PREFACE

Rural development and provision of better qualities of life to the rural people have been a major objective of planning in India throughout the entire planning period. Though the rural development was initially regarded as co-terminus with agricultural development, the range of activity brought under the ambit of rural development programmes has been expanding and by the early 1980's alleviation of poverty became the prime objective of India's rural development strategy. Target group oriented programmes for resource mobilisation and income generation, special area development programmes for drought prone area and wage employment schemes for rural workers constitute the core of this strategy. In the 1990's the primary focus was given to the various programmes and strategies adopted in the successive plans to provide the basic necessities to the rural poor. The strategy was to develop the entire rural area, which would take care of improved productivity, increased employment, higher income for the target groups as well as the minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and healthy surroundings. These are conducive to the development of rural people with a high value system and character.

During the first two decades of economic planning, emphasis was laid on the need to maximise the rate of growth of the Gross National Product and the strategy being followed in this period seemed more to be production oriented than welfare oriented. In this period it was believed that the high rate of economic growth would alleviate poverty automatically. After the elapse of four Five Year Plans in the country, it was realised that the various development programmes undertaken in the economy had not improved the socio-economic conditions of a large majority of the rural people and that public investment in the rural sector could not mitigate the incidence of poverty and unemployment. Thus, the realities of the rural situation dictated the adoption of different strategies at different periods. In order to realise the goals of increased production, alleviation of poverty and employment generation, several self and wage employment programmes or public works programmes have been launched from time to time out of which programmes like National Rural Employment Programme(NREP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rojgar Yojana(JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS) etc. intend to improve the earlier employment programmes by first providing employment on a sustained realisable
basis and secondly by linking up employment works closely with the various development programmes.

Alleviation of poverty and generation of employment are closely related. Agriculture is the key sector in providing employment to the rural people. Alongside with agricultural or farm sector, the non-farm sector is also a significant aspect in generating employment in rural areas.

There has been a lot of empirical studies of the various concepts to measure poverty, alleviation of poverty and generation of employment in general. The measurement of poverty is beset with various conceptual, methodological and empirical problems. Conceptually, it is difficult to define poverty in operational terms that are universally acceptable. Methodologically, there is no consensus among scholars about the measurement of poverty. And empirically, given the choice of a particular measure of poverty, it is very difficult to collect reliable data necessary for computing the value of the indicator or the measure chosen. Inspite of having such numerous problems in connection with the measurement of the poverty, policy makers, planners and scholars have attempted to measure poverty and used the poverty measures to monitor changes in the level or incidence of poverty for other purpose.

The present problem of our study is to analyse the impact of select rural employment programmes namely, Integrated Rural Development Programme(IRDP), Jawahar Rojgar Yojna(JRY) and Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS) on the generation of employment in the Kamrup district of Assam under the Five Year Plans. As the creation of employment opportunities is the instrument of generation of income, the study of impact of rural development programmes in the Five Year Plans on rural employment is of great significance, especially in an economically backward state like Assam.

We have studied the impact of Integrated Rural Development Programme on income and employment generation to the rural people in Kamrup district after making a comprehensive field survey through sampling method. We have analysed different aspects of our study as outlined in our objectives through statistical techniques like paired t, regression analysis, Gini co-efficient, Sen's index, Head count ratio, etc. We have also selected two other rural employment programmes namely Jawahar Rojgar Yojana(JRY) and Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS) to study their impact on the generation of employment to the rural people of Kamrup district through field survey.
Along with these specific studies we have also critically examine the implementation of different rural employment programmes in the Five Year Plans in Assam.

There are numerous problems and difficulties in the implementation of these select programmes faced by different quarters involved in it. We have highlighted these problems and difficulties faced by different sections involved in this process and tried to evolve remedial measures to overcome these problems.

We have incorporated in the thesis the major findings of the study, the conclusions and a set of suggestions for effective implementation of the rural employment programmes in Assam and in Kamrup district. We hope these findings and suggestions made by us would enlighten the policy makers, researchers, academicians and scholars in the field of rural development of our country.

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