

Policies and strategies of Rural Development

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Introduction:

A strategy consists of an orderly of various policy parameters to attain the desired goals. The seven major rural development policies are:

1. Land Policy: Land policy is a crucial element in a rural development strategy. It is well-known that distribution of land and other assets is very skewed in India, as the large majorities have small land holdings.

➔ This has a direct impact on the ability to earn incomes in rural areas. Land reforms including the protection of the rights of tenants are one of the primary means of transforming rural societies.

➔ It has also been contended that productivity levels of small farms are often greater than those of large farms. This is attributed to the fact that the small peasant puts in more intensive labour on the small plot that belongs to him. Thus land reforms and a land policy that seeks to provide distributive justice may also result in greater agricultural productivity.

2. Technology Policy: Improvements in technologies available to rural societies can have a big impact on them. On the hand, it is essential that newer technologies are adapted to rural societies and on the other, it is necessary that existing technologies are extended to rural areas. Technological planning, research and development are very vital ingredients of rural development.

➔ Rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-Urban

➔ In India, the agricultural sector is particularly vulnerable to the ravage of the weather. Technological improvements can play a vital role in insulating agriculture from the effects of weather. Rural societies are also characterized by large scale unemployment on the one hand and low productivity on the other. Therefore care has to be taken when new technologies are introduced in rural areas.

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➔ Technologies appropriate to rural societies have to be chosen so that there is no large scale displacement of labour. A judicious balance between achieving higher productivity and increasing employment opportunities to rural communities has to be struck. Rural development strategies have to take this into account in formulating their programmes.

3. Agricultural Policy: Agriculture remains the main avenue for providing incomes and employment in rural areas. Needless to say, agricultural planning is vital for rural development strategies. The balanced growth of the agricultural sector can play an important role in creating better conditions for those depending on this sector.

4. Employment Policy: Given the extent of unemployment problem in rural India, the need for well-formulated employment programmes can hardly be overstated. Such programmes can insulate fluctuations in rural incomes on account of poor weather conditions. It is the case when the monsoon fails.

➔ Agricultural employment is often seasonal. Under these conditions, rural employment programmes can ensure better spread of employment through the year. The growth of non-

agricultural activity within the village economy can also relieve the pressure of population on the land.

5. Education, Research and Extension

Policy: In India the problem of illiteracy is particularly acute in rural areas. The lack of education can act as a constraint in furthering rural development. Rural societies, are also characterized by wide spread inequalities in the distribution of incomes and assets.

➔ The lack of education creates a situation in which this problem is perpetuated. The spread of education on the one hand, can enable the rural poor to ensure distributive justice and, on the other, help them actively participating in rural development programmes.

➔ Research and extension is a very important ingredient of rural cultures and extension ensures that the gains are actually delivered to the target groups. Trained staff are very important for any rural development programme since they actually interact with the community for whom the programmes are meant

6. Rural Institutions Policy:

Rural institutions need to be reformed and utilized for successfully carrying out rural development. The institutional aspects of

rural societies are often ignored when strategies are formulated. The institutional structures such as panchayats need to be nurtured so that there is popular participation in rural development.

- ➔ These structures can act as powerful agents in actually implementing the development strategies.
- ➔ Since rural settlements are spread out and are often isolated, they cannot be monitored successfully from outside. Contrarily, local monitoring by institutions such as panchayats can actually ensure that programmes are successfully implemented and that the target group actually benefits from such programmes. Rural institutions such as banks and co-operatives can also play a vital role in rural development.

7. Price Policy: The use of a price is also a crucial element in a rural development policy:

1. Agricultural produce has to be priced in such a manner that the farmers enjoy adequate returns.
2. The price policy through the use of subsidies can act as a means of providing essential items of mass consumption to people residing in rural areas. This is particularly essential for those below the poverty line. The spread of the public

distribution system through its network of ratio shops in rural areas can be used to solve this problem.

- ➔ This is particularly important during periods of poor rainfall when rural Incomes are adversely affected, which in turn has a negative effect on consumption. Subsidies may have other forms-the form of input subsidies to the agricultural sector for example.
- ➔ This is particularly important in the case of fertilizers, pesticides and seeds. Thus, the price policy can act as a useful means of achieving rural development objectives.
- ➔ The recent thinking along the neo-liberal lines has led to significant change in the various aspects of the price policy, and it is quite clear that rural India has been subjected to tremendous stress during the liberalization era: some of it is on account of changes in some aspects of the price policy.