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Accelerating Pace of Rural Development—Some Critical Aspects for Success

M.P.Bhamare[1], R.N.Salunkhe[2], Dr. Sunil V. Desale[3]
[1]*Assist professor, Department of Civil Engineering, GCOE Nagaon Dhule-424002.*
[2, 3] *Professor, and Head, Department of Civil Engineering, GCOE Nagaon Dhule-424002.*

Abstract: The policy and programs of rural development aim at alleviating rural poverty, generating employment and removing hunger and malnourishment accompanied by the enrichment of the quality of human life as reflected by significantly improved human development index. It is the implementation of IRD program that is posing most formidable managerial challenges even when financial and material inputs are not serious constraints.
The MIS for IRD calls for strengthening and capacity building of the existing organizational setup, and redesigning the monitoring system. An effective MIS for IRD requires collection, compilation and analysis of the data and information by qualified and trained personnel at each decision-making level.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Independence, TheGovernment has been, formulating policies, programs, projects and schemes and investing significant financial resources through every Five Year Plan to accelerate the rural development. All these programs and schemes being implemented by the union and state governments in the area of education, health, drinking water, sanitation, transport and communication and supporting infrastructure have shown varying degree of response and performance and much less than expected result in respect of measureable indicators of human development index. In the context of India being emerging as a strong economy and committed to bring about a rapid and sustainable economic growth through various reforms, the rural development programs must sharply focus on people's participation and rural organizations for their success accompanied by equally important aspects, inter alia, concept of integrated development, planning process, Growth Centre Approach, management inputs, communication system and supporting Management Information System to improve the effectiveness of programs and achieve the desired objectives of the program.

A. Concept

The programs of rural development aim at reducing rural poverty, generatingemployment and removing hunger and malnourishment withthe enrichment of the quality of life as shown by significantly improved human development index. Problem of rural developmentis not only of development of rural areas but also of rural communities to dispel ignorance and poverty and create a selfreliantand self-sustaining, healthy communities. Rural development can no longer benow identified with mere increase in country's GDPor even per capita national income,in factevery rural family should have its reasonableshare in the generation ofthe GDP and increasingper capita income.

B. Integrated Development

The objective of the national policy should be to reconstruct and develop the rural economy in such a way that income flowing from productive assets, skills and labour would be distributed more equitably. Therefore, itfocuses on building viable rural communities of functional rural clusters with improved dwellings, dependable and convenient energy supplies, adequate transport and communication facilities that link it to the larger world, suitable health and educational facilities, access to credit and markets, culturally invigorated and no longer compartmentalized by castes, land ownership and occupation. Integrated development of rural areas acquires added importance in this process. Integrated development means that the planning of diverse aspects of development cannot be attempted in isolation through a project or a program approach but it is integrated to take account of their mutual interaction, with a view to achieving the total development of human being and the geographical area, thereby bridging the rural-urban gap. It is necessary to understand the specific characteristics of rural society which give rise to the problems of rural development.

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C. These characteristics mostly relate to the predominance of:

1) land in production with uneven distribution of land and other relevant asset
2) agriculture and allied activitie
3) self-employment and family labour among the land-owning working force
4) underemployment and casual employment among workers who hire out their labour
5) rural income on seasonal factors with uncertainty and fluctuationsin income and
6) reasons for low level of development in rural areas as compared to urban areas include demand for local non-agricultural goods and services; capital per capita excluding land; employment of science and technology; energy and machinery; human resources development in terms of literacy, education, health and technical as well as managerial skills; development and welfare services; communication and information; absence of people's organizations to redress grievances, monitor implementation of development programs and functioning as pressure groups; lack of power to take decisions on the part of local officials and greater distance from decision-making authorities.

Integrated Rural Development [IRD] envisages the optimum utilization of the natural, physical and human resources of a given rural area for the enrichment of the quality of life of its population without environmental degradation and also enabling their distribution and employment thereby helping the rural poor to cross the poverty line.

D. Planning Process

Planning exercise for IRD should consider provision of basic conditionsnecessary for increasing productive resources, mobilizing mass participation and ensuring equal distribution. It is essential that basic pre-conditions for IRD should bring change in land distribution, providing productive income-generating assets and inputs needed for production along with appropriate machinery setting up communitiesfor ensuring utilization of developmental facilities by the rural people.

The plan of IRD must seek a maximum share of self-reliance of the rural population. The concept of the welfare which governs the national policy of most developing countries is built on grants and subsidies which fails to stimulate self-reliance and leads to dependence which results in a larger role of the Government officials and failure to develop local participation.

Rural development cannot do without an inflow of resources from outside the area;also it should be accompanied from the outside with a built-in policy of contributions from the local beneficiaries and subsequent mobilization at source of at least apart of the gains from development. Failure to adopt such policy has resulted in Community Development Program leading to a revolution in rising expectations that seek fulfilment from outside instead of on self-help and reverting to stagnation when the outside help stops.

E. Alleviating Poverty

The Herculean task of alleviating rural poverty cannot be accomplished through piece meal effort and in isolation of total development of rural areas/rural economy.

The entire planning exercise is, therefore, required to be geared up in favour of

1) optimum utilization of the growth potential of the villages to increase income, employment and production
2) ensuring a proportionate gain of development to the weaker sections of the society
3) fulfilling the minimum needs of the people
4) augmenting the duration and productivityof employment in their existing occupationsthrough up gradation of technology, imparting required skills and setting upof non-exploitative institutions for credit,marketing and services
5) alleviating chronic unemployment through employment on public works
6) building up of social and economic infrastructure
7) reorienting existing institutions and organizations to protect the interest of the poo
8) building up of appropriate organizations for the poor to protect them from exploitation,
9) promotion of a progressively more egalitarian structure of ownership of assets.

F. Growth Centre

Experiences of rural development programs introduced in the earlier Five Year Plans have shown that a mere project approachis not adequate to lead to overall development of the rural area and distribution of benefits to local population, particularly poor. Different areas are at different levels of development and development potential depending on resources and endowments. Efforts have to be made to make the programs area specific and utilize local endowments for growth, social justice and employment. Also, effort has to be made to plan for integration of various programs and establish appropriate links for optimal use of local endowments consistent

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with the objectives, local needs and environmental balance. The Growth Centre exercise, in this context, can be an effective instrument in improving the well-being of the rural population. Based on the principle of "equal accessibility", the Growth Centre approach can bring several community facilities like health, education, transport, communication, local administration, etc. within reach of all the population.

These Growth Centres should be equipped with all the required facilities, which may help therural population to get their work done in the area itself rather than visiting cities/towns, viz.

1) a permanent training centre to impart practical and vocational training in the fieldof agriculture, rural/cottage industries, agro based industries and business and service sectors,
2) a mobile training-cum-demonstration unit to provide on-the-spot training, repair servicesand maintenance facilities for agricultural and industrial machineries
3) a marketing-cum-warehousing facilities thatcan provide safe storage and efficient marketingof farm produce and products of cottageindustrie
4) forest and grass nursery to raiseforests, fruits, fuel and fodde
5) a developmental school basedon "earning while learning"principle and a cadre of self-employed, dedicatedworkers to take care of human,animal, plant, soil andclimate chang
6) a residential component toprovide basic housing facilitiesfor workers in the project area.This would need Intensive research andinvestigation to
7) identify the existing areas which could bedeveloped as Growth Centres together withtheir associate areas in terms of an economicbase and a range of population
8) determine the suitability of population range[say 10,000 to 25,000] in a cluster of 15 to 20villages for the purpose of making the Growth Centre viable
9) understand inhibiting social factors and anomalies
10) determine norms of viable village communities in terms of economic investments and socialamenities and effectiveness of communityinstitutions like the panchayats
11) suggest eventually, as may be necessary, linesof possible change in the structure and baseunit of planning and administration.

G. Management Input

It is the implementation of IRD program that is posing most formidable managerial challenges even when financial and material inputs are not serious constraints. While the KVIC, Handlooms, Handicrafts, DRDAs, DICs, public sector banks, etc. have been for many years to play their role, none of them have demonstrated the level of management expertise necessary to manage programs of the magnitude and diversity that the IRD envisages. The Management Institutes including IIM, IRMA, NIBM, NIRD can endeavour to understand and overcome the managerial deficiencies existing in the above referred develop-oriented agencies already involved in planning and implementing their mandated programs having organic link with the IRD. Given the right attitudes and motivations, many of the scientific disciplines can be applied to resolve problems of rural development. There are institutions, such as Anand Milk Union Limited and Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation which have recruited professional managers and applied the scientific principles of management development with success in the field of rural development. The Management institutions can devote some attention to the economic, social and technical problems of rural development.

H. Communication System

Development is above all a human process and not just a mechanical or technological change neither it means the construction of physical structures, installation of machines or adoption of latest technology. In ultimate analysis, it is the development of the people which requires creating in them the awareness of their surroundings, understanding of their problems, identification by them the opportunities available for a better life, a capacity to work out what needs to be done and formulating programs to resolve problems and fulfilling their needs, goals and aspirations. Thus, for development of the people,education of all the rural households that can inspire them for a better living is required. Therefore, in program of the Community Development in 1953, high priority was accorded to social education amongst men, women and youths and to extension media as a basis of community action in the field of agriculture and other aspects. However, in recent years in the field of rural development more emphasis has been placed on the hardware of the physical programs and financial expenditure as compared with social education. A more comprehensive program of rural communication is required to deal with rural programs covering all sectors of the rural economy and society. The

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mean, methods and techniques of such rural communication programs need to be carefully designed and institutions established. For reaching these programs to the remote corners of the country, a number of techniques could be successfully employed, such as

1) visits to villages, arranging meetings and seminars, organizing demonstrations on farms
2) distribution of publicity materials like posters and Leaflets
3) use of mass media communication like films, radio and television
4) training programs for farmers, artisans, rural leaders including village womenand youths
5) [v] exhibitions in the villages, at rural training institutes and agricultural universities
6) Mobilization of rural institutions like Mahilamandals, Yuvakmandals and PRIs. Communication system must work hand-in hand with development workers. The technology and programs to be communicated form a part of what is called the stock in trade of the development works. Development is a micro-process where as mass media of communication involves certain amount of centralization.

I. Effective Management Information System [MIS]

The MIS in case of IRD is to be made most effective as the MIS is a process through which the monitoring authority of the IRD has to get proper feedback from grass roots that can facilitate him to take immediate corrective steps to plug loop holes and minimize leakages from the scheme. Besides, it provides him with information regarding the impact of the scheme in respect of important variables which could be analyzed on time and placed before the policy makers for introducing necessary changes, if any, in the policy and implementation of the IRD keeping the overall national objective in view. Experience suggests that the performance formats developed by the district level authorities for calling the periodic information concentrate more on physical and financial progress of the IRD. While not much information is provided which would help the monitoring authorities to understand the real factors leading to lower or exceptionally higher achievements in relation to targets, the formats do not provide data and information on important variables and measurableindicators like output, employment, income, quality of life etc. These do not provide adequate feedback to the central monitoring authority for initiating corrective measures. The MIS for IRD calls for strengthening of the existing organizational set-up, and redesigning the monitoring system. An effective MIS for IRD requires collection and analysis of the data and information by qualified and trained personnel at each decision-making level. Adequate investment in putting appropriate computerized MIS and trained staff is the need of the hour.

II. CONCLUSION

Rural development programs need to focus on people's participation and rural organizations for their success rather than providing everything to them readily as this leads to the habit of dependence in them and does not allow them to lead a self-reliant and self-sustaining life.

For bridging the rural-urban gap it is firstly necessary to understand the problems of rural society which interfere with rural development. IRD focuses on these problems and then ensures optimum utilization of natural and human resources without degrading the environment and providing employment to the rural poor and hence enabling them to cross the poverty line and become self-reliant.

The main aim of planning exercise of alleviating poverty should be first to fulfil the basic needs of the rural society like providing employment, help increase production, ensuring proportionate gain to weaker sections, upgrading their technology and installing non-exploitative institutions, reorienting institutions and organizations to protect the poor from exploitation, etc.

Growth centres should work on the principle of equal accessibility by bringing basic facilities like health, education, etc. together and arranging on the spot training-cum-demonstration unit, earning while learning programs and understanding and developing social and economic factors.

Communication system must be so designed that it works hand-in-hand with workers.

The monitoring authority of IRD should remain updated about the policy and implementations that have been undertaken and should get regular feedback from the grass roots. An effective MIS for IRD requires proper collection and analysis of data and information by qualified and trained personnel.

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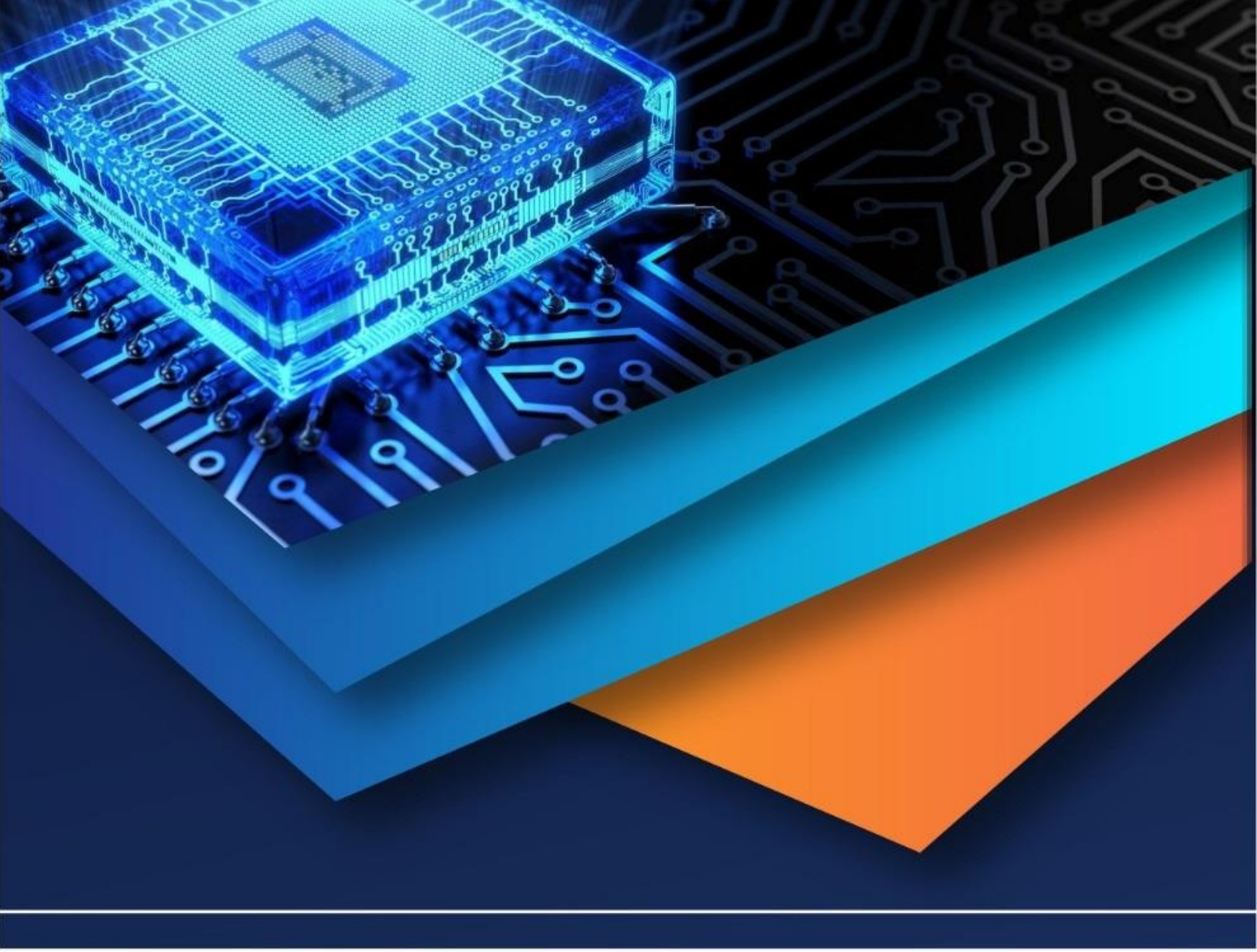
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