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During the post-world War II era, development theorist became increasingly dissatisfied with the way traditional concepts of development emphasized growth and neglected important issues related to distributive justice and other dimensions of development. The interest in rural development is partly an offshoot of such disenchantment and also an account of the growing realization of the centrality of rural development in facilitating the process of overall development. Rural development is a multi-dimensional concept to improve the quality of life of rural poor. After independence, India has experimented and implemented many rural development programmes to develop her largest group of people, i.e., ‘rural poor’. Since 1960s, several studies have been done to analyze the achievements and failures of rural development programmes and levels of rural development. It is significant to note that the majority of the rural development programmes failed to achieve their desired objectives and goals. Most of the programmes reflect some common problems and reasons behind their failures due to the policies and implementation strategy adopted specially the lack of coordination between government machineries and non-government organizations. Still the wrong selection of beneficiaries, i.e., the target group (BPL and SCs) as well as controversial rural poor identification criteria are being adopted by the government which had been a core cause of such failures in the past. However, all these problems are significant and well visible, but there is hardly any effort to explore serious latent causes behind the failure of rural development programmes. The present study is an effort to evaluate some of these latent causes which are very much responsible for such failures. This study area is selected for three prime factors: (i) it lies in the Kosi Project, (ii) a backward rural block, and (iii) comparatively poor growth of livelihood in this Maithil culture block. The prime objective of this research is to analyze some of the rural development programmes, i.e., MANREGS, IAY, SHGs and others particularly. The levels of rural development and achievements of rural development programmes have been dealt with to suggest some measures to eliminate such problems in Raghopur Block.

Raghopur Block is one of the eleven blocks of district-Supaul, situated in the Kosi plain of north Bihar stretching from 26° 29’ 68” N to 26° 30’ 34” N and 86° 83’ 37” E to 86° 84’ 24” E. It is known for its backwardness and flood vulnerability. Because of the plain region, the block is characterized by almost a levelled and uniform topography. In the past the topography
of the block had been affected by the ravages of floods but after construction of the River Kosi Barrage and several embankments, the area is now free from ravages of Kosi and the sandy tracts are being reclaimed. The than area of waste land, full of Kans and Pater (Jungles), lying in the area have been largely reclaimed and are yielding crops. The block is characterized by the sub-tropical monsoonal climate. It is a part of Maithili speaking region or so called Mithilanchal. The Block consists of 18 Panchayats and 58 Villages with an area of 21167 hectares (211.67 Sq. Km). The area comprises 215643 persons (2011) of which male population shares 51.54 per cent. The growth of population is very high, i.e., 34.30% (2001-2011) compared to the national average (17.64%). In 2011, the average density of population was 10 persons per hectare (Census of India, 2011). Only about 47% population are literate, whereas 67% households are below poverty line. This block is completely dependent on rural economy or livelihood. More than 75 percent of working population are engaged in agricultural activities (Census data, 2011), whereas about 73% of the total land is under arable land in the block. 86.67% households have marginal and small landholdings.

Research Methodology

It covers many aspects, viz., research questions, research objectives, research hypotheses, source of data collection and their methods, designing samples for primary data collection, forming of schedule as a tool of data collection in the field, etc.

Research Questions

After going through the several past experiences and findings in various works related to rural development, some relevant questions raised:-

1. What is the current status of rural development programmes and spatial variation of their effectiveness particularly in Raghopur Block?
2. Whether the change through rural development programmes have affected the core of the social fabric, i.e., rural poor in the block or just touched the periphery?
3. Whether there is gap between potentialities and achievements of rural development programmes? If it is, than why and at what extent the gap exists and how this gap can be eliminated?
4. What are the impact of rural development programmes on local people, resources and their distribution?
5. To what extent the failures of RDPs may be achieved if an effort made to reducing or eliminating corruption in people as well as government machinaries?
Research Objectives

On the basis of research questions, the following objectives have been framed for the present study:

1. To review and evaluate the different rural development programmes of Indian and State government in order to improve the quality of life of rural poor in the Raghopur Block.
2. To analyze the objectives, achievements and problems of the rural development programmes in terms of reducing the poverty, increasing the local resources and improving the distribution system in the Block.
3. To find out the level of rural development and their socio-spatial disparities.
4. To recommend the suitable measures and programmes implementation in order to improve the levels of rural development.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been framed on the basis of research questions and objectives:

1. The major social groups (Dalits and OBCs) need economic as well as social (Housing, education and health) support in the villages of Raghopur Block.
2. The rural poor (BPL Group) are real beneficiaries in Raghopur Block.

The present research is basically of applied nature as the outcome of the research may be applicable by the programme-makers and planners for prosperous and sustainable rural development. This study is the analysis of the current situation of different rural development programmes, their comparative description and their achievements towards unbiased local resource distribution and utilization for holistic upgradation of rural system. Side by side, it also tried to explore such latent holes existing in the rural system which causes emasculation of rural development programmes in their proper implementation, smart functioning and desirable result according to their potentialities.

The present study is the result of intensive field work and personal observations. The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources. However, the use of secondary data has been made by collecting from: Census of India, Ministry of Rural Development, Directorate of Census Operation (Bihar), BPL Census, District Statistical Hand Book, B.D.O.
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Office, NIRD and other government and non-government sources. On other hand, peoples’ participation and their attitudes towards the performance of programmes have been analyzed on the basis of information collected through field survey after selection of samples. 15 villages (25% of total villages) have been considered as sample villages for field survey on the basis of stratified random sampling based on ‘a Six-Step Composite Rank Index Method’. Finally, 519 households have been randomly selected from different age groups, social groups, gender wise, and religion at required proportion for the intensive field survey. An appropriate Household Schedule and Village Schedule have been designed for primary data collection from selected households at village level. Both the schedules were well equipped with simple and systematic questions. Some important information have also gathered through interviews and group discussions. After data collection, they have been processed for analysis and resulting with the help of suitable statistical methods (Z-Score, Composite Index, Headcount Index, S.D., etc.), and computer software like, ArcGIS 10.2, ArcMap 10.2, IBM SPSS Statistics 20, MS Office 2013, Map Info and Paint. All the work have been done by the researcher himself.

The present study comprises of six chapters. Chapter first deals with the concepts of rural development and rural development experiences before and after independence in India. It also includes, review of literature and research methodology adopted for the present research including research questions, objectives, hypotheses, sample design and designing of respondents for primary data collection, and tools and techniques (statistical methods and computer software) used for collection, processing and analysis of data. The second chapter provides the description of geographical background and analysis of the different bases of rural development. Physical background (extent, physiography and climatic conditions) and cultural background (Maithil cultural and Kosi project) have been discussed under geographical background. Further, agricultural economy and rural industrial bases have been analyzed followed by infrastructure and other social facilities available in the block. It has been observed that a spatial and social groupwise variation exist in terms of infrastructure and social facilities available in the block. The major social groups (Dalits and OBCs) need economic as well as social (Housing, education and health) support in the villages of Raghopur Block. The third chapter comprising three sections deals with population growth and distribution, population characteristics and identification of rural poor in Raghopur. The population characteristics have been assessed with reference to sex ratio, literacy, and working population with occupational structure. The rural poor have been identified on the basis of head count index (based on BPL data 2010). Chapter fourth analyses the spatial pattern of level of rural development and their
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effecting factors in detail. To measure the level of rural development in Raghopur Block, eight major factors followed by nineteen indicators and forty-five variables have been adopted. All the variables have been arranged on a single scale of measurement by applying standardization method (Z-Score). Further, the standard score of all the variables of a factor have aggregated to find out the standard score of each eight factors. Finally, a composite Z-Score has been calculated to measure the levels of rural development and its spatial variation. It is analyzed that out of eighteen panchayats of the block ten panchayats (55% of total) are characterized by low level of development, while five panchayats (28 % of total) fall under the moderate level of development and only three panchayats (17 % of total), i.e., Simrahi, Piprahi and Karjain dominated their significance with high level of development. The major cause behind this variability are, difference in availability of infrastructures, employment opportunities, agricultural facilities and self-willingness of rural poor. Disparities also exist due to the poor quality of Panchayati Raj Institutions. An appraisal of rural development programmes in the form of their objectives, achievements and problems have been discussed in the fifth chapter. Three major rural development programmes running in this block, i.e., Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), Indira Awash Yojana (IAY), and Self Help Groups (SHGs), have been taken into consideration for an appraisal. Although, the programmes have gained some achievements but they failed to achieve their prime objectives (removal of poverty and equality in resource distribution especially of land). Failures of these programmes have caused mainly due to high level of corruption, poor implementation, less peoples’ participation, low level of public awareness, poor will power and many others. All the three programmes mostly have affected the poor social groups (SCs and OBCs) at different pace and have little bit tried to reduce the social inequality by providing them employment opportunity, enhancing their assets and developing their means of livelihood. Among the beneficiaries from all the social groups, SCs and OBCs are more satisfied as compared to other households of BPL (BPL HHs from General Group) in case of MNREGS and IAY, while in case of SHGs the beneficiaries from BPL households belonging to general groups are more satisfied (34%) as compared to others. The study finds that the rural poor, i.e., households below poverty line (BPL) are the real beneficiaries of rural development programmes in Raghopur Block. Finally, chapter sixth deals with the development strategies, suggestions and recommendations for planning and implementation of rural development programmes in the block. The increasing role of local level planning and development, local governance (PRIs, i.e., Panchayati Raj Institutions)) and NGOs in the planning and implementation of rural
development programmes is a part of recent strategy for rural development. However, these strategical part of development still require a great improvement in their approaches and practices for better implementation of development plan. An attempt has been made for the spatial organization of infrastructure and other social facilities to remove the existing spatial disparities, so that, a sustainable rural development can be achieved. One service center, two market centers, eight well equipped central villages with road connectivity, few institutions and a hospital have been proposed for future growth of Raghopur. For transparent and accountable implementation and effectiveness of rural development programmes, few major suggestions have been provided by both the beneficiaries of programmes and the researcher. It has been suggested that for satisfactory achievements of programmes it requires: a qualitative PRIs, regular meeting of beneficiaries at panchayat level for their suggestions, active participation of NGOs, and increasing people’s participation and cooperation. Finally, a model for development strategy has been proposed for Raghopur Block-2021, to provide development issues, policies and institutions by coordinating PRIs, Government and NGOs with overall peoples’ participation, cooperation and devotion. A summary followed by a selected bibliography and a few appendices have been marked at the end of the work. A few photograph plates have been provided at different suitable places in order to illustrate the rural development in the study area.

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