

ROLE OF DRDA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED DISTRICTS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The rural developmental schemes aim to decrease the poverty and unemployment, to develop the healthcare and education status and to satisfy the basic needs of rural population. District Rural Development Agency has been the main agency at the district level, which supervises and manages the implementation of anti-poverty programmes of Ministry of Rural Development. In this paper, an effort has been made to understand the development effort to re-establish the rural life and livelihood by different schemes and programmes on the basis of secondary data obtained from District Rural Development Agency offices of selected districts of Himachal Pradesh.

INTRODUCTION

Development is a multidimensional and continuous process. Development is defined in terms of increase in national economy; others have defined it to include social improvement. Thus, development is a composite phenomenon including several magnitudes – social, political, economic, administrative etc. (Goel, 2009). According to the World Bank, rural development is a plan to improve the socio-economic conditions of life of group of rural poor including small and marginal growers, leaseholders and ousted (World Bank 1975). Robert Chambers defined rural development: “as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of rural people, spreading the benefits of development to the deprived among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas” (Chambers, 1975). Rural development involves improvement in overall rural community conditions, including economic and other concerns on the quality of life, such as the environment, health, infrastructure and housing (Srivastava, 1988). Thus, the term rural development is an inclusive development of rural areas to improve the quality of life. The rural developmental schemes aim to decrease the poverty and unemployment, to develop the healthcare and education status and to satisfy the basic needs of rural population.

To enhance the conditions of rural communities, Government of India started schemes, for instance, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana (RSVY), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), etc. All these schemes have made efforts to reduce rural-urban inequities and accelerate the development process. Rural development is the backbone of economic development of any nation and it helps the economy to develop and sustain. In this paper an effort has been made to highlight the success stories of implementation of some rural development schemes by DRDA in selected districts of Himachal Pradesh by using the secondary data.

THE STATE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Himachal Pradesh with varied climatic conditions forms a hot spot for floral faunal and cultural diversity, is the most fascinating region of the Indian Himalaya and is located in the lower Himalayan range which varies in height from 1,500 to 5,000 meters. The state has boundaries with the Jammu and Kashmir in the North, Uttar Pradesh in the Southeast, Haryana in the South and Punjab in the West. It is located between 30°22' and 30°12' north latitude and between 75°47' and 79°4' east longitude. The state has altitude ranging from 350 to 7000 meters above the sea level. Physiographically, Himachal Pradesh can be divided into three zones. These are the outer Himalaya or the Shivaliks, the inner or the middle Himalayas and the greater Himalayas or the Alpines. The Shivaliks include the districts of

Hamirpur, Kangra, Una, Bilaspur, and the lower parts of Solan, Sirmaur and Mandi. The altitude of lower Himalaya ranges between 350 m to 1500 meters. The middle region includes the parts of Sirmaur, Mandi and parts of Kangra and Shimla. The Alpine zone is at an altitude of 4,500 m and beyond comprises of the Kinnaur and parts of Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti. Due to variation in elevation, there is great diversification in the climatic conditions of Himachal (Ahluwalia, 1998). The climate of the state ranges from semi-tropical to semi-arctic and varies from place to place depending on the altitude of the region. The months from April to June are pleasant and comfortable at higher altitude and humid in the lower hills. The months of monsoon are from July to September. The state experiences average annual rainfall of about 160 cm. The winter season begins from October to February and is very severe. The state experiences heavy snowfall during this season. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry are the prime occupation of the people of Himachal. Himachal Pradesh is characterized by the highest percentage of rural population to total population among all the States and union territories of the country. Majority of the population live in rural areas of the State. Agriculture, horticulture, hydropower and tourism are important constituents of the state's economy (Singh, 2000). The hilly state is almost universally electrified with 99.5 percent of the households having electricity as of 2016. The state of Himachal Pradesh is divided into twelve districts which are grouped into three divisions, Shimla, Kangra and Mandi. The districts are further divided into 69 subdivisions, 78 blocks and 145 Tehsils. According to the Census of India 2011, Himachal Pradesh has a total population of 6,864,602 including 3,481,873 males and 3,382,729 females. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes account for 25.19 percent and 5.71 percent of the population respectively. The sex ratio is 972 females per 1000 males, with a marginal increase from 968 in 2001. The child sex ratio increased from 896 in 2001 to 909 in 2011 (Census, 2011).

DEVELOPMENTAL SCENARIO

Since independence, rural development and poverty alleviation have remained the areas of concern for the nation. The Community Development Programme was launched in 1952 throughout the country with the aim of inclusive development of rural areas involving the community participation. In the beginning the Community Development Programme in Himachal was confined to Mandi and Kangra district, where package programmes were started in association with the West Germany for propagating modern farming techniques among the farmers. The era of economic development in Himachal Pradesh started in 1948. In the first five-year plan more than fifty percent expenditure was made on improving the transportation facilities, as it was realized that without proper transportation, the dream of rural development couldn't be realized. The power sector got a share of just 4.6 percent during the first five year plan, though it had gradually increased to 7 percent by the Third Plan. Expenditure on farming and allied sector increased from 14.4 percent in the First Plan to 32 percent in the Third Plan, showing a decline afterwards from 24 percent in the Fourth Plan to less than 10 percent in the Tenth Plan.

For the implementation of rural development programmes, Rural Development Department in Himachal Pradesh has three tier structures. At state level, the Rural Development Department is functioning under the total control of the Secretary (RD) at the Government level assisted by the Special Secretary (RD), Additional Director-cum- Additional Secretary, Deputy Director-cum-Deputy Secretary, Deputy Director, Deputy Director Administrative Officer and Statistical Officer. At district level, DRDAs are responsible for the execution and supervising rural development programmes. The Deputy Commissioner-cum-Chief Executive Officer of the DRDA is assisted by the Project Director, Project Officers and Project Economist. Besides this, at district level there is a Governing body of DRDA under the Chairmanship of Zila Parishad. This body is responsible for monitoring of various Rural Development Programmes. At the Block level, the Block Development Officer is the main facilitator.

DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Development Blocks were created and considered pivotal for planning and implementation of various rural development schemes. District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has been the key organization at the district level to supervise and manage the implementation of anti-poverty programmes of Ministry of Rural Development. Initially, this agency was designed to execute the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). Afterwards, the DRDAs were assigned number of programmes of state and central government. DRDAs are district level implementation and supervising agencies formed under the Indian Societies Registration Act. Considerable amount of funds were allocated and directed through DRDAs under various centrally sponsored schemes. DRDAs are key institutions working at the district level. DRDA is envisioned as a specialized agency capable of handling the poverty alleviation programmes of the ministry of rural development and successfully linking these to the complete effort of poverty eradication in at district level.

Schemes and Programmes of DRDA: District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is monitoring various poverty alleviation programmes of central government through its schemes/programmes aimed at providing self-employment and shelter to BPL families. Some of these include:

A. Swaranjayanti Gram SwarozgarYojana: The scheme is being executed on 75:25 cost sharing basis between Central and State Government. It is a holistic package covering different aspects of self-employment, for instance, organization of poor into Self-help Groups, training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing. The beneficiaries under this scheme are called 'Swarozgaries'. A number of self-help groups are working in these panchayats and undertaking numerous self-sustaining activities.

B. Total Sanitation Campaign: Total Sanitation Campaign is a comprehensive programme to ensure sanitation facilities in rural areas with broader goal to eradicate the practice of open defecation. It follows a principle of "low to no subsidy" where a nominal subsidy in the form of incentive is given to poor households for construction of toilets. This programme is giving strong emphasis on Information, Education and Communication (IEC), capacity building and hygiene education for effective behavior change with involvement of PRIs, CBOs, and NGOs etc. The activities undertaken are:

1. Awareness generation among different sections of society regarding importance of sanitation;
2. Motivating people to construct toilets and stop open defecation;
3. Providing sanitation facilities in schools, *anganwaries* and community places; and
4. Creation of mechanism at village level to ensure sustainability;

Likewise, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan was initiated by the government in the year 2000. The prime focus of the scheme was to improve the sanitation conditions in the rural regions of the county. The approaches and steps adopted by the state included; political commitment to the cause of sanitation; award/reward schemes; community led approach; strong institutional structure and starting of Maharishi Valmiki Sampuran Swachhta Puraskar Yojana. In this regard, the success stories of Gram Panchayat Balh Bihal Development Block Bijhari, District Hamirpur and Gram Panchayat Dalchehra Development Block Bijhari, District Hamirpur are worth mentioning. Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan was launched in these panchayats with organizing awareness camp at panchayat level. The camp was headed by pradhan. All issues linked with sanitation campaign were shared with the people. Team members motivated the community to stop open defecation practice. Sessions were also conducted for Aanganwadi workers and Mahila Mandals and sensitized on the issues related to hygiene and sanitation of children. Awareness camps were organized to address the problem of solid waste. People followed the simple and cost effective means to handle Biodegradable waste including Vermicomposting and Composting. The panchayats were conferred with awards. Under Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, all panchayats of Hamirpur block were made open defecation

free. Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan has brought about an improvement in the general quality of life in these panchayats of Hamirpur.

Initiated in the year 2013, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is the most significant cleanliness campaign by the Government of India. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) or Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is a nation-wide campaign aims to clean up the streets, roads and infrastructure of India's cities, towns, and rural areas. Under this scheme, all panchayats of Tauni Devi block of Hamirpur were made open defecation free. In Bilaspur district, toilets were constructed in schools, Anganwadis, along National and state highways Under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

C. National Rural Livelihood Mission: The scheme is committed for promoting self-employment among rural poor. The main idea behind this programme is to organize the poor into SHG (Self Help Groups) and make them skilled for self-employment. In 1999, after reorganizing Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Ministry of Rural Development launched Swarnajayanti Grameen Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) to focus on promoting self-employment among rural poor, which was remodeled to form NRLM. NRLM has been implemented successfully in Himachal Pradesh. In Hamirpur, under National Rural Livelihood Mission, launched by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India in June 2011 efficient and effective institutional platforms have been created for the rural poor, which has enabled them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services. Under NRLM, Gurudev Self-Help Group, Hanog, in Bhoranj, district Hamirpur, been funded by government bank for undertaking mushroom cultivation by women group. Nari Ekta Self-Help Group, Daduhi panchayat and Bhole Shanker Self-help Group started dairy farms. Likewise, Shivani Self-Help Group, Jatehardi, district Hamirpur, are contributing to their family income by making winnowers from locally available material. In Hamirpur, under Indira Awas Yojna, as many as 41 houses have been constructed for rural poor during the year 2013-14 and 20 in 2014-15. Shiv Sewa Self-Help Group was constituted in Kanjyaan panchayat of district Hamirpur, with an aim of promoting the activities like, making of bags, shoes, carry bags and dairy activities. Vashno Self-Help Group of Dadhu panchayat undertook the dairy activities and stitching of carry bags. Simran Self-Group of Jangal village undertook dairy activities besides making of seera, vadi, ghee, papad, etc. Shiv-Shakti Self-Help Group Lohaar Balhi started rearing of goats, besides making turmeric powder, dried mango powder, and paper bags. Under Rural Self Employment Training Institutes, RSETI, various livelihood options were promoted by training and financing the starting of Mobile Repair shop at Village Nalti, Hamirpur, training and starting of Beauty Parlours at Daryota village and village Kohli, Hamirpur, Gents Saloon at Village Chabbot, training and starting of fashion designing at Chakmoh village, Hamirpur.

In Chamba, district, Self-Help Group Vikas, village Sarol, Tissa Block undertook cultivation of Medicinal & Aromatic Plants under Project Green Gold. Under same project Self-Help Group Tamana of Badli Langi of Chamba carried out cultivation of flowers. Garima Green Gold Samiti, Salooni, Chamba, Self-Help Group Kranti, Rajindu, Block Salooni, undertook cultivation of off-season vegetables under Project Green Gold. Self-Help Group Ali of Beri panchayat of Chamba block started the production of handmade soaps, bee wax candles and eco-friendly packaging material. In Shimla district in the year 2015, nearly 3114 Self-Help Groups were formed, which has supported the livelihood of thousands of people in the rural areas of Shimla district.

D. Integrated Watershed Development Project: Against the backdrop of DDP, IWDP, DPAP and Hariyal projects, the Government of India has brought these projects under single umbrella known as Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) which is being implemented through new guidelines for watershed development projects.

Integrated Watershed Development Project remained functional in Kalpa & Nichar sub-division of Kinnaur from the year 1999- 2000. Sixteen micro-watersheds were sanctioned

under IWDP-KNR-I with the project cost Rs. 350.60 lakhs. The project was closed in September 2007. 27 micro watershed projects were sanctioned in the year 2001-02 and 2004-05 for IWDP-II & III with sanctioned project cost of Rs. 871.32 lakh and are being implemented in the district. Under this project, watershed committees have been constituted at village level. The watershed committees operating in Kinnaur undertook various activities, like, renovation of barren land into cultivable land and stopping soil erosion; renovation and augmentation of water sources; afforestation including block plantation, agro-forestry and horticultural development; snow harvesting and glacier treatments.

In DhangonKalan, village of Hamirpur, check dam and irrigation tank were constructed on MatauliNala under Integrated Watershed Development Project, which enhanced the farm activities in the village. Check dam was constructed at village Pindhri, Gram Panchayat Sohari under IWMP in Development Block Bijhari, district Hamirpur. This dam is constructed at perennial water source. Water Harvesting Tank under IWMP-II in District Hamirpur, was constructed in village Nara, Gram Panchayat UsnarKalan of Bijhari Block. This tank is serving the purpose of water conservation, elevation of the water table, moisture restoration and livelihood improvement. A Check Dam was constructed in NalluwaliBowari in Bijhari, block of Hamirpur. In Luddu Micro-watershed of district Chamba a Checkdam was constructed at Kathanna. In Rajera Micro-watershed of district Chamba, an irrigation tank was constructed at Seri-Rajera. The water storage irrigation tank constructed is useful to irrigate area and farmers are using water for irrigating their crops. In Paluir Micro-watershed of district irrigation tank was constructed at Lower Paluir.

Under Integrated Watershed Development Project, crate work was carried out on NagniNala, in Bhaunt watershed of Chamba. In same panchayat, landrenovation activities, construction of step well, road construction, ginger cultivation, were carried out under same scheme. Gully Plugging was carried out in Chandi panchayat of Chamba. In Bangya panchayat construction of step well was carried out. In addition to this, breast walls, check dams, irrigation tanks, irrigation channels, and roads were constructed, besides undertaking cultivation of fruits in different panchayats of Chamba district.

In Development Block Theog, district Shimla, irrigation tank was constructed in village Satog under IWMP. Small farmers were benefited from this and they use the water from the tank for growing vegetables. Before the construction of tank, these farmers could not undertake the cultivation of crops because of acute water scarcity.

CONCLUSION

The inclusive development mediation in the rural areas mainly depends on the effective execution of self-employment and area development programmes. Since independence, numerous rural development programmes have been framed, rationalized and restored envisioning their broader outreach and suitability. Yet, the issues, challenges and concerns relating to the execution of these programmes remained more or less the same. The need of the hour is the merging of all development interventions at grassroot level to improve essential substructure in the rural areas besides confirming the capacity building and skill up-gradation. Monitoring of the developmental activities both by the government and local people would help in supporting these schemes in the rural settings.

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