



ISSUES CONCERNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN RURAL AREAS IN RAJASTHAN

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Prologue:

The state best known for its arid climate and Thar desert, Rajasthan has more than 75 per cent of its total population living in rural areas. The idea of the all-round development cannot be realised till the highest priority is given to the village and rural development. Rural development comprises development programmes and initiatives intended for enhancing living standard of the rural dwellers. The initiatives are usually taken by local authorities, local and international donor agencies, and related non-governmental organisations. In Rajasthan, this is perhaps because there are various issues which stands as a barrier in policy formulation and implementation in rural areas of Rajasthan.

Considering this fact, an organisation known as Community Projects Administration was set up under the Planning Commission, on 31st March 1952, to administer the programmes relating to community development. The community development programme, inaugurated on October 2, 1952, was an important landmark in the history of the rural development.

In October 1974, the Department of Rural Development came into existence as a part of Ministry of Food and Agriculture. On 18th August 1979, the Department of Rural Development was elevated to the status of a new Ministry of Rural Reconstruction. It was renamed as Ministry of Rural Development on 23rd January 1982.

However, the implementation of the maximum schemes implemented by the Rural Development Department was being done through the Panchayati Raj institutions at the district level. Therefore, for coordinating the district level, the District Rural Development Agencies were merged with the Zilla Parishad under the Chief Executive Officer. Likewise,

the merger of Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj was merged under the name of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department

Keeping the massive rural population in consideration, the state government of Rajasthan (GoR) launched various schemes for rural development like Guru Golwalkar Janbhagidari Vikas Yojana (GG/VY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), MPLAD & MLALAD Schemes, Rural Housing Schemes, Schemes for development of Rural Roads, Shyama Prasad Mukherii Rurban Mission (SPMRM), Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), Mukhya Mantri Adarsh Gram Panchayat Yona (MAGPY) and various development programmes like Rajasthan Rural Livelihoods Project (RRLP), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Mitigating Poverty in Western Rajasthan Project (MPOWER) etc. But the major problem lies ahead of these schemes and development programmes is implementation failure in the very structure and functioning of our implementing organisations.

Methodology:

- Descriptive Analysis
- Qualitative research
- Analytical research
- Evaluative research

The Problem:

1. Field Administration

Field officials could not act in response to contextual needs as departmental programmes specified the activities to be undertaken. For example, drinking water shortage, identified as a key problem by people, was caused by the falling groundwater table and subsequent drying up of water sources. But departmental programmes focussed on establishing and repairing hand pumps, and field officials could not address the core issue. The problem was exacerbated by the marginalisation of panchayats. While several panchayat representatives understood local issues and were motivated to resolve them, this potential remained unexploited. Coordinated action was difficult because of the very large number of departmental organisations. Further, the coordinating mechanism was fuzzy. Though as per law, panchayats were mandated to coordinate socio-economic development, in practice, departments delegated authority to the district collector (DC). Consequently, panchayat representatives were in constant conflict with officials, who followed the directions of their departments and the DC.

2. Funds

Providing financial services in rural areas is a challenge as agriculture and other rural economic activities have unique characteristics of dependence on natural resources, long production cycles and vulnerability to multiple risks. As per the law, panchayats, or local elected governments, were to lead socio-economic development. But they had almost no funds to spend as per needs. Further, the sub-division of land and small ticket size of rural

non-farm activities require the provision of small sized loans in large numbers often raising the operational costs for banks. Moreover, with the widening of the ambit of non-agricultural activities, the need for non-agricultural rural finance too has gone up considerably. Thus, developing an inclusive yet sustainable rural financial system is extremely challenging.

3. Human resources

An inadequate number of personnel, lack of expertise and new technologies for employees and rural people, failed to deliver the capacity. We need to maximise use of locally available resources in rural areas, application of new technologies can go a long way in improving the quality of life in rural areas. Most of the goods for rural poor should be produced locally with local resources but using high technology. This will save huge energy in transporting of goods. High technology is also needed for rural development so as to maximize efficiency.

4. Rigid working system

Importantly, the effectiveness of field organisations was jeopardised as they were not 'learning organisations'. They did not acquire new skills and insights to include them in their standard operating procedures. This was partly an outcome of extreme centralisation at the state level. Departments set targets, issued detailed directions and reviewed frequently. Several officials cited instances where rigid guidelines forced them to turn down legitimate demands from citizens. This centralisation had shaped the very definition of 'work' in the field. Field officials described their most important activities as implementing schemes, following directions and supervising junior officials, not analysing local issues and initiating relevant activities. Moreover, when directed by the state government, they performed tasks outside their mandate, such as sanitation, tree plantation and cultural matters, which reduced time on substantive work. Further, the state government undertook frequent 'campaigns' on various issues. Officials reported that before one campaign could take off, a new one began, and long-term tasks were neglected. Instead of analysis and strategy formulation, field officials relied on hierarchy and routinised processes. Several interviewees said that they could not question senior officials. Extensive data was collected on students' performance on tests, but not analysed and used merely for reporting. Little attempt was made to learn from other agencies. For example, officials charged with reducing domestic violence were oblivious to the successful strategies followed by the self-help group federation in the district. Schools and anganwadi centres had to maintain 20 and 15 registers respectively, which were monitored strictly. The most frequent activity of anganwadi workers observed was filling up registers. In schools, teachers engaged with students only half the time, being busy preparing reports, attending meetings etc. In three of the five sample schools, many children in grades four and five could not read.

5. Illiteracy

Rajasthan is the largest state in India and is home to 5.6% of its population. The State has a very important contribution to the national statistics like of health, education etc. It has a Human Development Index score of 0.434 in comparison to national score of 0.647. The state has been categorised as performer in SDG India Index of NITI Aayog with score of 57.

However, when it comes to Literacy, Rajasthan is one of the worst performing states in India. In 2017-18, as part of the 75 th round of National Sample Survey (NSS), the National Statistical Office (NSO) conducted a nationwide study on Household Social Consumption: Education in India. As per this Report, Rajasthan is one the worst performing state in India with overall 69.7% literacy rate.

Further, Female illiteracy is highest in Rajasthan with only 57.6% of its female population being literate. (NSO) conducted a nationwide study on Household Social Consumption: Education in India as part of the 75 th round of National Sample Survey (NSS). As per this report, India's average literacy rate stands at 77.7% with 64.7% male literacy and 70.3% female literacy. While Kerala had again the highest literacy rate in India at 96.2%, Andhra Pradesh had the least literacy rate at 66.4%.

In the same 75 th round National Sample Survey (NSS) – Rajasthan came at 2 nd place from bottom, just above Andhra Pradesh with an overall literacy rate of 69.7% While, the male literacy rate in the state is 80.8%, the state had the lowest female literacy rate at 57.6%. Earlier, as per 2011 Census, the total literacy rate was 66.11%, of which male literacy was 79.19% and female literacy rate was 52.12%, which was also much lower than the national average of 77% (male: 84% 1 female: 70%). According to World Bank, Rajasthan's female literacy rate is worse than the average for the Arab world and fragile and conflict-affected" countries.

Some of the causes of adult illiteracy in Rajasthan are:

- Undiagnosed learning disabilities
- Hearing or vision loss
- Lack of a role model, i.e. no one in the family or household stresses reading or education
- Poverty or a focus on survival needs rather than education
- Violence in the community or fear of violence, causing a student to miss large amounts of school
- Moving from one school to another throughout childhood, so that education didn't make sense and didn't fit together Leaving school at a young age to care for a sick or dying family member
- Leaving school at a young age to provide income for the family
- Being a foreigner and needing to learn English as a second language

- Geographical difficulties

Conclusion and suggestions:

Rural poor should get the same facilities as the urban India wants - good lighting; wholesome food; clean drinking water and affordable health services. “Most of the goods for rural poor should be produced locally with local resources but using high technology. This will save huge energy in transporting of goods. High technology is also needed for rural development so as to maximize efficiency.

There are many technological challenges yet to be explored – development of cheap drones with camera for disease stress identification; affordable and efficient drip irrigation systems; use of robots for planting, weeding and harvesting; farm machines to run on farm-derived fuel.

There is need for expertise like excellent engineers, scientists and managers for rural R&D. Institutions need to teach and inspire students on high tech rural development. Innovation ecosystem does not exist in Indian education.

The primary area to improve should be providing employment in rural areas and improving field administration. Often villages are not in sync with the urban areas because of bad connectivity and lack in technical advancement. Eventually, this leads to segregation and a social divide between urban and rural areas. In essence, the infrastructure of rural areas should drastically improve so that the policies are adequately implemented. Even after so many years of Independence, stigmas like the child labour, untouchability, domestic violence, illiteracy, child marriage, female infanticide, caste system, poverty and unemployment still have a grip on rural people of rajasthan. Quality education can help in achieving the goal of eradication of such social problems. The dwindling literacy rates in rural Rajasthan, especially for females, are a major matter of concern. There is a need for land and technical reforms. Modern technologies like organic farming should be incorporated to improve outputs and profits. Lastly, people should be given access to easy credit and loans by improving the banking system in rural areas.

It can be easily concluded, that for the development of an economy in both rural and urban areas need to be focused upon. Rural areas need drastic changes in areas like infrastructure, credit availability, literacy, poverty eradication, etc. The schemes that are already in place with the aim of rural development need a new outlook and proper updating. Accordingly, the government needs to act for the upliftment of rural India.

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Weblinks:

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/supply-based-model-for-rural-development-to-be-adopted-in-rajasthan/article66302199.ece>
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- <https://vigyanprasar.gov.in/isw/India-needs-high-quality-manpower-for-rural-R&D.html>
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