

Five Year Plan and Poverty Eradication in India

Abstract

India is a country where majority of the people live in rural areas. The latest World Bank assessment points out that India is home to the largest proportion of poor in the world. In India, poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, with a bundle of economic, social, geographical, human, gender, and other deprivations. These diverse features of poverty have led to different strategies of poverty reduction. The fact that the government has been formulating policies and programmes through five-years plans since independence. A sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. In addition to this, rural people should provide better prospects for economic development. Along with this, there should be decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit for the rural poor people.

Keywords: Five Year Plan, IRDP, SGSY.

Introduction

Poverty is a complex phenomenon influenced by a large number of factors and which can be studied from many different perspectives. Poverty is defined in terms of income, expenditure and nutritional value (calorie intake). Many countries adopt income poverty lines to monitor progress in reducing percentage of people below the poverty line. Poverty in India, as is the case in other countries, is measured in terms of the poverty line. Since 1951, India has completed 11th five year plans & is currently going on Twelfth plan (2012-17). One of the most striking experiences of planned efforts in India is that economically backward and socially oppressed people in the underdeveloped regions have gained almost nothing. The special programmes to boost the agricultural production in late sixties certainly helped to raise the food production but the benefits were largely reaped by those who had necessary resources. Small and marginal farmers trailed behind, as they were not directly benefited by the Green Revolution. Thus to tackle the problems of the rural poor, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced in 1979, with specific focus on the weaker sections of the society, particularly those living in poverty and to involve them in programme implementation. While the earlier programmes emphasized on the delivery systems which suppressed self-reliance, there was good scope for people's initiatives to build up their economy with dignity. The goal of poverty alleviation programme should not aim merely increasing the income level of poor people but mainstreaming marginalized in the development process of the country. The country cannot claim economic growth when sections of the people are marginalized to the periphery of the society. Poverty alleviation programmes should address the issue of poverty from broader social and economic perspectives.

Aim of the Study

This paper is focusing light on various rural development programmes introduced in India.

Methodology

This article is based on the study of secondary data. Journals, Magazines, Project reports and Internet have been used and studied for this article.

Removal of Poverty in India during Plan

Poverty elimination has been an avowed objective in Indian Planning, at least since the early 1960s. The Plan documents have often noted the poverty trends in the country. The Planning Commission also tried to assess the performance in certain programmes & schemes through the decline in the percentage of people below the poverty line.



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The First Plan (1951-56) was an attempt to strike a balance between the prevailing socio-economic conditions and the building up of a model society founded on the Indian Constitutional norms relating to the protection and advancement of the people belonging to the weaker sections. The Community Development Programme & National Extensive Service was started during the First Five Year Plan as a major attempt to alleviate poverty & unemployment. The basic premise of this programme was founded on the assumption that efforts at the local level could be instrumental in motivating the community to participate in the development programmes. However, the Community Development Programme, despite having been continued during the subsequent plan periods, failed to generate the desired results because of the over-dependency of the programme not only on the government initiative but also on government funding.

The Second Plan (1956-61) embarked upon a strategy of development based on the two-sector closed economy model of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, namely, capital goods producing sector and consumer goods producing sector. The objective of acceleration of economic growth, as perceived and applied during this period, was primarily based on higher investment in the domestic capital goods producing sector (and the associated metal-producing sectors).

The Third Plan (1961-66) tried to address the problems that cropped up in the second plan period without bringing about any basic changes in the policy of public sector driven industrialization and protectionism. A major development that took place during the third plan period, however, was the beginning of a comprehensive programme of rural works with the objective of generating additional employment opportunities and utilizing the large reserve of rural labour force for accelerating the process of economic development.

The focus of the first three five-year plans in India was eradication of poverty through economic growth. Since the Fourth Plan (1969-74), a new strategy of rural development was adopted, known as direct attack on poverty. So, it was decided to attack poverty directly. Thus came into existence the Small Farmers Development Programme (SFDP) to provide better employment opportunities to eradicate poverty, Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Minimum Needs Programme (MNP), etc. the small farmers development. Poverty alleviation schemes have been implemented in the form of distribution of alms without any serious consideration to generate viable income or service. Some projects were realised along with the mode of regional development, which were, Hill Area Programme (1972), Desert Development Programme (1970), etc. Small Farmer's Development Agency (1960) & Marginal Farmers & Agricultural Labour Agency (1971) were the projects which aimed to remove poverty & to develop the marginal and small farmers.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) was launched with the objectives of poverty removal and achievement of self-reliance. In this plan, it was

mentioned that "at present over 220 million are estimated to be living below poverty level. Since the inception of Fifth Five Year Plan poverty eradication programme was started through the slogan of "Garibi Hatao" (removal of poverty). Since then, various programmes of poverty eradication were continuing with the help of different projects through trial & error method.

The Sixth Five Year (1980-85) Plan emphasized on the goal of poverty alleviation and was sought to be achieved by using two main instruments. First was, a set of self-employment schemes for the poor & second was, wage employment programme. IRDP was started on 20th October 1980 in all blocks in India. It was earlier started in several blocks of the country. Its aims were to lift the families of below poverty line through employment generation. But IRDP could not achieve its goal & target as it was expected.

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) document again, recognised that the government had still to play a major role in the development process in order to remove poverty. IAY was started in 1985-86, for providing free housing to BPL.

The Eighth Plan (1992-97) was another important landmark in the development strategy when the limitation of an income and commodity-centric notion of poverty and human well-being was recognized. During the Eighth Five Year Plan, employment was provided to underemployed & unemployed through various employment programmes namely IRDP, JRY & NRY. It was also stated in the document of the plan that "it must be recognised that while these programmes meet the short-term objective of providing temporary work to unemployed, they must contribute to the certain of productive capacity of areas & individuals.

In the Ninth Five Year plan (1997-2002), the emphasis was on primary health facilities, safe drinking water, nutrition to school & pre-school children, shelter for poor and public distribution system with a focus on poor. The mid-term appraisal of Ninth Five Year Plan had indicated that sub-programmes like TRYSEM, DWCRA, and SITRA & GKJ of IRDP presented a matrix of multiple programmes without desired linkages. The Ninth Plan also identified Land Reforms as an important policy instrument for alleviation of rural poverty. However, little has been done by the states in this direction. The Planning Commission Committee in 1997 started to review self-employment & wage employment programmes. The Committee recommended the merger of all self-employment programmes for the rural poor & emphasized group-based approach to remove poverty. On April 1999, the IRDP and other programmes were merged into a single programme known as SGSY. The SGSY was conceived as a holistic programme of micro-enterprise development in rural areas. The GOI also launched a scheme known as SGRY in 2001, which aimed the generation of wage employment mainly.

As per the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), the GOI focused on the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. During 2004-07 the

Government initiated several new schemes for the removal of poverty and welfare for weaker section of the society. India had emerged as one of the fastest growing economy by the end of the Tenth Plan. But the growth was not perceived as sufficiently inclusive for many groups, specially SCs, STs & minorities as borne out by data on several dimensions like poverty, malnutrition, mortality, current daily employment etc.

Eleventh Plan (2007-12) was aimed "Towards Faster & More Inclusive Growth" after UPA rode back to power on the plank of helping common man. The Eleventh Five Year Plan clearly stated that development of rural India is the key for an inclusive and equitable growth.

The Eleventh Plan period saw major new initiatives towards inclusive growth in rural India. The total budgetary allocation for all rural development programmes by the Government of India in the Eleventh Plan was 2, 91,682 crores. Rural development programmes cover employment through the MNREGA, NRLM, housing via the IAY and various other schemes.

The broad vision and aspirations which the Twelfth Plan (2012-17) seeks to fulfil are reflected in the subtitle: 'Faster, Sustainable, and More Inclusive Growth'. The Twelfth Plan has set a target of 8 percent growth over the five year period 2012-13 to 2016-17. The government intends to reduce poverty by 10 per cent during the 12th Five-Year Plan. According to the Tendulkar methodology, the percentage of population below the poverty line was 29.8 per cent at the end of 2009-10. This number includes 33.8 per cent in the rural areas and 20.9 per cent in the urban areas.

Conclusion

The country cannot claim economic growth when sections of the people are marginalized to the

periphery of the society. Poverty alleviation programmes should address the issue of poverty from broader social and economic perspectives. But in spite of the massive development expenditures & increase in production recorded in various sectors, the socio-economic status of a vast majority has deteriorated continuously. The majority of the people have gained little benefits of five-years plans in our country. To achieve desired targets, the Indian government also needs to concentrate on agriculture and allied activities, research and development, infrastructural development and effective implementation of anti-poverty programmes.

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