

## DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

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### INTRODUCTION

An overwhelming majority of population in Pakistan is village-based and agriculture constitutes the most predominant sector of the economy (Anonymous, 1988-89). Agriculture will continue to be the main basis of development in Pakistan in a foreseeable future. The Government of Pakistan has, therefore, always been attaching utmost importance to agricultural and rural development. A number of institutionalised activities were undertaken under such agencies as V-AID, Basic Democracies and Integrated Rural Development Programme, to enable rural masses to lead a more satisfying life. Unfortunately, our village population, in spite of the best efforts of the Government, is still a victim of poverty, ignorance and disease. Most of the village are still isolated due to lack of roads and other communication facilities. The physical and psychological isolation of the villagers has resulted in a tightly-knit social structure particularly in the villages. Thus there is a general recognition for the development of an appropriate strategy for rural development having superior possibilities and scope for rural regeneration. This article attempts to spell out the parameters which would determine the substance for such a strategy.

### Rural Development as an Approach to Over-all Development

Rural reconstruction endeavours in the past have been generally made in isolation of the over-all national development in this country. The resultant implication of this tendency was the imbalance between rural and urban development. In fact, a policy of rural development must be seen as a policy of over-all national development. Rural development, therefore, must be

a description of the whole strategy of growth and improvement. In fact, rural development is to be regarded as an approach to total development. Rural development, thus, is the prism through which all the development policies should be seen and judged.

As suggested by Mosher (1976) modern rural-development strategy ought to encompass not only development in technologies, organizations and day-to-day activities but also in the values of the society concerned. This should bring forth increased opportunities for its rural populace for better health, broadened mental horizons, increased knowledge, improved skills and expanded and effective participation in both constructive and pleasurable activities relating to their culture. Besides, the latest strategy of rural development should provide for effective means for adjusting, as peacefully as possible, the conflicts and the injustices that invariably arise as technological and other cultural changes take place. Last, but not the least, this strategy should bring all present and potential farm land into its most effective use.

To further elaborate the point, it may be mentioned that modern rural development strategy should involve action to order the development priorities for all facets of rural life and to reverse the traditional flow of wealth from the rural to urban sector. The rural development experts must devise ways and means for channelising rural wealth to benefit the rural communities who actually produce it. It implies, therefore, that under the prevailing circumstances rural development requires a revolution in all the present patterns of our socio-economic development policies.

#### Utilization of Rural Surplus

Under the prevailing administrative and rural economic system, a village has got the position of a basic unit. The strength of higher tiers of administration is mainly dependent upon village as a primary and basic unit. All our development strategies, therefore, must be designed to ensure the strength of our basic unit. In view of this fact, a dynamic programme of village cooperatives was undertaken during 1963 under the Academy for Rural Development, Comilla in East Pakistan (Bangla

Desh). The results of Commilla experiment were very much encouraging and revealing. It may thus be suggested that Commilla approach, of course with certain modifications, is worth experimenting to develop a sound programme of rural reconstruction in the country.

The extraction of rural wealth has been going on for centuries. A major portion of this wealth has been used to establish self-sustaining income-generating enterprises in the urban areas and also to build infrastructure for civilized town life. What is really needed is that reasonable portion of wealth gained from new national developments of the above nature may be channelled into the rural areas, particularly, into those which are most backward.

It is generally argued that rural areas must produce surplus to finance rural diversification. In fact, rural areas are already producing surplus. The trouble is that it is extracted and used to finance luxurious consumption pattern of urban development which further supports the present economic structures.

From the above discussion it can safely be concluded that fundamental changes in our present approach to development are essential to the promotion of rural development. The government policies and activities of the development departments and agencies shall have to be redirected to encourage rural production in such a way that surplus produced in the rural areas is used primarily for the development of such areas. In short, a sound programme of rural development requires a re-orientation of our administrative, economic and social organizations. Obviously, this requires concerted government action

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#### Inter Disciplinary Approach to Rural Development

A good number of government departments, semi-government institutions and voluntary organizations are trying to assist the rural communities to improve their way of life and the level of living. The efforts of all these agencies have not been able to create a visible impact on rural life, primarily, due to lack of coordination and collaboration between them. Bhatta (1982) put his finger on a serious problem when he said that rural development agencies were suffering from ailments like

jealousy, friction, pride and self-importance. There is, thus, an urgent need for bringing about integration among the development agencies to enhance their effectiveness.

Rural development also hinges considerably upon bridging the gulf between the functionaries of beneficiary departments and the rural masses. The existing gulf has resulted in developing misunderstandings and doubts among the people regarding the performance of agricultural and rural development personnel. A number of research studies have provided sufficient evidence in regard to the poor image developed by rural people about the development functionaries. The people and functionaries, therefore, need to be brought closer to each other so that they might develop a sense of we-feeling and common purpose, and chalk out joint programmes for introducing needed changes in rural communities.

Rural reconstruction poses a series of challenges for the planners, administrators and the field workers of various development agencies. For a developing country like Pakistan, multi-dimensional approach is the most feasible and virtually the only approach for the timely completion of all those challenging targets for agricultural and rural development that have been set forth in the seventh five year plan. However, it is heartening to note that there is a growing realization among the development functionaries for a synthesised approach for rural uplift. Actually, instances do exist where statutory and voluntary agencies are making collective efforts to enhance the quality of rural life. This shift towards coordination and collaboration in official thinking and working is a welcome improvement which needs to be expanded and strengthened at all levels.

#### Participation of Rural People in Development

It is quite obvious that rural development has many administrative, economic, social and political implications. It cannot occur unless government is absolutely committed to tackling problems at their roots in the rural areas. The government commitment, however, is not the whole answer to the problem of rural reconstruction. Government can facilitate rural development but can not achieve it by itself. It is the rural people

who have to develop themselves and their environment. The rural people must participate not only in physical labour involved in rural development but also in the planning, execution and evaluation of rural development particularly, in the determination of priorities at every stage of development.

Rural people no doubt possess a limitless capacity to fashion a better way of life. It is now universally accepted that freedom is essential to development. The rural people certainly require certain amount of freedom and power to exercise control over their own activities within the framework of village communities. At the same time they must be able to mount effective pressure at higher levels of our economic and administrative structure. Freedom, however, does not mean the freedom of the rich and the clever to exploit the poor and the ignorant.

#### **Human Resource Development**

The contemporary rural renaissance can be propelled through the joint efforts of all sections of rural population. In fact, it is a multidimensional process with a number of out-side agencies joining hands with rural men, women and youth in a well-planned war on rural inadequacies. Hence, the development planners and functionaries must pay adequate attention in bringing out the latest potentialities of rural men, women, boys and girls for reshaping their attitudes and their lives.

A vigorous and continuous programme of education and training of rural people, therefore, has to be undertaken to enable them to actively and efficiently participate in various rural development activities. It is encouraging to note that a number of institutions have the needed facilities both in men and material to further the noble cause of rural development through the organization of courses of short duration. The University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, for instance, is already disseminating scientific information and improved technology concerning agriculture and allied disciplines among rural masses through its well-planned programme of short courses. This programme, however, needs to be further strengthened.

## Flight of Talent from Rural to Urban Areas

There is a growing tendency among educated youngmen as well as skilled and unskilled labour in Pakistan to migrate from villages to the towns. The flight of talent from villages has created many problems for rural inhabitants. The most noteworthy among these are: acute labour shortage, particularly, during peak seasons, dearth of enlightened leadership (Rauf, 1973). The large scale migration has also added new dimensions to the exiting urban problems such as housing, health and sanitation, crime increase, etc. This state of affairs, thus, makes it imperative to control the migratory trend. A careful analysis of both push and pull factors responsible for inducing people to desert their native villages is an essential pre-requisite to the solution of this serious problem. After the identification of these factors, appropriate measures need to be adopted to put an end to the exodus of rural talent and work force. An effective check on migration must, therefore, form an integral part of human resource development programme in the countryside.

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