

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Some Key Issues and Prospects for the Future

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The problems of development or underdevelopment of the third world countries have been the central area of concern of development planners. International agencies and bilateral donor agencies for more than three decades. The variety of policy approaches and development strategies applied over these years has not helped to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor in any significant manner, though notable achievements were recorded in some countries in agricultural production, GNP and per capita incomes. Poverty still remains an intractable problem. About 791 million people were considered living in abject poverty in 1974 by the World Bank on the basis of the criterion of an annual per capita income equivalent to \$ 50 or less. Seventy five percent, or 584 million, of this 791 million were found in Asia (excluding China). More than 80% of this population live and work in rural areas and include small farmers, share-tenants, landless workers, artisans and labourers. Lack of access to resources has led thousands of the rural poor to migrate to relatively more developed urban areas. Inadequate housing, sanitation and job opportunities in urban areas, however, make life more difficult and less rewarding for them. Proliferation of slums consequent to influx of the rural poor has aggravated the already complex issues of development. What were the strategies and approaches adopted during the past three decades to alleviate the problems of poverty and underdevelopment? Why did they fail to measure up to the expectations of development theorists and governments? Is there scope for redirecting the efforts of development towards more realistic and attainable goals which will promote greater economic growth, a more equitable income distribution and a socially satisfying life for the millions of the rural poor? This paper would focus attention on these issues.

Introduction

Development in the context of the third world countries should necessarily have aimed at the upliftment of the depressed 70 to 80% in the rural areas. During the last three decades, rural development received only superficial attention and only recently its relevance and strategic importance for developing countries have been recognised. Today, in most if not all the developing countries, rural development is being singled out as the most appropriate approach¹.

The concept of rural development has been defined by the World Bank (1975), "as a process through which rural poverty is alleviated by sustained increases in the productivity and income of low-income rural workers and households.....this concept requires that target groups be specified among the rural poor, for whom specific measures to raise production and income can be designed and in whose case the resulting flow of benefits - direct and indirect - are both identifiable and poten-

1. The experiences of the following countries are considered in this paper: Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Nepal and occasionally some countries in Africa such as Tanzania.

tially measurable. The notion of target groups lies at the root of the definition of rural development as a separable and distinct component of general development strategy". It is interesting that a further definition conceived rural development 'as a process which leads to a rise in the capacity of rural people to control their environment, accompanied by wider distribution of benefits resulting from such a control' (Inayatullah 1979). The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in recent times stressed that 'the goal of agrarian reform and rural development is a transformation of rural life and activities in all their economic, social, institutional, environmental and human aspects. Objectives and strategies to achieve this transformation should be governed by policies for attaining growth with equity and people's participation.....'"²

The definitions given above, though differing in emphasis, identify the following specific areas of common concern:

1. Rural development is a process of change aimed at alleviating poverty.
2. It stresses self-reliance and promotes wider participation of the people.
3. The primary focus is on broad-based economic growth and income distribution leading to a more egalitarian society.
4. The lowest income groups should be the main targets of intervention for instituting special action programmes.

The above definition serves as the basis for the evaluation of the past approaches to rural development.

Approaches to Rural Development

The various approaches made by the developing countries have been broadly classified under three types, technocratic, reformist and radical (Griffin, 1974). The technocratic approach lays stress on increased agricultural output through intensified use of modern technology and emphasises economic growth as the most important variable in the entire process of development. The radical approach entails far-reaching structural changes in the pattern of production, ownership of land and redistribution of assets. The over-riding objective of this strategy is to achieve faster growth and greater economic equality through drastic land reforms, institutional changes and mobilisation and participation of the rural population in self-reliant undertakings³. The reformist approach is a middle-path strategy emphasising the need for quick economic growth with better income distribution. While no radical structural changes are advocated, institutional reforms and land tenurial changes conducive to increased productivity and wider participation through co-operative institutions, are advocated within a given socio-political framework.

These approaches have in recent times been constituted as three different models based on the level of government intervention in instituting change and development (Inayatullah, 1979). These models have been described as:

1. the low intervention-productivity model
2. the medium intervention-solidarity model
3. the high intervention-equality model

2. *Draft Declaration of Principles and Programmes of Action*, WCARRD, Rome, 12 July 1979.
 3. *Problems of Rural Workers in Asia and the Pacific*, Report III, Asian Regional Conference, ILO, Manila, 1980.

The description of these three models is basically in conformity with the three types of approaches discussed earlier.

Most third world countries have either adopted the technocratic or the low intervention model or the reformist or medium intervention model in preference to the radical or high intervention equality model. Within this broad framework, the types of rural development programmes implemented in the developing countries during the past three decades have taken different names such as community development, agricultural development, integrated rural development and basic needs approach. The strategies and policies associated with each of these programmes varied considerably and were in direct relationship with the power-structure and socio-political consciousness of the communities concerned. The success or failure of each one of these strategies has valid lessons for the future.

Community Development Programmes

The community development programmes of the 1950's were expected to be multi-purpose in character and scope. It was expected that local resources as well as local participation would be forthcoming on a voluntary basis and that the benefits would be equally shared by the rich and the poor. The community development programmes, in many instances, turned out to be mere public work programmes. In some instances where this approach did lead to the establishment of production-oriented enterprises it was found difficult to integrate them with a more broad based development programme due to bureaucratic pressures. A serious drawback of this approach was the assumption that village communities are homogenous in nature and that the rich and the poor, the weak and the able, would participate in community decision-making and be involved on a uniform basis in their own development. The village institutions became corrupt serving more the needs of the rich and demanding the services of the poor for voluntary community work. Consequently, this approach turned out to be of not much "purpose" and was mostly "process" and little of "product"⁴.

Agricultural Development Programmes

The 1960's saw most countries in the Asian Region faced with a serious problem of food shortage. Frantic efforts were made to increase productivity in agricultural lands through improved seed-fertilizer technology which was being developed in international research institutes and elsewhere. The development of high yielding varieties of seed and related chemical inputs gave the necessary impetus to usher in an era of investment in production-oriented programmes. It was envisaged that increased production would generate higher economic growth leading to reduction in poverty.

The high cost of agricultural inputs combined with the skewed distribution and delivery mechanisms enabled those farmers who commanded adequate resources to benefit from the new technology. Numerous studies conducted on the impact of the "Green Revolution" on the small farmer and the landless workers confirm that the new technology was exploited ably by the landed gentry and the middle class farmers at the expense of the poorer farmers. Consequently, the agricultural production programmes failed to generate sufficient enthusiasm among the lower income groups whose conditions in most instances further deteriorated. "It is a

4. Gelia Castillo, Professor of Rural Sociology in one of her seminar discussions on IRD held in the Philippines in 1975.

remarkable feature of Asian agriculture that the institutions, policies and technologies associated with the so-called green revolution often had a noticeable class bias which has accentuated the initial inequality in the distribution of income" (Griffin and Ghose 1978).

Integrated Rural Development Programmes

The sectoral approach to rural development with emphasis on industries in the fifties and agriculture in the sixties left little impact on the rural poor. It was in this context that a new concept of integrated approach to rural development was launched. It has been stated that the integrated approach to rural development planning, "implies the taking into account of all important conditions obtaining at the outset with regard to the distribution of wealth and income, the legal framework, the social system, cultural traditions, government services, private economic activities, the current stage of agricultural productivity and the potential for raising it"⁵ It also refers to a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach whereby a series of activities that are complementary and mutually reinforcing are undertaken almost simultaneously. The need for *integration* of economic, social and even cultural activities along with the *transformation* of institutions and services specifically oriented towards solving the problems of the rural poor is recognised and considered fundamental to the implementation of IRD programmes.

The limited experience of developing countries in implementing integrated rural development programmes during the past few years indicates that in most of these countries the desired levels of commitment and participation were not forthcoming. Though lip-service has been paid to multi-disciplinary approaches, very often, development planners and implementors have found it difficult to break away from the mono-disciplinary approach. Further, in some countries where IRD projects are being tried out on an experimental basis serious problems of coordination and administration have been encountered. However, it is increasingly recognized that in the context of widespread poverty, integrated approach to rural development has great relevance and applicability and should therefore receive continuing emphasis despite initial problems and constraints. Some of the countries such as India, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka have in recent times also adopted a variant of this approach known as the area development approach. The variation basically is in the extent of the size, scope and nature of the area involved but the principles continues to remain the same.

Basic Needs Approach

The basic needs strategy of development outlined by ILO since 1976 does not go counter to the integrated approach as its main thesis rests on the provision of basic needs such as food, housing, clothing and services such as education and health with the ultimate objective of eradicating poverty and unemployment. This strategy as well as the IRD approach stems from the fact that the "trickle down" theory whereby the benefits of economic growth were expected to filter down to the poor had in fact had the opposite effect of aggravating poverty and creating greater inequalities at the rural level.

The IRD approach as well as the basic needs strategy has received some impetus in the last five years consequent to increased attention paid by international multi-lateral agencies including the UN and the World Bank. Proponents of the basic

5. Report on the FAO/SIDA Symposium on Agricultural Institutions for Integrated Rural Development 1971.

needs approach consider that direct provision of essential goods and services will help to eliminate poverty more rapidly. There is now considerable debate about whether the basic needs strategy will slow down a country's growth rate or whether it will complement the efforts aimed at greater productivity and growth. There is a growing feeling that improvements in the provision of the basic needs can augment the rate of growth. While this may be substantially correct in some countries such as Sri Lanka, the supporting structure and the socio-political system as well as a variety of other factors have to be considered together in evaluating the suitability of this approach to the different countries.

The various approaches adopted so far have to be evaluated in relation to the established objectives outlined in the definition of rural development. It was noted that the objectives provided for alleviation of poverty, increased economic growth and equitable income distribution, wider participation of the low-income groups in socio-economic activities and institution of special action programmes for upgrading the life style of the most disadvantaged sector of the rural population. The trend of development however, was rather disappointing 'as the material conditions of life for millions of villagers deteriorated in the 1970's as against one or two decades ago.'⁶ The ILO's medium-term plan 1982-87 estimates that the magnitude of Asian poverty will rise from 759 millions to 818 millions during the period 1974-87. What then were the factors and issues that led to the distorted development pattern?

Issues in Rural Development

As rural development is a complex process requiring a multi-dimensional approach, the issues are also multi-faceted in character. The main issues could be contained under the following:

1. political commitment
2. institutional reforms
3. administrative capability
4. participation
5. special action programmes for the low-income groups.

Political Commitment

In a majority of developing countries the commitment for rural development though expressed profoundly in words was not matched with action. Political commitment for rural development should mean at a minimum, attaching high priority to rural-oriented action programmes, releasing funds both in time and in adequate amounts for such programmes on a continuous basis and providing the requisite administrative and institutional support throughout the period of implementation. Political commitment also becomes essential to institute far-reaching reforms such as land reform to motivate tradition-bound societies to innovate and reorganise their societal structure for a more equitable distribution of the nation's resource endowments.

The commitment that was forthcoming was limited in scope and nature as the prevailing power structure in most countries espoused causes that were politically expedient. Those in positions of power came either from the elitist class or from the wealthy landed interests. Their interests coincided more with the richer entrepre-

6. Report of the Director-General, ILO, Asian Development in the 1980's—9th Asian Regional Conference, Manila, December 1980.

neurs and industrialists in the urban centres and/or the landlords in the rural areas. Consequently, the rural poor had to be contended with mere palliatives which came in the form of subsidies and welfare measures rather than concrete structural reforms.

The political leadership often succumbed to the manifold pressures of the more articulate urban population. This bias towards the urban sector was conditioned by a number of factors such as the organised nature of the working classes who resorted to direct action and disrupted the smooth flow of economic services and goods, the power structure of the bureaucracy which in its desire to keep urban prices low thwarted all attempts to increase farm prices of staple products and above all the identity of interests of the urban population with those at the helm of power. "The cumulative effects of urban bias have contributed to rural-urban migration and to restricting access of the landless and the near-landless to public services and to employment that might have enhanced their productivity, opportunity and quality of life" (Esman 1978).

Institutional Reforms

Rural development is difficult to achieve without substantial changes in the social structure which remains primarily agrarian in almost all the developing countries. The basic resource of a rural society is land and unless it is distributed equitably and made use of productively, social transformation will never be a reality. Most developing countries have endeavoured in varying degrees to institute land reforms. The extent of opposition both political and technical, advanced against land reform in these countries is well known. The land reform programmes that were instituted were often mere compromises to pressures from various groups and failed to generate popular support.

Most countries which initiated land reforms stopped with fixing ceiling limits and carefully avoided actual implementation of the legislative enactments or in the alternative did not make available adequate funds. The complexity of land reform legislation made land distribution a difficult process. Countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand which succeeded in fixing ceiling limits and taking over excess land were not able to achieve success in re-distribution. Few countries such as the Philippines implementing a relatively more successful land reform programme than the others also suffered from the limitations in scope and coverage. Those who benefitted from land reforms in some countries have become petty landlords using rural power politics to buy up the lands of the less fortunate tenant-turned owner-cultivators. Inadequate institutional support, escalation in prices of farm inputs as well as the rural power structure which is heavily weighted in favour of the more affluent class emerged as the chief factors leading to the disposition of land by the beneficiaries. This is, however, a symptom of the malady that exists today in the total agrarian structure of these countries. Those who should have a 'say' in programme implementation are left out of it. In the redistributive process the people must have power. "Governments by themselves cannot achieve rural development. They can only facilitate it and make it possible. They can organise, help and guide. They cannot do it. For rural development is people's development of themselves, their lives and environment, and the people cannot do it if they have no power"⁷.

7. Julius Nyerere in his speech at World Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development (WCARRD), Rome, 1969.

The failure of rural institutions to provide support services such as credit, extension, agricultural inputs and marketing on an equitable and impartial basis has further accentuated the dichotomy that exists between those who have access to these services and those denied them. That credit, extension and marketing reached the larger and the relatively affluent farmers and benefitted them most has been well documented in a number of studies undertaken in the recent past. "Better connections and greater influence of richer farmers led to a near monopoly of the restricted supplies of credit".⁸ Rural institutions such as the co-operatives have served to reflect national trends in power-structure and in the distribution of vital inputs they became instruments of the local elitist groups who dominate the village society. They were imposed from above and had no rapport or participation of the people whom they were directed to serve. The personnel in these institutions became over time 'civil servants' working for paid salaries and unsympathetic to the needs and aspirations of the disadvantaged groups.

The inadequacy of land reform and institutional support measures had distorted the advance made in technology and agricultural growth. It has been established beyond doubt that with a few exceptions, agricultural output per head in Asia has been rising. Average incomes too have shown an upward trend but the incremental incomes have been distributed unequally leading to the living standards of the disadvantaged groups deteriorating further.

Administrative Capability

One of the serious constraints encountered by the developing countries in implementing rural development programmes has been the inadequate and inappropriate administrative structure that was bequeathed to them by their colonial rulers. Most of the countries did endeavour to re-orient the administrative services to cope with the developmental needs in contrast to the law and order functions performed by them previously. The demands and complexities of the process of rural development, however, needed dynamic administrative support which has not been readily forthcoming. Several studies undertaken in recent years have confirmed that due to the diverse as well as multi-disciplinary character of operations involved, the administrative structure showed signs of heavy stress leading to lamentable lags in implementation of some of the key rural development projects. Excessive paperwork, wasteful meetings and cumbersome procedures of plan implementation became key issues in the protracted execution of projects and served to enlarge the frontiers of corruption. An example of this is the varied experience of developing countries in the area of credit disbursement. The number of forms that the farmers were called upon to complete, to satisfy administrative criteria laid down by officials literally drove them into the hands of money-lenders and usurers.

Management as a tool for improving performance in the rural sector was relatively neglected until recently. A classic description of this situation is given by Robert Chambers (1974).

'In practice, however, management procedures receive much less notice and care than they deserve. To academia they are often an unopened book and believed to be a very dull and unacademic one at that. To short-term consultants they are unattractive because procedural recommendations involve hard work and require a detailed understanding of the administrative system. To senior government servants embroiled in day-to-day affairs they are just one extra burden, and are

8. *Rural Development-Evaluation Study No. 2*, UNDP, New York, June 1979.

thought out under pressure, embodied in circulars, and then introduced on a national scale without either pretesting or subsequent evaluation. But the principles of experimental testing which apply to pilot projects should also apply to procedures. That this so rarely happens is one reason why the detailed rules and conventions by which government agencies in rural areas operate are so often crude and inappropriate, and why a better design of management procedures presents a key point of leverage for improving performance.

The administrative machinery is beset with a number of other problems as well. There has been widespread criticism of the bureaucracy's role in rural development because of its linkages with the relatively affluent and the middle-income groups. The socio-cultural barriers between the administrators and the rural population have also contributed to accentuate this situation further. Governments continue to over-centralise administration of rural development projects while emphasising the need for decentralisation and devolution of authority to the regions and districts.

The variety of functions and services that have to be performed to get a rural development project operational, underscores the need for a project approach which entails closer coordination among co-operating agencies, cutting across narrow concerns of departments and ministries. Lack of coordination as well as inter-departmental or inter-ministerial rivalries have seriously impeded implementation of programmes at the project level. Taking note of the inherent weaknesses in the administrative structure, donor agencies such as the World Bank have often advocated the establishment of separate organisations or units to administer rural projects. This has had mixed results. While programme delivery was observed to be satisfactory, proliferation of government agencies only helped to accentuate disparities in salary and cadre structures among organisations which in turn led to reduced motivation and growing frustrations among the traditional service categories in the bureaucracy.

Monitoring and evaluation never became serious subjects of concern until about the latter half of the 1970's. The gaps between plans, targets and actual implementation were noted long after, when corrective action could not be taken. Techniques of supervision, control and reporting were often archaic in form and content. Costs and benefits of programmes were either not closely examined before or during implementation or deliberately given less importance in the light of more important political or social considerations.

Participation

Planning and implementation of development programmes have often been considered as major bureaucratic efforts requiring only acquiescence by the people and rarely their active involvement. The priorities of the government were considered priorities of the poor. Akhter Hameed Khan speaking specifically about his Comilla experience once stated that "the planners saw productivity as the main priority and had designed an extension service whose main function was to increase output! The villagers saw as the real problems the construction of such local infrastructure as drainage facilities and roads and later irrigation works and the useful employment of the landless labourers" (Khan, 1976). While the priorities of the government merged often with certain classes of the people, they rarely synchronised with the needs of the low-income groups.

The rural institutions established to cater to the needs of the rural poor often excluded them as the larger farmers or the elitist groups captured power and utilised

it for enhancing their social and economic status. For example, in most countries of the region, the imposition of the co-operatives on the rural poor had limited impact on their life style, in contrast to the situation reflected by the farmers' organisations of Taiwan and Japan. The heterogeneous nature of rural societies was not appreciated by governments which created institutions at local level for performance of selected economic functions. The regional disparities in resource endowments as well as socio-cultural differences were ignored in establishing these institutions. Under these circumstances, participation in its true sense encompassing all classes of people remained a distant dream.

Special Action Programmes

Recent surveys and studies⁹ have clearly indicated that the economic and social conditions of the low-income groups, particularly share-tenants, landless workers and small farmers are deteriorating. Most developing countries have made feeble efforts to make a frontal attack on the issues confronting these disadvantaged groups. They embarked on package programmes to cover a wider segment of the rural population consisting of a heterogeneous group of larger farmers, middle-class entrepreneurs and smaller farmers. Special action programmes to improve the living conditions of the landless workers — the most depressed group — were rarely initiated. What is more disconcerting is that most countries have still not been able to identify the different categories in these groups. The nature and extent of the problems governing these groups are still subjects of conjecture while development efforts are ostensibly directed at the whole rural sector!

The foregoing analysis focussed on the strategies and approaches adopted over the last three decades to foster rural development. The emerging picture points to deterioration in living standards of the low-income groups and exacerbation of poverty and landlessness. It is reported that the proportion of rural population without land is increasing rapidly and that inequality of land among those who have access to it, is rising. Similarly, the distribution of money income is also following the pattern of land distribution in most countries (Keith Griffin).

Prospect for the Future

The bulk of the population in the developing countries will continue to live in the rural areas for many more decades. Rural development will therefore emerge as the most crucial and central concern of developing countries for years to come. The lessons of the past have to be clearly grasped if development planning for the future is to contribute to any meaningful improvement in the quality of life of the low-income groups.

The path to rural development, whether it is the technocratic approach, the reformist approach or the radical approach, that would best suit a particular country is a decision that has to be carefully evaluated both on the basis of past experiences and the extent of the developmental problems needing urgent attention. That the technocratic approach has largely failed, except in Taiwan and South Korea, to solve the issues of poverty and unemployment so far cannot be overlooked. The choice may often vary between the reformist and radical approaches depending upon the power structure, the political ideologies and the seriousness of the problems that have to be tackled.

9. The report of the Director-General of ILO at the Asian Regional Conference, Manila 1980, the analysis of Keith Griffin and Ajit Kumar Ghose on Growth and Improvement in the Rural areas of Asia (World Development, 1979), FAO, WCARRD reports and World Bank releases confirm this trend.

Increased Political Commitment

In the first instance there should be sincere and dedicated commitment for rural development at the highest levels. Commitment in words should be translated into action whereby there is a definite shift in priorities in the allocation of resources. The balance should now be tilted unmistakably in favour of the rural sector, particularly the rural poor, in contrast to the prevailing bias towards urban development.

More Effective Institutional and Technological Reforms

There is a very close correlation between political commitment and the launching of far-reaching institutional reforms. Hitherto commitment for implementation of piecemeal land reforms came reluctantly, if at all, because of the patronage and power wielded by the landowners and other vested interests. It is not recognised that land reform is a structural re-arrangement vital for re-ordering societies. The spectacular successes achieved by countries such as Taiwan and Japan in this direction should serve as a guiding force to the developing countries of the Asian Region.

Redistribution of land, in keeping with the political, social and cultural ethos of a country, should be accompanied by concerted efforts at increasing agricultural productivity. Technological innovations should be carefully tailored to suit the needs of the different regions, the agro-climatic conditions and above all the different classes and levels of the beneficiaries of such programmes. The neglected areas of investment in agriculture such as rainfed farming on which a substantial number of farmers subsist need to be given emphasis in the future. The technological advances made consequent to the Green Revolution hardly benefited rainfed farming. "Rainfed agriculture currently supports and will continue to support in the 1980's the bulk of rural households in the region. There has been no breakthrough in research on rainfed agriculture comparable to the scientific advances which triggered the Green Revolution. Strenuous efforts must be exerted to improve rainfed technology. One area of wide relevance is research into improving the cropping systems and practices of small farmers who are short on cash but long on labour. Because of the size of this sub-sector, even modest productivity improvements will raise agricultural output and rural income appreciably"¹⁰. This quotation underlines the vacuum that exists in an area which has tremendous potential for improving the livelihood of millions of subsistence farmers in countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines.

Intensified Efforts to Institute Special Action Programmes

A problem of major dimension that confronts rural development planners today is the proliferation of the number of landless workers in most countries of the region. The difficulties in identifying and organising them have made the governments to concentrate their attention on those who are easily identified such as small farmers and larger farmers. Most countries in the Asian Region as well as elsewhere have no up to date statistics of the number, categories and socio-economic conditions of the underprivileged groups in their respective countries. The efforts made by international agencies such as the World Bank, FAO, and ILO as well as realisation of the serious economic situation of these groups which are now beginning to articulate, albeit in a modest way, have now opened the eyes of the governments. In the

¹⁰ Report of the Director-General, ILO—Ninth Asian Regional Conference, Manila, December 1980.

first instance, surveys and research studies have to be instituted to identify the various categories of landless labour and share-tenants separately. Research should constitute an important and integral component of the development strategy as witnessed during the early growth period and even at present in the developed world. Secondly, special action programmes for these groups have to be launched to ensure better income distribution, improved productivity and a desirable standard of living. The action programmes have to be specially designed and executed by selected personnel who are committed to the alleviation of poverty in rural areas.

The problem of landless workers is more a problem of unemployment. The issues confronting share-tenants and small farmers are different. The share-tenants need in the first instance greater security if not ownership rights and secondly more institutional support in the form of credit, extension and marketing services. The small farmers on the other hand need improved technology and appropriate credit, marketing and extension support. Larger farmers have often access to credit from commercial banks and related establishments, maintain close ties with marketing institutions and obtain their sources of chemical inputs direct from suppliers in bulk. The small farmers have none of these advantages and depend heavily on government supported or government sponsored institutional sources to provide them with necessary assistance. The traditional approach of pooling all these groups together for government support services is not considered desirable in view of the different strategies needed, though the share-tenants and small farmers can often be taken together, for purposes of economy in the distribution of services such as extension, credit and marketing. Improvement in productivity which is critical to this group presupposes a more intensive approach to crop production where the accent should be more on improvement in cultural practices using family labour rather than on increased financial investment.

The landless labour has to be provided with diverse opportunities of employment. It is unlikely that even if land reform is implemented on a more vigorous basis, it would result in all of them receiving viable, economic units of land. Since land is a limited asset, the solution has to be found elsewhere. One of the major programmes of consequence would be the provision of employment in rural infrastructure programmes as well as in agro-industries and small-scale cottage-based and estate-based industries. The rural unemployment schemes in the past have often tended to be charitable relief operations rather than permanent sources of employment. The need therefore is to match employment generation with investment for greater output. Work on the construction of rural houses, bridges, roads and other infrastructure may not provide long term employment opportunities. A more aggressive attempt should therefore be made to create labour-intensive agro-industries and small-scale industries. Agro-industries could subsume livestock and dairy development, small-scale poultry and piggery establishments as well as industries based on the by-products of agricultural crops produced in the respective countries. Industrial estates can be established in rural areas for production of garments, light engineering goods and other consumer-oriented ventures. The small-scale cottage industries should be based on locally available raw materials.

The establishment and operation of special action programmes require a total commitment by governments to invest funds and resources, undertake feasibility studies, implement carefully prepared plans and monitor continuously the progress of such programmes for identifying bottlenecks in implementation. It would be necessary for organising the beneficiaries into groups according to vocations or categories for purposes of collective action. Establishment of co-operatives may be

the next logical step in order that disparate groups are brought together for organising the delivery of inputs, marketing and institutional support. Organisation of co-operatives however should arise from a 'felt need' rather than from being imposed from above.

Improving Administrative Capacity

The gaps between theory and practice of administration of rural development programmes were referred to earlier. The lack of administrative capacity which was highlighted as early as the 1960's has continued to impose some limitations on the implementation of rural development programmes (Waterston, 1965). As the process of training and re-training of civil servants on modern tools and techniques of management, the importance of which is now recognised, would take time, the administration of rural development projects or programmes would continue to suffer at least for the next few years.

The issue today in some of the developing countries is not so much the lack of capacity or talent but the absence of commitment to decentralise and delegate decision-making power in adequate form and content to the hinterlands. The fear to decentralise and delegate partly emanates from the belief that the local populations are not ready or are inadequately equipped to effectively administer their own development. On the other hand, it is also due to inherent reluctance of the centralised bureaucracy to part with power. Decentralisation of functions would enable the *local units* of administration to interact closely with the rural population and understand their needs and aspirations better. Similarly, some measure of devolution of functions should be passed on to the *rural organisations* of the people as well. The success of the farmers' associations of Taiwan, Japan and Korea as well as that of China clearly indicates the viability of this proposal as long as this step is taken after a careful evaluation of the capabilities and resourcefulness of the organisations. Devolution would be meaningless unless supported with an appreciable degree of autonomy and adequate releases of funds.

Decentralisation should be accompanied with the recruitment of local personnel for absorption to the administrative cadres. The tendency to send those with limited field experience from central offices to rural areas has to be minimised in the light of past failures and misdirected efforts. The failure of local level personnel to improve their performance on the other hand, has rightly been attributed to the poor incentive structure of the administrative systems in the developing countries. The need to pay enhanced allowances such as hardship allowances or alternative incentives to those who work under difficult conditions in remote areas cannot be over-emphasised. Similarly, a more rational salary structure and a suitable reward system should be introduced to motivate public officers to improve performance.

Another area of concern referred to earlier is the serious lack of linkages and co-ordination between government agencies at both central and local levels. While co-ordination has surfaced as an important constraint to implementation of development programmes, it has often been over-rated as a magic solution to many of the problems of project execution. Co-ordination becomes necessary when duplication of functions and specialisation exists. Duplication can be avoided if inter-departmental rivalries are discouraged by appropriate administrative fiat. Where specialisation in functions brings about the need for co-ordination, suitable co-ordinating mechanisms with power and authority to forge

closer co-ordination and interaction among collaborating institutions should be established with patronage emanating from the highest levels. The success of the rural development programme in South Korea is a valuable example of central direction and co-ordination exercised at the highest levels without sacrificing the principle of decentralisation.

There is increasing recognition that monitoring and evaluation help policy-makers and planners at various stages of project planning and development to improve the quality of decision-making. The development strategies of today need to be continuously monitored and evaluated closely to ascertain whether the intended target groups benefitted from programme implementation or that implementation fell far short of expectations. In most countries, however, monitoring is, more often than not, conceived of as collection of information and development of reporting systems with little attention paid to using the information and reporting systems as effective management tools for controlling financial and physical performance. Indicators for measuring performance, output and effects of rural development projects have not been developed in any comprehensive manner. Greater attention should therefore be given to the identification and formulation of suitable indicators for more effective monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Whenever international agencies support rural development programmes, a built-in monitoring and evaluation component is provided. Developing countries which are aware of the fundamental weaknesses in their administrative structure should readily concede the need for establishing monitoring and evaluation units in each development-oriented organisation. The organisational arrangements should in turn be extended to cover the administrative units at the regional, provincial and project levels. Establishment of a three-tier structure (at central, regional or provincial and project levels) is considered essential as the emerging trend has been to limit monitoring and evaluation of activities at the central level only.

The collection, interpretation and analysis of data require specialised skills which have often been not forthcoming from among staff selected to work in projects. It is therefore important that suitable training programmes are conducted at all levels to impart the necessary professional skills required for monitoring and evaluating projects.

Enhancing People's Participation

Participation as a key element in the development process has in recent times been widely canvassed and extensively acknowledged. It is interesting to observe that various international conferences such as the World Employment Conference of 1976 and the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of 1979 strongly emphasised the need for participation because it "stimulates the people to mobilise their collective initiatives, energies and resources for cooperation in the accomplishment of development tasks". There are some who consider participation as the single most important variable that determines the success or failure of a programme. There are others who consider participation as a complementary process that reinforces governmental intervention in the field of economic growth and social mobilisation. However, the nature, scope as well as the type of participation and the different levels at which it should be forthcoming have not been clearly defined. It is not at all stages or activities of programme implementation that meaningful participation of beneficiaries is possible though its relevance and applicability at all levels—project, local government and central government

levels-cannot be overemphasised. It is essential that the stages or phases of a programme where participation is feasible and desirable for realization of programme objectives or goals are clearly delineated. Similarly, the nature and scope of programme tasks where participation is vital to the process of development should also be spelled out. Lack of clear direction in these spheres can result in inadequate appreciation of the inter-relationships between participation and programme impact or effects.

The type and nature of participation considered appropriate would vary according to the ideological commitment and the development goals of a country. In the present stage of growth of the countries in the Asian Region, participation has to be viewed as a complementary input to government supported development activities.

At the local level, rural organisations are expected to foster participation. Past experience shows that rural organisations that emerged out of a felt need were either suppressed or actively discouraged because of potential threats to the 'establishment'. Natural leaders among the rural communities have often tended to shy away from government programmes due to indifference and opposition from vested interests. Spontaneous organisations would rarely emerge unless governments lend them a helping hand at least during the initial growth period. The first step in this process would be to recognise them and give freedom to articulate their grievances and aspirations. The controlling power in these organisations should lie with the representative members of the community and not with the more articulate rural elite.

While rural organisations would obviously be the primary instruments, the creation of such organisations require considerations relating to geographical, cultural, social and historical barriers that can inhibit or promote participation. Secondly, these organisations should not endeavour to embrace all categories of people in rural communities. The industrial labour in rural areas or artisans and technicians need a different form and kind of organisational support than the landless labour or share-tenants. It is incumbent on both the government and non-government organisers to recognise and understand the varied aspirations and behavioural patterns of the different groups. Thirdly, the rural poor need proper training in the art of self-management of their organisations as well as in the scope and nature of participation that will improve their economic status. Training needs to be organised on a priority basis and followed up continuously with systematic evaluation of its impact on participatory management.

Management of public enterprises should no longer be done in a paternalistic manner. The people should not be treated as 'objects' of development but as 'subjects' having a say in their own development. Up to now they have remained as passive recipients of technology and other related benefits developed outside their realm of experience. This trend needs to be reversed through a process of participatory management whereby the 'centres of power' reflect the true aspirations of the people.

The success of participation would ultimately depend on the extent to which various disadvantaged groups are offered facilities to organise and involve themselves fully in the mobilisation of local resources, distribution of inputs, marketing of output, fixing of realistic pricing policies and the enrichment of their social, cultural and political values.

Conclusions

The difficulties encountered by the developing countries in containing population growth as well as inflation have distorted development efforts. The rate of growth of population has been varying between 1.7 and 3.0 in most countries of the region pinpointing the need for a more dynamic approach to population control. The constraints arising from limited scarce resources and escalating prices of petroleum products will continue to pose new threats to more investment in rural areas unless self-reliance and optimum use of local resources become potent and viable strategies in the implementation of development programmes.

The failure of past approaches to rural development highlights the need for a more direct attack on the problems of poverty and unemployment through integrated efforts at rural development. Political commitment should no longer be a manifestation of ambivalent attitudes towards rural reconstruction. The commitment should be towards greater and broad-based investment in rural areas with the objective of matching the two basic assets, man and land. While the primary focus should be on agricultural diversification and expansion, industrial growth that is supportive of integrated development should be encouraged and fostered.

The issue of land reforms should not be viewed from a parochial or partisan angle. It should become one of the chief instruments through which the rural power structure is altered to provide for a more egalitarian society. It should also serve as a medium for increasing the bargaining power as well as participation of the rural poor in development activities. Participation should be aimed at promoting self-reliance, building up of decision-making capabilities, involvement in the planning and implementing of development projects and mobilisation of leadership potential available within village communities.

The administrative support structure should be re-organised to permit greater decentralisation, devolution of functions, and a more realistic, flexible and simple monitoring and evaluation system. Co-ordination of development programmes should be achieved through institutional mechanisms that provide for intervention at the highest levels.

Rural development does not take place in a vacuum—in isolation of development efforts at the urban level. The degree of economic, social and political relationships that develop between the rural and urban sectors is governed by the pace and speed with which the rural sector interacts with the urban population. The institutional linkages between various sub-sectors such as banking, marketing and credit need to be strengthened to foster balanced rural-urban growth. Agricultural and agro-industrial policies, if judiciously blended with balanced regional development strategies, should enable the countries in the region to reach satisfactory levels of rural-urban equilibrium.

The stability and resurgence of the developing countries largely depend on the outcome of the present day efforts at rural reconstruction. The success or failure of such efforts would determine the pace at which economic growth and social equity would be achieved in the future.

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