CHAPTER II

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES - AN OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Rural Development Before Independence

2.3 Rural Development after Independence

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

India is one of the important developing countries in Asia. It has been, and continues to be a predominantly rural country. Its rural character in National economy is reflected in the very large proportion of population living in rural areas. According to 1991 census, out of 84.43 crore population 62.71 crores live in rural areas, which is 73.9 per cent of the total. Of these, 11.6 crores are agriculturists, 28.4 crores are farm labourers and 10.2 crores come from non-agricultural families. There are over 575000 villages while there are not more than 4,700 cities and towns. Besides, the incidence of poverty in India is more in villages than in towns.¹ The rural character of the economy and the need for regeneration of rural life were stressed by Mahatma Gandhi. He laid the greatest emphasis on the development of villages in India culturally, economically and politically and said "If the village perishes, India will perish too."² The development of villages is a


pre-condition for balanced economic development, accelerated economic growth and industrial advancement. The basic requirements for economic growth, namely savings and investment and an expanding market for industrial products ultimately depend upon rural development. Further, the contribution of the rural sector to the national income is substantial. Such an important sector would naturally draw the attention of the people and the Government.

Rural development received grossly negligible attention during the British rule. However, after Independence the need for rural development was felt for transforming the socio-economic life of rural India. Since the beginning of the planning era, a number of rural development schemes and programmes have been formulated and implemented from time to time as measures to abolish rural poverty.

This chapter seeks to review the evolution of rural development programmes. An attempt at a historical review may help in understanding the dynamic nature of the programmes, the changes that occurred and are occurring; and the direction that these changes had taken. Further, the present evaluation study would be of no use if it failed to take into account the original hopes and aspirations of the people influenced by Rural Development Programmes.
India has a long history of efforts and experiments, in rural development, which can be broadly discussed under two phases:

1. Rural Development before Independence and
2. Rural Development after Independence.

2.2 RURAL DEVELOPMENT BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

In this period, a number of official and non-official attempts were made on a pilot scale to deal with the problem of rural reconstruction. The most well-known among the attempts were the Sriniketan Experiment of Tagore (1920), Marthandan Project of Spencer Hatch (1921), the Gurgao Experiment, the Rural Reconstruction Project in Baroda (1932), the Gandhian Movement in Wardha (1938), Firka Development Scheme in Madras (1946), Nilokherei Experiment (1947) and the Etawah Pilot Project in Uttar Pradesh (1948). These schemes were not labelled as rural development schemes, but in essence their purpose was the same, namely to help people to help themselves.

A. Sriniketan Experiment

Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet-Philosopher was a pioneer of the secular rural development movement in India which he
initiated as a 'protest against the indifference of his countrymen towards the rural masses'.\textsuperscript{3} Tagore established the Sriniketan Institute of Rural Reconstruction in 1921 under the Stewardship of Mr. Elmhirst and formulated a programme for the all-round improvement in the village of his Zamindari with the objectives of studying rural problems and helping the villages to develop agriculture, improve the livestock, formation of co-operatives and improve village sanitation\textsuperscript{4}. There was a marked improvement in the villages surrounding Sriniketan. This experiment though not fully successful, achieved certain physical and notable results.

B. Marthandan Experiment

Dr. Spencer Hatch of the YMCA set up a project in 1921 at Marthandan, 25 miles south of Trivandrum. The purpose of the experiment was to bring about a complete upward development towards more abundant life for rural people, spiritually, mentally, physically, socially and economically.\textsuperscript{5} Marthandan became a demonstration centre for about a hundred assemblies of religious order of the YMCA in


\textsuperscript{4} Rambhai, B., \textit{The Silent Revolution}, Jiwan Prakshan, Delhi, 1959, p.10.

the surrounding villages. It had a demonstration farm of prized animals, equipment for the honey industry and other cottage vocations in its campus. Some industries like weaving, poultry and bee-keeping were started on a co-operative basis. The Marthandan experiment’s main gains were the changes in the attitude of the rural people, inculcating in them a desire to improve and creating in them a spirit of co-operation and self-respect. This experiment spread to other states and its workers assisted the States of Baroda, Mysore, Cochin and Hyderabad to set up centres for training the people in rural construction.

C. Gurgaon Experiment

Mr. M.L. Brayne, who was working as the Collector of Gurgaon District (Punjab), conceived this rural development scheme in 1927. The experiment aimed at (i) agricultural development (ii) Mass education, particularly education of girls (iii) social reforms (iv) reduction of waste and (v) improving health. Brayne appointed village guides who were educated in the school of Rural Economy established in 1925. Their specific duties related to (i) development of Co-operation (ii) public health work (iii) cleaning of villages and (iv) demonstration of improved seeds and ploughs. Brayne’s work, however, could not spread beyond Punjab, where also it disappeared soon after he was withdrawn.
D. Baroda Experiment

Baroda was one of the few advanced princely states on the map of pre-independent India. The Maharaja of Baroda was a progressive and enlightened man and he started a rural reconstruction scheme in 1932. Mr. V. T. Krishnamachari was the Diwan of the state. He prepared and implemented a comprehensive programme of rural reconstruction covering the various aspects of rural life to promote self-help and self-reliance. The programme included (a) improvement of communication (b) Digging of drinking water wells, (c) Anti-malarial measures, (d) pasture development (e) Training in cottage crafts, (f) Establishment of panchayats and co-operatives covering every village, and (h) development of village schools as centres for teaching agriculture and imparting the will to live better.

A trust of Rs. 1 crore was earmarked for rural reconstruction work, the income from which was to be utilised for meeting the costs of the programme. In every district, intensive zones consisting of 20 to 25 villages were carved out and manned by graduate assistants who spread the message of the movement and helped in organizing the co-operatives and other projects. By 1942-43 there were 24 such intensive units covering 487 villages.
E. The Gandhian Movement

Mahatma Gandhi started his constructive programme of rural development in an entirely different fashion, at Champaran in 1917, at Sevagram in 1920 and at Wardha in 1938. His action plan involved the rebuilding of every aspect of human life, economic, educational, social and political, and envisaged a society based on self-supporting and self-governing villages. The main pillars of his famous constructive programme were:

6. (a) Production and use of Khadi (b) Promotion of village industries (c) improvement of cattle (d) socio-economic equality (e) Basic and adult education (f) development of regional languages with Hindi as the link language, (g) removal of untouchability (h) communal harmony (i) women’s uplift (j) village cleanliness (k) prohibition (l) education in health and hygiene (m) organisation of peasants and labour for securing their just rights. (n) Organisation of students and youths for social work and (o) Panchayat Raj (Gram Swaraj) that is self-governing society at the village level.

The village was at the centre stage, aiming at self-sufficiency as the key-note of the system. According to

Gandhiji, the rural and urban areas had complementary relationship. They were not two sectors representing two groups or classes of people pitted against each other.\(^7\) The village could be (i) a source of raw material, ii) a market for goods produced in urban areas, and (iii) an entity in itself. It cannot flourish as a source of raw material or as a market but as an entity in itself; it makes the villager a worthy citizen.\(^8\) Gandhiji emphasised self-sufficiency in food and cloth. He was in favour of 'Gram Swaraj'. His views on Khadi, basic education, village self-sufficiency and the like have been actively debated by his followers and his critics.

The Gandhian philosophy was accepted officially. The adoption of khadi and village industry programme, the notion of village self-sufficiency and faith in the "Panchayat Raj" movement are some of the results of the impact of the Gandhian tradition. The 'Bhoodan' and 'Gramdan' movements led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and the late Jaiprkash Narain are the contributions as well as the off-shoots of Gandhian philosophy.


\(^8\) Kumarappa, J.C., Swaraj for the Masses, Hind Kitab Publication, Bombay, pp.41-46.
F. Firka Development Scheme

The Firka development of Madras was a Government-launched scheme. The scheme was launched in 1946 in 34 Firkas to which were added 50 more firkas in 1950 and 24 in 1952. The short term objectives of the scheme were to develop basic amenities and an institutional frame-work for carrying out communication, water supply, sanitation projects and formation of panchayats and co-operatives. The long term objectives were to attain self-sufficiency in food, clothing, shelter, development of agriculture, animal husbandry, khadi and cottage industries. To achieve these goals a special fund of Rs.4 crores was created. At the provincial level, the Director of Rural Welfare was put in charge of the scheme. The Collector was made responsible for implementing the scheme at the district level. He was assisted by a Rural Welfare Officer who was in charge of two or three Firkas and there were five to ten 'Gram Sevaks' under him. Staff for agriculture and public works were also provided for every Firka. When the Community Development and National Extension Service Programmes were adopted by the Madras State in 1953-54, the Firka Development scheme got merged with them.
G. The Nilokheri Experiment

Nilokheri was another pioneering attempt which drew country-wide attention and influenced the community development movement directly through its examples and indirectly through Sri S.S.K. Dey, the Ex-Minister of Community Development and Co-operation, who was the moving spirit behind the project.

Nilokheri township was designed to rehabilitate about 7000 displaced persons on an 1,100 acre plot of marshy land which was transferred to the colony in 1948. The township was afterwards integrated with 100 villages around it. The scheme was called "Mazdoor Manzil" because it was based on the principle, "He who would not work, neither shall he eat". Rights for education and medical care for the sick were guaranteed. Its main focus was a vocational training centre, run on co-operative lines. The colony had its own dairy, poultry, piggery, printing press, engineering workshops, tannery and bone-meal factory. People were given vocational training of their choice to run these co-operative enterprises. Its main objective was to attain self-sufficiency in the essential requirements for the township and surrounding villages. The Nilokheri project left an
imprint on the community development programmes in the country. It presented the concept of agro-industrial township as the nerve centre of rural development and it found a place in the First Five Year Plan and in the lay-out of the Financial Plans of the first 52 community projects.

Nilokheri was seen as a symbol of progress, but unfortunately, the colony developed its own hierarchical structure. The industries started facing trouble due to lack of competitive advantages. Still the project continues to be an important centre for the training of Panchayat Raj and rural development functionaries.

H. The Etawah Pilot Project

The Etawah Pilot Project was conceived by Mr. Albert Mayer in 1948 for the development of the rural areas of Etawah district in Uttar Pradesh. It was the forerunner of the first series of community projects in 1952. The main objective of the project was: "To see what degree of productive and social improvement as well as initiative, self-confidence and co-operation can be developed. The problem was to ascertain how quickly these results may be
attainable and remain permanently a part of people's mental, spiritual, technical equipment and outlook after the special pressure is lifted.9

The other points of emphasis were: Production, intensity, people's co-operation, development of appropriate attitudes, careful selection of personnel, self-reliance, the use of local sources, supply and development of village leadership.

For carrying out these operations intensively, Maheva Block in Etawah District with 97 villages was selected. To train in Agriculture and Extension, Village Level Workers were selected with great care. In carrying out various activities like agricultural demonstrations, soil conservation, improvement in animal husbandry and village sanitation, the co-operation of various departments and non-official agencies was secured. At the conclusion of his project, Mr. Mayer could demonstrate that the project had not only paid off the investment several times in terms of physical benefits but had also brought about non-tangible improvements of real value.

The various attempts made by early pioneers were not successful because they were isolated and each one worked

independently without utilising the knowledge and experience of others. These schemes were implemented on a limited scale without proper support of the Government. No systematic and planned effort was ever made by the British Government in this direction. Unfortunately, rural development could not get due attention from the Government departments and hence it remained neglected for a very long-time till the country attained independence.

2.3 RURAL DEVELOPMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

In 1947 when the British, after a long-drawn and bitter freedom struggle, left the country, India inherited poverty and a crippled economy with stagnant agriculture and an under-developed industry. The National Government of India realised that if the poverty of India's teeming millions was to be relieved, more attention had to be given to rural areas and accordingly efforts were initiated to improve the pitiable conditions of the rural poor. During the struggle for independence, national leaders had given the pledge that after independence the new Government and its resources would be mobilised and directed towards the removal of poverty from the country.

In March 1950, the Planning Commission was constituted and the Government of India was committed to formulate
various plan policies on rural development. The various plan policies on rural development during the successive five year plans are indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Rural Development Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Plan</td>
<td>1951-1956</td>
<td>Community development as method and national extension service as the agency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Plan</td>
<td>1956-1961</td>
<td>Co-operative farming with local participation.</td>
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<td>IV Plan</td>
<td>1969-1974</td>
<td>Area-based Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>V Plan</td>
<td>1974-1979</td>
<td>Introducing the concept of minimum needs programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VII Plan</td>
<td>1985-1990</td>
<td>Emphasis on creating new employment opportunities, special programmes for income generation, through Asset, Endowments, Land Reforms, Participation of people at the gross-roots level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII Plan</td>
<td>1992-97</td>
<td>Emphasis on building up of rural infrastructure. Priority for rural roads, especially in tribal, hill and desert areas, minor irrigation, soil conservation, social forestry and participation of people in Rural Development Programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the long period of planned development and emerging dynamics of the rural situation, the content and emphasis placed on rural development had also undergone various changes to meet new challenges of development. Indian Government had launched a large number of rural development programmes which are indicated below:

Rural Development Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Year Plan</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Year of Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1. Community Development Programme</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. National Extension Service</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>3. Khadi &amp; village Industries Programme</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td>4. village Housing project scheme</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Multipurpose Tribal Development Blocks Programme</td>
<td>1959</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Package Programme</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Intensive Agricultural District Programme</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Year Plan</td>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Year of Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Rural Industries Projects</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Intensive Agriculture Area Programme</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. High-yielding variety Programme</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Plan</td>
<td>12. Farmers' Training and Education Programme</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>15. Tribal Development Block</td>
<td>1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Plan,</td>
<td>16. Rural Manpower Programme</td>
<td>1969</td>
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<td>1968-69</td>
<td>17. Composite Programme for women and Pre-school Children.</td>
<td>1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>18. Drought-Prone Area Programme</td>
<td>1970</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Crash Scheme for Rural Employment</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. Tribal Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22. Pilot Projects for Tribal Development</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23. Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Year Plan</td>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Year of Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25. Command Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1974</td>
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<td>26. Hill Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27. Special Livestock Production Programme</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. Food for Work Programme</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<td></td>
<td>29. Desert Development Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30. Whole Village Development Programme</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31. Training Rural Youth for Self-employment</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32. Integrated Rural Development Programme</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>33. National Rural Employment Programme</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td></td>
<td>34. Prime Minister’s New 20-Point Programme</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35. Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<td></td>
<td>36. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas</td>
<td>1983</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2.3.1 Four Major Phases of Rural Development Programme

The various programmes launched during the period of planned development can broadly be put into four major phases: a) Community Development Phase b) Intensive Area Development Phase c) Target Area and Group Development Phase and d) IRDP Phase.

a) Community Development Phase

After independence, one of the important problems the Government had to solve was the food problem, for feeding
the Indian masses, "Grow More Food Campaign" was launched throughout the country. It was reviewed and found that more food could not be grown by raising slogans only. Instead some programme had to be devised and organised which would enforce the execution of this campaign. This explains the birth of the first rural reconstruction movement popularly known as Community Development Programme (CDP) formed on the basis of the recommendation of the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee. The launching of this programme was a landmark in the history of India which ushered in an era of rural development with the participation of rural people.

Community Development Programme was looked upon as "a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and initiative of the community". According to the report of the UNO "The term community development has come to connote the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of Governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of a nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress".


Before covering the country with a network of community projects, the Government of India entered into an aid agreement with the Ford Foundation to start 52 community projects in different parts of the country to gather the necessary experience. The first series was launched on 2nd October, 1952, followed a year later by the establishment of the National Extension Service. Community Development was regarded as a method and the National Extension service as an agency through which the social and economic transformation of village life was to be brought about under the First Five Year Plan.\textsuperscript{12}

CDP envisages comprehensive development of a whole village. It places emphasis on a multipurpose approach: an area development, a co-ordinated administration and the development of individual and the community as a whole through aided self-help.\textsuperscript{13} The main objectives of CDP are:\textsuperscript{14}

i) to develop a sound agricultural base for carrying out the programmes of rural development.

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\textsuperscript{12} First Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, New Delhi, p.223.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.136.
ii) to develop different sectors of the rural economy—particularly on the institutional front to smoothen the process of rural transformation; and

iii) to make the 'block' a village level planning unit and to enable it to serve as a link between the development agencies and rural people.

To achieve the above objectives, programme for each block was worked out on the basis of the desire and aspirations of the local people and their requirements within the limitations of budgetary and local contributions. The programmes were not to have the characteristics of a uniform pattern but to be different to suit the varied geographical, climatic, ecological and cultural conditions prevailing in each block.

Notwithstanding the positive efforts of the programme in remedying various rural ills, the programme was strongly criticised and condemned on the ground that it largely benefited the elite group only and failed to fulfil the aspirations of the economically weak rural people. Besides it did not solve rural unemployment and poverty. So there started a search for alternative programmes for rural development.
b) Intensive Area Development Phase

Towards the Fifties, the Central Government realised that its resources were limited and to make an impact on rural poverty it should follow an "area" or cluster approach, concentrating its efforts on selected pockets in the country. Further, the rural economy being predominantly agrarian, Government thought it would be wise to concentrate on agricultural programmes to attain the goal of self-reliance. This realisation led to a shift in emphasis on rural development. Accordingly, in the early sixties, the Government of India launched a series of growth-oriented intensive agricultural area programmes like Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP), popularly known as "Package Programme" in 1960-61, Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) in 1964-65, High-Yielding Varieties Programme (HYVP) in 1967-68 and many more. Community Development Programme provided the basis for the formulation and implementation of many subsequent rural development programmes. These efforts were further strengthened by the 'Green Revolution' in agriculture. These programmes increased the total agricultural production and productivity but these also widened the regional disparities and the gap between the rural haves and the have-nots.
c) Target Area and Group Development Phase

To correct the imbalances caused by the previous phase, there was a shift in the strategy of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes from "block approach" to "target area/ group approach." Accordingly a series of new development programmes aimed at specific target areas and groups were launched during the 1970's. The target area development programmes were launched to counter the poverty caused by adverse agro-climatic conditions and the generation of eco-systems. The notable programmes included under this scheme are: Rural Works Programme, later renamed as Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP), Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP). Target group programmes were concerned with identifying the target groups, drawing up suitable programmes for their upliftment, locating institutional support and providing supervision over the implementation of such programmes. Notable Target Group Programmes introduced were Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour Development Agency (MFALDA), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA).
d. Integrated Rural Development Phase (IRDP)

Integrated Rural Development Programme [IRDP] has a close resemblance to the community development programme launched during the first Five Year Plan period. The performance of the various Rural Development Programmes was evaluated both by individual researchers and the Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO), a unit of the Planning Commission. Based on the various evaluation studies and the shortcomings of the existing various RD programmes, the Government of India decided to replace these multiple programmes by a single programme. Accordingly, the programme named Integrated Rural Development Programme was launched.

An overview of the different development programmes implemented since independence indicates that in India, the concept of Rural Development has undergone many changes depending upon the requirements of the people and the changing political economic and social transformation of the Indian Democratic System. In the first four Plans, the emphasis was on increasing production both in agriculture and industrial segments as this was considered a remedy to the problems of poverty, ignorance and unemployment. During the

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fifth Five-Year plan, the approach had changed from the production to area approach on target population.

From the Sixth Plan onwards the concept of 'Antyodaya' (to assist the poorest of the poor first) has become the guiding principle for the implementation of the various special programmes of Rural Development.

2.4 INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME [IRDP]

As the whole study involves IRDP, it would be pertinent to give its conceptual frame-work, its evolution in India, its objectives and its operational strategy.

2.4.1 IRDP: Conceptual Frame Work

The concept of Integrated Rural Development was originally propounded, by the World Bank in its study, 'The Assault on World Poverty, Problems of Rural Development, Education and Health'. According to the study, the processes of rural development must integrate the rural poor into the social, political and economic life of a country.16 Later

on, as a concept, the 'Integrated Rural Development' gained widespread acceptance among rural development experts in defining the concept.

According to Desai, 'Integrated Rural Development programme is an approach which, by better utilization of local resources and by creating infrastructural facilities for economic and social development, aims at improving the quality of life of the rural population, especially the rural poor, by the creation of expanded employment and income opportunities for them.'

Integrated Rural Development according to C. Subramanian the then Finance Minister of India, means 'Something more comprehensive and fundamental, a systematic, scientific and integrated use of our natural resources, and as part of this process, enabling every person to engage himself in a productive and socially useful occupation and earn an income that would meet atleast the basic needs'.

IRDP is a strategy which focuses attention on the rural poor and attempts to improve the quality of life of the


weaker sections of the society in the overall spectrum of development and growth. The strategy is just not an attempt of increasing agricultural productivity but ensuring that the poor and the weaker sections share the benefits of economic and social progress.\textsuperscript{19}

"Integrated Rural Development may be defined as a systematic approach aiming at total development of the area and the people by bringing about the necessary institutional and attitudinal changes and by delivering a package of services through extension method to encompass not only the economic field, i.e., development of agricultural and rural industries, etc., but also the establishment of the required social infrastructure and services in the area of health and nutrition, family planning, etc., with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of life in the rural area".\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, the concept of Integrated Rural Development came into vogue with the need for a multi-purpose thrust to rural planning. It is a 'multi-level, a multi-sector, and multi section concept'. As a multi-level concept, it encompasses rural development at various levels in the spatial hierarchy


such as the viable cluster of village communities, blocks and districts. As a multi-sector concept, it encompasses agriculture, industry, education, health and transportation. As a multi-section concept, it encompasses socio-economic development of the target group of the weaker sections or sub-sections of the rural population, such as, landless labourers, artisans, small farmers, marginal farmers, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

2.4.2 IRDP in India

Ever since the introduction of economic planning in India, various programmes and approaches have been formulated and implemented from time to time as a measure to abolish rural poverty. Though they had achieved appreciable progress, it was realised that these programmes failed to bring about the much-needed relief to the poor as their benefits did not percolate to them but they were mostly cornered by the affluent sections of the rural society. By and large all the programmes and their approaches were selective, sporadic, piecemeal or of sectoral nature. They

just covered one or two aspects of the needs of the rural people in the selected areas.\textsuperscript{22} None of these programmes covered the whole country, though a large number of them operated simultaneously in the same area for the same target groups. They have caused spatial and sectoral imbalances in the growth of the economy. This territorial overlap combined with the different funding patterns of these programmes not only created considerable difficulties in their effective implementation, monitoring and accounting but also blurred the programme objective.\textsuperscript{23} It was therefore proposed that such multiplicity of programmes for rural poor operating through a multiplicity of agencies should be ended and be replaced by one single agency for implementing the new integrated programme called as IRDP, operative through out the country.

The concept of Integrated Rural Department emerged in the Indian Science Congress which was held at Waltair in January, 1976. Later on, the concept was enunciated by the Finance Minister of India while presenting the budget in the Parliament in 1976. The Programme was to be based on


the knowledge of local needs, resource endowments and potentialities of the area and its people. The programme was started in March 1976 in 20 selected districts in the country, representing different socio-economic and ecological conditions, so that the experience gained in these districts could be replicated in other parts of the country. The results were reviewed in the year 1978 and it was decided to integrate the methodology and approach of three major ongoing programmes namely the Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) the Command Area Development Programme (CADP) and Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP). In 1978-79, the IRDP was expanded to 2300 blocks and it was proposed to add 300 blocks every year under the programme. IRDP got extended to a total of 2600 blocks as on 31st March 1980. However, in the light of the success of the programme, Government of India took a major policy decision to extend the benefits of the programme to the target group families in all the blocks in the country from 2nd October 1980. Simultaneously the National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), launched in August 1979, was also made a part of IRDP. In 1982, the programme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA) was also included in IRDP in selected districts. Upto 1978-79 IRDP was centra.
sector scheme and hundred per cent funds were provided by the Central Government. During 1979-80, this programme was made a centrally-sponsored scheme in which funding was shared on a 50:50 basis between the centre and the states. In the case of Union Territories, hundred per cent funds were provided by the Central Government.

2.4.3 Objectives of IRDP

IRDP was devised with a lot of hope and expectations for achieving the following objectives:

a) to raise families in identified target groups above the poverty line within a specified period of time through the provision of productive (income earning) assets.

b) to create substantial additional opportunities of employment through the development of primary, secondary and tertiary sector activities in rural areas.

c) to reduce rural poverty in a phased manner.

d) to make the rural family of the targeted groups economically viable and self-sufficient and

e) to create durable community assets for strengthening the rural infrastructure.
The Other aims of IRDP are

- diversification of agriculture through animal husbandry, dairying, forestry, fishery, sericulture etc. it would benefit both the landless and the landholders and this would form an important plank of the programme.

- improving the productivity of land by providing access to inputs like water, improved seeds and fertilizers to those categories of the rural poor, who have some land assets, and

- developing, processing and manufacturing activities based on local resources.

2.4.4 Operational Strategy

The operational mechanics of IRDP are as follows:

IRDP is a programme which calls for a detailed micro-level planning. The starting point is the survey for identifying families with an annual income below the poverty line. From amongst such families, those belonging to the income class falling below the cut-off line are chosen. The list of such families are then placed before an assembly of all adults of the village, called the Gram Sabha, to ensure that no poor family is excluded and no non-poor family is included. Priority is given to the poorest of the poor in
the consideration for assistance under the programme. Based on the definition of poverty line in monetary terms, a family with an annual income of Rs.11,000/- or less is considered to be below the poverty line. Since the objective of IRDP is to assist the poorest of the poor, the assistance is first given to the rural families having an annual income below a 'cut-off' line of Rs.8,500/- constituting the target group. Even among them, families with an annual income below Rs.6,000/- are assisted first.

The target group of the programme consists of small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others whose annual family income is below the cut-off line.

IRDP considered 'family' as the basic unit of development and not the individual. This implies that more than one member could be given assistance taking into consideration the income gap of the family required to be bridged and the absorption capacity of its members.


Any economically viable scheme having favourable incremental capital output ratio (ICOR) is taken up under the programme, in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Considering the need to off-load the farm sector, attempts are made to diversify into secondary and tertiary sector activities that is, industries, services and business activities in harmony with the local situation. The identified families are consulted about their preference for income generation activities. The schemes chosen for the families should match the need and aptitude of the family and the local resource profile.

The capital cost of the assets is financed partly by subsidy by the Government and partly by bank loans. The quantum of subsidy available is 25 per cent in respect of small farmers, 33.33 per cent in the case of marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and 50 per cent in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The total quantum of subsidy per beneficiary is limited to Rs.4000/- in Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) areas and Rs.3000/- in non-DPAP areas and Rs.5000/- in the case of Scheduled Caste/Tribe beneficiaries. The subsidy ceiling is applied to the family as a unit.26

The main administrative unit for the implementation of the IRDP is the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). It is an autonomous body outside the district administration and registered under the Societies Registration Act. This agency is headed by a Project Director who is a full-time functionary and the Chief Executive of the DRDA. The Governing Body of the DRDA provides guidance and directions to the DRDAs. The Governing body consists of the District Collector, a Member of Parliament, Members of Legislature, Chairmen of Zilla Parishads, Heads of District Development Departments, representatives of SC/ST and women. At the field level, the block is the basic unit for planning and implementation of the programme and for providing the feedback on the impact of the programme. The block development machinery is charged with the task of identification of families, preparation of bankable schemes for beneficiaries and monitoring the implementation of the programme. The field level functionaries at the block level are expected to play a liaison role with the banks and other institutions for mobilising credit, supply of inputs, organisation of marketing facilities and the like and take follow-up action at periodical intervals for ensuring supply of raw materials and other requirements. They are also expected to assist the financing institutions in recovering loans from the
beneficiaries. At the village level where the poor are identified, the village level worker (VLW) is the link with the block development machinery.

IRDP has been a good innovation for ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor. It is exclusively meant for the different strata of the economically weak especially those below the poverty line in rural areas. The programme of asset endowment under IRDP is designed to develop self-employment ventures and a variety of activities in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.