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RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSAM: AN ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:**

Rural development is not only the development of the rural area but also the development of all-round development of the society. It means sustained growth of income of the rural people along with the distribution of income and economic assets in favor of the poorer sections of the community in such a way as to progressively remove unemployment and poverty. With the progressive removal of poverty, rural development also brings about an improvement in social, educational, economic, health, cultural aspects, and other aspects of rural life (Mitra, 1985). Rural development is the prior objective of development planning for every state in India. In Assam, most of the people live in rural areas of the state and most of them are found poverty ridden and economically backward. The state government has been giving special trust for the elimination of rural poverty as well as upliftment of the economic condition of people in rural areas. To achieve the objective, the state government has been implementing various poverty alleviation programs undertaken by the government of India. The Panchayat & Rural Development, Assam has been implementing various state and centrally sponsored programs through networks of 27 DRDAs, 21 Zila Parishads, 219 Community Development Block, 188 Anchalik Panchayat, and 2202 Gaon Panchayat. The programs that are under the sector of rural development are sponsored by both central and state governments. The present investigator wants to examine the different rural development schemes of the government sector and analyze various problems of rural development in Assam.

**Introduction:**

Development is a continuous process consisting of quantitative and qualitative change in the country leading to improve the standard of living of the people and more efforts are made to improve in the future. The process is continued to improve a lot of people in the country. Development is a comprehensive term consisting of all aspects of human life like

economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and technical, etc. thus it is a continuous process relating to the all-round development of human beings in any country.

In the past rural development indicated the development of the agricultural sector but it is not correct because only agricultural development can't provide all-around development of the rural area and its people. According to Michael P. Todaro, Rural Development comprises:

- 1) Improvement in terms of levels of living which include education, health and nutrition, employment, housing, and different kind of social services.
- 2) Reducing inequality in the distribution of rural incomes and rural-urban imbalances in incomes and economic opportunities.
- 3) Helping the capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvements.

Moreover, Rural Development is a strategy aiming at the improvement of Economic and social living conditions of a specific group of people who are below poverty line in rural areas. It assists the poorest groups. According to Robbert Chambers Rural Development is an approach that enables a specific group of poor people to expand economic benefit and social development. Thus the study of Rural Development encompasses various aspects like education, health, agriculture, forest, tourism, employment, eradication of poverty, etc. Assam is situated in the middle of the North East and About 80% of people are in rural area, here agriculture is their main livelihood of its people. Industry, market, communication, health etc. are all related to Agriculture. As Assam is an unceasing flood-affected area and far from the central Government Administration, most, rural areas of Assam remain unpaid attention. Besides, as agriculture is the main livelihood of the people of rural areas they are facing lots of problems like low income, unemployment, scarcity of food, fodder lack of irrigation etc. in this view the present investigator want to know the problems as well as development schemes of rural masses of Assam. Therefore this study is only limited to Assam.

### **Review of related literature**

From the review of related literature, it was observed that rural development is the key to the economic development of a nation and each administrative set up of the country also leads to the development of rural nation (Sing, Hosshir.1995). It is the development of quality of life of the rural masses rather it is only the development of rural areas (Sharma, & Mishra1979). Some time due to inadequate fund, more globalized programs and authority structure of a country creates problems in rural development in developing countries (Sahu, B. K. 2003). In terms of gender work participation rate of males is higher than the female population in Assam as a result the unemployment rate of the female is higher than their male counterparts (Goswami, & Manisha 2014). On the other hand

developmental schemes like CMJSY & PMEGP for the development of rural entrepreneurship in Assam (Dr. S., S., Sarkar. & Pandey, s. K. 2017). Therefore for the development of rural livelihood or rural masses, it is important to the development of psychological dimensions and practical efforts (Baumatari, Manjeeta.(2016) as well as it needs to ensure all kind of development including education, environment, health care, communication, etc for rural development in Assam (Mili, Manika. 2019).

### **Objectives:**

- 1) To examine the various plans & programs for rural development in Assam
- 2) To analyze the problems of rural development in Assam.

### **Methodology:**

The study is mainly based on secondary data. The methodology implied in this study is an empirical method. The secondary data are collected from various books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc. The researcher collects some specific primary data while necessary in some context.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

As per 2011 census data, 68.84 percent of the total population live in rural India and in Assam, 87 percent of the total population live in rural areas (Census of India Report, 2011). After Independence special attention has been paid to the rural development in our five-year plans. The first important step taken in this direction was the launching of a community development program in 1952. Since then several rural development programs were started. Some of them are Intensive Agriculture District Program, Small Farmer's Development Agency, Rural Action Plan, Minimum Need Program, Food For Work Scheme, Antyodaya, Integrated Development Program, National Rural Employment Program, Training Of Rural Youth For Self-Employment, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program, Jawahar Rozger Yojana, Indira Awas Yojana, National Maternity Benefit Scheme, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozger Yojana, Annapurna Yojana, Pradhan Mantra Gramin Sadak Yojana, Samporna Gramin Rozger Yojana, National Rural Health Mission, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act etc.

In India, various programs have been taken by the state and central government for rural development. In Assam majority of the rural development program which executed are mainly centrally sponsored. Some of the important rural development programs are discussed below:

1. **Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP):** The central government started an integrated rural development program in 1979. This

scheme is a self-employed program and is one of the important which have been taken to remove poverty from rural India. The aims of this program include improving the socio-economic conditions as well as a standard of living who belong to the below poverty line, it also targeted to remove unemployment by providing self-employment facilities to the additional manpower of the rural area.

2. **Indira Awas Yojana (IAY):** IAY is a centrally sponsored scheme aiming at to provide free housing facilities to the people belonging to the below poverty line including SC, ST, and free bonded labour. IAY was previously a sub-scheme of the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program and since 1996 it's being implemented as an independent scheme.

3. **Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozger Yojana (SGSY):** The SGSY was launched from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999 covering all aspects of self-employment like an association of the rural poor into self-help groups and their infrastructure build-up, capacity building, technology, credit, and marketing, etc. and the scheme a provision of assisting individual beneficiaries but progressively majority of the funding will be for self-help groups.

4. **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):** The Prime Minister launched the Padhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana(PMGSY) on December 25, 2000, with the objective of providing road connectivity through good quality roads to all unconnected habitations. The roads are connected in the areas which having a population of more than 1000 person by the year 2003. It is totally a centrally sponsored scheme.

5. **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM):** The NRHM scheme was launched by govt. of India on April 12, 2005 throughout the country by giving special focus on the northeastern region and some other state like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and so on. The main aim of the scheme is to provide effective health care to the rural population especially the rural poor, women, and children, to promote decentralization and integration with other sectors namely integrated child development scheme, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, drinking water, etc.

6. **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA):** This scheme has been started to reduce unemployment in rural areas of the country and create enduring assets as well as increase of rural income. The NREGA was passed by the parliament of India in 2005 that guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. Now, this scheme is known as MGNREGA.

7. **Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana(RGGVY):** This scheme targeted for complete hundred percent electrification of all villages in India till 2008, is being financed by govt. of India. Initially, this scheme was named as "accelerated village electrification scheme" and later renamed as "Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana". This scheme provides a free electric connection to those families which are living below the poverty line but there will no rebate on monthly electric bills. In Assam under this scheme lot of villages are connected with electricity but lack of don't proper survey many villages left in to put in this scheme.

8. **Wastelands Development:** The Wastelands Development Division of Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development is

implementing a wide range scheme for checking land degradation, increasing bio-mass availability, and working on putting wastelands into sustainable use.

#### **9. Din Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**

The Scheme was announced by The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in the year 2014 on 25<sup>th</sup> September. It is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) with a vision of transforming rural youth into an economically independent and globally relevant workforce. The schemes focus on the youth age group of 15 and 35. It plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government.

**10. Project Golden Thread:** The Golden Thread Project is conceived as a rural development project through sericulture activity. This special project aims to boost the livelihood of the poor through the improvement of traditional sericulture activity in North East India. The project involves the development of non-mulberry silk namely Eri & Muga. This is a holistic project covering all aspects from plantation to spinning with modern machines and market linkage. And it is now working in the eight districts of Assam namely Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Karbianglong, Goalpara, Golaghat, Kamrup, and Kokrajhar.

#### **Problems of Rural Development in Assam:**

Various problems stand as a barrier in the way of rural development. These problems are discussed below-

- ***Lack of awareness among the masses:*** Due to lack of awareness many programs of rural development have not succeeded. The authority has failed to motivate the people regarding different rural development programs and the need for people's awareness and participation in the implementation of the program in many cases.
- ***Lack of qualitative participation of women:*** Many elected women representatives of the panchayats working as proxy representatives. Although half of the rural people of Assam are women, many of them have come to the panchayats as representatives to fulfill the desire of the male members of their families but not of their own.
- ***Political interference:*** Unnecessary political interference stands as another obstacle to the proper implementation of programs. Due to the political interference in the implementation of different programs, the possibilities of misleading the programs at the time selection of beneficiaries and evaluation process are not ruled out.
- ***Corruption:*** Corruption is also a barrier to rural development. Due to corruption in the implementation of rural development scheme have not succeeded. In many districts of Assam there is the allegation of corruption even against the presidents and members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- ***The communication gap between the implementing agency and the people:*** Due to the communication gap between the implementing agency

and the people, the atmosphere for proper implementation of schemes is not created.

- **Wrong identification of beneficiaries:** Many times selection of beneficiaries is not based on a priority basis. Some rural people are deprived of the benefit of the rural development programs due to biases in the selection of beneficiaries.

- **Illiteracy:** the majority of the illiterate people of our state lives in rural areas. These illiterate people are easily exploited, dominated by the political leader. They are not aware of the rural development scheme and the advantages provided by these schemes. During the election, they are misguided by the political leaders, and their votes are easily purchased by money or other materials. So, rural people, many times fail to elect a proper candidate for them.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

From the above discussion, it is clear that rural development programs have almost failed in solving the problems of the rural people of Assam. Though the state administration implemented many programs for a long time and spent lakhs of rupees, still a large section of the people are deprived of the benefit of the schemes. Based on the trends emerging from this study, the following measures are suggested for effective implementation of the rural development programs-

- 1) Awareness among rural masses should be increased.
- 2) Plans and programs should be prepared in the proper way.
- 3) Political interferences should be minimized in the implementation of rural development programs.
- 4) The strict step should be taken to stop corruption from the programs.
- 5) The communication gap between the implementing agency and the people should be removed.
- 6) NGOs should be encouraged to participate in the implementation of different rural development programs.
- 7) Monitoring authorities should supervise the programs regularly.
- 8) Educated rural people should come forward to take an active part in the Panchayati Raj Institution which is an important institution of rural development.
- 9) The selection of beneficiaries under the scheme should be transparent.
- 10) Rural development programs should be implemented in a priority basis.
- 11) Rural people should be provided training regarding information and computer technology which is essential for rural development.

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