CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Mahatma Gandhi believed that India lived in her villages; he desired that the traditional way of life of rural India should not be abandoned; at the same time he wanted villages to be made economically self-sufficient. His dream was that every village should have the basic necessities, and that every individual in every village should have complete freedom and opportunity to work and enjoy the fruits of his labour. It was towards this end that Gandhiji proposed rural upliftment programmes in various parts of India during the time of freedom struggle.¹

INDIAN POPULATION

India has always been, and continue to be, a predominantly rural country; according to 1991 census, 73.87 per cent of India's population of 846 million live in villages. The truth becomes evident from the fact that there are over 575,000 villages while there are not more than 4,700 cities and towns.² The need for the upliftment of women becomes evident in the context of the fact that women constitute nearly 407.1 million in the total population of 846.3 million according to the 1991 census. This is more or less in tune with world populations where women form half of the population.³

2. The Rural poor capital income is less than half the urban ones, India Packet Book of Economic Information, Publication Division, Government of India, (New Delhi, 1978), p. 3.
According to 1991 Census, 629 million people lived in villages, and only 218 million people in urban areas. Indian women numbering 297.8 million, amounting to 73.2 per cent, live in rural areas, and 27 per cent of these rural women live below the poverty line.¹

POVERTY OF THE VILLAGE

A study of Indian society reveals the truth that the incidence of poverty in this country has been always more severe in villages than in towns. The rural areas have remained almost entirely without civic amenities and comforts. One has only to visit a school or a dispensary in a village and in a town to see for oneself how glaring the difference is. The regrettable truth is that a child in a rural area grows up under a load of accumulated deprivations.³

In India, 74 per cent of the population lives in villages, where agriculture is the main profession and almost the only means of subsistence. It is unfortunate that villagers who produce food for others suffer from poverty and want of food. The incidence of poverty is much higher in villages than in cities, and roughly 39 percent of the rural population suffers from chronic poverty.

Agriculture is the source of livelihood for 70 percent of the population, but it accounts for less than 40 per cent of the national income. One of the reasons for this is the unequal distribution of land; 10 to 20 percent of


5. Sixth Five Year Plan (1978 - 83), Planning Commission, Government of India (Registered) (New Delhi, Year Not mentioned), p.3.
landholders own 70 percent of the total land, and 50 percent of the land holders are marginal farmers with less than one hectar (2.471 acres) of land. Therefore, thus any agenda for fighting poverty must take into account the rural sector.  

A study of the rural population made by the committees appointed by the Government have brought to light the poor condition of the rural people in different spheres like health and literacy. It is a well known truth that the philosophers of India for centuries have emphasized the need for and usefulness of education for all people. They felt that literacy would enable people to understand their problems as well as that of society and would help them to find out proper solutions to solve them. Inspite of such useful advice, the majority of Indians remain illiterate, and the truth is that the rate of literacy is 75.85% among males, and 54.16% among females.  

POOR CONDITION OF THE INDIAN VILLAGES

Many scholars have written about “rural development”, meaning improvement of the villages in different spheres. In other words, it refers to improving the living conditions of the villagers who suffer due to unemployment, illiteracy, ill health, inadequate intake of nutritious food, infant mortality, lack of proper housing, poor status of women, inadequate supply of safe drinking water, and a host of similar problems. Social scientists expect that the Government

should address itself in solving these problems if it really wants to improve the living conditions of the villagers.⁹

The Government of India, did not fail to appreciate these problems, and implemented a series of schemes in order to eliminate them. Its three major goals are provision of education, health, and income-generating activities for the rural poor. Therefore, a brief discussion about the history of rural development in India, and the different schemes of the governments, becomes necessary.

**DEFINITION OF “RURAL DEVELOPMENT”**

There is no unanimous agreement among scholars about the definition of the concept, “Rural Development”. It is defined by different scholars in different ways. Inspite of this fact, we can gather from the different definitions of the concept that the fundamental view of the scholars refers to the improvement of the quality of the life of the poor people in the villages. ¹⁰

According to Robert Chambers, rural development is a complex process to enable a specific group of people, like poor rural men and women, to gain for themselves and their children much of what they need. It involves helping the poor who seek livelihood in the rural areas to enjoy the benefits of rural development. This seems to be a simple and satisfactory definition.

To start with, rural development activities in India were by the Government in the context of recurring famines, but in the beginning they did not have any legal

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sanction behind them. Inspite of this, steps were taken to help the rural poor so that they could atleast be saved from certain death. In the first few decades after 1858, some district officers seized in the midst of famine the food grain stocks, and controlled the market to ensure their distribution among the needy. This was done without any apparent legal sanction; this act was motivated only by a determination to control profiteering and to alleviate rural suffering.¹¹ Rural development thus began as a humanitarian measure, a practice not backed by any executive or legal fiat. Legality as a legitimacy was only provided later. Thus one cannot fail to see that rural development as a function of government initially began as B.B. Misra rightly observes as a search for an alternative to laissez faire.¹²

**STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATING RURAL POVERTY**

The poverty of the people living in rural areas of India, strictly speaking, has not been solved hitherto to any appreciable extent. The same is true even with regard to other countries of Asia. This condition has led the International Labour Organisation to state that it was not happy with the activities of Asian countries engaged in the task of eliminating poverty. It has stated that "years of experimentation" with a host of anti-poverty programmes in Asian countries has not made any significant dent in rural poverty.¹³ One of its criticisms is that the failure to remove poverty from Asian countries was due to the absence of active involvement and participation of the rural poor.

¹² Ibid., p. 387.
The above criticism of the ILO brought out the truth that all strategies for alleviating poverty in Asia have been only on the official level, and the rural poor were not provided any opportunity to participate and involve themselves in the implementation of the strategies. This is an important reason leading to the formulation of the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas Programme, as well as its forerunner, namely, the Integrated Rural Development Programme. These two programmes were meant to facilitate involvement of the rural poor in the welfare works meant for them.

HISTORY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The earliest attempt at rural development was made in 1885, at the time of the first Indian National Congress held at Bombay under the presidency of W.C. Bonnerjee. The political ideology of the Congress had two dimensions: independence of India from the British rule, and the development of the Indian villages. Mahatma Gandhi never ceased emphasizing the truth that economic progress of India meant economic progress of villages; therefore, he encouraged village crafts, and as a corollary, asked the Indians to boycott the British products.\footnote{Ibid.}

BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The contribution of the British for the upliftment of the rural poor cannot be ignored. For example, the Government of India was made to initiate programmes of rural development under the newly introduced constitutional changes. Rural development, indeed, received a powerful fillip in 1921 when
"dyarchy" was introduced in the Provinces under the Government of India Act of 1919. Provincial subjects were classified into 'reserved' and 'transferred' subjects and, as such, law and order and revenue, including land revenue and tenants rights, were placed in the 'reserved list', while subjects like, agriculture, public education, public health, co-operatives, local self-government, and animal husbandry were placed in the 'transferred' list.

The Government of India Act of 1935, conferred autonomy to the provinces and emphasized the need for rural development. A new department of development was constituted in most provinces and rural development received a further push. The Congress party which fought in election under this Act of 1935 promised wide-ranging agrarian reforms. It particularly sought a substantial reduction in revenue and relief from the burden of rural debt.

In 1937 a separate Rural Development Department was established in the State of Uttar Pradesh and for two years it sponsored programmes including experimental use of multi-purpose village workers, and co-ordination of technical services.

This was one of the resolutions made in the Congress session, held at Calcutta in September 1920 under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai. It told

the people that "spinning and weaving" would induce confidence in the villages and contribute for rural development."

**MAHATMA GANDHI AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

With the entry of Mahatma Gandhi into Indian public life rural development received mass popularity for the first time. Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa in 1915 but, it was only in 1919 that he plunged into national politics. The Non-Cooperation Movement, started by him in 1920, was the first political attempt in India to mobilize the villagers, and ruralise politics. The Indian National Congress in its Calcutta session of September 1920, articulated the approach to rural development by recommending hand spinning in every house, and handweaving for millions of weavers.

Mahatma Gandhi made rural upliftment an integral part of his movement for attaining Swaraj. He laid down a Four Point Constructive Programme for the regeneration of rural life:

1. Hindu Muslim unity
2. Abolition of untouchability
3. Prohibition of narcotics and liquor, and
4. Encouragement of home industries, such as spinning, weaving, and handicrafts of all sorts.


SRINIKETAN INSTITUTE

In India, Rabindranath Tagore, the famous poet philosopher of Bengal and of the nation, became a pioneer in the area of rural reconstruction. He established several institutions as early as 1914. The most famous of them was founded at Sriniketan in 1921. Many scholars and social workers worked for rural development. Among other early efforts, mention may be made of an Industrial school at Sultanpur, the work of Babi Neezu, and Mrs. Nalini Dutt's Women Institute.\(^{21}\)

MARTHANDAM SCHEME

In 1921 several leaders of the Indian Young Men Christian Association established a Rural Demonstration centre at Marthandam. Under the leadership of D. Spencer Halch. They stressed on self help. The aim of this experiment was "to bring about a complete upward development towards a more abundance of life for the rural people-spiritually, mentally, physically, socially and economically. Quite appropriately the experiment came to be known as the "Five sided programme".\(^{22}\)

GURGAON EXPERIMENT

The works of F.L. Brayne, Development Commissioner of Gurgaon District in Punjab, between 1920 -1928, opened one of the most important chapters in rural welfare programmes in India.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 34.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 12.
The Communist Party also played its own role for the upliftment of the rural poor. In the year 1945, the Kishan Sabha, under the leadership of Godavani Paraleka, took the next important step. The Adivasis, for the first time, shouted slogans against the inexploitation by landlords, money lenders, and constructors.

Though the State Governments took several measures to bring down the level of poverty, the experience across the country has been mixed owing to differences in initial conditions, institutional framework, approach and design of the poverty alleviation programme and their implementation, and macro-economic policy environment. It is in this context that the sharing of the experiences of the different States for poverty alleviation became helpful in refining and designing the efforts for reducing poverty at a rapid rate.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, also worked for the upliftment of the poor villagers but with difference. Thanks to his education in the west and possessed of a modern spirit, he wanted to introduce science and technology so that the villagers in India could march in step with the rest of the world.

The Government of India was seriously concerned about improving the quality of life of the poor rural people especially the poor and helpless rural women. In the beginning, the perspective was general in that the upliftment of the

25. Ibid., p. 304.
27. Ibid., p.33.
poor people of India was the goal. Therefore, various schemes were implemented among which the following eighteen are worthy of special mention.

1. Mahewa - Etawah Pilot Project - 1948
2. Firka Development Scheme - 1950
3. Community Development Programme - 1952
4. Rural Manpower Programme (RMP) - 1960
5. High - yielding Varieties Programme (HYVP) - 1966
6. Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) - 1969
7. Marginal Farmers and Agriculture Labourers (MFAL) - (1969)
8. Rural for Works Programme (RWP) - (1970)
9. Cash Scheme of Rural Employment Programme (CSREP) - 1971
10. Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP) - 1972
11. Drought prone Areas Programme (DPAP) - 1973
12. Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) - 1974
13. Special Livestock Production Programme (SLPP) - 1975
14. National Rural Employment Programme (NREPI) - 1976
15. Food Work Programme (FWP) - 1977
16. Desert Development Programme (DDP) - 1977
17. Antyodya Programme (AP) - (1978)

We shall briefly discuss about these schemes.

1. MAHEWA-ETAWAH PILOT PROJECT

The Mahewa-Etawah Pilot Project launched in 1948, became the model for all the projects implemented by different States of India. It was implemented
first in Uttar Pradesh\textsuperscript{28}, and provided extension services in agriculture and animal husbandry. It was at this historic moment that Chester Bowels came to India as the U.S. Ambassador. He saw the experiment at Etawah and Nilokheri. In the course of his discussions with the Government of India, it was decided that pilot project of the new programme of village development should be started in all the States, and that the American Government would provide the technical equipment and the foreign extension personnel required for the programme. In connection with this project, fertilizers and implements for experimentation were offered under supplementary agreements with other agencies of the Government. \textsuperscript{29}

2. **FIRKA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

Inspired by Gandhi's call for rural development State Governments in India launched rural welfare schemes. The following three were the important schemes:

1. The *Rural Reconstruction Scheme* of the former state of Baroda \textsuperscript{16}
2. The *Sarvodaya Scheme* of Bombay\textsuperscript{11}, and
3. The *Firka Development Scheme* in Madras \textsuperscript{12}

The Firka (or regional) Development Scheme is a memorable one because, its administrative structure was destined to serve as a model for the

\begin{itemize}
  \item *Kurykshetra*, January, 6, p. 11.
  \item *Ibid.*, p. 12.z
\end{itemize}
welfare programmes launched in the 1950's by the Government of India in the form of Community projects and National Extension Services. The underlying idea of the Firka Development Scheme was to organize the villagers for a happier and prosperous life in which the individual villager would have an opportunity to develop both as an individual and as a member of a well integrated society. In this context, one must not forget that the seeds of this Rural Development programme were already sown by the First Congress ministry under Rajaji.

3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP)

The Community Development Programme was launched in 1952, for initiating a process of transformation of the socio economic life in the rural areas.

The Central Government, the State Governments, and the US Government agreed to finance the Programme of Community Development. Under the Indo-U.S. Technical co-operation agreement of 1952, the U.S. Government agreed to bear 10 per cent of the whole expenditure, but its assistance was to be given mainly in the form of equipments. In the First Five Year Plan, a total amount of Rs. 101 crore was recommended for expenditure on community projects and National Extension Services.

In the beginning of the programme, the main fields of its activities were:

1. Agriculture 2. Employment 3. Communication
4. Education 5. Health 6. Training

On 31st December 1962, there were (i) 157 groups and (ii) 129 groups and 88 preextension blocks functioning in the state of Madras.

The Fourth Evaluation Report of 1957, adopting a different classifying criteria, classified the activities undertaken by the community projects as constructional programmes, irrigation programmes, agricultural programmes, institutional and other general programmes. It was decided then that the National Extension Services would cover only one-fourth of the country during the First Five Year Plan period. This meant the initiation of work in 1200 development blocks, each comprising 100 villages, with a population of about 66,000.

The principal social welfare problems concerned women, children, youth, family, underprivileged groups. As women had to fulfil domestic and economic responsibilities, adequate extension had to be paid for relaxation and reservation, both in the homes as well as in the community.

41. Ibid.
4. RURAL MANPOWER PROGRAMME (RMP)

As the name suggests, the main objective of this programme was to give employment to the unemployed and under-employed villagers in backward areas, especially during agricultural slack seasons.

In 1960-61, the Rural Manpower Programme (RMP) was taken up in 32 CD blocks on a pilot basis with the objective of providing employment for 100 days to at least 2.5 million persons by the end of the Third Five Year Plan, particularly in areas exposed to pronounced seasonal unemployment, and under-employment.\textsuperscript{42} For the programme which covered CD blocks by the end of 1964-65, only a little over 20 per cent of the originally contemplated outlay of Rs. 150 crores could be provided due to resource constraints. Nevertheless, it generated 137 million Mandays of employment until 1968-69 i.e., the year in which the programme was terminated\textsuperscript{43}. In Tamil Nadu during the year 1971-72 an expenditure, of Rs. 49.89 lakh was incurred under the RMP.\textsuperscript{44}

5. HIGH-YIELDING SEED VARIETIES PROGRAMME (HYVP)

The evolution of high yielding varieties of seeds marked a turning point in modernizing the traditional Indian agriculture. The draft outline of the Fourth Five Year Plan asserted that it was necessary to make greater use of modern methods of production, and to bridge the gap between demand and supply by the


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 283.

\textsuperscript{44} Tamil Nadu State Administrative Report (1971 - 72), (Government of Tamil Nadu, 1974), p. 508.
application of the latest advance in the science of agriculture. The new agricultural strategy which aimed at a rapid and spectacular increase in food grains production was adopted from 1966-67. Although an improved strategy in agricultural development in terms of IADP and FAAP was already functioning in the country, the fundamental departure in the new agriculture technology was the introduction of intensive cultivation, using new high yielding varieties of seeds, backed by more and better plant nutrients, effective plant protection, and adequate water supply.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) saw a record of food grains harvest during 1975-76. The output of food grains rose from 99.8 million tons in 1974-75. The output of rice rose by 25 percent from 39.6 million tons to 48.74 million tons, the output of coarse grains increased by nearly 3.8 million tons, and that of pulses by nearly 3.8 million tons. After registering a sharp increase of 15.2 percent in the year 1975-76, agriculture production in 1976-77 however, declined by 6.7 percent. Agricultural production which had suffered a small decline in the previous years, registered a significant increase in 1977-78. The total area under high yielding variety seed programme increased from 26.02 million hectares in 1973-74 to 34.48 million hectares in 1976-77, a phenomenal increase of more than 2 million hectares in one year and nearly 7.5 million hectares in two years.

Since a single group wheat reaped the entire benefits of the new technology, some economists have rightly called this agricultural revolution as

“Wheat Revolution.” Hence it may be concluded that during a period of five years from 1968-69 to 1974-75 which saw the introduction of high yielding variety seeds and mechanization of agriculture operations, Indian agriculture virtually witnessed a “wheat revolution” instead of green revolution.

6. SMALL FARMERS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SFDA)

The Government of India evaluated the activities of the different agencies, and found out the utter failure of the trickle down agencies (CDP, IADP, IAAP and HYVP) to produce any visible impact on the socio-economic condition of the weaker sections, particularly scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes. This discovery led to the adoption of a target group approach from the Fourth Five Year Plan. The objective to create direct impact on the socio-economic status of the rural poor led to the creation of Small Farmers Development Agencies, and the Integrated Rural Development Programme was a direct offshoot of the SFDA. It was established on the recommendation made by the All India Rural Credit Review Committee in 1968-1969 to assist the small farmers who did not benefit from the existing programmes. The Committee recommended to the Government to set up special institutions of SFDA in selected districts to assist small farmers in terms of credit, technical guidance etc. Initially, Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDA) Pilot Projects were started

during the Fourth Five year Plan, and on the recommendation of the National Commission on Agriculture, Marginal Farmer and Agriculture Labourers (MFAL) Agencies were merged with SFDA. Later, in 1979, SFDA was extended to 198 districts, before it was merged with the IRDP.

The main objectives of the SFDA were to identify members of the target groups and their problems, apart from providing requirements to organize and arrange for supplies of inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides, agriculture implements, marketing services and other facilities to small and marginal farmers, and to review the progress and effectiveness of the assistance. It is gratifying to note that the SFDA aimed at for supply of inputs to small farmers who got a subsidy of 25-32 percent.

7. MARGINAL FARMERS AND AGRICULTURE LABOURERS (MFAL)

The Fourth Five Year Plan identified that the poor comprised landless agriculture labourers, small and marginal farmers, and village artisans. It was in order to help them that the Government launched in 1969-70 a number of projects on experimental basis. These MFAL spread over selected areas in the country. Most of the projects were sanctioned during 1970-71.


The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) reported that out of a total of approximately 5100 blocks in the country, 1818 blocks were covered. The functions of the MFAL agencies were to identify genuine marginal farmers and agriculture labourers, identify the nature and assess the magnitude of their problems, formulate economic programmes for providing gainful employment to them, arrange for the procurement of inputs and for the provision of facilities for production, processing, storage, marketing etc.

8. RURAL WORKS PROGRAMME (RWP)

The Third Five Year Plan provided for a rural works programme for expansion of employment opportunities and fuller utilisation of manpower resources of rural areas. RWP and the food for works programme (FWP) introduced to alleviate rural poverty through employment generation were unable to provide a permanent solution for the landless and rural poor. The programme was initiated in the form of pilot projects in 32 blocks towards the end of 1960-61. 54 selected districts in 13 States were identified as Drought Prone on the basis of well-defined norms, such as extent of irrigated areas, quality and distribution of rainfall, and high frequency of drought, with the objective of mitigating gradually the severity of scarcity conditions in these areas. This scheme also aimed at

59. Third Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 98.
providing employment to the rural unemployed during the slack seasons. The evaluation of the RWP done by the Programme Evaluation Organisation showed that it performed poorly, mainly due to organizational and administrative deficiencies. Further, the fund allotted to it was so small that it could create no significant impact in terms of employment generation. \[60\]

It may be relevant to add here that low productivity, widespread unemployment, underemployment, social inequality, lack of infrastructure facilities and the basic minimum of social amenities that were necessary for civilized living, characterize the rural economy of the third World countries. Rural Development, a long term process, required a decentralized as well as integrated approach. Reduction in the levels of poverty continued to be on the top of the agenda of several developing countries, in order to cultivate 1.5 million tons of food grains in 1978.\[61\]

9. CASH SCHEME OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (CSREP)

This scheme was introduced as a non-plan programme in 1971-72, and next year it was adopted as a central plan programme. Rural works under CSREP were to be located in such areas of each district where SFDA was not in operation; other criteria for location were the high percentage of landless labourers, and high incidence of unemployment. The Government of India sanctioned

\[60\] The Sixth Five Year Plan, 1980-85, op. cit., p. 168.

Rs. 12.50 lakh annually for a period of three years beginning from April 1971-to each district of the country. It was expected that one thousand persons in each district would get productive work leading to an average of 2.5 lakh man-days of employment.\(^2\) It also appeared that 70 to 80 percent of the expenditure would be incurred on the construction of rural roads. The importance of rural roads in providing the necessary infrastructure to the rural economy was thus recognised.\(^3\)

The CSREP overstepped the funds allocation and release in 1972-73 and 1973-74. It only goes to suggest that emphasis was placed on achieving financial targets.\(^4\) Nearly three-fourth of the total expenditure, under this scheme went to road construction. Works such as minor irrigation, soil conservation, flood protection, school building etc. were given low priority. It was the result of the lack of interest on the part of district administration in charge of the scheme. They could have shown greater interest in formulating, selecting, and executing projects which strengthen productive assets.\(^5\)

10 DROUGHT PRONE AREAS PROGRAMME (DPAP)

Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) was one of the area development programmes launched by the Government of India in 1973-74 to tackle the special problems faced by those fragile areas which were constantly

affected by severe drought conditions. 66 These areas were characterized by large human and cattle populations which were continuously putting heavy pressure on the already fragile natural resource base for food, fodder, and fuel. This continuous biotic pressure was leading to fast and continuous depletion of vegetative cover, and less rainfall, increasing soil erosion and fast receding of ground water level due to continuous exploitation without any effort to recharge the underground aquifers. 67

During 1988-89, out of a total allocation of Rs. 102.52 crore, the Central Government’s share was Rs. 51.26 crores. The total anticipated expenditure under the programme was Rs. 100 crores. For 1989-90 the total outlay under the programme was retained at Rs. 102.52 crores. 68 Though the programme created some positive impact in terms of creating durable public assets in the programme areas, the overall impact of the programme in effectively containing the adverse effects of drought was found to be not very encouraging. Based on the recommendations of the Hanumantha Rao Committee, comprehensive conditions for Watershed Development community, applicable to the DPAP, DDP, EAS. 50 percent allocation in DPAP and DDP areas was issued in 1994. 69 The DPAP, during 1981-82, covered 554 blocks spread over 73 districts in the country. Its main aim was utilisation of land, water, and livestock resources. The main objective of the programme was to minimise the adverse effect of drought on

68. Government of India, Planning Commission, Annual Plan (1989, 90), New Delhi, p. 75.
production of crops, livestock, and productivity of land, water, and human resources ultimately leading to the drought proofing of the affected areas. The programme also aimed to promote overall economic development and improving the socio-economic conditions of the resource poor and disadvantaged sections inhabiting the programme areas. 70

The strategy of the DPAP was area development programme to be implemented exclusively on water shed basis. This project basis covered a period of four years. Watershed project was to cover a village as far as possible and also to encourage participation of local people and the Panchayat Raj Institutions. DRDA / ZP was to be the Nodal Government agency at the district level, to act as a facilitator and provider of finances, and technical assistance to the people’s organizations executing the watershed projects. 71

11. PILOT INTENSIVE RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (PIREP)

Alongside of the CSRE, in November, 1972, a Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Development Programme (PIREP) was started for a three year period in 15 selected Community Development Blocks with the basic objective of providing additional employment opportunities for the unskilled, creating of assets that had a multiplier effect, creation of new skills through project work onsite, and finally and importantly, to attempt some kind of manpower budgeting with respect

to wage-seeking labours with a view to ultimately evolving a comprehensive programme for the rest of the country. 72

12. MINIMUM NEEDS PROGRAMME (MNP)

The minimum needs programme, apart from the target approach as adopted in India, it also catered to the needs of a specific group of people, the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and not necessarily those who basic needs remained unfulfilled. In view of the high incidence of poverty discussed earlier literature, the need for a programme to be basic to an ILO report by the “satisfaction of basic needs” meant meeting the minimum requirements of a family for personal consumption access to essential services; provision of job to every individual willing to work, satisfaction of needs of a more qualitative nature and popular participation in the making of decision. 73

The Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) in the Fifth Five Year Plan was to raise the living standards and reduce regional disparities in development. 74 The basic needs of the people identified were Elementary Education, Adult Education, Rural Health, Rural Water Supply, Rural Roads, Rural Electrification, Rural Housing, Environment Improvement of Urban Slums, and Nutrition. 75

The Sixth Five year plan claimed to have connected 18000 Indian villages

73. Amerendra, op. cit., p. 74.
74. Ibid.
under the Minimum Needs Programme. Nearly 34 percent villages of India were without any road link while more than 2/3rd of the villages did not have all weather roads\textsuperscript{76}. The number of landless families provided house sites was estimated at 13.07 million. About 35000 villages were electrified under the Sixth Five Year Plan\textsuperscript{77}. During the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985 - 90), three additional components were added; they were Rural Domestic Cooking Energy, Rural Sanitation, and Public Distribution System.\textsuperscript{78}

13. **SPECIAL LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION PROGRAMME (SLPP)**

The Special Livestock Production Programme (SLPP) was initiated during the years 1975-76 on the basis of the recommendation of the then National Commission for Agriculture (NCA). The programme was in operation in 183 Districts in 21 States and 4 Union Territories. It was consisted of two parts (i) cross breed heifer rearing (ii) setting up of sheep, poultry, and piggery production units.\textsuperscript{79}

Under the scheme, assistance was provided at the rate of 50 percent to small and marginal farmers, and 66-2/3 per cent to agricultural labourers for rearing cross breed heifer of 4th to 32nd month of age. Assistance was given for setting up sheep, poultry and piggery production units for which subsidy was provided at the rate of 25 per cent to small farmers and 33- 1/3 per cent to

\textsuperscript{76} D.C. Pande, op.cit., pp. 159 - 160.

\textsuperscript{77} K.A. Suresh, Molley Joseph, op.cit., p.33.

\textsuperscript{78} Government of India, Annual Plan (1989-90), op.cit., p. 304.

marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The expenditure on the programme was shared on 50:50 percent by the Central Government in the case of Union Territories.80

14 NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (NREP)

The National Rural Employment Programme was one of the three main anti-poverty-cum-employment schemes of IRDP, NREP, and RLEG.41 The poverty-oriented programmes like NREP and IRDP enabled nearly 38.65 million persons to cross the poverty line over the Sixth Five Year Plan period.82 Which is a fairly creditable achievement.

The problem of employment in rural areas was mainly of seasonal unemployment and under-employment. Fuller employment opportunities for the rural work force had to be found within the framework of agricultural and allied occupations. However, the very dimensions of the problem called for a multi-pronged strategy which aimed on the one hand at resource development of vulnerable sections of the population, and on the other, provided supplementary employment opportunities to the rural poor, particularly, during lean periods, in a manner which would at the same time contribute directly to the creation of durable assets for the community.83

It was in this context that the “food for work programme” was conceived in 1976-77. The basic objectives of the programme which was launched on 1st April 1977 were to generate additional employment in rural areas through the utilisation of available stocks of food grains, and to create thereby durable community assets, which could strengthen the infrastructure in rural areas for socio-economic development. Based on the deficiencies or short comings which were noticed in the implementation of the food for work programme in the States, it was renamed as National Rural Employment Programme in October, 1980.  

The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) became a regular part of the Sixth Five Year Plan with effect from 1981-82. The programme was implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme on 50:50 sharing between the Centre and the States. The programme had the following three basic objectives:

1. Generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed persons, both men and women in the rural areas
2. Creation of durable community assets for strengthening rural infrastructure, which would lead to rapid growth of rural economy and steady rise in the income levels of the rural poor, and
3. Improvement of the nutritional status and the living standards of the rural poor.

The allocation of resources to the States and the Union Territories was made on the basis of a formula giving 75 percent weightage to the number of

85. The Sixth Five Year Plan, (1980 - 85), op. cit. p. 175.
86. Amarendra, op. cit. p. 91.
agricultural labours and marginal farmers, and 25 per cent weightage to the incidence of poverty in each State. Payment of wages in food grains was restricted to 1 kg per day per head, and the balance wage was paid in cash. The ratio between the material component and wage component was fixed at 40 : 60 in respect of individual work. During the period from 1977-78 to 1980-81 a large number of community assets in the rural areas were created under the programme; this resulted in an impact on the quality of life in the villages all over the country. However, in 1989-90, NREP was merged into a new programme known as Jawahar Rojgar Yojana.

15. FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAMME (FWP)

The main objectives of the programme was to create for the idle labour force gainful employment opportunity, and plan and non-plan schemes seeking to create durable community assets so as to increase production by way of utilization of surplus stock of food grains made available by the Government of India free of cost. Since the introduction of the programme in 1977-78, the outlay approved for the 1978-83 plan was Rs. 1000 lakhs out of which Rs. 466.06 lakhs were utilized in 1978-79.

This programme (FWP) was started in 1977-78, during the last year of Fifth Five Year Plan as a non-plan scheme to augment the funds of the State Government for the maintenance of public works. The scheme was designed to offer gainful employment to the rural poor and improve their nutritional and

89. Amarendra, op. cit., p. 112.
income level through development of infrastructure, and to create community assets by utilizing surplus food stocks. The category of works which qualified for assistance under the scheme included irrigation works, soil and water conservation, and building of schools and community centres. During the year 1977-78, 2.04 lakhs tons of wheat was allocated to different states and utilisation amounted to only 1.72 lakhs of tons. In the FWP 1.5 million tons of food grains, were utilised creating 372.8 million mandays of employment.

16. DESERT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (DDP)

The Desert Development Programme (DDP) was started in 1977-78, with the objective of controlling desertification and increasing of opportunites for raising the level of production, income, and employment in the areas covered. This programme was in relation to 132 blocks till the end of 1981-82. As many as 21 districts in 5 states, both in the hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana, and the cold desert areas of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh came under the programme. Over the years, the increase in human and livestock population in desert areas placed the natural resources of the region under great stress. The major problems were continuous depletion of vegetative cover, increase in soil erosion, and fall in ground water table. All these factors accounted for diminishing productivity of land and loss of natural resources. The problems would have been worse but for the introduction of some specific highly focussed areas development programmes in these areas.

90. The Sixth Five Year Plan, (1980 - 85) op. cit. p. 167.
91. Amarendra, op.cit., p.112.
The objective of the programme was to mitigate adverse effects of
desertification and adverse climatic conditions on crops, human and livestock
population, combating desertification, and restoring ecological balance of the
area. Administered through DPAP/IRD agencies, the Desert Development
Programme aimed at the integrated development of desert areas by increasing the
productivity, income level, and employment opportunities for the inhabitants through
optimum utilization of physical, human, livestock, and other resources. The
activities under the programme were based on the recommendations of the
National Commission on Agriculture (interim report) on desert development, and
under this programme, since its inception in 1977-78 upto 1981, an expenditure
of Rs. 37.81 crores was incurred. This had mainly been on schemes of afforestation,
water harvesting, rural electrification, and animal husbandry.  

17. ANTYODYA PROGRAMME (AP)

The word, "anyodya" means "upliftment of people at the lowest rung of
the economic ladder." The programme was introduced in 1978-79. Approaching
the problem of poverty from the bottom, the programme envisaged selection of
five poorest in each village for bringing about their economic betterment, as its
very name implied. In the Sixth Five Year Plan, the programme covered 159
blocks. The programmes which were generally financed under Antyodya supplied
rickshaws, bullock carts, horse carts, push carts, bullocks, sewing machines,

96. B.L. Mathur, Rural Development and Co-operation, RBSA, Publishers, (Jaipur,
milch cattle, piggery, poultry, goatry, and establishment of shops. In the beginning, Antyodya beneficiaries were provided subsidy in IRDP blocks.\textsuperscript{97}

18 INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (IRDP)

The Integrated Rural Development Programme was launched in 1979. The major aim of the IRDP was the eradication of poverty of the people living in the Indian villages. This aim was expressed in the Fourth Five Year Plan which was meant to improve the assets basis of the poor and to involve them in income-generating activities. The IRDP - covered initially 2300 blocks and later on extended to all the blocks of the country.\textsuperscript{98} Its concern was assisting 600 poorest families in each of the 5,011 development blocks in the country every year so as to improve their income.\textsuperscript{99}

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The IRDP selected the rural poor belonging to families living below poverty line, and provided them with the necessary assistance. Funds were provided to States by the Central Government in proportion to the poverty levels in each State on the basis of official estimates of the Planning Commission.\textsuperscript{100}

97. Amarendra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 111
TARGET GROUP

The target group consisted of families of small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans etc., whose per capita monthly expenditure did not exceed the poverty line. The IRDP provided special safeguards by way of reservation to certain people. The SC/STs shared 50 per cent of the benefits, women shared 40 per cent, and physically handicapped persons shared 3 per cent. The pattern of subsidy was 25 per cent for small farmers, 33 1/3 per cent for marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans, and 50 per cent for SC/STs and physically handicapped persons.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

The District Rural Development Agency Zilla Parishad was the implementing agency for this programme. The governing body at the district level provided guidance and directions to DRDAs. It included local MPs, MLAs, Chairmen of Zilla Parishads, heads of District Development Departments, and representatives of SC/STs, women, and NGOs. At the grass root level, the programme was carried out by Block Development Officers (BDO), and other Blocks staff with the help of village level functionaries.


The expenditure involved in the implementation of scheme was shared by both the Central Government and the State Governments on a 50:50 cost sharing basis. The funds were released directly to the DRDAs. 104

The financing was done by the NABARD and the RBI, which evaluated problems arising in the course of the implementation of the programme of IRDP, and which also reviewed the credit arrangements. They recommended changes and improvements whenever such a necessity arose. Many committees like the State Level Bankers Committee, District Level Conservative Committee, Block Level Conservative Committee and Block Level Bankers Committee provided the necessary help in implementing the IRDPs. During the Sixth Five Year Plan, the scale of funding under the programme was Rs. 5 lakhs per block in the first year of the plan, Rs. 6 lakhs in the second year, and Rs. 8 lakhs each in the last three years. 105

According to the IRDP's definition, which was approved by the Ministry of Rural Development, as revised in May 1991, a rural household with an annual income of less than Rs. 11,000 was considered as being below poverty line 106

THE IRDP AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DWCRA

The IRDP, due to its multi-dimensional activities, could not do much to the poor rural women of India. And according to many social scientists, in the whole process of implementation of IRDP, women had been by and large overlooked.

104. Ibid., p. 5.
and its family approach, in a way, had ignored the economic potential of women work force. In fact, the participation of women in the programme had been significantly low, and the women beneficiaries constituted only 7 percent of the total so far assisted under IRDP. This is quite disappointing. It was natural, therefore, that an alternative solution had to be found and the formulation of another scheme with total concern for rural areas was inevitable. The DWCRA that came into existence as a subscheme was thus the alternative solution.107

The IRDP was supported by another scheme called Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment, (TRYSEM) which aimed at uplifting the poor rural youth. This scheme continued to function even after 1982, along with the Development of Women and Children in Rural areas. The DWCRA was a self-employment scheme aimed at increasing women's access to skill training, employment, credit and other supportive services. Its control focus was on women. Hence, its importance is obvious.

In the following chapter we will make a brief study of the DWCRA and its salients features, as well as its various components.