CHAPTER VI: Conclusion:

The present chapter is an attempt to sum up the major findings of the study with regard to the main objectives of the study which is to examine the effectiveness or otherwise of the rural development programs and the role-played by the DRDA while implementing the programs. Besides, an attempt to evaluate the significance of DRDA in rural development is also being made in this section. The findings being summarized here are drawn from the responses to the interview schedules in course of the research work and the field surveys carried out at the Thoubal District, and as such, are specific to this context. An attempt is also being made here to put forward some suggestions and recommendations for making the DRDA a more effective agency for carrying out the rural development activities.

Rural development is a familiar concept all over the world and it has always been an important concern for every society at one time or the other. It is also a vital task in an economically developing nation. In short, it refers to
policies and attempts made for improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor. To be more specific, it is concerned with the removal of rural poverty and unemployment; development of infrastructures like road transport, power, insurance and banking; development of cottage industries, providing decent and affordable houses for rural poor and the depressed classes; etc. It is, thus, a broad concept concerned with the total development of the rural areas as a whole. In may also be understood as a never-ending process involving the meaningful implementation of numerous programs which aim at bringing socio-economic and political uplift of the people in rural areas.

The objectives of these programs are laudable in the sense that it envisaged a frontal attack on poverty with the identification of the poorest of poor and needy families, landless and freed bonded laborers, Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes, women and other economically vulnerable sections of the society. It provides the productive assets, bank credit, technical and other infrastructure supports to
assist the target groups for bringing them above the poverty line. It is a continuous process with only the contents of the programs being changed from time to time or the emphasis on the various ingredients being varied over the years. This was well illustrated by the Indian experience with rural development. In the early years of planning, Community Development Programme (1952) was initiated to bring about a qualitative change in rural areas. Later on, various different programs namely, Intensive Area Development Program (1960-61), High Yielding Variety Program (1965-66), Small Farmers Development Agency and Marginal Farmers and Agriculture Laborers Agency (1971), National Rural Employment Program (1978-79), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program (1985-86) Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (1979) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989) etc. were also started in different plan periods in the country.

The programs of rural development initiated during the 1950s created the basic infrastructure needed for rural areas. During the 1960s, the main objective of the rural
development programs was to achieve rapid growth in agriculture through intensive cultivation. The various programs implemented during this period resulted in the green revolution and food self-sufficiency for India. Yet it was soon realized that the income inequalities also got further increased then. These programs have not been of much success in the north-eastern part of the country.

Most of the rural development programs in 1970s and 1980s aimed at achieving growth with the involvement of specialized agencies in rural areas. Rural development programs implemented during these years created infrastructures in the rural areas, relieved the country from the food problems and brought substantial improvement in the living conditions of the rural population.

However, the achievement of the objectives of growth with the help of specialized agencies implementing the programs has not been to the extent as anticipated by the governments. The DRDA was created as a specialized agency with a view to help the successful implementation of these programs so that the task of rural development in the
nation is accomplished in a speedy manner. It was intended that the various rural development programs are not only implemented through them but also monitored by them in such a manner that the benefits of the programs actually reach the target group of people. The introduction of the DRDA Administration scheme by the Central Government further underlined the Central Government's intention to make the DRDAs the conduit through which the rural development programs are to be meaningfully implemented for the benefit of the rural poor in India.

It was with the beginning of the plan development period in the year 1951 that the idea of specialized agency for the effective implementation of this program was adopted to improve the desired qualitative changes in the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor. One significant example will be that of the introduction of Community Development Blocks (1952) as an implementing agency along with the introduction of the CDP. The objective of the CDP was to bring about changes in the economic, social as well as cultural life of the villages. The highest priority was
given to agriculture, but the program also sought to bring about improvements in communication, health, sanitation, housing education, rural employment, welfare of women and children, and cottage and small scale industries.

It was found from various studies that the Community Development Program (CDP) did not succeed as anticipated by the governments. The main reason for the little success of this program was lack of appropriate leadership particularly among the agents who were responsible for its execution. For instance, though it was rightly observed in the beginning of this program that the role of village level worker and Block Development Officers (BDOs) would be invaluable in implementing the program very successfully, these agencies did not live up to the expectations. They could not deliver the desire results as they could not establish proper rapport with the villagers. One of the reasons for their slow acceptability was also that of the fact that they were a part of administrative hierarchy.

Further significant measures were taken up to ameliorate the lot of small and marginal farmers and
agricultural laborers during 1970-71. For instance, two new agencies namely, the Small Farmers’ Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labor (MFAL) Agency were set up as corporate and autonomous bodies (registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860) to work at the district level. The objective of these programs was to enable small farmers to become viable by making timely supplies of inputs like credit, irrigation, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides and by improvements of the marketing facilities available to them. However, these programs also could not realize their avowed objectives.

Another program for the economic development of the weaker sections of the society was launched on 14 January 1982 in the name of 20-Point Economic Program. This program also aimed and focused on the development of agriculture and uplift of the under privileged rural population.

However, the experience drawn from the implementation of the programs revealed the tardy progress in achieving its objectives due to the lack of commitment on
the part of the people responsible for their implementation to the solution of the economic problems of the rural poor. It also came to realize that the gains of development got concentrated in a few hands of the better-off sections of the population.

Besides the indirect attack on the problems of unemployment and poverty, a direct employment program was launched in 1977 commonly known as Food for Work Program (FWP). The program intended not only to provide employment during the slack seasons but also contribute towards the creation of durable community assets. The workers were paid in food grains for the job done by them. Though Food for Works Program met with some success in its operation, the generation of employment in terms of mandays recorded a step decline over the years.

As a major poverty alleviation program, the IRDP provided the assistance to the target groups of both small and marginal farmers, agricultural laborers and rural artisans. It also provided assistance to the target families for purchasing productive assets and enabled them to improve
their socio-economic conditions. The program was accompanied by the creation of a specialized agency to implement the program at the district level called the DRDA. Evaluation studies conducted in the state and elsewhere reveal the broad features of the programs and its failures and success. One of the most important lapses in the program was found to be in the careless identification of the target families. Many people who did not belong to the BPL got selected as beneficiaries thereby depriving many of the people who were supposed to be the target beneficiaries of the program. Some of the deserving poor people could not avail the benefits of this program. The selection of the schemes under the program had also shown that there was an overwhelming bias towards the schemes related to animal husbandry. There was also delay in the sanction and disbursement of loans by the DRDA and bank. Middlemen and officials also indulged in malpractice.

IRDP is the one program which attracted the maximum public attention among all the development programs introduced in this country over the years.
However, the program and its dovetail schemes were modified in course of time. They were restructured and merged into a single program known as Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna (SGSY) in the year 1999 and the unspent balances, as on 1.4.99, under these erstwhile programs, were also pooled under the head of the SGSY and utilized as per the new guidelines. Unfortunately, the program has not been properly implemented in the study area during the period of the present research study.

The study is intended to assess the effectiveness and otherwise of the important rural development programs in the Thoubal District of the state though DRDA as an implementing agency. It also makes a humble attempt to suggest measures for making the DRDA a more effective agency for bringing about rural development. The administration of DRDA with regard to the above objectives has been critically examined in the case of Thoubal district of Manipur. Both primary and secondary data are used in this study to assess the awareness of the programs among the people and also the impact of these programs on them.
Secondary data were obtained from the published sources whereas the primary data were collected with the help of structured questionnaires meant for beneficiaries of the programs taken up for the study and through numerous interviews with the DRDA personnel. A total of 30 beneficiaries for each of the seven programs which are discussed in the third and fourth chapters of the present study (three self-employment programs in the third and four wage employment programs in the fourth). Altogether, the total sample size was 210. They were selected on the basis of the random sample technique from the two blocks of this district.

The study of the self-employment programs indicates that majority of the sampled beneficiaries were from the families of above poverty line. Improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries in comparison to the pre-assistance period was noticed. The extent of improvement varied from 45.1% of TRYSEM to 41.8% of DWCRA to 67.5% of IRDP. It may also be noted that most of the beneficiaries who felt that their socio-economic
conditions have improved belonged to the higher income group among the sampled beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries of other income groups have not shown much improvement in their socio-economic conditions. This was mainly because of the fact that many of them have sold the assets provided to them to repay the loan or other personal debts.

The non-agricultural employment has also much scope for generating employment and income opportunities for the target groups. However, from the analysis of the working of these programs (the IRDP and its sub-schemes), their impact on employment and income of the beneficiary households, etc. it has been found that the proper implementation of these programs are yet a mater of concern both from planning and implementation point of view. The main problems regarding these programs as revealed from the study are that there were undue delays in providing assistance to the beneficiaries, financial or otherwise, due to various formalities at DRDA and bank level. The follow up actions of the old beneficiaries were also
not properly taken up. The beneficiaries complained about the corruptions particularly for clearance of scheme from District Rural Development Agency. It has also been found that the beneficiaries needed infrastructural support and required forward and backward linkages for the schemes to be successful. It has been noted from the study that there is also weak and uncoordinated delivery and marketing system and inability of the selected beneficiaries to undertake the risk and managerial functions particularly when they happen to be the poorest of the poor and are hopelessly suffering from debts. These factors have contributed to the fact that the defaulters of the programs are in the same state of affairs as they were at the time of sanctioning of loan.

It is also evident from the study that the employment and income has not uniformly improved among the different classes of the weaker sections. The maximum percentage of improvement after the program has been found in the income groups between Rs. 401 and Rs. 500 or above. It may be further inferred from the small changes in income
and employment conditions of the target groups that the condition of relative poverty and inequality still remains, and therefore needs attention.

The distribution of the assets under these programs must be in accordance with the local resources available in a cluster of villages, skill of the beneficiaries, marketing potential of the products generated by assets, etc. The poor people who have acquired skill must be provided with the subsidy and income generating assets. Moreover, the identification of such projects/schemes needs a lot of study.

Though the programs which were implemented in past aimed at creation of economic assets and continuous employment generation for the rural poor, they were distorted during the process of implementation with the result that the benefits of these programs could not properly reach the target groups. They are either abandoned or soft peddled.

Little adherence has also been given to national guidelines. It is very difficult to achieve the desired objectives of all programs which are being implemented.
through the DRDA if the supportive actions are not simultaneously and properly taken up. This has been all the more true in case of the selection of beneficiaries.

There have also been other flaws while implementing the programs. They were mainly in the form of lack of inter-agency coordination; political interference and pressures; etc. Such pressures and inconveniences have generally retarded the progress of the implementation of the programs.

One also finds an extremely disappointing attitude among the DRDA personnel. It is the fact that most of the DRDA personnel have a very negative attitude towards their duties and responsibilities. They are mainly concerned with the distribution of the funds that are to be distributed through them. Their concern towards the promotion of overall rural development seems rather limited as their efforts for the same seem to have ended with the distribution of the funds to the lower agencies. None of the officials wants to go beyond this as to remove poverty following with the provisions of the guidelines.
The efforts of the DRDA to coordinate various agencies which are to play different important parts for the proper implementation of the schemes are also far from satisfactory. These agencies are the related departments of the government, banks, NGOs, CBOs, PRIs, etc. The DRDA with the banks is expected to specially look after the obstacles that constraint the beneficiaries in improving their income from the assets given under the programs. There should be regular supervision of the assets provided to the beneficiaries by the concern authorities to see whether the assets are still in the possession of the beneficiaries and in proper conditions or not. The time tag in supplying the benefits to the beneficiaries must be minimized. This will check the malpractices and corruption. It can only be done by simplifying the loaning procedure. The recovery of loans which were provided under the program should be considered to be an important part of the program.

The awareness of functionaries associated with the implementation of the programs about the urgent need for the meaningful implementation of the various schemes
should also be increased. This can be done through organizing training programs and workshops for the people’s representatives and government officials so that through interactions they can enrich themselves and shed confusions about the programs. This will ensure better utilization of the opportunities extended by different programs of rural development.

It may further be observed that there is the urgent need for revamping the process of rural development on a war footing to address the multi-dimensional problems of the rural poor in a multi-directional way. For the multi-pronged attack on poverty to be a success, the negative attitude of the implementing agencies has to be changed. Apart from their proper sensitization to the urgent needs of the rural people, there is also the need for a real sense of commitment and sincerity on their part while playing their role in the course of implementing the various programs.

Another important task yet to be accomplished for the successful implementation of the programs is that of promoting proper awareness about the same among the
target group of people. Often, the rural poor themselves are not aware of the schemes. As a result they remain ignorant of the opportunities offered to them by these programs. The poor people should be made aware of the prescribed objectives of the programs so that they could avail the maximum benefits of same. The role that the DRDA can play to bring this awareness can never be overemphasized.

About the wage employment programs as discussed in the fourth chapter, the JRY has been introduced in 1989-90 as a wage-employment scheme in Thoubal District along with the introduction of this scheme in the country. This program was intended to create additional employment opportunities by creating assets particularly in rural areas. However, the program is no longer in operation at present. The program was restructured under the head of two separate programs namely, EAS and JGSY. Later, these programs were further restructured and formed as SGRY.

The official documents of the district indicate that the overall performance of the JRY as determined by the proportion of the utilized funds to that of the funds
sanctioned was 75.1%. In case of the EAS, the MWS and IAY, the overall performances were 88.8 %, 81.6 % and 76.6 % respectively.

It has been observed that the benefits of the wage employment programs have not been equally felt among the different categories of the rural poor. Within them it was felt more among those who belonged to the higher income group. This means uneven distribution of the benefits of the scheme among the different groups of the rural poor.

Another serious flaw in the implementation of the programs was that the there were cases of huge differences in the number of mandays envisaged to be provided under a scheme and the actual number of mandays provided under the same. For example, in case of EAS, while the number of man days to be provided under the scheme was 100 per annum, the maximum number of man days actually provided was 45.

The success of the wage employment schemes was further rendered limited by another consideration. For instance, the assets created under the programs were not
durable and the employments were not created on a more permanent basis.

Just as in case of the self employment schemes, the benefits of the wage employment schemes, however limited they may be, also did not always go to the target groups of people. This was mainly because of the discrepancies in time of selecting the beneficiaries. Cases of beneficiaries being selected from among people other than those living below the poverty line were often there. This led to the deprivation of the target group of people. The late submission of the utilization certificates from the panchayats is also often there. This mainly affected the DRDA in timely submission of the utilization certificates to the Central Government. This further led to the late release of funds from the Central Government, delays in plan approval and minimized the number of beneficiaries to be covered in a financial year.

Finally the following measures may be taken into consideration for the efficient and meaningful implementation of the various schemes intended to bring
about Rural development in the Thoubal district of Manipur and also elsewhere:

- People in rural areas need to be made aware of different programs of rural development so that they become aware of the benefits they may avail under these schemes and also of the means and ways for availing these benefits. This can be done through organizing massive awareness generation campaigns in rural areas.

- Gaps in the implementation process and observance of many guidelines emanate mainly due to the lack of awareness among the officials/non-officials at various levels. With a view to making the officials/non-officials at all levels fully aware about the procedure of the guidelines for effective planning and implementation of various rural development programs, sensitization courses/workshops should be organized and make it compulsory for them to attend the said courses/workshops.
• There is also a need to lay special stress on the forward and backward linkages while planning and implementing the income generating schemes for the rural poor.

• For ensuring effective participation of rural people in all stages of planning and implementation of rural development programs, the involvement of the people should be encouraged.

• The programs should be implemented on the basis of the guidelines so that the target groups of the rural poor gets the benefits of the programs properly. However, if necessary, the guidelines should be properly modified in view of the ground realities of the state.

• At the time of selection of beneficiaries, the practice of selecting beneficiaries from among the BPL families should be adhered to strictly. It is therefore essential that the implementing agencies pay special attention to making the BPL population and the various categories
therein up to date and select the entitled beneficiaries according to the guidelines.

- Political interference in time of selection of beneficiaries has to be removed.

- The success of the self-employment programs depends entirely on effective teamwork of the DRDA and other agencies involved in the proper implementation of the program like the PRIs, relevant line departments of the state like the veterinary and agriculture departments, block administration, polytechnics, district industry centers, banks, etc. The DRDA, therefore, must work in close association with these agencies concerned with rural development activities, and build the right kind of synergy with them.

- The utilization certificates should be properly submitted in time so that timely release of subsequent installments is not affected.

- Funds of different programs should be released in time to the DRDA so that it will get enough time to implement the programs. This will enable the DRDA to
distribute the same to the lower agencies in time. The state government should also release its share of funds timely and ensure the full and proper utilization of the same.

- The involvement of the middleman/contractors in the implementation of different programs should not be encouraged so that the implementation of these programs is done properly in accordance with the guidelines in an efficient manner.

- A strict monitoring and follow up mechanism including provisions to provide guidance to the beneficiaries, conduct periodic verification of physical possession of the assets, their maintenance, gradual economic improvement of the beneficiaries’ status, etc. should be developed with great care by the DRDA with the help of other agencies.

- The DRDA also needs to actively seek and utilize experts in different fields. Special efforts should be made to strengthen and streamline the DRDA in this direction. Besides, the staffing structure of the DRDA
should also be made as per given in the national guidelines. Hence, the vacant posts of the officers and technical staff at DRDA should be filled on a priority basis. The DRDA personnel also should be given all the necessary trainings from time to time so that they may continuously develop their skills and expertise to implement the programs properly. This also will make them on the alert all the time make them justly prepared for the task they have to perform in hand.

- It is also essential that the various agencies involved in the implementation of rural development programs often fail to have proper co-ordination. Governing Body of the DRDA which have members from all the relevant departments and institutions should make extra efforts to ensure that there is proper coordination among all the related agencies involved in the implementation.