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Forethoughts to Strategize Sustainable Rural Development

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Absract

Development is a broad term while Rural Development is area specific component considering the geographical and demographical situations especially of villages. Rural Development is a process of bringing change among rural community from the traditional way of living to progressive way of living. As rural development being a dynamic process, mainly concerned with empowerment of village populace through putting efforts for agricultural growth, empowering economic and social infrastructure, providing fair wages as also housing and house sites for the landless, village planning, public health, education and functional literacy, civic services, basic amenities etc. Further, Sustainability of national GDP has direct relationship with the holistic development of rural areas in sustainable manner.

Keywords: Sustainable, Rural Development, Gram Panchayat, Social Mobilization

Introduction

Development can be referred as a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the empowerment in physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components in civilization. The purpose of development is to rise in the level and quality of life of the population and creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities without damaging the resources of the environment. Development is a broad term while Rural Development is area specific component considering the geographical and demographical situations especially of villages. Rural Development is a process of bringing change among rural community from the traditional way of living to progressive way of living.

Rural Development has never been a new concept in India. The saying "India lives in its villages" is relevant even today, in the new millennium. Out of total population of India, 68.9% of our population lives in rural areas (Census 2011). As rural development being a dynamic process, mainly concerned with empowerment of village populace through putting efforts for agricultural growth, empowering economic and social infrastructure, providing fair wages as also housing and house sites for the landless, village planning, public health, education and functional literacy, civic services, basic amenities etc. Further, Sustainability of national GDP has direct relationship with the holistic development of rural areas in sustainable manner.

Sustainable Development is a concept defined as the “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report, 1987). The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012 led to the development of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), built upon the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations General Assembly formally adopted agenda for Sustainable Development via set of 17 SDGs. That included aims such as; the end of poverty and hunger, better standards of education and healthcare, particularly as it pertains to water quality and better sanitation, to achieve gender equality, sustainable economic growth while promoting jobs and stronger economies, sustainability to include health of the land, air, and sea. Majority of the SDGs are also necessary for attaining holistic development of rural areas. Improvement of water harvesting ,cultivating drought resistant crops, ecological restoration, combined with better local governance, financial instruments, integrated resource management, sound public services and better urban rural linkages could help rural communities around the world to become more sustainable (Florin Constantin Mihai and Comeliu Latu, January 2020).

Sustainable Rural Development is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of nations. It is essential for poverty eradication since global poverty is overwhelmingly rural. It is therefore critical, and there is great value to be gained, by coordinating rural development initiatives that contribute to sustainable livelihoods through efforts at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate. Strategies to deal with rural development should take into consideration since the resources are limited and controlled use of available resources may lead to long lasting benefit provisions (Olivera Lekic, 2018). Foresights while planning, identifying the potential of local resources, controlled use of input materials, taking care of natural resources to

conserve them for next generation and finally implementation of projects in accordance of local situation can result in sustainable development. After implementation of developmental activities, maintenance, management and timely repairing and renovation of created infrastructure and assets via work distribution among the users are crucial part for attaining goals of sustainable rural development. Following are the some of the strategies, which can be helpful in durable benefit provision for the activities carried out in rural areas (K. D. Baldaniya, 2020).

Leadership of Gram Panchayat: Once the developmental activities executed in the villages, the management of the particular projects or created infrastructure are ultimately laid down on Gram Panchayat Body. Support of various sectoral committees, UGS, SHGs, Institutions and other leading agencies is crucial which is directly dependent on the influence of the leadership. The strength of GP body in term of their knowledge, political reach, command among communities, dispute-resolving skills, relations with government as well as continuity of coordination with stakeholders became key factor in sustained outcomes for development of villages. The responsible Gram Panchayat Body with due ownership on the physical works assures more chances of lifelong benefits to the villagers through set of their joint initiatives.

Role Clarity of Community in Operation and Maintenance of the Assets: At the time of finalization of the activities in rural development planning, the sustainability measures of expected outcomes needs to keep in mind. Role clarity on operations and maintenance of the assets via community under guidance of Panchayat Body to be finalized as an advance mechanism for bring in sustainability in it. The community likely to use the infrastructure also needs to set their responsibilities in equal manner. Fixing responsibilities for repairing and renovation of the some physical civil structures

on community, especially to the people who take benefit of that project help in self-sufficiency in the activity though concern government departments should be in touch for possible technical or financial help. Thus management can be done by responsible body of GP, but ultimately tasks of operations and maintenance are been performed by users. Role clarity of elected village leaders & talati cum mantri of particular villages to coordinate with government regarding administrative matters may help to community in offering continued benefits.

Avoiding involvement of Private Sector: hiring the services of private agencies are generally costlier and needs budgetary provision. Due to lack of funds, sometimes, assets not being maintained which were created using lacks of rupees and finally that are not in working order. Instead of depending upon the private agencies, strategies should be to use local resources, talents and innovative ideas for management of implemented developmental works. In exceptional cases only, private sector services suggested to hire through prior contract signing by panchayat representatives with responsible authority of the Private Agencies. Thus, negligible dependence on other than the community in maintaining the usability of assets or infrastructure results in sustainability of the specific work.

Fixing responsibilities of Government Departments: At the time of finalizing the activities and before approvals, the roles and responsibilities of the project implementing agencies and their officers should be finalized according to government guidelines and norms of schemes. The accountabilities includes quality of work, completion timeline, benefit provision to targeted group of village as well as periodical repairing and renovation of the created asset after completion of works. Panchayat representatives should also help to government officials through mechanisms and machineries available at their level. Strong planning and strategy

prepared in advance guarantees sustainable development of the village through collective efforts of all stakeholders.

Ownership of Village Institutions: The ultimate aim of creating the infrastructure is to facilitate the basic amenities or civic services to villagers via developmental initiatives of village institutions such as GP itself, School, Anganwadi, PDS, Bank, Health Institutions etc. Activeness and responsibility of such village institutions lead village to long time positive impacts through careful use of assets handed over to them. Institution playing active role with straightforward benefit provision to society increases the chances of sustainability. The responsible use of the assets or infrastructure with on time maintenance and their commitment to offer benefits to community adhering to their responsibilities assures sustainable development in their area of operations.

Involvement of SHGs/UGs for Environment Creation & Social Mobilization: The successfulness of initiatives, especially during the initial phase of rural development planning, has greater impacts on sustainable outputs. Volunteers from SHGs/UGs may help in activities in which, awareness generation or social mobilization can be done for different social security schemes. Women associated with SHGs can also play crucial role in organizing gram sabhas, trainings, workshops, field demo etc. for bringing the behavioural and social changes by sensitizing communities towards sanitation, health, financial inclusion, gender equalization, livelihood empowerment etc. Micro enterprise activities and micro finance activities operationalized by SHGs upholds self-sufficiency among the rural women.

Capacity Building of Stakeholders: village stakeholders plays ultimate role in any rural development projects. Capacity building of the stakeholders according to their roles and

responsibilities help at each and every stage of implementation of initiatives. There are multiple ways of capacity building of the local people. Skilling and training to local people provides skilled manpower, timely repairing and renovation of assets by local youth save additional cost and assure consistent benefit provision, trained individuals gives training to others and generate the livelihood opportunities, impart trust building, strengthen communication channels and ultimately results in better response from the society to implementers. Through trainings, community can be able to take over the projects at completion stage and maintain the sustainability of the development imparted. Capacity building inculcate the ethics, moral values, good habits as well as mind-set towards conservation of the common resources, which have potential for lifelong sustainability of developments carried out.

Involvement of Local Communities: in rural development, usually two type of planning; top to down approach and bottom-up approach are followed. In top-down approach, the funding agency or planners are sitting at remote location and giving the instruction and finalizing the activities where as in bottom-up approach, the opinions of the grass root level people are taken in to consideration. Among both of these, bottom-up approach addresses the real problems of the rural people and even locals suggests the most possible ways to resolve their problems and fulfilment of their requirements. The involvement of local people wins the trust of villagers and develop ownership among them towards the activities and hence of that, more chances of sustainability of particular activities.

Social Audits: Social Audits influences the quality and transparency in community works. The social audit at various phases of the development projects helps in improving on deficiencies, increasing the profitability and ensuring the desired results of particular initiative by minimizing the conflicts. It also

increases the bonding among villagers followed by smooth implementation of works as well as bringing durable outputs. Involvement of elected GP members, village elders, key stakeholders, representative of village institutions and person with technical knowledge from village or government helps in ensuring the sustainability of the projects. Challenges such as lack of ownership, management issues, less willpower, poor quality of work, corruption and less involvement of community can be resolve via Social Audits on site of work.

Convergence of Activities & Resources: instead of using the self-generated income of the Panchayat, convergence of the resources with government schemes or other non-government agencies helps in rural development. The government Line Departments have expertise in their domain developmental works, which implement the activities impact fully. Thus identifying resource envelop can be helpful in saving the local funds and gap filling for the activities not supported by government. Instead of constructing the new structures, renovation of old structures should be promoted that will save the available funds and cover the untapped areas of development. Through convergence, the maximum activities out of vision of local people can be covered which covers maximum developmental goals among 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals.

Use of Technology & Innovation: The adoption of latest technologies and introduction of innovative ideas in rural development stimulates sustainability in outcomes of intervention. Generally, in field of rural development, cutting-edge technologies and global innovation does not work but local trends and technologies are proven suitable. Technologies such as GIS, Remote Sensing and Space Technologies are helpful in planning for projects related to housing, drinking water, drainage, road connectivity etc. Mobile Technologies, Internet and Social Media applications often applied for executing the projects

related to agriculture, livelihoods, social security, market linkages etc. via awareness generation and community mobilization. Use of technologies and innovative ideas expedites development process and helps in achieving the sustainable development of rural areas.

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