

MICRO-PLANNING FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA

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Key words

Rural sector,
poverty,
economic
disparity,

village-based

development plans

Received on:
12.06.2014

Accepted On:
30.07.2014

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Abstract

The removal of poverty and development of the rural areas calls for a multi-dimensional action-oriented series of micro programmes. All the Five-Year Plans have given fairly high priority to the rural sector and indeed, a substantial outlay went to the development of the rural economy. But, however, our attack on rural poverty in the past did not meet with the desired success for want of an integrated approach. Therefore, any programme of rural development should take into account the realities and special features of the rural economy and ensure not only coordination between different sections of the programme but a perfect integration and interaction between them.

In India, the Next Five Year Plan and other future plans of action must give priority importance to the implementation aspect of the plans and programmes at the micro-level and look into the achievements through annual monitoring and evaluation, otherwise, like all the successive Plans operated, the proposed schemes and programmes for the development of the rural areas under micro-level planning approach would remain merely a 'charter of intentions'. Therefore, if the multi-dimensional micro-level planning approach is designed in this way and implemented with the help of facilities like economic, political and environmental; involving the people at large, it would go a long way in transforming the rural scene and eradicating the area or regional disparities in the country.

Introduction

The process of planned economic development was initiated in India after independence, particularly with the advent of the First Five Year Plan in 1951 intending to expand the community's productive power, to provide the environment in which the benefits of economic development could accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and to reduce progressively the concentration of incomes, wealth and economic power. Planning, as conceived in India, during the past 65 years, has largely been concerned with the formulation of public policy for maximizing national income focusing attention primarily on the choice of criterion for optimum resource

allocation between different sectors of the economy. The analysis has mostly been in terms of macro-level aggregative sectoral projections neglecting the spatial planning framework, inter-sectoral co-ordination and functional inter-linkages which have led to environmental pollution, social disintegration, sectoral and spatial imbalances and mass poverty in the country. The two main causes of poverty in India are under-development and inequality which are extensively prevalent in rural areas. The removal of poverty and development of the rural areas calls for a multi-dimensional action-oriented series of micro programmes (Agrawal 1976). All the Five-Year Plans have given fairly high priority to the rural sector and indeed, a

substantial outlay went to the development of the rural economy. But, however, our attack on rural poverty in the past did not meet with the desired success for want of an integrated approach. Therefore, any programme of rural development should take into account the realities and special features of the rural economy and ensure not only coordination between different sections of the programme but a perfect integration and interaction between them. This paper provides a brief overview of the fact that merely disowning the names of any 'yojna' or merely introducing each year a new 'yojna' would create only political chaos. On the other day, after today, when the govt. would become any erstwhile govt. the replacing govt. would again make political corrections, the process of vicious-circle of making corrections would go on endlessly. These are the tragic inactions of the govt. which the rural poor have to pay its price. Noting that many of the problems of the poor economy can be understood under the framework loosely based on prisoner's dilemma in game theory. The paper examines five, aspects of planning in terms of its contribution for resolving prisoner's dilemma problems. These are –

1. Systematic thinking for the development of the weaker sections in India took place in the beginning of the '*third five year plan*'- *to evaluate*.
2. It was in 1999, emphasis was laid on providing more employment opportunities to the rural mass through self help group agencies- *to examine*.
3. Regional planning or Area-Based-planning would foster the possibilities of development environment in India- *to accelerate*.
4. The operational part of this approach is derived from the assumption that there exists over population and consequently, a reserve army of labour in agriculture- *to optimize*.
5. There has been a flaw in the overall design of the development strategies being pursued hither to or that the implicate discipline of microeconomic planning has been lacking.

Conceptualization of Constraints

The government has introduced various schemes meant for boosting up agricultural production during the last six and half decades (Fourie and Van 1947). The Intensive Area Development Programme which has been introduced in some of the selected districts aimed at intensifying the agricultural operations through the extension of farm technology and the dissemination of the knowledge of modern farming. But, the beneficiaries are usually the big and medium farmers only. To break the bottle-necks in the development process on the side of credit availability, after realizing the reluctance of organized banking system to venture into agricultural financing, much hope was pinned on the co-operative. But the co-operative movement has done perhaps a very little to ameliorate the economic conditions of the marginal and small farmers. A large portion of rural unemployed can be gainfully employed through rational distribution of land, provision of required inputs, promotion of subsidiary occupations and provision of credit facilities. Our lop-sided economic development is the main cause of the rapid rise in unemployment and under-employment in rural areas. The development strategy, hitherto followed, has caused concentration of investment in urban areas and also concentration of economic power in fewer hands. Presently, agriculture and industry exist as almost two unrelated activities. Agriculture being unorganized and backward, does not offer expanding markets for growing industry. At the same time, anemic agriculture cannot sustain industrial growth. Industrial development has a definite role to play in

the solution of the problem of over-population and under-employment and unemployment in the rural areas. Cottage and small industries in the village is next to that of agriculture (Planning Commission Report 1969). Similarly all the successive Five Year Plans gave priority importance to small and cottage industries to be located and flourished in rural areas but due to the defective approach and lack of spatial dimensions in planning exercises, industries in the rural areas have not provided expected employment opportunities.

The role of rural industries may not be restricted to supplementing the agricultural occupation only. Industrial growth should be conceived more as a tool for drawing out the under-employed agricultural labour and increasing productivity in general. Also, village industries should not be equated with perpetuation of inferior production techniques, rather important tools and equipment have to be introduced to the village craftsmen if they are to compete successfully in open markets. It is equally necessary to accelerate the process of decentralization of industrial growth because an underdeveloped economy like ours needs a pyramidal structure of industries for a stable and balanced development. The base of the pyramid consists of the innumerable small industries of various descriptions located in the rural areas.

Transformation of Associated Problems

Development in the agricultural or the industrial sectors as well as optimum utilization of surplus man power can be assured only by planning the different economic aspects of a particular area based on its own resources and skills which has generally been overlooked in the highly centralized sectoral type of planning in India (Levis 1966). All the villages cannot be developed simultaneously and independently nor, all are suited for industrial development. At the same time, the village is too small

a planning unit for building the services and institutions needed for agriculture. Yet, there are a large number of big villages which could promote linkages with urban areas emanating a 'viable rural-urban community' designed to stress the idea that as agriculture modernizes and new agro-industries and agro-services emerge, there will be increasing interdependence of village and town development.

Therefore, village-cum-town development linking clusters of villages with the growth centre or focal points should form the basis of the area planning for developing the countryside (Merrium 1963). Growth centers should be provided with the needed infrastructural facilities including economic and social institutions to supply agricultural and industrial inputs, shops for consumer goods, marketing and warehousing facilities, agro-industries, health, educational, recreational and credit facilities of many kinds. The highest importance should be placed on the establishment of credit institutions and industrial co-operatives at the growth centers.

Rural development and employment promotion do not need so much of reiteration as effective implementation of the various schemes. In the past, the desired results of rural development promotion could not be achieved not because of the paucity of schemes. Rather, there were schemes after schemes. What wanted were the techno-economically feasible schemes and their effective implementation. Therefore, even if we have only a few schemes, it would be better to implement them fully.

Conclusion

Thus, to conclude, the need in India, particularly for rural transformation, is to adopt multi-dimensional micro-level planning covering all the aspects of the rural economy. This is because; only such type of planning strategy will induce functional integration among the schemes, and sectoral co-ordination at

different hierarchical levels of planning and ensure people's participation on a mass scale (Metraux 1954). Such type of planning strategy, by means of focusing attention on all the aspects of the rural economy and making a frontal attack on the problems, will increase productivity, provide adequate employment opportunities and secure decentralization of economic power and wealth through equitable distribution of the fruits of development which in turn, would be conducive to rural transformation from the state of stagnation, poverty, unemployment and inequality to progress, prosperity, self-employment and equality.

At the same time, in the absence of effective implementation machinery, adequate infrastructural facilities, improved agricultural technology, supply of agricultural inputs and agricultural extension, agricultural marketing and processing, supply of industrial raw materials and intermediate products to the rural areas as a base for establishing manufacturing finished goods industries, availability of minimum level of developmental services, credit facilities easily and at moderate cost and above all political will and people's participation, such type of micro-planning may fail in achieving the goal of integrated rural development and transformation of the rural scene (Mishra et al. 1974, Musi 1971). For the successful implementation of the plan and programmes there should be an integrated organizational and institutional structure as well as necessary authority within the district or regional plan, as the case may be, co-ordinating the developmental programmes of all the hierarchies of the functional settlements (Mydral 1968). There should be only one agency responsible for all development programmes in the micro-level plan operating within the region.

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