



Employment Generation Programmes in India: An Overview

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Abstract

‘Eradicating rural poverty’ as an improvement process, rural society is aspiring to move from lower economic and lower social standard to higher standard in the lives of the rural people. ‘Rural poverty’ is an extremely difficult subject to deal with because of a huge variety of socio-economic and ecological situations in which it takes place. Thus, the policies for the eradication rural poverty have to be targeted at the rural poor, which have been at the receiving end of the ill effects of poverty over the ages. This paper broadly presents a critique of rural employment generation programmes in India. it also focuses on Five Year Plan’s towards to create employment opportunities for the rural poor in India and also deals major rural employment generation programs and finally the paper gives the critical view on overall Implementation and drawbacks of Employment Generation Programmes in India.

Introduction

Ever since independence, a major thrust has been on employment generation programmes. The present strategy of anti-poverty programmes, which focus mainly on creation of employment through wage employment and self-employment, tend to overlook the more sustained employment approach of production- led employment, ‘together with this to reduce poverty, the programmes for population control, literacy and public health (which have direct impact on poverty) are not linked to the anti-poverty programmes as a matter of strategy during the design of anti-poverty programmes. The basic issue of rural employment policy, therefore, relates to how best to incorporate the development of employment objectives in local level planning¹.

1. Rural Employment and Five Year Plans in India

In a society like India, with many working poor, achievement of poverty alleviation/eradication on a sustainable basis warrants a multi-pronged approach.ⁱⁱ At the time of independence, though reliable databases were not available in regard to the extent and nature of employment and unemployment, it was believed that a sizeable proportion of the labour force might be either under-employed or unemployed in rural India. Adding to this, our planning agenda has taken up different approaches for a targeted focus on poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes.ⁱⁱⁱ

India has for long been grappling with the unemployment problem. Generation of adequate employment and a substantial reduction in poverty has been the goal of successive Plans in India. The continued slow pace of overall growth during the 1960s and 1970s, along with the growing scepticism regarding the trickle-down process to speedily eradicate disguised unemployment and poverty^{iv}, made the planners think more towards targeted employment and income generating programmes aimed at directly raising the living standard of the rural poor.

Before and after independence, India has been facing problems like unemployment, poverty and illiteracy are prevalent in the rural areas; these areas remain targets for the development programmes. A number of rural development programmes had been pursued during the successive Five Year Plans in India.^v These appear to be working in an isolated manner, without proper integration and coordination. It became evident that, despite the implementation of several employments oriented programmes, majority of the rural population continued to remain poor without productive assets, which would generate income and the problem largely remains untackled. Increasing employment and wages of landless labourers will directly reduce rural poverty. India's Five Year Plans for the last twenty years had explicit targets for the reduction of poverty and related achievements in such fields as employment generation, etc.^{vi}

The First Plan did not make a specific mention of measures for employment generation.^{vii} The avowed objective of the Second Plan was the establishment of a 'socialistic pattern of society' in India by adopting a suitable pattern of development. Keeping this in view, it largely aimed at expanding employment opportunities throughout the country. The Third Plan aimed at a marked advance towards self-sustaining growth by ensuring a substantial expansion in employment opportunities.^{viii}

The situation created by the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965 forced India to temporarily abandon its Five Year Plans and go in for Annual Plans between 1966 and 1969. The year 1967 was marked by the introduction of the, rural works programme aimed at providing additional employment opportunities to the rural workforce. Thereafter, the Fourth Plan specifically focused on improving the conditions of the less privileged and weaker sections of society, by provision of employment and education. In 1998-99, the government decided to unify the various employment and poverty alleviation programmes under the two broad categories of wage employment and self-employment schemes. An effort was also made to rationalise the funding and organisational patterns so as to secure the maximum beneficial impact of these programmes.^{ix}

Fifth Five-Year Plan recognised that employment will be the most important challenge to development during the perspective period of 1974-86. The addition to labour-force during this period was estimated at 65 million, which was more than 3% times the level of employment in the entire organised sector. Besides, there was a huge backlog of unemployment, under-employment and thin employment. The Fifth Five-Year Plan viewed unemployment and poverty together and aimed at raising of the consumption levels of the lowest 30 per cent of population^x.

A major development during this period was the finalisation of Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP). The programme covered cattle development, Sheep husbandry, Dairying etc. This scheme was a centrally sponsored one and the aim was reducing the drought proneness of the areas through restoration of ecological balance. The change from rural works programme to DPAP meant a shift to a programme for sustainable employment through strengthening the natural resource system from a programme generating of additional employment in bad season. The National Commission on Rural Labour has concluded that "these programmes (DPAP & DDP) could not prevent ecological deterioration in any significant way nor could they generate the expected amount of employment.

After two interrupted plans (the fifth plan 1974-79 and the fifth plan 1978-83), Sixth Plan ran to full course. This viewed unemployment as an issue of social justice. It proposed that the growth strategy should aim at significant redistribution of income and consumption so that the population below poverty-line is reduced to below 30 per cent by 1984-85 and to below 10 per cent by 1994-95. The labour-force projections indicated that over a period of 15 years, 1979-80 to 1994-95, it will increase by 108 millions or at an annual average rate of 2.4 per cent, which was higher than the estimated rate of growth of population. Sixth Plan aimed at a growth rate of 5.0 to 5.5 per cent per

annum in the GDP and seeks a significant reduction in unemployment and under-employment through a pattern of allocation of resources, which favors employment.^{xi} It also proposed to pursue pure employment generation schemes. The demand side interventions included apart from the general programmes of construction and other development in the plan, the Minimum Needs Programme and the Drought Prone Area Programme and the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) The NREP aimed at generating about 300 to 400 million person days of employment during the plan period.

The Seventh Plan aimed at achieving high employment and virtual elimination of poverty and illiteracy besides satisfying the basic needs for all by 2000. The absolute magnitude of additions to labour-force were estimated to be 39 millions and 81 millions during the two periods-1985-90 and 1990-2000. Turning into account the backlog of unemployment, the magnitude of additional employment to be generated by the year 2000, was estimated at 130 million^{xii}. It was proposed to achieve the target of employment generation through the sustained faster rate of growth of the economy. The growth of employment in the agricultural sector was expected to be at the rate of 35 per cent a year. The plan argued for the involvement of the local people and their organisations at the local level as well as that of voluntary organisations in this process to ensure greater effectiveness and to minimise leakages With these various programmes, the plan aimed to generate employment potential of 40 million standard person years against an increase in labour- force of 39 millions.

Eighth Five-Year Plan focussed attention on (a) clear privatisation of sectors of investment, (b) making available the resources for these priority sectors and ensuring their effective utilisation, (c) creation of social security net through employment generation, improved health care and provision of extensive education facilities and (d) creation of appropriate organisations and delivery systems to ensure that the benefits of investments in the social sectors reach the intended beneficiaries^{xiii}. Recognising that growing unemployment has been a major problem of the 80s and is going to be even worse in the 90s, the Plan lists as the very first objective the generation of adequate employment to achieve near full employment level by the turn of the century Thus, the Eighth Plan aims at bringing employment into a sharper focus in a medium term perspective with the goal of reducing unemployment to negligible level by the turn of the century.

Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) held the view that a broad based programme of development and economic growth could alone offer a sustained and long-lasting solution to the problems of poverty and unemployment. Priority was assigned to agriculture and rural development In the generation of

productive employment, sectors and sub-sectors using labour-intensive techniques and regions characterised by chronic under-employment and unemployment were to receive greater attention. The new employment strategy aimed at creation of such work environment as could enable the employed enjoy better working and living conditions. The focus of the plan was on education and skill development as far as the quality is concerned. The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) has been accorded a high priority to supplement the work opportunities and to ensure a larger share of these to the poor'.^{xiv} A holistic approach would be adopted with an integration of the existing sub-schemes of Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) and Ganga Kalyani Yojana (GKY) in the RDP Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) will be confined to the creation of rural infrastructure according to the felt needs of the people at the village level through Panchayats. However, at the block and district level, the EAS would be the single wage employment programme. Efforts would be made, to bring about a greater integration between the poverty-alleviation programmes and the various sectoral programmes, as well as area development programmes within the umbrella of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Tenth Plan (2002–2007) main objectives were attaining 8 percent GDP growth per year. Reduction of poverty rate by 5 percent by 2007. Providing gainful and high-quality employment at least to the addition to the labour force. Reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50 percent by 2007. 20-point program was introduced. Target growth was 8.1 percent but growth achieved was 7.7 percent^{xv}. The tenth plan was expected to follow a regional approach rather than sectoral approach to bring down regional inequalities. Expenditure of ₹ 43,825 crores for tenth five years (Out of total plan outlay ₹ 921,291 crore (57.9%) was for central government and ₹ 691,009 crore (42.1%) was for states and union territories.)

Eleventh Plan (2007–2012) main objectives were Rapid and inclusive growth especially Poverty reduction in the rural areas. Emphasis on social sector and delivery of service therein. Empowerment through education and skill development. Reduction of gender inequality. Environmental sustainability. To increase the growth rate in agriculture, industry and services to 4 percent, 10 percent and 9 percent respectively. The plan one of the major objective is reducing total fertility rate to 2.1, provide clean drinking water for all by 2009 and increase agriculture growth to 4 percent^{xvi}.

Twelfth Plan (2012–2017) of the Government of India has decided for the growth rate at 8.2 percent but the National Development Council (NDC) on 27 Dec 2012 approved 8 percent growth

rate for 12th five-year plan^{xvii}. With the deteriorating global situation, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia has said that achieving an average growth rate of 9 percent in the next five years is not possible. The Final growth target has been set at 8 percent by the endorsement of plan at the National Development Council meeting held in New Delhi. The government intends to reduce poverty by 10 percent during the 12th Five-Year Plan. Mr Ahluwalia said, “We aim to reduce poverty estimates by 9 percent annually on a sustainable basis during the Plan period. Earlier, addressing a conference of State Planning Boards and Planning departments, he said the rate of decline in poverty doubled during the 11th Plan. The commission had said, while using the Tendulkar poverty line, the rate of reduction in the five years between 2004–05 and 2009–10, was about 1.5 percent points each year, which was twice that when compared to the period between 1993–95 to 2004–05. The plan aims towards the betterment of the infrastructural projects of the nation avoiding all types of bottlenecks. The document presented by the planning commission is aimed to attract private investments of up to US\$1 trillion in the infrastructural growth in the 12th five-year plan, which will also ensure a reduction in subsidy burden of the government to 1.5 percent from 2 percent of the GDP (gross domestic product). The UID (Unique Identification Number) will act as a platform for cash transfer of the subsidies in the plan.

2. Major Employment Generation Programmes

Self-Employment schemes seek to focus on those households among the identified poor households, which possess assets and skills. The main objective is creation of assets and income generation at the household level^{xviii}.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

India’s search for a satisfactory model of rural development opened the way for introducing the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The concept of IRDP^{xix} was first proposed in the Central Budget of 1976-77. Actually, this programme, with some modifications, was introduced on an expanded scale in 1978-79. This integrated development should encompass both spatial and functional integration of all relevant programmes, with a bearing on increased agricultural production and reduction of unemployment and under-employment among small farmers and agricultural labourers. The aim is to ensure all-round development - and not increasing production alone.^{xx}

It is the single largest scheme aimed at ameliorating the lot of the weaker groups in the rural society and is available only for rural poor, i.e., the poorest among the poor. It is open to all rural poor and has a much wider set of activities. The novel feature of the programme was the leadership role assumed by the agricultural universities of the country. Their task under the IRDP included plans to raise agricultural productivity, creating rural non-farm occupations, promoting agro-industries and looking after welfare needs. The IRDP was prepared by scientists, which certainly was an innovation in the field of rural development in India.^{xxi} The IRDP seeks to formulate schemes of specific beneficiary-oriented assistance, in a bid to bring the beneficiaries above the poverty line. Its main objective is to provide productive assets and employment to the poor to enable them to attain a better standard of living and higher incomes. These assets include sources of irrigation, bullocks and implements besides inputs like seeds and fertilizers for farming, animals for dairy and other animal husbandry activities and tools and training for cottage industries and handicrafts. The basic strategy was self-employment of the poor with the help of these so that they could earn enough to rise above the poverty line.^{xxii}

Initially, it was introduced in 20 selected districts covering 2300 blocks, of which 2000 were under coterminous coverage with small farmer's development agency (SFDA), drought prone area programme (DPAP). By 1980-81, it was being implemented in all blocks of the country and continued as a major employment scheme till March 31, 1999. IRDP was a centrally sponsored scheme funded by the centre and state on 50:50 cost-sharing bases. IRDP had several allied programmes like Training of rural youth for self-employment (TRYSEM), The Development of Women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY), Million Wells Scheme (MWS), and Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA). Then it was restructured as the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), which aimed at self-employment of the poor.^{xxiii}

Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)

The TRYSEM (Training of rural youth for self-employment) was flagged off on 15 August 1979.^{xxiv} It mainly aimed at imparting technical and entrepreneurial skills to rural youth (in the 18-35 years age group) from families below the poverty line so that they could take up income-generating activities.^{xxv} Those having the necessary skills and aptitude to take self-employment in agriculture and allied activities industry, service, etc., were given preference in the selection process. At the same time, priority was given to members of SC/ST communities and women. During the Sixth Plan, 10.15 lakh rural youth received training under this programme. In 1999, this programme was merged into the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).^{xxvi}

The Development of women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)

It was an exclusive scheme for women, was launched in 1982-83^{xxvii}, as a pilot project in 50 districts. It was subsequently extended to all the districts in the country by 1994-95. It later emerged that, despite reservations under various poverty alleviation programmes, the benefits were not adequately flowing to the poor women.^{xxviii} The Development of women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme was conceived to remedy the situation. The primary aim of DWCRA was to raise the incomes of rural women of poor families, and enable organised participation of cluster of women in the programmes of credit, skill training and infrastructure support for self-employment.

Under DWCRA, a group of women is granted assistance to take up viable economic activities the central government, state governments and UNICEF sponsored this fund in the ratio of 40; 40; 20. In January 1996, UNICEF withdrew its support. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has been the implementing agency for the DWCRA. States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Tripura and Gujarat have performed very well. In April 1999, the DWCRA was merged in Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).^{xxix}

Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA)

This Programme was launched in July 1992 as a sub-scheme of The Development of women and children in Rural Areas (IRDP).^{xxx} In the beginning, it was confined to some selected districts. Later it was extended to all districts of the country. Under this scheme, different categories of artisans were issued kits of improved hand tools. Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) aimed at enabling rural artisans to enhance the quality of their products, and increase their production and income. It also sought to reduce their migration to urban areas. Artisans, except weaving, tailoring, needle –workers and beedi-workers, were to be supplied with improved hand tools.^{xxxi}

Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY)

Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) was introduced as a sub-scheme of the Integrated Rural Development Programme during 1996-97.^{xxxii} It is now being continued as an independent scheme. The main purpose of the plan is to provide irrigation through digging of bore wells and tube wells for individuals and groups of beneficiaries of small and marginal farmers belonging to the below poverty line families. The individual or groups are provided subsidy by the government and term

credit by financial institutions including SCs /STs /BC Finance and Development Corporation. At least 50 percent of the funds have been allotted for SCs and STs.^{xxxiii}

The central government funds up to 80 percent, and the rest is provided by the concerned state government. Allocation to a state is on the criteria fixed for IRDP. THE states are required to make district-wise allocations, taking into consideration the potential for exploitation of groundwater resources, economic viability of exploiting such potential and other relevant considerations. The DRDAs/Zilla Parishads are implementing the scheme. In 1997-98, Rs 566.65 lakh had been expended and 1674 individual projects and 92 group projects initiated and in 1998-99, 2261 individual projects and 72 group projects had been taken by the states.^{xxxiv}

Swanajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

It is the largest ongoing self-employment programme for the rural poor from its inception on 1st April 1999^{xxxv}, the integrated rural development programme (IRDP) and allied programmes such as Training of rural youth for self-employment (TRYSEM), The Development of women and children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY), along with Million Wells Scheme (MWS), were merged into this programme. This scheme was formulated after taking into the consideration the lessons learnt from the failure of IRDP. The main intention of the programme is to bring the assisted below poverty line (BPL) families above the poverty line, by ensuring appreciable increase in income through the mix of bank credit and governmental subsidy over a period of time. It aims at covering all aspects of self-employment of the rural poor and encourages the formation of self-help groups (SHGs) and a move towards the group approach^{xxxvi}.

SGSY strengthens the groups, through revolving fund assistance and providing market support along with market research. Special focus is on vulnerable groups, i.e., coverage of 50% is SCs /STs , women (40%) and disabled persons (3%), along with 15percent of the earmarked funds for bringing a specific number of BPL families above the poverty line. It encourages them to come forward to form SHGs. The funds are shared between centre and state in the ratio of 75: 25. Since its inception, up to December 2004, an average, 51 lakh self-entrepreneurs were provided assistance. While SC/ST accounted for around 45.12 percent of the beneficiaries, women were 46.16 percent. The average of total investment is 10726.44 crore and total funds utilised are Rs. 5624.18 crore.^{xxxvii}

3. Wage Employment Programmes

Such programmes play a prominent role in creation of community assets and providing daily employment to the rural poor. Wage employment schemes in India have a long history.

Rural Manpower Programme (RMP)

This Rural Manpower Programme (RMP), which was started in 1960-61^{xxxviii} in 32 community blocks on a pilot basis for utilizing the rural labour force was extended to 1000 blocks by 1964-65 and remained in operation till 1968-69. The objective was to generate at least 2.5 million man-days of employment.

Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE)

It was initiated as a non-plan programme with effect from 1971-72 and was upgraded as a central plan programme, the following year. The selected rural works under Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) should be undertaken in areas of each district where other special programmes such as SFDA had not fully spread. The basic objective of the CSRE is to generate employment in productive works for a thousand persons in each district. The Scheme stipulates that, on an average, 2.50 lakh man-days of employment should be generated in every district and lays stress on generation of durable assets that are in tune with the local development plans.

The central government provides funds to the state government proceeds to Zilla Parishads. In its execution from 1971-72 to 1973-74, the total expenditure incurred for this programme was Rs. 12,262.825 crore and the employment generated, 3157.390 lakh man–days. Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) suffered due to the following reasons: absence of guidelines to take up labour intensive works, treating all districts alike in allocating funds, selection of inappropriate assets, absence of proper estimate of labour intensity feasible in rural works programme. Despite initiatives in the area of employment generation, it did not give the desired results.

Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP)

As a part of Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), this programme was taken up during November 1972, in 15 selected blocks for a period of three years. The object of this project was to collect necessary data regarding the dimensions of the programme for providing full employment to everyone who is willing to work. The main objectives were: providing employment for all those offering their services for a wage through execution of work projects not requiring skills of a high

order, imparting new skills to at least some of the workers employed on the project work and the skills would be chosen with reference to likely demands in each block or area.^{xxxix}

In the three years with total expenditure of Rs. 928.24 crore, it created 181.60 lakh man-days of employment. It was better than Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) and suffered from fewer defects like divergence between the expected and actual over-all benefits was suggestively high and the implementation machinery, and also selection of works in non-promising areas. On the whole, the Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP) provided for integrated development of different areas with view to provide employment to the maximum number of persons in the area.

Food for Work Programme (FWP)

In the fifth Plan, one of the major objectives was to substantially raise the per-capita monthly consumption of the rural population. Government was convinced that rural industries, constructions and housing must necessarily emanate from the agriculture sector^{xl}. Keeping aside this scenario, in view of food surplus, it was thought that this could be used for generation of productive employment in rural areas. The Food for Work Programme started functioning from 1977-78, with the objective of employment generation and development of a sound economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. Originally, it was started as a non-plan scheme, but subsequently, it was modified to include all items of work, plan and non-plan - provided they create durable community assets. The works undertaken in this programme include:

- Major, Medium and Minor irrigation work
- Flood protection, drainage and anti-water logging works
- Afforestation and social forestry
- construction of field channels
- Road construction including forest road and
- Construction of schools building, drinking water wells, etc.

Food grains supplied by the government of India would be additional to resources already allotted to state governments during the Plan Period. In this scheme, the employed persons were paid partly in cash and kind in order to provide supplementary wage employment and providing of food – security through creation of need based economic, social community assets. During 1977-81, the food for work programme created assets worth hundreds of crore of rupees and potential for long-term employment for lakhs of villagers. In less than four years of operation, over 25 lakh acres were

brought under irrigation. Another 10.5 lakh acres were protected against floods and 3.75 lakh acres became more cultivable owing to construction of field channels, land leveling and other on farm-development works. More than sixty lakh kilometers of roads have been newly built or old ones repaired.^{xli}

A total of 5.6 million tonnes of food grains were allocated from the inception till October 1980, of which 4.6 million tonnes had been actually utilised, generating, in the process, 868 million mandays of employment. But this has not been free from problems. Non-availability of construction materials continues to be a major constraint. There is also the issue of income disparities and misuse of the food grains and the supplied material to this scheme. The Food for Work Programme changed ravaged roads into green fields and mud huts into tile –roofed modern tenements and many others.^{xlii}

National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)

The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was launched in October, 1980 and became a regular Plan programme from April, 1981. The programme was expected to generate additional gainful employment in the rural areas, to the extent of 300-400 million mandays per annum, create durable community assets, and improve nutritional status and living standards of the poor. An outlay of Rs. 1620 crores was provided under this Programme, out of which the outlay from 1980-81 onwards (Rs. 1280 crores) was to be shared equally between the Centre and the States.

A major step was taken in 1983-84 when it was decided to subsidise the cost of the foodgrains to be distributed under this Programme. A subsidy to the extent of 37 Paise to 40 Paise per kg was provided for wheat and rice to be distributed under the Programme. According to the guidelines, foodgrains were to be provided at the rate of 1 kg per man day. The creation of durable assets was an important objective of this Programme and, in fact, the real distinguishing feature between the Food for Work Programme and the NREP. With a view to ensuring the durability of assets created, a provision had been made allowing for expenditure on materials to the extent of 40.

Rural Landless Employment Programme (RLEP)

Rural landless Employment Programme^{xliii} was launched on 15 August, 1983 to supplement the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and it was modeled on the lines of Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme.^{xliiv} The main objectives of this programme are: improving and

expanding employment opportunities for the rural landless by providing guaranteed employment of up to 100 days in a year to at least one member of every landless household and creating durable assets for strengthening the infrastructure, so as to meet the growing requirements of the rural economy. Funds have been earmarked specifically for certain activities - 25 percent for social forestry, 10 percent for works benefiting only the SCs and STs and 20 percent for housing. An outlay of Rs. 1743.78 crore had been provided in the central sector for the Seventh Plan for this programme and the target was to generate 1013 million man-days during the Plan Period. A separate provision within the Rural-Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) aimed at constructing one million houses in the Seventh Plan, under the Indira Awas Yojana, was launched on 2nd October, 1985, as a sub-scheme of Rural-Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP).^{xlv}

A large number of people in rural areas are without assets, or with grossly inadequate assets, and need to be provided wage employment. This segment of people depends upon wage employment during the lean agricultural period. The best solution for the above problem is the National Rural Employment Programme. Under this programme, development projects and targets group oriented employment generation projects will be closely intertwined. The basic objective is to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed, both men and women, and creation of durable community assets for strengthening the rural infrastructure, which would lead to rapid growth of rural economy and steady rise in the income levels of the rural poor and improvement of the nutritional status and living standards of the rural poor. MGNRES is being implemented as centrally sponsored scheme on 50:50 cost-sharing between the centre and the states.^{xlvi}

A steering committee, headed by the district magistrate/collector, works under this scheme. The centre will grant its share, in the form of food grains, to the extent surplus food grains are available, and the rest in cash. Wage given should be adequate to meet a family's needs. The educational research and technical institutions in the block would be associated with the Panchayati Raj Institutions in preparing a shelf of projects which will help to ensure the assets created are at least equal in value to the wages paid. An outlay of Rs. 980 crore had been provided for the programme by the central government. This was the biggest single target-oriented rural programme in the Sixth Plan.^{xlvii}

Million Wells Scheme (MWS)

This scheme was taken up as a sub-scheme of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)/ Rural-Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) during the year 1988-89 and was being continued under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana as a sub-scheme from April 1989 to end December 1995. From 1.1.1996, MWS has been an independent scheme. Till 1989-90, the objective of MWS was to provide open irrigation wells to small and marginal farmers amongst SC/ST and freed bonded labour, but from the year 1993-94, the scope has been enlarged to cover non-SC/ST small and marginal farmers, who are below the poverty line. The sector earmarking has also been raised from 20 percent to 30 percent from 1993-94, subject to the condition that the benefits to non-SC/ST should not exceed 10 percent of the total allocation.^{xlviii}

Million Wells Scheme (MWS) is a centrally sponsored scheme. Funds under the scheme are shared between the centre and state on 80:20 basis. Million Wells Scheme (MWS) is primarily intended to provide only open wells. The scheme could be utilised for other works like irrigation tanks, water-harvesting structures and also for the development of lands belonging to the target groups. During the period 1988-89 to 1998-99, a total of 12.63 crore wells were dug. The total funds utilised were Rs 4728.17 crore. This scheme has definitely been a success since has provided water sources for agriculture and other activities, especially to farmers. With this scheme, the household income has gone up from Rs 750 to 2500 per month. It has shortcoming like the land of the beneficiary continues to be single cropped area and motivation to install pump sets and use these for a second crop has been found to be inadequate.^{xlix}

Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)

The Eighth Five Year Plan aimed at bringing employment into a sharper focus with the goal of bringing down unemployment to a negligible level within the next ten years. It was noticed that during the implementation of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)/ Rural-Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) the funds did not invariably go to the areas of concentration of unemployed landless and rural labour. It was, therefore, decided to merge NREP/RLEGP into one single rural employment programme, known as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, from April 1989¹.

The JRY was undertaken with the following objectives:

- Generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and the under-employed men and women
- To create sustained employment by strengthening the rural economic infrastructure.
- To improve the overall quality of life in the rural areas.
- The JRY has people below the poverty line as the three target groups and preference is given to SCs/STs for employment. It is also laid down that 30% of the employment opportunities are to be reserved for women. Funds are shared between the centre and the states on 80:20 basis.
- In the context of the stabilisation programme under the new economic policy, the strategy was modified from 1993-94 to ensure better implementation of the Yojana during the Eight Plan in the backward districts, where there is a concentration of unemployed and under-employed persons. The impact on wage level, creation of the community and social assets, creation of sustained employment by strengthening economic infrastructure and also assets in favour of the rural poor for their direct and continuing benefit and overall improvement in the quality of life in rural areas, will remain the attendant benefits of the scheme.
- Up to 1998-99, JRY had utilized Rs 28892.71 core and achieved a total of 71906.12 lakh man-days of employment. JRY-enabled construction of rural link roads received high priority, the assets created are generally good and the share of SCs/STs in generation of employment was satisfactory.

Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)

The Government of India launched a new employment assurance scheme on 2nd October 1993, in 1778 identified rural backward blocks of the country. In 1994-95, it the Scheme was extended to 2447 blocks, situated mainly in the drought-prone, tribal and hill areas. This Scheme primarily aimed at providing gainful manual employment during the lean agriculture season to all able-bodied adults in the rural areas, who were in need of work, but could not find it. Another objective of the Scheme was the creation of economic infrastructure and community assets for sustained employment and development.ⁱⁱ

Expenditure under Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) is shared between the state and central government in the ratio of 20:80. Under Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), unlike Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), the works are opened as and when there is need for employment. The scheme aims to provide assured employment for 100 days to the rural poor, over 18 year and below

60 years of age. A maximum of two adults per family would be provided this assistance, if and when they seek it during the lean agriculture season. Persons seeking work under Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) should be given employment within the area of the block on works started from out of the shelf works prepared for this purpose by the implementation authority. It should be ensured that the provision of employment under this scheme results in the creation of durable productive assets in the block area. The District Collector/Deputy Commissioner of the district is the overall charge of the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) as the implementation authority. A part of wages may be paid in the form of food grains, not exceeding 2kgs per man day and not exceeding 50 percent of the wages in cost. During the year 1993-94, the total funds utilized were 183.75 crore and 494.74 lakh man-days of work were achieved. This increased to 1202.62 lakh man-days, at an expenditure of 928.47 crore investment in the year 1999-2000.^{lii}

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)

Both Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Employment Assurance Scheme are generating wage employment and, in the process, helping in the creation of durable assets. Hence, it was felt that development of village infrastructure needed to be taken up in a planned manner. Accordingly, the government has strengthened and restructured Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) as Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY). It came into effect from 01 April 1999. The two main goals of this scheme are creation of demand-driven community village infrastructure, including durable assets, at the village level, with a view to enable the rural poor to have more opportunities for sustained employment and generation of wage employment for the unemployed poor in the rural areas.^{liii}

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana is being implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme on cost sharing basis between the centre and the concerned state in the ratio of 75:25. It would be implemented by the village panchayats, who would be responsible for overall guidance, coordination, supervision and monitoring the scheme. In the Ninth Plan, the total expenditure incurred was Rs 643185.15 lakh and 7910.26 man-days of work were generated. It was later merged into SGRY.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)

A new scheme came into the force on 25th September 2001^{liv}, by merging the ongoing Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana and Employment Assurance Scheme. “The scheme aims at providing additional wage employment and also food security in the rural areas, along with the creation of

durable community, social and economic infrastructure. Special emphasis is to give wage employment to women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupations.” About 100 crore man-days of employment are envisaged to be generated every year in rural areas. There is a provision for reserving 30 percent jobs for women. The Programme is implemented in two streams. The first stream is through the Zilla Parishad and intermediate level panchayats, for which 50 percent of the funds would be made available in the ratio 40: 60. The second stream is implemented at the village panchayat level.^{lv}

The Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana is a centrally sponsored scheme, being implemented with an annual allocation of about Rs 6000 crore and 50 lakh tonnes of food grains, and this is provided free of cost to the States and Union Territories. The Centre and the state share the cash component in the ratio of 75:25. The Union Ministry of Rural Development makes payment for the food grains to the Food Corporation of India directly. Payment of wages is partly in cash and the rest in kind. Food grains component is five kg per man day, while the balance is in cash. Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) is a noble programme with unique features. It is the first ever programme of such magnitude that is fully implemented by Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is not only directed to generate man-day, but greater emphasis is on channelizing its vast potential for increase in human resources which may transform the rural face to give a boost to the nation’s economy.

3. Critical view on Overall Implementation and Drawbacks of Employment Generation Programmes in India

Rural development programmes are intended to improve the material condition of the rural poor and increase capital formation and productivity in rural India. These self and wage employment programmes were cost effective and were able to function, despite some drawbacks. The self-employment programmes have largely succeeded in the formation of self-help groups involving the women and maximising their skills by providing them toolkits and training. With the availability of resources, these have brought the self earning scenario on to the rural agenda. One ongoing scheme, i.e., Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana, has established a ground for the Non- Governmental Organisations (NGO) to be participants in spreading greater awareness among the poor. Self-employment programmes have encouraged the rural entrepreneurs to become capable of producing marketable products and services, which can compete in the competitive markets. The Integrated Rural Employment Programme (IRDP) has greatly helped in increasing the nutritional level and standard of living in the rural areas. But these schemes require restructuring to be more fruitful in the days to come.^{lvi}

The wage employment schemes have generally succeeded in providing supplementary employment to vulnerable sections of the population especially in the seasonal lean periods. In the time of droughts or famines, these act as a social safety net for the needy poor. Particularly the wage employment programmes have a maximizing effect in the rural areas by helping in the creation of durable assets and strengthening the economic and social infrastructure. Right from the rural manpower programme to a more contemporary scheme, i.e., Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, these have enabled the rural areas to develop with their own resources.^{lvii} However, due to a number of shortcomings in the delivery system, these could not touch some areas. But the overall view is that these have played a major role in transformation of the rural society.

Some of the benefits to the rural society from these schemes are as follows:

- The first and foremost is the creation of community based assets, and also individual based assets.
- Generation of self-employment at the village level
- Short-term employment through employment schemes has also benefited the villagers, by providing infrastructure and employment to people during lean period.
- Quality of life, which includes economic and social well-being health education and interaction with surroundings, has improved.
- The programmes have increased the income of rural labour, as well as improved the level of nutrition.
- Some of the assets created like schools, paths and community centers have brought togetherness in communities.
- Improved the accessibility to the health centers and hospitals in all seasons.
- Public transportation, that was earlier not available to many villages, has now would become available.
- Overall rural employment programmes has increased the income, expenditure, and productivity and created both individual and community-based assets.

Drawbacks/ Problems

Self and wage employment programmes are not free from the problems in implementation. It is, therefore, imperative to strengthen these programmes, to create a transparent delivery system that would take the intended groups without leakage or diversion of funds along the way. Here, several problems were identified in the execution of these employment programmes. These include:

- Appointed official were not fully equipped for carrying out the responsibilities. They did not keep their books properly and could not extract the required data from their blocks. There were also the issues of shortage of personnel.
- Selection of beneficiaries was not based on suitability, but under the pressure from influential groups.
- Literacy and awareness among the rural masses was low.
- There was a shortage of staff for looking after proper implementation of the schemes and to keep a record of the necessary details and useful data - especially at the block level.
- Non-receipt /late receipt of funds from the concerned authorities, leading to difficulty in getting the work done at the grassroots level.
- It is noted that bankers did not take proper interest in the process of providing loans and other facilities to beneficiaries, which hampers the implementation of the schemes.
- It was observed that repayment of loans was very poor, which was mainly responsible for the non- cooperative attitude of the bank officials towards these schemes.
- Shortage of staff at District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) level was mainly responsible for the poor skill development programmes among the beneficiaries in the district. Due to the poor skill development programmes, beneficiaries were not able to properly utilise the money received in various activities through these programmes. Many of them have even diverted the money for their personal use.
- Some of the community assets were created by the unilateral decision taken by the local leaders, prominent personality of the villages for their self benefit. Besides delay in payment of wages, there were also complaints about irregularities in the distribution of grains. Some Below Poverty Line (BPL) beneficiaries did not have any assets and were unable to provide collateral against loan, Lack of training for skill development, concern about untimely, irregular and time consuming disbursement of benefits was also expressed by the majority of beneficiaries. There were also complaints about the lengthy procedures for getting loan under the programme and the paper involved was found to be cumbersome.

From the above discussion and evaluation of major employment programs in India the study come up with a conclusion that introduction of MGRGA is very essential in providing rural employment to the unskilled labour of rural people in India.

Conclusion

The employment generation and Poverty alleviation programmes constitutes an important dimension of the public policy thrust to bring about rapid reduction in rural poverty. In recent poverty eradication phenomena, two major changes have occurred. Wage employment and credit-cum subsidy self employment have been formulated and notified. Further, these programmes are now targeted to enhance the income generation opportunities for poor families. A review of various developmental programmes taken up since independence indicated the need for a new comprehensive programme for the eradication of poverty in rural areas.

Creation of Self-employment has been an important element in the overall employment strategy. The IRDP has been a major instrument for this purpose. Over the years, a number of subsidiary and allied programmes evolved under the umbrella of IRDP. These included: Training For Rural Youth for Self Employment, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, and the Million Wells Scheme, all of which were introduced in the Seventh Plan, the Ganga Kalia Yojana was introduced in 1997 and the Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans in 1992. All these self-employment programmes were merged into Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, in order to ensure greater integration of the schemes at the implementing level. Some schemes are working well, but the programme, as a whole, has suffered from serious deficiencies. Taking into consideration the shortcomings in the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), the new restructured Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) is definitely a step in the right direction. Since 1960, a number of wage employment schemes have been launched to provide employment to people in the rural areas, especially in the lean period of the agricultural season. An on-going scheme is the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana.

Though a number of programmes have been in operation for the uplift of rural poor, yet, achievement of the objectives is not upto the mark. The programmes did not cover the target groups i.e., poorest of the poor families. The studies also indicated that much of the programmes have been corrupted by administrative mal practices. It was, therefore, proposed that such target oriented, especially with pro-poor concept, and community based organization's involvement for the self-sufficiency and economically vibrant schemes has to come up.

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