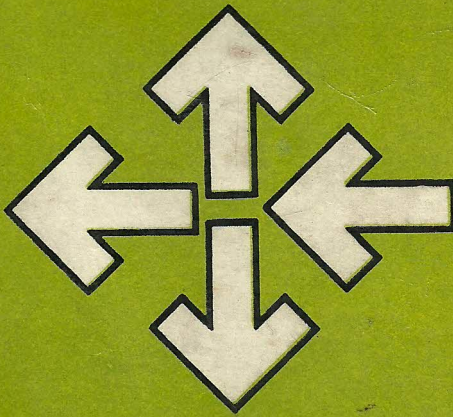


**RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN
NORTH EAST INDIA**

**PERSPECTIVES
ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES**



Edited by

Dr. R.K. Samanta

Rural development has been considered essential for national development and social welfare of the people. The problem is not merely one of development of rural areas but of the development of rural communities. Rural development has followed different paths during the last four decades. There have been directional changes as a consequence of political change and shifts in political ideas or actions. As such, political ideology is significant in determining the goals of development including rural development. Therefore, the development efforts, taken by the Govt. so far to raise the standard of living of the rural peasantry of tribal dominated north eastern states remain questionable.

The present volume, in this context, is a modest attempt to analyse, examine and highlight those various concerned issues of rural development in North East India and also to find out viable solutions of long standing problems faced by the teeming tribal population. The volume, consists of 28 papers written by various reputed scholars and academics. It is largely expected that the Students, Scholars, Development Administrators, Policy Makers and Social Scientists will be benefitted from this valuable publication.

Dr. Ranajit Kumar Samanta (b 1950...) received Ph.D. degree in Agr. Extension from B.C. Agricultural University, West Bengal in 1978. He had his further academic training both from India and the United States.

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IN
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*Dedicated to
North-East India Council for
Social Science Research
Shillong*

Preface

Rural development is an integrated part of the total social and economic development of the country. Rural development can not be viewed in isolation from urban development and industrialising and urbanising influences have to be built into the rural development perspective. And most significant factor is that rural development can be a reality only if it related to the core value system of the rural masses.

Rural development can be considered fundamental if it is related to the social, ecological, technical, political and value system of a country, for the economic emancipation of the people and their integrated social living otherwise it remains a fad. The present volume, entitled, "RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA-PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES" attempts to examine, highlight and experience those various related issues of N.E. India in particular and of India in general.

The volume which comprises 28 papers written by various scholars and academics, is divided into 4 Chapters, viz. i) Rural Development-Perspectives and Issues; ii) Rural Development in North-East India-Problems and Prospects; iii) Rural Development in North-East India-Experiences; and iv) Rural Development in North-East India-Strategies and Future Plan of Actions.

The volume is intended to serve the dual purpose i.e. academic as well as applied. The book is expected to be of much help to the students, scholars, development administrators and policy makers concerned to development of North-Eastern Region of India.

I would like to express my special thanks to the Governing Body of North-East India Council for the Social Science Research (NEICSSR), Shillong for choosing me to edit this volume, which I consider a great honour to me. Dr. B. Dutta Ray, Secretary of NEICSSR supported me greatly in this endeavour and he deserves my full gratitude.

My sincere thanks are also to Mr. B.S. Uppal of M/S Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi for publishing of this volume promptly and Ms. M. Vijayalakshmy for typing the manuscript of the book neatly.

At last but not the least, I would also like to express my thanks and profound sense of gratitude to all the learned contributors who by contributing their valuable articles, enabled me to place this volume before the general public and the academic community.

Hyderabad
October, 1990

R.K. Samanta

Introduction

In recent years rural development has acquired special significance in the Third World Nations. More than 50 per cent of the population of these nations live in villages. Till half a century back most of these countries were under colonial rules and development of rural areas of these countries were neglected by the rulers. And that is the prime reason, how urban centres have been developed rapidly at the expenses of rural areas. These phenomena have resulted in tremendous disparities and gulf of difference between urban and rural areas and its populace. India is one of these countries who has suffered and undergone the same experiences over the years till 1947. Now, therefore, time has come to look into these problems and find out feasible plans, strategies and course of actions to overcome the burden and sufferings of millions of rural people of our country.

Rural development has been considered essential for national development and social welfare of the people. The problem is not merely one of development of rural areas, but of the development of rural countries. Economists and social scientists differ about the meaning of rural development. But for our present purpose, the definition offered by World Bank (1975)¹ seems to be appropriate. World Bank defines rural development as "a strategy designed to improve the economic and social conditions of life of a specific group of people-the rural poor.

It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a level-hood in the rural areas.

The definition raises the questions of who the rural poor are. The rural poor are those who are living in a state of degradation, deprivation and dependence below the physically and socio-culturally accepted standards. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to know, study and examine the philosophy, scope, content and significance of various rural development programmes. Government of India has sponsored since independence to raise the level of living of its vast majority poor people.

In order to give added attention for the upliftment of the under privileged and economically weaker sections of the society, a series of special programmes were launched under the framework of rural development. The Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) was started in 1970-71 for stabilizing the income of the weaker sections and minimising the ill-effect of drought on agricultural production. During the same period Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDA) were formed to benefit small and marginal farmers and also agricultural labourers. There were 389 such agencies in 1983. Similarly the Hill Areas Development Programme (1973-74), Tribal Areas Development Programme (1971-72), Whole Village Development Programme (1975-76), Command Area Development (1974-75) and Voluntary Action Scheme (1974-75) were undertaken to benefit millions of rural people. But the desired objectives have not been achieved yet. A huge section of the country's poor and unprivileged population still suffer from degradation, deprivation and economic dependency and a large chunk of them live in seven states of North-Eastern Hills Region of the Country.

The performance of these programmes was evaluated both by individual researchers and the programme evaluation (PEO), a Unit of the Planning Commission Govt. of India. Reviewing the evaluation studies of some of these poverty alleviation pro-

grammes it is observed that in most cases, the programme officials allotted their resources to various activities on *ad-hoc* bases mainly to achieve the physical targets of expenditure and beneficiary coverage. In practice, therefore, these programmes were reduced to mere subsidy giving programmes shorn of any planned approach to the development of the rural poor as in-built process in the development of the area and its resources.

Though these programmes differed from one another with respect to their objectives, strategy and organisational focus, they faced similar implementation problems. The possible reasons for this could be: lack of proper leadership at various levels of hierarchy, especially at implementation level; lack of adequate training of the people at lower down the hierarchy; lack of attention paid to the development of appropriate processes at various levels; inadequate attention paid to the role relationships (resulting in coordination problems); and lack of clear vision on the part of programme planners as to what they are going to achieve through each of these programmes.

Keeping these things in focus North-East India Council for Social Science Research conducted a National Seminar on "PERSPECTIVE, ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA" at Shillong, Meghalaya, from 26-27 May 1989. The present volume is the compilation of the 28 selected papers presented in the Seminar.

Based on the themes and contents the papers, have been grouped into four heads and named as four Chapters, viz. i) Rural Development-Perspectives and Issues; ii) Rural Development in North-East India-Problems and Prospects; iii) Rural Development in North-East India-Experiences; and iv) Rural Development in North-East India-Strategies and Future Plan of Actions.

There are altogether seven papers, in the first Chapter of the volume, which highlight the various issues in larger perspectives.

of rural development in India and particularly of North-Eastern Region. As such Dr. B.N. Bordoloi has raised some basic issues regarding approaches in determining rural poverty and poverty alleviation programmes based on them, which in his opinion are not correct ones and therefore suggested the need of critical review of entire rural development programmes. Similarly, Dr. Rabindra Chowdhury in his paper has analysed in depth the absolute and relative magnitude of existence of rural poverty in N.E. India with several hard hitting examples and criticised the determinants of poverty and also suggested the key alternatives to alleviate poverty. While Dr. B. Dutta Ray with his vast academic experience in the socio-cultural and political arena of the N.E. Region has discussed the employment dimension of rural development in his background note, Dr. K. Alam in his paper has highlighted the process, concepts and feasible work strategy to achieve Integrated Rural Development objectives effectively. Mr. Prabin Baishya, on the other hand has stressed and justified the establishment of rural industries utilising local resources to eradicate rural Jhum cultivators of Garo Hills in Meghalaya (by Dr. B.S.N. Reddy) to special poverty alleviation programmes in Arunachal Pradesh (by Dr. A.P. Dash). In one hand Dr. Methew George has outlined the need of education for Integrated Tribal development in Mizoram and Dr. Jogamaya Saikia has pronounced the need of peoples' participation in their own development programmes in Nagaland on the other. while a detailed account of forced labour, wage systems and labour exploitation in Manipur has been given by Dr. A.K. Roy, the untold story of poverty among the Kaibartas in Assam has been narrated by Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur. In another paper Dr. (Mrs.) Tapati Chakravarti interestingly reported about the Raing Women of Tripura--their participation in all round development activities of their community and how Rieng Women enjoy greater independence than many other tribal women.

The fourth Chapter of the volume consists of ten papers which propose the various strategies and plan of actions for effective

implementation of rural development programmes in North-Eastern Region and thereby alleviating poverty to a great extent. Dr. A.N. Bose, while emphasising in his background note, the need of new methodology for decentralised planning suggested the systematic change and restructuring of planning procedures for effective implementation of rural development programmes.

Further several plan of actions have been suggested by various authors in their papers to overcome the pitfalls of present rural development programmes particularly in North-Eastern Region. As such, Dr. Kamal Nadu,

There are six papers, in Second chapter which mostly deal with the problems and prospects of rural development in North-East India. Dr. B.P. Maithani in his thought provoking paper draws our attention to the peculiar nature and conditions of North-Eastern Region regarding its resources, culture and people and thereby suggests and advocates the need of special development plan to alleviate rural poverty. Mr. N. Venkata Rao interestingly revealed the trends in consumption expenditure and incidence of poverty in rural villages of N.E. India through his economic analysis of National Sample Survey data. In another well documented paper, Dr. Mahadev Chakravarti has put forwards his opinion quoting Tripura's experiences that India's approach to development planning has been so far predominantly macro-oriented emphasising national goals and objectives ignoring the micro aspects of grass root level which is essential to eradicate poverty in the rural areas.

The other three papers are the representation of direct observation of problems in rural areas of Assam and Mizoram as perceived by three scholar. While Dr. A.K. Agarwal has depicted a vivid picture of dynamics of rural development in Mizoram, Dr. (Mrs.) Sakiya Khan and Mr. Aswhini Kr. Borah have highlighted the malnutrition problems among children and pre-

gnant woman; and problems of using modern technology for better farm productivity in Assam respectively.

Chapter three of the book focuses an in depth experience of different scholars about rural development in actual terms in North-Eastern States. The case studies made by the authors reveal the interesting facts of the wide range of subjects, from plight of Dr. S.B. Chakravarty, Dr. T.B. Lahiri and Dr. N.N. Bhattacharya have put forward their ideas about the necessity of balanced approach of rural development programme blending the top-down and bottom-up planning, the 'Antyodaya,' rural reconstruction and rejuvenation of village life in Tagore and Gandhian way, and well coordinated micro level planning for rapid rural growth respectively.

The very success or failure may even the very survival of a rural development programme depends on its beneficiarie's support and proper management, and ineffective management cuts at the very roots of the development and its standing; saying this Dr. R.K. Samanta in his paper has emphasised the need of people's participation and collective actions in all stages of development process. In the same direction Dr. P.R. Bhattacharya and Dr. (Mrs.) N.L. Dutta have narrated about the growth booster in the rural economy of Tripura and the need of Panchayati Raj institutions for rural development in Assam. Mr. Haren Hazarika and Mr. H.C. Sharma, further, have highlighted the use of interface between mass media and developmental work; and need of basic infrastural provisions for all round development in rural areas.

Thus, the present volume combines the valuable experiences and observations of scholars who are actively involved in the task of rural development. It attempts to systematically highlight and pinpoint the pressing problems and long felt needs of North-Eastern Region states of India and to suggest viable measures of solution to them. I sincerely hope, the book will help

promote the cause of rural development and will initiate further research, investigation and discussion into various aspects of rural society, its culture and economy of North-Eastern Region of India.

Hyderabad
October 1990

R.K. Samanta

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