RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATING PROGRAMMES

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Abstract: This research delves into the critical intersection of rural poverty and employment, seeking to understand the efficacy of various programs designed to alleviate poverty in rural settings. The paper employs a multifaceted approach, combining quantitative analysis, case studies, and policy evaluations to comprehensively assess the impact of employment-generating initiatives on poverty reduction. The primary objective of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of existing employment-generating programs in rural areas and their role in mitigating poverty. By examining programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the paper seeks to identify the key factors influencing success or failure, considering aspects like program design, implementation, and community engagement. Methodologically, a mixedmethods approach is adopted, incorporating quantitative data analysis to assess the statistical significance of poverty reduction outcomes and qualitative case studies to unravel the contextual intricacies influencing program impact. The research draws on a diverse set of data sources, including government reports, field surveys, and academic literature, to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject. Preliminary findings indicate that employment-generating programs play a pivotal role in alleviating rural poverty. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act emerges as a beacon of success, showcasing the potential of targeted interventions in creating sustainable livelihoods. However, challenges such as implementation bottlenecks, seasonal variations in employment demand, and issues related to social inclusion are identified as areas requiring focused attention. The implications of this research are far-reaching, informing policymakers, development practitioners, and academics about the intricacies of designing and implementing effective employment-generating programs in rural contexts. Insights from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on poverty alleviation strategies, offering evidencebased recommendations for optimizing the impact of such programs and fostering sustainable development in rural areas. As countries grapple with the imperative of eradicating rural poverty, this research serves as a valuable resource in shaping future policies and interventions for meaningful and lasting change.

Index Terms - Rural poverty, Employment generation, Poverty alleviation, Rural development, MGNREGA, Livelihood programs, Social inclusion, Sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Rural poverty, a persistent and pervasive global challenge, remains a formidable barrier to sustainable development and social equity. In the intricate tapestry of poverty, the rural thread is woven with unique complexities, where limited access to resources, education, and gainful employment intertwine to create a web of deprivation. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this multifaceted issue, various employment-generating programs have emerged as key instruments in the pursuit of rural poverty alleviation. This introduction endeavors to provide a comprehensive overview of the contextual landscape, historical perspectives, and the evolving role of employment-generating programs in the intricate fabric of rural poverty.

CONTEXT OF RURAL POVERTY:

Understanding the context of rural poverty requires a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by communities residing in the heartland. Unlike their urban counterparts, rural populations often grapple with inadequate infrastructure, limited healthcare facilities, and constrained access to education. The absence of diversified economic opportunities further exacerbates the vulnerability of these communities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that transcends generations.

Historically, rural areas have been the epicenter of agrarian economies, relying on traditional farming practices for sustenance. However, with globalization and shifting economic dynamics, these communities find themselves at a crossroads, grappling with the need for adaptation and diversification. The consequences of rural poverty extend far beyond economic hardship, influencing education, healthcare, and overall quality of life.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS:

The quest for alleviating rural poverty through employment programs is not a recent phenomenon. Historically, governments and philanthropic organizations have initiated various schemes to provide temporary relief to rural populations. These efforts often

manifested in public works projects, such as the construction of roads, dams, and irrigation systems, aimed at creating immediate employment opportunities during times of economic distress.

While these initiatives had short-term benefits, they often fell short of addressing the root causes of rural poverty. The cyclical nature of economic dependence on public works projects and the lack of focus on skill development limited the transformative impact of these historical endeavors.

Contemporary Approaches to Employment Generation:

In recent decades, a paradigm shift has occurred in the design and implementation of employment-generating programs. Governments and development agencies have increasingly recognized the need for holistic approaches that go beyond mere income support. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India stands out as a transformative example. Enacted in 2005, MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household, with a strong emphasis on asset creation and community development.

Contemporary approaches prioritize not only the quantity of employment generated but also the quality and sustainability of the work. Programs aim to create assets that endure beyond the duration of the employment period, contributing to the long-term development of rural infrastructure and enhancing community resilience.

Innovative Techniques in Employment Generation:

The landscape of employment generation in rural areas has evolved with the infusion of innovative techniques. Technology, once considered a distant luxury for rural communities, is now a key enabler. Mobile applications, digital payment systems, and data analytics are being leveraged to streamline program implementation, monitor outcomes, and ensure transparent delivery of benefits. These technological interventions not only enhance the efficiency of programs but also empower rural populations through increased access to information and resources.

Community-Centered Approaches:

Recognizing the importance of community engagement, contemporary employment programs increasingly adopt community-centered approaches. Instead of imposing top-down solutions, these programs involve local communities in decision-making processes, ensuring that initiatives are tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of the people they intend to serve. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of programs but also fosters a sense of ownership and sustainability within communities.

Diversification of Skill Development:

While traditional programs often focused on unskilled manual labor, there is a growing recognition of the need to diversify skill development opportunities. Modern employment programs incorporate training components that equip individuals with market-relevant skills, enhancing their employability in sectors beyond the program's immediate scope. This shift aligns with the changing dynamics of the global and local job markets, promoting long-term economic resilience.

Public-Private Partnerships:

In a departure from solely government-driven initiatives, new models emphasize public-private partnerships as catalysts for rural development. By collaborating with private enterprises, employment programs gain access to additional resources, expertise, and market linkages. This synergy not only enhances the scalability and sustainability of programs but also creates avenues for entrepreneurship and private sector-led growth in rural areas.

Environmental Sustainability:

Contemporary employment programs increasingly recognize the interconnectedness of poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability. Initiatives that promote eco-friendly practices, such as sustainable agriculture or renewable energy projects, not only contribute to rural development but also address the broader challenges of climate change. This holistic approach ensures that economic progress is not achieved at the expense of the environment.

Employment Generating Programme

Employment Generating Programmes have emerge as a most important tool for socio economic empowerment of ladies in India. They have end up an crucial section of India's improvement strategy, as the government seeks to decrease poverty and enlarge women's participation in the labour force. These programmes are designed to supply skill-based education and employment possibilities to women in a range of sectors. They have been able to make an have an effect on in terms of supplying job possibilities to women, increasing their bargaining power, and improving their get entry to to financial resources. Moreover, Employment Generating Programmes have also helped to create a experience of self-confidence and confidence amongst women. The programmes have additionally helped to enhance the monetary and social repute of women, through strengthening their capacity to get right of entry to and control resources. These programmes have also been instrumental in developing a supportive surroundings for female to have interaction in financial activities. In addition, Employment Generating Programmes have additionally enabled female to acquire get admission to to higher healthcare and education services. Through these programmes, ladies have been provided with the probability to no longer only earn an earnings however to also construct their very own wealth. This in flip has helped to decrease poverty and enhance the basic fine of lifestyles of many women.

Present Status of Employment Generation Programmes

India is one of the quickest developing economies in the world and the Government of India has been focusing on employment era programmes for its citizens. The overall employment rate in India has extended over the past few years, however there is nonetheless a need to create more employment opportunities. The Government has taken a variety of initiatives to create employment opportunities for citizens in the form of Employment Generating Programmes.

The Government of India has launched numerous schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and more. These schemes have been designed to help residents to acquire employment with the aid of presenting skill improvement training, financial assistance, and other benefits.

The Government of India has also set up countless employment trade workplaces in the use of a to facilitate the registration of job seekers and employers. These employment trade places of work supply data about the contemporary job openings and job seekers can avail this data to search for suitable job opportunities. The Government has additionally taken steps to reduce the entry barrier of job seekers in the personal area by introducing a number incentives such as the Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

Apart from these initiatives, the Government of India has additionally launched quite a few entrepreneurship development programmes to promote self-employment. These programmes grant monetary and technical help to the aspiring entrepreneurs to help them start their very own businesses. The Government has also taken steps to enhance the infrastructure in the united states of america to facilitate the boom of the non-public sector and to furnish employment possibilities to the citizens.

Overall, the Government of India has taken numerous initiatives to create employment opportunities for its citizens through Employment Generating Programmes. These initiatives have helped to enlarge the usual employment fee in the u . s . a . and to limit the entry barrier of job seekers in the private sector. However, there is still a need to create greater employment possibilities and to enhance the infrastructure in the united states of america to further promote employment era programmes.

The major goals of MGNREGA are to:

Enhance livelihood security of the rural poor by generating wage employment opportunities in works that develop the infrastructure base of the area concerned.

- ✓ Rejuvenate the natural resource base of the area concerned.
- ✓ Create a productive rural asset base.
- ✓ Stimulate the local economy by providing a safety net to rural poor.
- ✓ Ensure empowerment to women.
- ✓ Strengthen grass-roots democratic institutions

Key Achievements of MGNREGA

- Since its inception in 2006, around Rs.1,63,754.41 crores have been disbursed directly as wage payments to rural worker households
- 1,657.45 crore person-days of wage employment has been generated. On an average, five crore rural households have been provided with wage employment each year since 2008.
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes participation has been 48 percent till 31st March 2014.
- Women have accounted for 48 percent of the total person-days generated. This is well above the mandatory 33 percent as required under the Act.
- Since the beginning of the programme, 260 lakh works have been taken up under the Act.
- Average wage per person-day has gone up by 81 percent since the inception of the programme. The notified wage today varies from a minimum of Rs.153 in Meghalaya to Rs.236 in Haryana.

National Rural Livelihood Mission

- The NRLM is one of the important programs of the government of India, in terms of allocation and coverage, and it seeks to reach out to 8–10 crore rural poor households and organize them into SHGs and federations at the village and at higher levels by 2021-22.
- While doing so, NRLM ensures adequate coverage of poor and vulnerable sections of the society identified through Participatory processes and approved by Gram Sabha.
- A strong convergence with Panchayati Raj Institutions (P.R.I) is an important feature of the programme.
- During the year 2013-14, Aajeevika-NRLM has focused on supporting the State Missions in transiting to NRLM by fulfilling all the requirements, setting up implementation architecture, strengthening them by providing comprehensive induction training and capacity building support.
- As of March 2014, 27 States and the Union Territory of Puducherry have transited to NRLM.
- The Resource blocks initiated during the year 2012-13 have shown impressive results in terms of quality of community institutions and generation of social capital.
- NRLM has focused on creating special strategies and initiating pilots to reach out to the most marginalized and vulnerable communities Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), the elderly, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), bonded labour, manual scavengers, victims of human trafficking, etc.
- During the year emphasis was also placed on strengthening the institutional systems in terms of adopting Human Resource Manual, Financial Management manual and roll out of interest subvention programme.
- Around 1.58 lakh youths have set up their own enterprises with the help of Aajeevika. 24.5 lakh Mahila Kisans have also been provided support.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

Rural roads constitute about 80% of the country's road network and are a lifeline for the vast majority of the population that lives in the villages.

Roads form a critical link for rural communities to access markets, education, health and other facilities.

They also enhance opportunities for employment in the non-farm sector and facilitate setting up of shops and small businesses.

The government of India, as part of poverty reduction strategy, launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) on 25th December 2000 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to assist States.

The primary objective of the programme is to provide good all-weather connectivity to all eligible unconnected habitations in the core network with a population of 500 (Census-2001) and above.

In respect of the Hill States (North-East, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand), Desert areas (as identified in the Desert Development Programme), and Tribal (Schedule V) Areas and Selected Tribal and Backward Districts (as identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Planning Commission), the objective is to connect habitations with a population of 250 (Census-2001) and above.

The programme envisages single all-weather connectivity.

The country has now a network of about 3,99,979 km of such roads. With a view to ensuring full farm-to-market connectivity, the programme also provides for the up gradation of the existing 'Through Routes' and Major Rural Links to prescribed standards, though it is not central to the programme. Under PMGSY-II, 10,725 projects have been cleared out of eligible 50,000 projects. As on March 31, 2014, 97,838 habitations have been connected. New connectivity of 2,48,919 km has been achieved.

Indira Awaas Yojana

As part of a larger strategy of the Ministry's poverty eradication effort, Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development, has since inception been providing assistance to the BPL families who are either houseless or having inadequate housing facilities, for constructing a safe and durable shelter.

The Government has been implementing IAY as part of the enabling approach to 'shelter for all', taking cognizance of the fact that rural housing is one of the major anti-poverty

measures for the marginalized.

The house is recognized not merely as a shelter and a dwelling place but also as an asset which supports the livelihood, symbolizes social position and is also a cultural expression.

A good home would be in harmony with the natural environment protecting the household from extreme weather conditions, and it would have the required connectivity for mobility and facilities for economic activities.

In the year 2013-14, 13.73 lakh houses have been constructed.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana

PMAY was launched in June 2015. The Government envisages building affordable pucca houses with water facility, sanitation and electricity supply round-the-clock.

The scheme originally was meant to cover people in the EWS (annual income not exceeding ₹3 lakh) and LIG (annual income not exceeding ₹6 lakh) sections, but now covers the mid-income group (MIG) as well.

PMAY scheme comprises of four key aspects.

One, it aims to transform slum areas by building homes for slum dwellers in collaboration with private developers.

Two, it plans to give a credit-linked subsidy to weaker and mid-income sections on loans taken for new construction or renovation of existing homes.

An interest subsidy of 3 percent to 6.5 per cent has been announced for loans ranging between ₹6 lakh and ₹12 lakh. For those in the EWS and LIG category who wish to take a loan of up to ₹6 lakh, there is an interest subsidy (concession) of 6.5 percent for the tenure of 15 years.

So far around 20,000 people have availed of loans under this scheme. The Government increased the loan amount to ₹12 lakh, targeting the mid-income category. The interest subsidy on loans up to ₹12 lakh will be 3 percent. In rural areas, interest subvention of 3 percent is offered on loans up to ₹2 lakh for constructing new homes or extension of old homes.

Three, the Government will chip in with financial assistance for affordable housing projects done in partnership with States/ Union Territories for the EWS. Four, it will extend direct financial assistance of ₹1.5 lakh to EWS.

Today, while developers in India's metropolitan cities are sitting on lakhs of unsold residences costing upwards of ₹50 lakh, the country is estimated to have a shortage of nearly 20 million housing units needed by the rural and urban poor, at far lower price points of ₹5-15 lakh.

The PMAY aims to address this shortfall. With the increase in subsidised loan amount to ₹12 lakh, the scheme is expected to cover a higher proportion of the urban poor.

The PMAY will hopefully incentivise India's construction and realty sector to reduce its traditional obsession with affluent home buyers in the cities.

National Urban Livelihoods Mission

Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation has launched "National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM)" in the 12th Five-Year Plan w.e.f. 24th September 2013 replacing the existing Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY).

The NULM focuses on organizing urban poor in Self Help Groups, creating opportunities for skill development leading to market-based employment and helping them to set up self-employment ventures by ensuring easy access to credit.

The Mission aims at providing shelter equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner. In addition, the Mission will also address livelihood concerns of the urban street vendors.

The primary target of NULM is the urban poor, including the urban homeless. The NULM has six major components:

- I. Social Mobilizations and Institution Development (SM&ID): NULM envisages mobilisation of urban poor households into thrift and credit-based Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations/ collectives.
- II. Capacity Building and Training (CB&T): A multi-pronged approach is planned under NULM for continuous capacity building of SHGs and their federations/collectives, government functionaries at Central, State and City/Town levels, bankers, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders. NULM will also create national and state-level mission management units to support the implementation of the programme for the poor.
- III. Employment through Skills Training and Placement (EST&P): NULM will focus on providing assistance for skill development / upgrading of the urban poor to enhance their capacity for self-employment or better-salaried employment.
- IV. Self-Employment Programme (SEP): Self-Employment Programme (SEP): This component will focus on financial assistance to individuals/groups of urban poor for setting up gainful self-employment ventures/ micro-enterprises, suited to their skills, training, aptitude and local conditions.
- V. Support for Urban Street Vendors: This component will cover the development of vendors market, credit enablement of vendors, a socio-economic survey of street vendors, skill development and micro enterprises development and convergence with social assistance under various schemes of the Government.

VI. Shelter for Urban Homeless (SUH): Under this component, the construction of permanent shelters for the urban homeless equipped with essential services will be supported.

National Food Security Mission

The Government of India in 2007 adopted a resolution to launch a Food Security Mission comprising rice, wheat and pulses to increase the production of rice by 10 million tons, wheat by 8 million tons and pulses by 2 million tons by the end of the Eleventh Plan (2011-12).

Accordingly, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, 'National Food Security Mission' (NFSM), was launched in October 2007.

The Mission is being continued during 12th Five Year Plan with new targets of additional production of food grains of 25 million tons of food grains comprising of 10 million tons rice, 8 million tons of wheat, 4 million tons of pulses and 3 million tons of coarse cereals by the end of 12th Five Year Plan.

The National Food Security Mission (NFSM) during the 12th Five Year Plan is having five components (i) NFSM- Rice; (ii) NFSM-Wheat: (iii) NFSM-Pulses. (iv) NFSM-Coarse cereals and (v) NFSM Commercial Crops.

The objectives of NFSM are

Increasing production of rice, wheat, pulses and coarse cereals through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in the identified districts of the country

Restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level; and

Enhancing farm level economy (i.e. farm profits) to restore confidence amongst the farmers

The Mission is adopting the following strategies:

- Focus on low productivity and high potential districts including cultivation of food grain crops in rainfed areas.
- Implementation of cropping system-centric interventions in a Mission mode approach through active engagement of all the stakeholders at various levels.
- Agro-climatic zone wise planning and cluster approach for crop productivity enhancement.
- Focus on pulse production through utilization of rice fallow, rice bunds and intercropping of pulses with coarse cereals, oilseeds and commercial crops (sugarcane, cotton, jute).
- Promotion and extension of improved technologies, i.e., seed, integrated nutrient management (INM) including micronutrients, soil amendments, integrated pest management (IPM), input use efficiency and resource conservation technologies along with capacity building of the farmers/ extension functionaries.
- Close monitoring of the flow of funds to ensure the timely reach of interventions to the target beneficiaries.
- Integration of various proposed interventions and targets with the district plan of each identified district.
- Constant monitoring and concurrent evaluation by the implementing agencies for assessing the impact of the interventions for a result oriented approach.

Integrated Child Development Services

The ICDS Scheme implemented by Government of India is one of the world's largest and unique programmers for early childhood care and development.

It is the foremost symbol of the Country's commitment to its children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school nonformula education on the one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other.

The beneficiaries under this scheme are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

To improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group 0-6 years, reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity and malnutrition of children, and nutritional supplements to pregnant women and lactating mothers are some important objectives of ICDS.

The ICDS Scheme is universal for all categories of beneficiaries.

The ICDS Scheme was launched in 1975 in 33 Blocks (Projects) with 4891 Anganwadi Centres (AWC).

As on 31/12/2013, under ICDS, 7067 projects 13.41 lakhs AWCs are operational covering 1026.03 lakh beneficiaries under supplementary nutrition.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution, effectiveness, and challenges associated with employment-generating programs for rural poverty alleviation. The research landscape reflects a shift from historical public works projects to contemporary, community-centered, and technologically integrated approaches. Scholars emphasize the need for holistic strategies that consider the unique contexts of rural communities, actively involve local populations, and address the root causes of poverty. The literature review sets the stage for further exploration, guiding the research towards a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between employment programs and rural poverty, ultimately contributing to the ongoing discourse on effective development interventions.

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