

Challenges before Sustainable Rural Development - A Case Study from Central India

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Rural development denotes the overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people in a sustainable manner. It is a comprehensive set of activities pertaining to all the aspects of rural economy. It covers benefits on a number of classes like farmers, landless labourers, artisans, etc. Since Independence there have been numerous initiatives by government as well as non-governmental organizations to bring sustainable rural development. Despite of numerous schemes and projects like DWCRA, TRYSEM, Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojna, etc., and efforts of developmental organizations like Indo Global Social Service Society, Action Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action etc.. The present paper is a case study from village Gurawal located in Madhya Pradesh. The paper tries to draw learning's from a rural development project titled "Practicing sustainable agriculture through technique of vermi compost in Gurawal". The paper highlights that the project was highly successful during the implementation period and for a very short time during the post implementation period. It turned out to be a failure after the project-based support of NGO was withdrawn from the village. Most of the people of the village also gave up vermi compost based activity. Although, the results and outcomes after the implementation of the project were tremendously encouraging but the activity became a mere model of sustainable rural development for a very short span of time. Sustainability of such rural developmental interventions has become questionable. The attitude people as mere receivers / beneficiaries, target based approach of schemes, lack of Right Based Approach towards development are some of the major impediments in the path of successful sustainable rural development.

Key words : Sustainability, Rural, Development

Introduction

"Our aims must be to restore to the villages the power to meet their own requirement" - Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore

The term rural means countryside picture of a nation. These areas are often considered to be the areas where the fruits of development have yet to reach. In India, rural areas are usually areas having poor power, infrastructure, literacy rate, health care facilities, unemployment, alcoholism and poverty. The rural population of our nation is 742,617,747(72.2%), (Male: 381,668,992, Female: 360,948,755) (2001 Census). It comprises of around two third of the total population. A nation cannot become developed unless and until the rural areas are also developed. Backwardness of rural India is a major impediment in its path of becoming a developed nation.

To understand the meaning of the term "Rural Development", it is essential to understand the meaning of the terms 'rural' and 'development'. These terms are explained in the following paragraphs:

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The widely accepted definition of the Rural Development Framework of 1997 defines rural areas as "sparsely populated area in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including the villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas, also includes large settlements in the former homelands, created by apartheid removals" (Gwanya, n.d.) Development generally means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. Development also means that people should have decent housing, and that they should have security within those houses. Rural Development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in Non-Urban neighborhoods', countryside, and remote villages. These communities can be exemplified with a low ratio of inhabitants to open space. Agricultural activities may be prominent in this case whereas economic activities would relate to the primary sector, production of foodstuffs and raw materials (Wikipedia, 2012).

Rural Development has emerged as "a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people the rural population. It involves extending the benefits of development to the rural population who seek a livelihood in the

rural areas" (McNamara 1975). In the words of Robert Chambers, "Rural Development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control of the benefits of rural development" (Chambers 1983). Rural Development is a comprehensive programme of activities, which include agriculture growth, development of economics and social infrastructure, village planning, public health, education, education, Functional Literacy and communications, etc.

Rural development denotes the overall development of rural areas with a view to improving the quality of life of rural people. It is a comprehensive set of activities pertaining to all aspects of rural economy. It covers benefits on a number of classes like farmers, landless laborers, artisans etc. Projects / Programmes are a major key to bring rural development and positive change. There have been numerous projects covering various areas of rural development. For instance - empowerment of rural women, health security of women and children in rural areas, generation of employment for rural youth and women, agricultural development, provision of basic infrastructure facilities like roads, schools, anganwadi, health centers etc, running rural literacy programmes etc. The failure of our nation to transform the rural areas as developed areas despite of serious efforts since more than 55 years of our independence makes us to reflect the gravity of the issue. Hence, thinkers, planners, implementers and developmental professionals are seriously trying to explore the reasons for unsustainable development.

Sustainability and Sustainable Development

Today sustainability has become a very crucial issue in all spheres of development. Sustainable development has been universally accepted as a supreme goal of humanity. In predominantly agrarian economies like India's rural development is a sine qua non of development. The concept of sustainability basically implies to the characteristics of a system, a program, a resources, or an outcome of some process to last forever. The concept first came into prominence in 1980 in the context of the World Conservation Strategy if the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Thereafter, the World Commission on

Environment and Development emphasized the key role of agricultural sustainability as the basis of sustainable development. Lack of sustainability means that there cannot be development. According to the world commission on Environment and Sustainable Development (WCED 1987), "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". According to UN Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome (FAO, 1988) Development is the management and conservation of the natural resources base, and the orientation of "Sustainable development of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable" (IIASA, 2012). Barbier (1987) provided a detailed definition of sustainable development. He defined sustainable development as one, which is directly concerned with increasing the material standard of living of the poor at the grassroots level, which could be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, educational services, health care, sanitation and water supply, emergency stock of food and cash, etc., and only indirectly concerned with economic growth at the aggregate, commonly national level. The basic objective of sustainable development aims at reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, pollution, environmental degradation, cultural disruption, social instability and social injustice.

Sustainability and Rural Development

After Independence, the Government of India came out with various schemes and policies for rural development. The Theory of "Trickle Down Benefit" was followed; but this ultimately did not help in rural development. Some of the schemes are Development of Women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA-1978), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM- 1979), Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojna 1999, Employment Assurance Scheme 1993, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Indira Awas Yojana (1985-86), Credit-cum-Subsidy Scheme for Rural Housing (1999), Innovative stream for Rural Housing and habitat

Development (1999), Rural Building Scheme (1985), Samagra Awaas Yojna and National Social Assistance Programme (1995). Despite of these interventions a full-fledged developed rural India is still a distant dream. This makes us realize that the programmes implemented for development have been implemented more with a target-oriented approach. Let us take example of Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojna, which was launched in the year 1999. It was a revised version of Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY). (Yesudian 2007) In terms of wage employment, the new programme lagged behind JRY. While the JRY produced 1.03 Billions of man-days of labour in 1993-94, the JGSY produced just 270 millions man-days each year. Since the programme was implemented by the panchayats, many did not have the capacity and experience to implement the programme. Further, the allocation of funds was inadequate to manage the programme. There are also incidences of corruption by way of fudging the muster roles (Yesudian 2007). This shows the poor sustainability of the programmes, as there is failure in reaching to new and good heights.

A review of different wage employment programmes in the Ninth Plan showed that there had been erosion in the programme in terms of resource allocation and employment generation. There was steady decline in employment generation in this programme. The allocation of these programmes came down from Eight Plan to Ninth Plan. Ninth Plan allocation was only 88% of the Eight Plan. Further, the cost of generating employment had gone up during this period. As a result, only 2.86 billion man-days of labour were produced during the ninth plan as against 5.13 billion man-days of labour produced during the Eight Plan Period. Even the allocated fund was very poorly utilized (Tenth Five Year Plan, chap.3.2). A report collated by National Social Watch Coalition shows that out of Rs. 130 Billion allocated for wage employment in rural areas, only Rs. 65 Billion was utilized, i.e., just 50% of the allocated fund (Yesudian, 2007). Hence, it is observed that due to poor beginning there cannot be a proper outcome and sustainability of rural development becomes a night mare.

Case Study from Gurawal

A local NGO started a rural development project entitled "Practicing sustainable agriculture through technique of vermi compost in Gurawal" which comes under Gram Panchayat Gurawal. The village is situated at a distance of 40 Kms from

Gwalior city and around 70 Kms from Shivpuri district. The major beneficiaries in the village belong to the Scheduled Tribe. Besides them marginal farmers, small landowners are also important components of the beneficiaries. The villagers have good livestock resources with them and hence cow dung is being extensively used in the process of vermi composting. 50 farmers (from 50 different household) of the village adopted this technique. The total population of the village is around 3500 and there are around 343 households in the village. The total number of livestock of the beneficiaries is around 450. Compost units were set up at the land of each beneficiary with the help of voluntary organization. Technical assistance, guidance and training for setting up the units, maintenance and recovery of vermi compost pit and its specified use for crops, was provided to the beneficiaries. 50 vermi compost units and 50 vermi wash units were made. The project commenced during August 2005 and continued till September 2007. During January 2011 a study of the beneficiaries of the scheme was conducted. The aim was to study the number of people undertaking this project successfully. It was observed that out of 50 beneficiaries only 5 were still practicing the technique of vermi compost. The remaining units were not functional. This illustrates that only 10% beneficiaries were still continuing with the project based intervention. This shows that the project lacked sustainability. Although the results and outcomes helped in achieving the objectives of the project but these results did not last for long. The syndrome of merely acting as beneficiaries is still prevalent among the people. Lack of ownership and attachment of the people with the project-based intervention is one of the major impediments in achieving sustainable rural development. There should be development of Right Based Approach towards rural development.

The objective of the project was to create the awareness among the villagers about vermi compost, Skill development on garbage management through vermi compost, Demonstration cum field trials of vermi compost in the farmers field and to provide additional income through vermi compost among the stakeholders by increasing their agricultural yields;

The outcomes of this intervention were:

- The target group accepted the environment friendly approach of preparing organic manure. The task of preparing the vermi compost pit and

vermi wash unit has been fully undertaken by all the participants in the target group

- The organic manure prepared by the target group is used for cultivation of chilli, vegetables and other crops in the respective agricultural fields of the farmers.
- People who are not lying in the target group are interested in adopting vermi compost technique. They want that the local NGO should provide them support to get involved in vermi compost technique.
- The people in the village have learnt about the adverse effect of chemical fertilizers on their land and crops.
- Developing vermi compost technique has helped the farmers in increasing their income as they often sell the surplus manure generated in the pit. It has also helped to get good qualitative yield of crops.
- Earlier the plants grown by the farmers were under the threat of getting burnt due to the use of chemical fertilizer but after adoption of organic manure the plants are not getting burnt.
- The Sarpanch of the village showed enthusiasm in the technique of vermi compost and requested that this technique must be made available to everyone in There were no problems that were encountered during the implementation of the project.

Conclusion

Despite of such positive outcomes the projects for rural development ends up within the stipulated phase and thereby there is no element of sustainability. Sustainable Rural Development depends on cooperation with others and especially with nature. The basic ingredient of caring for one another and for Earth is very important. Human beings must put a check on their greed and they must not take more from nature than what nature can replenish. Adoption of life style which respects nature is important and simultaneously the outcomes from the interventions / projects for rural development must synchronize with the needs of the nature. These outcomes should not be for a very short period of time. The greater and longer extend of the outcomes shall lay a foundation in bringing about sustainable rural development. Hence some simple measures for Sustainable Rural Development should be followed. Realizing that reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment is an important index of rural

development. A few simple measures can be specified by posing the following six questions (Singh 1999).

1. Has the number of rural people Below the Absolute Poverty Line been declining over time?
2. Has the degree of income inequality in rural areas been declining over time?
3. Has the level of rural unemployment been declining over time?
4. Have the nature and quality of public educational, health, and other social and cultural services in rural areas been improving over time?
5. Has the economic progress enhanced individual and group esteem of rural people both internally vis-à-vis one another and externally vis-à-vis other nations and regions?
6. Finally, has the economic progress expanded the range of choice available to rural people freed them from external dependence and internal servitude to other men and institutions?

If the answer to each of these questions is 'yes', then clearly these phenomena constitute real rural development and development is sustainable. Hence it is important to follow certain principles of sustainable development like:-

1. That it is an alternative design for development, which, by definition should be environmentally, benign and eco-friendly.
2. That the present generation should meets its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, i.e., to ensure that the productive assets available to future generations are not unfairly diminished.
3. That those who enjoy the fruits of economic development today must not make future generations worse off by excessively degrading the earth's exhaustible resources and polluting the earth's ecology and environment.
4. That there is a symbiotic relationship between consumerist human race and producer human systems.
5. That environment and development are not mutually exclusive-healthy environment is essential to sustainable development and healthy economy

6. That economic development which erodes natural capital is often not essential.
7. The environmental mistakes of the past need not be repeated, as past patterns of environmental degradation are not inevitable.
8. That development is not growth only; it should stand for broader goals of social transformation.
9. That sustainable development in the long run has to do with ecology, resources and people, along with their service agencies, institutions and other aspects of their social organizations.
10. That sustainable development has two major aspects- internally sustain development and external sustainable development- without both, no real sustainable work exists.
11. That sustainable development is accountable to the poor, and hence, it ensures that the poor have adequate access to sustainable and secure livelihoods.

Hence it is very important that the concept of development must be well understood. There can be no rural development without sustainability. Experiences from Gurawal are a small example and similar situation occurs for big projects also. The need of the hour is to realize from our past learning and develop a good future for rural India. The Project should have focused on the sustainability aspect of the intervention before the actual implementation took place. Measures like

community based organizations and tie up with institutions of local governance like Panchayats might have helped the intervention to be sustainable.

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