handicapped to accord proper attention to their crops due to lot of restrictions on their movement. Rivers Ravi and Sutlej are passing through the border districts of Gurdaspur and Ferozepur respectively and often wash away the crops of these areas during the rainy seasons by way of flooding. In addition, there are a number of choes/distributaries of these rivers, which also cause damage to the crops of this area. Punjab has a special place in India due to its geographical conditions. The total border area of the state is 6369.82 Sq. kms (approx). The total population of the four border districts as per 2011 census is 7936818.

For the purpose three schemes namely; Border Area Development Programme (BADP), Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) and Pardhan Mantri Gram Sarv Yojana (PMGSY) have been selected for the evaluation in border areas of Punjab. Present study was undertaken with the main objective to examine the impact of centrally sponsored development schemes in the border area of Punjab. To evaluate the impact of different activities implemented/being implemented under major development schemes. To assess the availability of funds and existing status of development infrastructure, problems of its maintenance and the level of critical gap in the physical and social infrastructure requirement of the blocks for sustainable development.

The nature of the study was such that it required both primary as well as secondary data. The secondary data were obtained from various published sources on various aspects of border area development programme. A multistage sampling technique was employed to reach out the ultimate sampling units. At the first stage all four border districts were chosen purposively. At the next stage two blocks from each sample district were chosen randomly. At the third stage two villages each were chosen randomly from each sample block. At the last stage 10 respondents belonging to different socio-economic group were selected randomly from each village and thus, making a sample of 160 respondents. Along with this primary data has also been collected from the government employees working in the border area under different departments of the state government with the help of pretested schedules. For this purpose 60 employees of different departments were interviewed. It has been analysed in the study that under BADP Ferozepur district had received maximum funds under the scheme and the Amritsar district was the least recipient. Since financial year 2004-05 Ferozepur district had received maximum Rs.5179.97 lacs, where as Amritsar district got only Rs. 1678.29 lacs. Other districts namely; Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran received Rs. 2621.03 lacs and Rs. 2003.20 lacs respectively. It has been analysed that since the inception of MPLAD scheme the state of Punjab had received Rs. 58775.10 lacs from government of India under account of different MPs. Jalandhar district had received maximum amount (Rs. 7491.22 lacs) of funds under MPLADS but the district could utilize only 89.90 percent of funds. Mukatsar district ranked first in the state tally by 100 percent utilization of funds.
received under MPLADS. Border district Amritsar received Rs. 7387.80 lacs out of which it could utilize Rs. 7129.17 lacs and ranked 3rd. Among other border districts Ferozepur received Rs. 3352.66 lacs and utilized Rs. 3227.05 lacs, Gurdaspur received Rs. 4872.43 lacs and utilized Rs. 4505.08 lacs and district Tarn Taran had received Rs. 1650.84 lacs and utilized Rs. 1539.56 lacs. It has been observed that under PMGSY Amritsar district (including Tarn Taran district) had received Rs. 21045.98 lacs since 2004-05 for the construction of rural roads under PMGSY, which was highest share. Moga district was the least recipient of funds under this scheme with Rs. 4231.96 lacs making a share of only 2.54 percent of total funds received by the state government. Impact, Performance and Effectiveness of the selected centrally sponsored schemes has also been analysed. It has been found that many schemes had already been operational in the state of Punjab for the upliftment of educational infrastructure since years but in case of border districts no positive impact was seen. It was found in the study that 100 percent villages had Anganwari Centres for pre schooling kids. Similarly 100 percent villages had primary schools, but after primary level of education situation was not so good. It has been observed that only 12.50 and 25 percent selected border villages had availability of middle and secondary schools respectively. No selected border village had any ITI, polytechnic college or other professional institutions. It seems to be the worst educational infrastructure scenario. There was not even a single medium or large scale industry in the selected border villages. Only industry available was either village level cottage industry or very small scale industry. Villages on zero line of the international border have cultivated land across the fence. Due to restrictions on movement by the defense personnel the crops on other side did not get equal care and equal necessary farming practices like weeding, irrigation etc. Almost 12.50 percent residents of border area suffer from this problem. In case of Amritsar and Tarn Taran district 25 percent residents reported about this problem. It has been found that root problem for proper implementation of development work was the political interference. The political leaders finalised the proposals of development works only as per their choice to take political mileage and the exact need of the village was over sighted. Out of total respondents 31.25 percent felt that improper implementation of the schemes was just because of the political interference. Another group of 30.63 percent respondents felt that fractions in the villages was the root of failure of such schemes as if one group want to start one particular work the other group immediately resist and as a result the village development get suppressed. It has also been found that there was no transparency in the utilization of funds under many schemes (works) particularly under PMGSY as 15.62 percent people were found ignorant about the funds spent in their village under different schemes. Non availability of basic necessary working atmosphere and infrastructure availability the officers / employees did not want to stay at the border stations. Due to short stay the officers cannot concentrate of the development schemes properly and the implementation of various development schemes was found to be half hearted. It is suggested that there should be block wise / district wise plan prepared taking all the requirements of the villages under consideration. The plan should be prepared for at least 10 years in advance and funds should be released accordingly under the schemes. Master plan of the entire border villages be prepared with the consent of concerned gram panchayats only. The role of political persons be minimised for the finalization of the projects. The district administration should involve the gram panchayats in implementation of all the schemes. The community participation should be encouraged for the implementation of all the centrally sponsored schemes in the border areas of Punjab as it has been found that people were really willing to contribute in the development process. The social auditing of the centrally sponsored schemes should be mandatory.