CHAPTER 2
RURAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS DURING PRE-PLANNING PERIOD

2.1.0.0 Introduction

Rural development is an obligation of the Government to raise the standard of living of the rural people. Since independence, the Government has initiated developmental planning measures and implemented through Five Year Plans. So far, though eight Five Year Plans have been implemented, still the problem of rural poverty and unemployment has remained largely unsolved. Even basic infrastructure facilities also are lacking in most of the Villages. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is an organised effort to evolve the possibility of developing infrastructural facilities along with inter-sectoral avenue in an integrated framework at micro-level.¹ It is not merely a programme of rural development but a combined effort under which all rural development programmes which were in vogue were integrated. It represents a significant achievement in the field of organisation. The evolution of IRDP has a historical background. But before discussing it, it is essential to know what is

rural development and what are the rural development efforts before and after independence.

2.2.0.0 The Concept of Rural Development

In India, the concept of rural development was born in the context of agriculture and it remained for a long time conterminous with agricultural development.

According to the 1991 census, 73.87% of India's population of 846 million lives in Villages. There are over 5,75,000 Villages while there are not more than 4700 cities and towns. ²

Most of the people in Villages are agriculturists or depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Nearly 43% of India's total land area has been brought under the plough, which is much in excess of what is appropriate for an ecological balance. The expert view is that about one-third of the area of the country should be under cultivation, another one-third under forests and the remaining third for human habitation.³ India has already brought more than the optimum land under cultivation, which is not good for the ecological balance. This points to the need for utmost attention to rural development.

³ Ibid. p.15.
In 1972, the Task Force of the Planning Commission observed a similar
view of rural development as:

After careful consideration, we have belatedly decided to take
what might be considered a rather restricted view of the
expression ‘rural development’. We have chosen to equate it with
agricultural development in the widest sense so as to embrace,
besides crop husbandry, all the allied activities. 4

The objectives of rural development, according to the World Bank, are
not restricted to any single Department but spread over several, and the resultant
mix serves to raise agricultural output, create new employment, improve health
and education, expand communication, provide housing etc. Thus the World
Bank defined rural development in terms of an improvement of the economic and
social life of the rural poor. 5

Rural development encompasses all sectors of rural life. In its widest
sense, it implies development of every aspect of rural life.

The basic objectives of rural development is to organise, develop and
utilise the available resources of land, water, and manpower in such a manner
that the entire population depended on these resources have an equitable

---

opportunity to meet, as a minimum in its basic needs. Rural development involves. 6

1. Improvement in levels of weaker sections of the rural population, as indicated by income, productivity, employment, literacy rate, health and nutrition, infant mortality rate, expectation of life, exposure to mass media, housing, political participation, status of women, supply of safe drinking water and similar other minimum needs.

2. Decreasing the inequality in distribution of rural wealth and incomes,

3. Decreasing the inequality in rural-urban imbalances in incomes and economic opportunities,

4. Capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of the above mentioned improvement over time.

G.R. Krishnaswamy's views on rural development involves several categories of integration such as, integration of different sectors of the rural economy with forward and backward linkages, economic development with social development, total area approach and target group approach, credit with technical services, human resource development with manpower needs and

integration of income generating schemes with the minimum needs programme of education, rural health, water supply and nutrition.\(^7\)

2.3.0.0 Definitions of Rural Development

The Rural Development sector Policy Paper of the World Bank (1975) observes that “rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves the extension of the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless.”\(^8\)

Again a World Bank publication defines rural development as “improving the living standards of the low-income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining”\(^9\). It consists of development of Villages into healthy, self-sufficient and prosperous units of living and also provides the basic requirements for a healthy and comfortable living.

In a seminar on Approaches to Rural Development in Asia, discussions were centred around a definition of rural development as a process which lead


to a continuous rise in the capacity of the rural people to control their environment, accompanied by a wider distribution of benefits resulting from such control. This definition is composed of three important elements:

1. Rural development must be viewed as a process of raising the capacity of the rural people to control their environment. Environment does not mean only agricultural or economic development. It includes all aspects of rural life - social, economic, cultural and political.

2. Rural Development as a process should continuously raise the capacity of the rural people to influence their total environment, enabling them to become initiators and controllers of change in their environment rather than being merely the passive objects of external manipulation and control, and

3. Rural development must result in wider distribution of benefits accruing from technical developments and the participation of weaker sections of the rural population in the process of development.

G. Parthasarathy11 opines that

the critical element in the rural development involves improvement of living standards of the poor through opportunities for better utilization of their physical and human resources, in the absence of this, utilization of rural resources

---

has no functional significance. Making the process of rural development self-sustaining not only implies the mobilization of capital and use of technology for the benefit of the poor but their active involvement in the building up of institutions as well as in functioning of these.

Michael Torado\textsuperscript{12} views that rural development encompasses

1. improvement in levels of living including employment, education, health and nutrition, housing and a variety of social services,

2. decreasing inequality in the distribution of rural incomes and in rural-urban balances in incomes and economic opportunities, and

3. the capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvements.

The famous sociologist, James H. Crops has defined rural development as a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the well being and self-realisation of people living outside the urbanised area. He further contends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to widen people’s range of choice.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} James H. Crops, "Rural Sociology and Rural Development" \textit{Rural Sociology}, Vol.37, No.4, December, 1972, pp.515-523.
Mishra and Sunderam defined rural development as not merely development of rural areas but also the development of quality of life of the rural masses into self-reliant and self-sustaining modern little communities. Rural development is therefore development of rural areas in such a way that each component of rural life changes in a desired direction.\textsuperscript{14}

Another scholar, Lassey emphasises that the focus of rural development should be on:

1. preservation of ecological integrity with a view to provide a continuous supply of life-supporting resources,
2. efficient and appropriate land use,
3. healthy living conditions,
4. an aesthetically pleasing environment,
5. effective socio-economic and Governmental institutions,
6. improved human welfare in terms of minimum economic and social level,
7. physical structures adopted and landscape of pleasing design, and
8. comprehensiveness, that is, the full range of physical, biological and human factors in ruins.\textsuperscript{15}


The Ashridge Conference on Social Development defined rural development as a movement designed to promote better living for all in the whole community with the active participation and initiative of the community.\textsuperscript{16}

According to UN Report, “rural development has come into international usage to connote the process by which the efforts of people themselves are united to those of Governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions in the life of the nation and to relate them to contribute fully to national programmes.”\textsuperscript{17}

In the words of Robert Chambers, “rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and landless.”\textsuperscript{18}

Thus rural development is a multi-dimensional process which includes the development of socio-economic conditions of the people living in the rural areas and ensures their participation in the process of development for complete


\textsuperscript{17} Government of India, Report of Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, New Delhi, 1966, p.135.

utilization of physical and human resources for better living conditions. It extends the benefits of development to the weaker and poorer sections of rural society. It also enhances both the capacity and capability of administrative and socio-economic development agencies and agricultural marketing units working in the rural areas.

2.4.0.0 Rural Development During the British Rule

Since time immemorial, India has been predominantly a rural country. Thus rural development has always been in the priority concern of national development. In those days, our villages were self-sufficient and self-sustained and any effort for the betterment in their conditions was made by the respective rulers.

But during the British rule, they were not concerned with the socio-economic development of India and thus our rural economy was severely damaged resulting in the miserable conditions of the ruralites. It was the famine of 1899 which forced the British Government to think about the people of India who were dying of hunger. The recurrent famines forced the State Administrators to seize the food grains and make arrangements for the distribution among the famine-affected people. All this was done without any apparent legal sanction, motivated as the action purely was by determination to
control profiteering and alleviate rural suffering. As B.B. Mishra further says, "Rural development thus began as a humanitarian act, and the practice was not backed by any executive or legal sanction in the beginning. Legality and legitimacy were provided later. Rural development as a function of Government initially began as a search for an alternative to Laissez-faire".

Later, with the recommendations of Famine Commissions of 1866 and 1880 and with the initiative of Lord Curzon, Provincial Department of Agriculture with Agricultural College and Provincial Research Institute were established. In 1906 the Indian Agricultural Service was constituted.

A number of British officers according to their interest and inclination tried out a few experiments in rural reconstruction. The spread of such programmes was thin and only small financial outlays could be made for them. They were not pursued with any noticeable sense of urgency. The primary concern of the administration was maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue, not development. Thus colonial interests were the primary objectives and rural development was secondary.

---

20 Ibid. p.387.
2.5.0.0 Rural Development during the Pre-independence Period

In the pre-independence period, a number of rural development programmes were started by the Nationalists and Social reformers. Some of these programmes gradually disappeared or some were merged with Government-sponsored schemes later. This is because of various reasons like lack of encouragement from the Government, lack of financial support, inadequate, inexperienced and untrained staff. The other reasons are lop-sided approach to different aspects of development, absence of needed supplies and services, inadequate co-ordination and co-operation from other departments and agencies.

The most important rural development efforts during the pre-independence era were:

1. Rural Reconstruction programme by Mahatma Gandhi

2. The Sriniketan Experiment

3. The Martandam Experiment

4. The Gurgaon Experiment

5. Rural Reconstruction Programmes in Baroda, and

6. The Firka Development scheme.
2.5.1.0 Rural Reconstruction Programme by Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi started the programmes for rural reconstruction at Sevagram in Wardha in 1938. His 18-point Constructive Programme included the use of khadi, promotion of village industries, basic education, adult education, rural sanitation, removal of untouchability, upliftment of the backward classes, welfare of women, education in public health and hygiene, prohibition, propagation of mother tongue and economic equality.

The Gandhian Constructive Programme is essentially a programme of human activity in various fields that is beneficial for the economic growth of rural India. Gandhiji wished to evolve a philosophy of life which would achieve the welfare of all (Sarvodaya).

Gandhiji was greatly disturbed by the decline of rural industries. He believed that the extinction of Village industry would complete the ruin of 7,00,000 villages. He gave special attention to revive rural crafts especially spinning and weaving, traditional oil press, grain processing and leather work.

According to Gandhiji, the return to traditional village industry could ensure full employment and well-being to the overwhelming population of the country. This philosophy inspired and informed the activities of Gandhiji to the

---

constructive workers who dedicated their lives to village development programmes.

Gandhian rural reconstruction activities were based on the principles of truth and non-violence. His ideas of rural reconstruction were accepted officially and resulted in the adoption of Khadi and Village Industries Programme, the principle of Village Self-sufficiency and the faith in the Panchayati Raj and Sahakari Samaj Movement by the Government are some of the examples of the impact of Gandhian tradition.

2.5. 2.0 *Sriniketan Experiment*

In 1920, Rabindra Nath Tagore laid the foundation of the Sriniketan Institute for Rural Reconstruction and formulated a programme for the all-round improvement in the Village of his Zamindari with the objective of studying rural problems and of helping the Villagers to develop agriculture, improving the livestock, formation of co-operatives and improving Village sanitation.\(^{24}\)

Tagore believed in self-help and mutual help and wanted the village workers to be involved in the life of rural people and work for their welfare. He started this programme in the cluster of 8 Villages but were not very successful and can only be described as rural welfare works. The absence of market

---

facilities, professional guidance, lack of co-ordination between the implementing authority and improper incentives for workers made the task more difficult and desired results could not be achieved.

The Sriniketan experiment meant for bringing back life in its completeness into the Villages, making rural folks self-reliant and engrading self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic conditions. Though this experiment was not successful, it attained certain physical and notable results.

2.5.3.0 The Martandam Experiment

Dr. Spencer Hatch of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) set up a Project in 1921 at Martandam, 25 miles south of Thiruvananthapuram. The purpose of this experiment was to bring about a complete upward development towards a more complete and meaningful life for rural people, spiritually, mentally, physically, socially and economically.

The main stress in this programme was on the principle that people should not depend on Government for support because when concessions and

help in any field are not given, the people develop in them a feeling of self-help and self-reliance.

The objective of this programme was the YMCA should work in the Villages to eliminate poverty. For this, the Rural Demonstration Centre at Martandam had a demonstration farm, 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. Dr. Hatch could demonstrate the lucrative possibilities of these enterprises.

The major achievements of this programme were the change in the attitudes of the rural people, formation of a desire to improve the spirit of co-operation and self-respect. This experiment was followed by other States and its workers helped the States of Baroda, Mysore, Cochin and Hyderabad to set up Centres of Training for Rural Reconstruction.

2.5.4.0 The Gurgaon Experiment

In 1927, the Gurgaon experiment was started by F.L. Bryne, who was the Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon District in Punjab. The programme aimed at improving agriculture, education, health and sanitation facilities, co-operation and social development with greater vigour. Through these comprehensive

---

efforts, he intended to remove poverty through a mass movement. He stressed on the dignity of labour, self-help and conducted propaganda through films, songs, skits and plays with a view to increase farm yields and improving health standards. Under this programme, for the first time, a 'Village guide' was posted in each village who was to work as a link to pass on new innovations to the villagers. The main reason for the failure of this programme was that the reforms were imposed on the people, rather than initiated by themselves. This widened the gap between the 'haves and have-nots'.

2.5.5.0 Rural Re-construction Programme in Baroda

The Maharaja of Baroda was a progressive and enlightened man and he started the Baroda experiment in 1932. This programme aimed at developing "will to live better" and a capacity for self-help and self-reliance. The programme included the following items:

1. Improvement of communication,

2. Digging of drinking water wells,

3. Anti-malarial measures,

4. Pasture development,

5. Distribution of improved seeds,

6. Training in Cottage crafts,

7. Establishment of Panchayats and Co-operatives covering every Village,

8. Development of village schools as Centres for teaching agriculture and for improving the will to live better.

The programme had full legislative and financial support.

2.5.6.0 The Firka Development Scheme

The Firka Development scheme of Madras was a Government sponsored scheme in 1946. This programme aimed at organising the villagers for a happier, more prosperous and fuller life in which the individual villagers had the opportunity to develop both as an individual and as a unit of a well integrated society.

The short term objectives of the scheme was to develop basic amenities and an institutional framework for carrying out communication, water supply, sanitation, formation of local self-governments (i.e. panchayats) and co-operatives. The long term objectives were to attain self-sufficiency in food, clothing, shelter, development of agriculture, animal husbandry, khadi and village industries.²⁹

²⁹ Ibid. p.39.
The administrative machinery consisted of Director of Rural Welfare at the State level, the Collector at District level, the Rural Welfare Officer at Firka level and 5 to 10 Gramasevaks under him. Besides these, staff for Agriculture and Public Works were also provided for every Firka.

Later in 1953-54, when the Community Development Programme and National Extension Service Programme were adopted by Madras State, the Firka Development Scheme was merged with it.

2.6.0.0 Rural Development Since Independence

Immediately after the attainment of independence and before the commencement of planned economic development through Five Year Plans, three important programmes of rural reconstruction were introduced in India.

They were

1. The Etawah Pilot Project
2. The Nilokheri Experiment
3. The Bhoodan Movement.

2.6.1.0 The Etawah Pilot Project

In 1948, Albert Mayor started the Etawah Pilot Project for the development of the rural areas of Etawah District in Uttar Pradesh. 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 attained and remain permanently a part of the people’s mental, spiritual, technical equipment and outlook after the special pressure is lifted.”

The other important features were: production intensity, people’s co-operation, development of appropriate attitudes, careful selection of Personnel, self reliance, local resources and supply and development of Village leadership. The effort was made to introduce the Concept of Decentralised Economy leading to Agro-Industrial Economy which in turn led to the development of agriculture, horticulture, poultry, piggery, fishery and other forms of animal husbandry.

For intensive operation of the programme, 97 Villages of Mahadeva Block in Etawah District were selected. Various activities like agricultural demonstrations, soil conservation, improvement in animal husbandry, village sanitation and the co-operation of various departments and non-official agencies were carried out. In order to secure people’s participation, a programme of social education was also started. The Project was successful in achieving its aim and within 3 years, it was extended to 300 Villages of the Etawah District in UP.

2.6.2.0 The Nilokheri Experiment

S. K. Dey, the former Minister for Community Development and Co-operation was the founder of the Nilokheri Experiment in 1948, when nearly 7000 displaced persons were rehabilitated in Nilokheri town after independence.

The scheme was also known as “Mazdoor Manzil” because of its principle ‘he who will not work, neither shall he eat’.

Under this programme, the main activities were a Vocational Training Centre run on co-operative lines and 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. Rights for education and medical care for the sick were also guaranteed.

The Nilokheri project, in spite of its limitations, left an imprint on the Community Development Programme in the country. It gave the idea of agro-industrial township as the nerve-centre of rural development. The programme found place in the First Five Year Plan and in the lay-out of the Financial Plan of the first 52 Community Projects.

---

34 Ibid. p.41.
Nilokheri was seen as a symbol of progress, but the Colony developed its own hierarchial structure and the industries started facing troubles due to lack of competitive advantages. Nilokheri is still an important centre for the training of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Functionaries.

2.6.3.0 The Bhoodan Movement

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, one of the earlier social reformers of India is the propounder of Bhoodan movement. In the words of Vinoba Bhave,

Bhoodan Yagna is an all-comprehensive movement directed to the reform in all walks of life. Today every one thinks of himself alone and feels for his self only. But Bhoodan makes the people think and do just the opposite of what they do now. It makes the people first think of their neighbours, and if he has no land, it must be their duty to provide him with it. In Bhoodan, distribution of land is not the only question. It aims at the moral regeneration of the whole nation. Through it we hope to solve the economic difficulties, encourage Village Industries and remove the difference between the educated and the uneducated by making them both to join in common work.35

The inspiration for Bhoodan came to Vinobaji in 1951 when he was touring the Telangana District of Hyderabad. The basic objective of Bhoodan campaign was to prevent the emergence of bloody revolution by solving the land

problems in a peaceful way. The real intention was to create the right atmosphere so that progressive land reforms could follow.36

At one stage, it was thought that Vinoba had succeeded in converting the minds of large numbers of big landholders. Acres upon acres and later Villages after Villages were shown as being given away to the landless or the tenants. But later, it was found that, in most such cases, the Bhoodan proved to be a sham; in one manner or another, the land was retained by the large landholders.37

2.7.0.0 Conclusion

The different rural development attempts during the pre-planning period, no doubt, did something really good in spite of many hurdles. But some of the schemes gradually disappeared from the scene and some were merged later with Government sponsored schemes. These earlier attempts could not last long or attain the desired goals for various reasons such as lack of encouragement from the Government, lack of necessary financial support, inadequate and untrained staff, lop-sided approach to different aspects of development and absence of necessary infrastructure facilities. As noted in the First Five Year Plan, the experience of early rural reconstruction schemes reveals that different schemes

were forced on the villagers and as such there was no enthusiasm among them and there was lack of initiative for the people which is very essential for the success of the schemes.\textsuperscript{38}