

Public Policy Initiatives to Enable Access to Sustainable Livelihood to Rural Populace in India: A Framework Based Analysis

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Abstract:

Nearly 70 percent of the people in India live in rural areas and of them almost 25.7 percent live Below Poverty Line (based on NSSO 2011-12 report). The number of rural people in India is 833.1 million of which 216.5 million are estimated to be Below Poverty Line (BPL). There is pressing need to develop rural India to ensure balanced and sustainable economic growth in the country. A plethora of Rural Development initiatives have been formulated developed and implemented from time to time by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in order to alleviate poverty from the face of India so as to ensure sustainable livelihood to the rural populace. This paper explains through a framework, the context, dimensions, policies and schemes considered by the MoRD for enabling access to sustainable livelihood to rural dwellers in India. The framework based analysis enables to easily comprehend the way the public sector delivery mechanism functions towards realizing the objective of equitable and sustainable development. The framework has been developed on the basis of Meta-analytic survey of government reports and websites. An effort is also made to briefly describe the rationale, dimensions and schemes considered for enabling access to sustainable livelihood with the help of statistical data obtained from macro data sources.

Key Words:

Sustainable Livelihood, Public Policy Initiatives, Rural Populace, Rural Development Dimensions, Context based development

Introduction:

Ministry of Rural Development spearheads the country's efforts to enhance access to sustainable livelihood to scores of rural residents by means of providing them employment, education, housing and health care facilities through its various policies and schemes. The ratio of increase in rural to urban population is 4:15, which is mainly due to the migration of rural population to urban areas in search of jobs for their livelihood. There are nearly 6.45 lakh villages in India in which there are about 833 million residents who are mostly deprived of many privileges enjoyed by their urban counterparts. Around 216 million rural residents are estimated to be Below Poverty Line. They are deprived of even the basic amenities of life. In order to ensure sustainable livelihood to them, Government of India has implemented several rural welfare schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Rural Livelihoods mission, Indira Awas Yojna, National Social Assistance Programme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna and so on.

This paper investigates into the rationale and need for such developmental programmes oriented towards the rural welfare, delivery mechanism adopted, the programmes and schemes envisaged for the purpose and the dimensions considered for development.

Research Context and Statement of the Problem:

Massive outlay of funds is rolled out to ameliorate the quality of sustenance of rural Indians and there is a need to understand and justify the rationale and mechanism behind such huge expenditure. Though adequate information is available on the subject from different sources, they are all in a fragmented form. This paper provides a simple framework to

comprehend the context, dimensions and the mechanism involved in enabling access to sustainable livelihood to rural residents.

Objectives:

1. To examine the rationale and need for sustainable livelihood programmes in rural areas.
2. To identify the dimensions that ensure sustainable livelihood to rural populace.
3. To develop a comprehensive framework indicating various components of sustainable livelihood.
4. To indicate the prevailing rural development delivery mechanism within the framework developed.
5. To briefly outline and analyze the various policy initiatives adopted by the Government towards rural development.

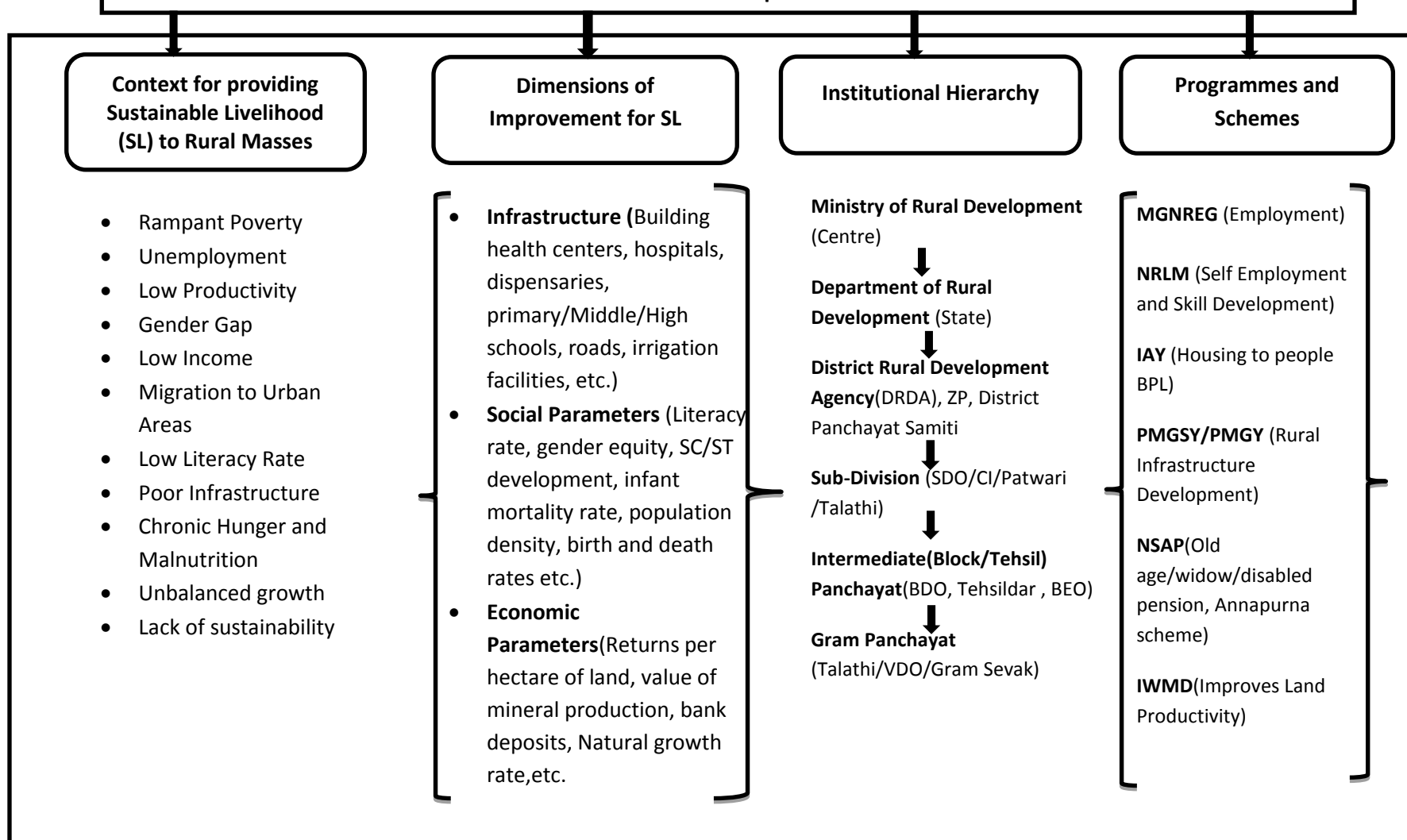
Scope of the Study

The scope of the research is confined to components established within the framework developed for the study. It includes the context and dimensions of rural development, policies and programmes identified for the purpose and the delivery mechanism adopted by the Government.

Methodology Adopted

Descriptive research method was employed for the study. Secondary data required for the study was gathered through extensive internet search. Reports and articles of pertinence to research were scrutinized and incorporated to develop the framework enclosed on the ensuing page.

Fig.1: Framework indicating Context, Dimensions, Institutional Hierarchy and Programmes for ensuring Sustainable Livelihood to Rural Populace in India



Contextual Basis for Sustainable Livelihood Policy:

Adoption of sustainable livelihood approach in rural areas will help in addressing the need-based problems on priority basis through formulation of policies or through direct involvement of public agencies. It is one of the sure ways to alleviate poverty in India in a phased manner. But that will be possible only when a fool-proof and transparent delivery mechanism is established and continuously monitored to prevent leakages in grants and funds channelized towards the intended cause. The context which mandated public action to ensure sustainable livelihood is discussed below. (*Refer Fig: 1*)

- More than $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the population in India includes **rural residents**, yet their **contribution to National Income** is **only $1/3^{\text{rd}}$** . While residents of towns and cities constitute only $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the total population but they contribute almost $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ to National Income stream. This is mainly due to excessive dependence on agriculture for employment in rural areas.
- Urbanization is increasing at a faster pace due to migration of rural population. More than 500 million or 40 % of the population is expected to reside in urban areas in 2030 which is only 28% at present.
- Average income of a rural dweller is only $1/4^{\text{th}}$ that of an urban dweller.
- Literacy rate in rural India was only 58.7 percent (2001) as against urban literacy rate of 79.9 and national literacy rate of 64.8 percent.
- Nearly 218 million people in rural areas were employed in agriculture and allied activities while another 99 million of them were employed in non-agricultural jobs. Rate of employment was low.
- Almost 38 percent of the rural population was below poverty line.

- Human Development Index was weighed down by factors like birth rate, death rate, literacy rate, infant mortality, gender ratio and other determinants.
- Rural India was characterized by chronic hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, illiteracy, gender gap, low productivity, low income levels and unbalanced growth.

Poverty statistics and Human Development Index made it imperative for the Government action towards enabling sustainable livelihood to rural people since they constitute more than 2/3rd of the total population and their growth and development will reflect in the national growth and development indices.

Tri-Dimensional Approach to Sustainable Livelihood

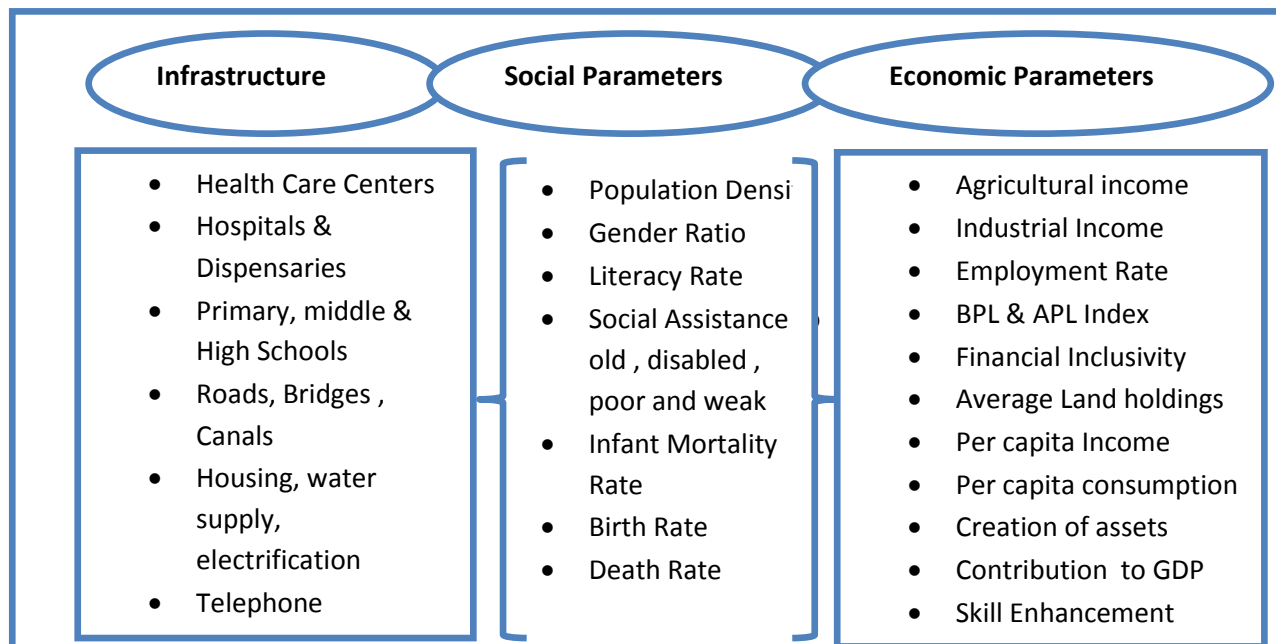
In order to ensure sustainable livelihood, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has developed and implemented several strategies and programmes. A few dimensions and perspectives have been shortlisted for the purpose.

The following diagram indicates the three dimensional approach of the Government to ensure sustainable livelihood. The key dimensions namely – Infrastructure, social parameters and economic parameters with their associated factors of development are indicated in **figure-2**.

- 1. Infrastructure Dimension:** This is of primary importance to enhance the sustainable livelihood to villagers. Under previous section, the rationale behind rural development initiatives of the government like - low literacy rate, poor health care facilities, lack of transportation, lack of communication and drinking water facilities, lack of electrification and so on were mentioned. In order to overcome these shortcomings, ministry of rural development has envisaged infrastructure development strategies as pivotal to ensure access to sustainable livelihood in rural areas through its various schemes such as Indira

AawasYojna (IAY), Pradhana Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and others. Various facilities provided under these schemes have been indicated in **figure 2**.

Figure 2: Tridimensional Approach to Sustainable Livelihood

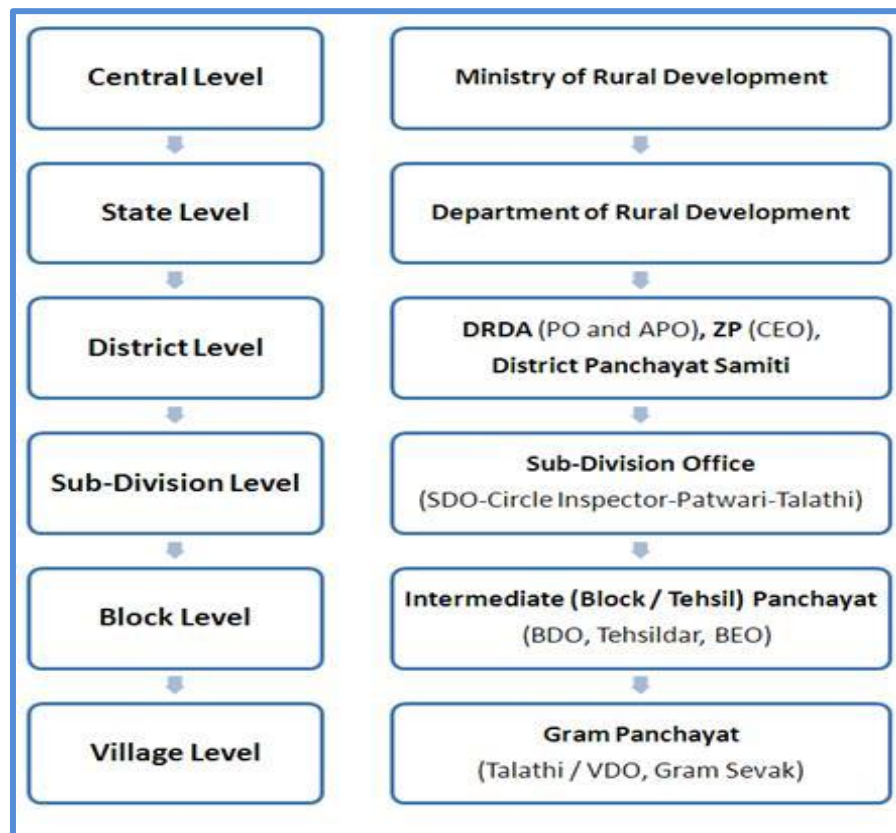


2. Social Parameters: Villages in India are characterized by poverty, high birth and death rates, infant mortality, gender discrimination and gender inequity, low literacy rate, low skill formation, unemployment and other societal problems. Government of India has developed and implemented policies like National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and other programmes to help in skill formation, and to offer social security benefits like old age pension, disablement benefits and other special privileges for backward and weaker sections of the society. Besides, under NRLM scheme it will conduct special training sessions to rural youth to facilitate skill formation and to create awareness about various entrepreneurial qualities for self-employment.

- 3. Economic Parameters:** The per capita income and per capita consumption expenditure of the rural residents is mere one quarter that of the urban residents. Their employment rate is low and many people depend on agriculture for their sustenance, non-agricultural income is low compared to agricultural income. Their contribution to National Income is also only 1/3rd though they constitute almost 3/4th of the total population of the country. To counter all these problems some of the public initiatives taken are- MGNREGA, NRLM, IAY, JawaharRozgarYojna. Asset creation, financial inclusivity schemes, Provision of infrastructure and conducting of skill enhancement programmes.

Delivery Mechanism to Provide Sustainable Livelihood

Figure: 3 Institutional Hierarchy to Enable Access to Sustainable Livelihood



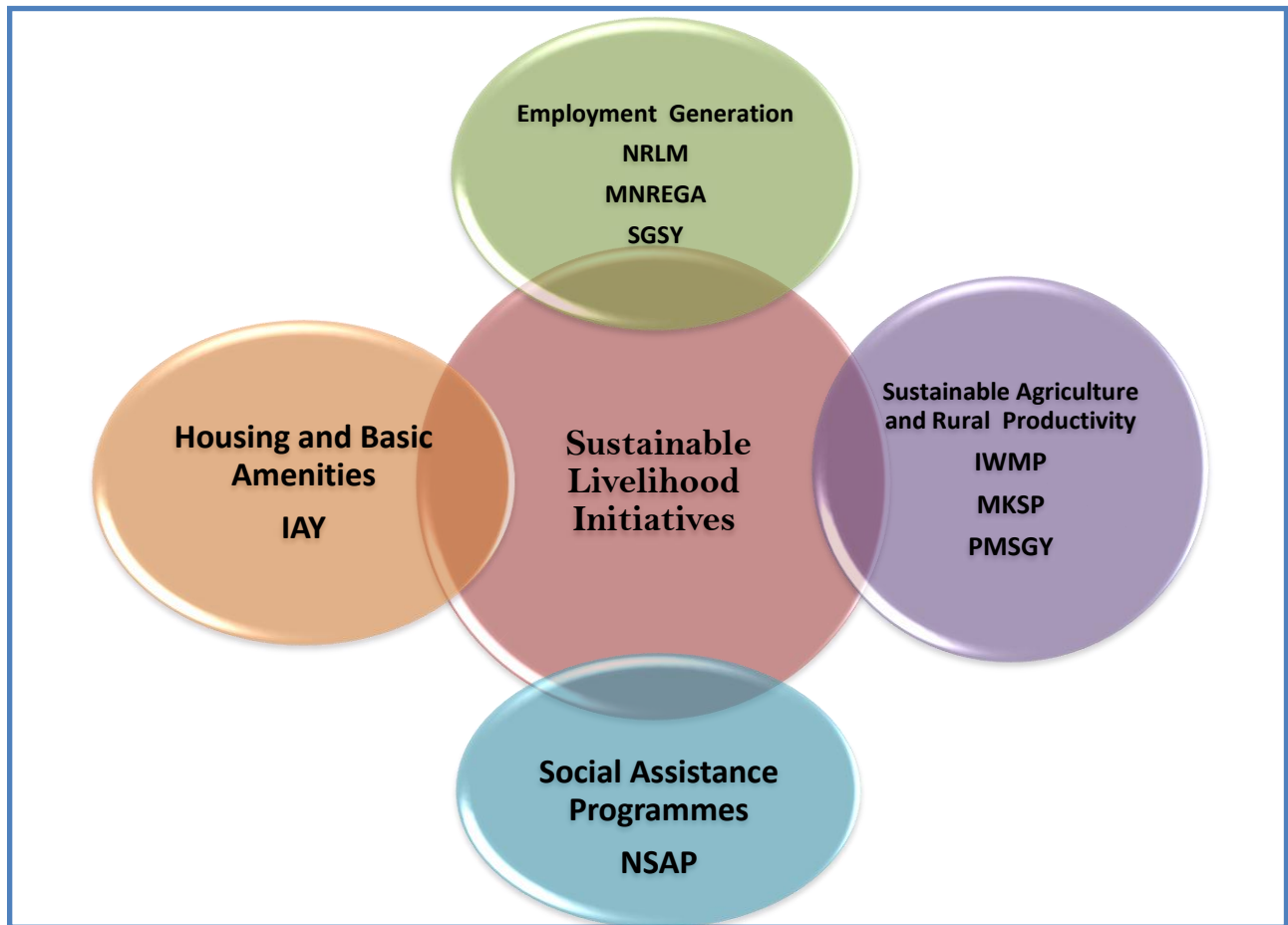
Sustainable livelihood initiatives to rural residents are delivered under ministry of rural development as the apex authority in India. The overall monitoring of all the programmes at the national level is carried out by the Monitoring Divisions of the Ministry. The Programme Divisions monitor the respective programmes implemented by them.

The Programmes of the Ministry are basically implemented by the State Implementing Agencies. At the State level, the Secretary/Commissioner dealing with the Programme monitors its implementation. The actual execution of the Programmes takes place at the District/Village level through District Rural Development Agency (DRDAs), Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other implementing Agencies, who monitor the execution of the programmes at the grass root level.

In order that the programme implementation reflects the needs and aspirations of the local people the Panchayat Raj Institutions are considered as an important tool for the implementation of the programmes of the Ministry. As a step towards decentralization of the planning process and implementation of the programmes, Panchayat Raj Institutions have been strengthened. A crucial role has been assigned to PRIs for programme implementation. Sustained efforts are being made to strengthen local governance, institutionalizing people's participation and empowering women through PRIs. The State governments are being pursued for delegation of adequate administrative and financial powers to PRIs and a significant change has been noticed in this regard.

Under this department there are three autonomous bodies viz., Council of Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and National Rural Road Development Agency (NRRDA).

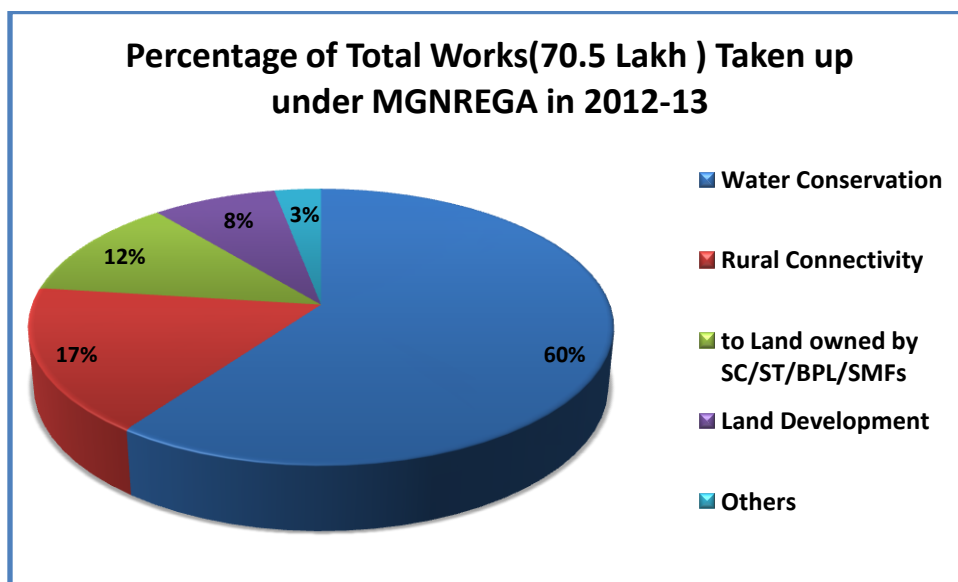
Policy Initiatives and Strategies of the Government for Providing Sustainable Livelihood



Employment Generation Schemes

1. Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme(MANREGA):

It is both center and state sponsored scheme in the ratio of 3:1 .It enhances livelihood security of people in rural areas by generating hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to rural households whose adults volunteer to do unskilled manual work.



Since its inception in 2006 till now MGNREGA has accomplished commendable feat by covering 7, 78,134 villages under planned outlay of 2, 36,323 crore by generating 1607.35 crore man-days of work to rural people.

2. Aajeevika- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM):

It was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in 2011. It aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancement and improved access to financial services.

NRLM has an agenda to cover 7 Crore rural poor households, across 600 districts, 6000 blocks, 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats and 6 lakh villages in the country through self-managed Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federated institutions and support them for livelihoods collectives in a period of 8-10 years. In addition, it will help poor to achieve increased access

to their rights, entitlements and public services, diversified risk and better social indicators of empowerment.

3. **The Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)** is a self-employment programme for the rural poor and it came into effect in 1999. It covers all aspects of self-employment like organization of rural poor into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their capacity building, training, planning of activity clusters, infrastructure development, financial assistance through bank credit provision of subsidy and marketing support.

Social Assistance Programme:

1. **The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** came into effect from 15th August, 1995. It aims at ensuring minimum national standard for social assistance in addition to the benefits that states are currently providing. NSAP at present comprises of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and Annapurna scheme.

Infrastructure Development Schemes:

1. **Indira Awas Yojna (IAY):** Housing is one of the basic requirements for human survival. Therefore, construction of houses was included as one of the major activities under the National Rural Employment Programme which began in 1980. **Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)** began in 1983. Indira Awas Yojana **IAY** was launched during 1985-1986 as a sub scheme of RLEGP, later it was made an independent scheme. The Government of India, in 1998 announced a

National Housing and Habitat policy which aims at providing “Housing for all” and facilitating the construction of 20 lakh additional housing units (13 lakh in rural areas and 7 in urban areas) with emphasis on standing benefits to the poor and the deprived.

- 2. Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)** is a modified programme of erstwhile Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), Desert Development Programme (DDP) and Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) of the Department of Land Resources.

This consolidation is for optimum use of resources, sustainable outcomes and integrated planning. The scheme was launched during 2009-10.. The main objectives of the IWMP are to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources such as soil, vegetative cover and water. The outcomes are prevention of soil erosion, regeneration of natural vegetation, rain water harvesting and recharging of the ground water table. This enables multi-cropping and the introduction of diverse agro-based activities, which help to provide sustainable livelihoods to the people residing in the watershed area.

- 3. MahilaKisanSashaktikarnPariyojana (MKSP):**The project aims at improving the capacities of women in agriculture by accessing the resources of other institutions like Self Help Groups(SHG), community institutions of farmers, community para professionals and sustainable agricultural practices.
- 4. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):**Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was launched on 25th December 2000 as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country. The programme envisages connecting all habitations with a population of 500 persons and

above in the plain areas and 250 persons and above in hill States, the tribal and the desert areas.

Findings and Observations:

1. Due to effective Implementation of multitude of strategies and programmes to realize the tridimensional objectives of infrastructure and socio-economic development of rural residents, the livelihood and security of people has enhanced.
2. The schemes are powerful tools that have effectively strengthened natural resource management through works that address chronic poverty, drought, deforestation and soil erosion.
3. Number of people Below Poverty Line in rural areas has reduced significantly.
4. The average per capita consumption expenditure of rural residents over urban residents has increased.
5. The three pronged approach of the government has augmented rural productivity, employment and literacy rate.
6. Employment guarantee programmes have helped in reducing migration and facilitated skill formation and self-employment.
7. There are many flaws and leakages in the existing delivery Mechanism leading to excessive expenditure and delay in delivery. Sometimes it fails to reach the beneficiaries in intended form.

Suggestions:

1. A proper Feedback Mechanism may be evolved to ensure that the privileges and benefits advanced are reaching the underprivileged in the appropriate sense.

2. An effective evaluation mechanism should be used and corrective measures should be taken and incorporated in ensuing plans.
3. There are many leakages in the delivery channel leading to high expenditure beyond planned outlays. They should be detected and stopped by ensuring transparency and accountability.
4. To address the shortage of skilled doctors, teachers and other health workers in rural India appropriate skill formation and skill retention strategies may be devised.
5. Various departments under MoRD should adopt convergence approach to provide integrated solutions to improve health, hygiene, literacy rate and to reduce poverty.
6. Greater thrust and emphasis should be laid on reducing gender gap and women empowerment.
7. Sustainable livelihood initiatives are currently inaccessible to many rural residents; measures may be taken to extend them to all 6.4 lakh villages in India gradually.
8. Legislative amendments may be made to various state panchayat Acts. To ensure effective delivery mechanism through decentralized governance.

Conclusion:

The policies and programmes devised and developed towards ensuring sustainable livelihood to rural masses are making remarkable strides in terms of reducing unemployment, poverty, migration, gender gap and in increasing literacy rate, rural per capita income and consumption expenditure. However the expenditure is exceeding much beyond the planned outlay this could be due to delayed decision making and tardy implementation mechanism. There

is need to check staggering, deceptive and corrupt practices in delivery system to enable effective implementation.

Apart from devising programmes for poverty alleviation, government should partner with different private agencies and NGOs to facilitate better implementation of schemes. It should enter into alliance with various stake holders (local citizens being one of them) in order to empower the rural sector and make it self-managed and self-governed in the long run. It is not only important that socio-economic and infrastructure developmental activities are initiated locally but also care should be taken that they are sustained and grown in future. Therefore, the framework to ensure sustainable livelihoods to rural populace must have certain inbuilt motivators for enhancing its performance and effectiveness.

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