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Rural Development Programme Implementation in Developing Countries: The Experience of China and India

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Rural Development Programme Implementation in Developing Countries: The Experience of China and India

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I. INTRODUCTION

The quest for achievement of desired rural development has remained a critical concern of most countries the contemporary world. This is succinct because, available statistics shows that about 80% of the population of most nations resides in rural areas. Unfortunately, this population sometime do not benefit from the over-dramatized rural transformation agenda acclaimed by most countries particularly in the third world social formations.

Thus, some scholars have emphasized the imperative for according desired priority to the development of rural areas. However, such emphasis is rooted in several reasons. According to Robert (1974), four main reasons could be advanced for why greater attention should be shifted to the development of rural areas. First, majority of the population lives and

finds their means of livelihood in the rural areas. Secondly, the rural-urban drift or migration has continued to be an issue of serious concern to governments largely due to the increasing spate of urban unemployment, food scarcity, housing problems, sanitation, health challenges and other attendant social problems. Thirdly, in most third world countries, the poor and disadvantaged people mostly reside in the rural areas. Fourthly, many scholars have persuasively argued that priority should be accorded to issues germane to rural and agricultural development implicit in their significant roles in a country's economic growth and development.

To address the issues of rural backwardness, some countries have adopted and implemented certain policy strategies to tackle problems such as poverty, illiteracy, inequality, hunger, diseases, unemployment, among others. Consequently, such strategies have successfully worked in some countries while similar strategies did not work in others.

In consideration of this pathetic situation of rural development in many countries in the third world, this paper examines rural development programme and implementation particularly in underdeveloped social formations, using China and India as case studies.

II. RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As it is the scenario in the disciplines of social sciences, there is no generally acceptable definition of rural development. This is largely because scholars within the purview of social sciences perceive the concept of rural development from distinct analytical perception and ideological milieu. In spite of this intellectual bias, some scholar conceived rural development as process of not only increasing the level of per capita income in the rural areas, but also the standard of living of the rural population, measured by food and nutrition level, health, education, housing, recreation and security (Diejomaoh, 1973).

The World Bank (1975) conceives rural development as the process of rural modernization and the monetization of the rural society leading to its transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy. As a critical concept, Ollawa (1971)

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perceives rural development as “the restructuring of the economy in order to satisfy the material needs and aspirations of the rural masses and to promote individual and collective incentives to enable them participate in the process of development. Thus, this strategy involves a host of multi-sectoral activities including the improvement of agriculture, the promotion of rural industries, the creation of the requisite infrastructure and social overheads, as well as the establishment of appropriate decentralized structure in order to allow mass production (Wilkin, 2010).

For, Obinozie (1999), rural development is “a multi-dimensional process aimed at uplifting the life of the rural dwellers in the society. This involves the creation of employment, access roads, health facilities, better housing, good water supply and equitable distribution of income among the rural people.

In spite of numerous and diverse definitions the subject by scholars, one thing is imperative about the scope and boundaries of rural development as a field of inquiry. This analytical importance borders on the fact that rural development is directed principally and completely towards the total transformation of rural communities. The essence is to transform these communities to modern cities. The ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty and further reduce the persistent migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of better means of livelihood in the contemporary world.

III. A REVIEW OF MODELS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

In view of the comparative nature of this work, it is therefore imperative to examine the various models of rural development which have been put in practice in some developing countries. According to Ayichi (1995), these models include:

- a. Urban Development Model
- b. Industrial Development Model
- c. Sectoral Development Model
- d. Area Development Model; and
- e. Integrated Rural Development Model

In most developing countries such as China and India, these models have been applied at various times to achieve rural development policies and programmes. Thus, above rural development models are carefully discussed below:

Urban Development Model:

The model favours the concentration of development projects in the urban areas. Its underlying assumptions and methodological premise are based on the fact that the benefits of urban development will trickle-down to the rural areas and further stimulates growth and development. Unfortunately, this concept has failed in many third world formations largely due to over-concentration of development projects in the urban centres resulting in rural-urban migration (Roundinelli,

1975). This ugly trend is clearly responsible for challenges in the urban centres such as over-population, increase in crime, poor sanitary condition, low life span of social amenities/facilities, high cost of living, security challenges, diseases and unemployment (Grindle, 1980).

a) *Industrial Development Model:*

This model posits that the industrialization of the economy is a pre-condition for achievement of rural development. Thus, the model assumed that industrialization of the rural areas will further create employment opportunities for the people and also attract other social amenities such as water, electricity, road, health, education, recreational facilities, among others (Tadora, 1995).

Unfortunately, available evidence in some countries in the developing world has shown that these industries are short-lived largely due to poor management and funding.

b) *Sectoral Development Model:*

The proponents and apologists of this model assert that sectoral development of a specific area of rural life will eventually bring about desired development in the community. To some scholars, this situation informed the age-long efforts by some governments in the developing countries to concentrate attention in the development of agricultural sector as a panacea to achieve rural development objectives. Thus, available evidence has shown that the development of agriculture alone cannot bring about desired development in rural areas. Therefore, political will and governments' huge investments in education sector, health, transport, commerce, credible electoral process, fight against corruption, hunger, injustice, among others, will obviously transform rural areas into enviable towns in the contemporary world (Wholey, 1982).

c) *Integrated Rural Development Model:*

This approach seeks to develop all the sectors of the economy and effectively link them to the urban economy (Pinstrup-Aderesene, 2002). It aims at promoting linkages between formal and informal sectors as of the rural economy. This model is usually prescribed by International Development Partners and Donor Agencies. This includes the World Bank, United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) among others.

According to Ijere (1993), the integrated rural development model entails government-community co-operative participation in providing better health services, education and rural

Infrastructure in such a co-ordinated and simultaneous manner in order to enhance the overall welfare of the rural dwellers. The beauty of integrated rural development approach is that rural development programmes are pursued holistically. Hence, embraces

not only the rural areas, but also urban centres in a particular state.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN CHINA

Rural development in China is ultimately accorded desired priority. Thus, to achieve desired rural development objectives, several programmes and policy strategies were adopted by the Chinese government. This includes:

a) Agriculture:

A major focus of rural development in China takes cognizance of the imperative for involving the people in agricultural policies and programmes. Thus, the Chinese government has over the years, involved the citizens in the following agricultural activities:

- a. Large scale production of vegetables
- b. Production of aquatic products
- c. Agricultural processing
- d. Rural off-farm production, and;
- e. Procurement and storage of harvested grains.

In view of emphasis placed on agricultural development as a precursor of rural development, the Chinese Government provides 'policy loans' to agricultural sector (Yao, 2010). However, Cheng and Xu (2003) have pervasively argued that:

...an important aspect of China's selective credit policies is the provision of policy loans by Rural Finance Institutions (RFIs) to priority sectors of the economy. The policy loans for rural China include but are not limited to, the loan for agricultural procurement and storage (mainly by the ADBC), poverty loans...

b) Promoting Self-reliance through Formal and Informal Institutions involved in Rural Development:

A central policy strategy of the rural livelihoods approach in China is aimed at putting people at the centre of development. This is to increase the effectiveness of development assistance from the government and international development partners. This strategy was adopted to achieve a poverty reduction particularly in the rural China. Obviously, the involvement of the poor citizens in rural development programmes resulted to local empowerment of the people which in turn leads to opportunities for local leadership. It also increased women participation in politics in China. Thus, the village institutions form the basis of community organization and function through "Village Development Committees. Also, this committee comprises the representatives of all communities in the village. As a rule, at least 30 percent of the composition of the above committee must be drawn from women

population. These Committees develop Village Development Plans and work closely with the Ministry of Rural Development in China (Xian, 2010).

Other community organizations such as Farmers' Federations and Women's Self-help Groups also facilitate the process of community-driven development (Huang and Rozelle, 2000). These institutions operate there is availability of micro-credit schemes to farmers.

It is equally imperative to note that communities also form "Apex Institutions" (Federation of Various Community Institutions), at the Block, (a unit of a district) and "Taluka" (a unit of a Block) level. These institutions act as venues through which regional issues and challenges to farmers are effectively discussed with a view to find lasting solutions to the problems. These institutions also dialogue with the government and other agencies (including banks) to access various agricultural loans in China. For instance, Adams and Nehman (1979) assert that in Shanxi Province and other Provinces, rural borrowers in China sometimes offer gifts, kickbacks and even organize banquets for "Loan Officials" for easy access and processing of loan applications.

Thus, the Federation of various Community Institutions most times serves as agricultural extension agents and also disseminates information from agricultural institutes to farmers in remote areas in China. Further, they also engage in collective marketing of agricultural produce to enable member institutions to sell their products at the best possible prices (Zhang and Zhang, 2002).

It is, therefore, pertinent to note that the formation of Farmers' Federations and the Women's Federations have resulted to social campaigns in the rural China, thereby reducing unnecessary expenditure on social customs, promoting the education of girls, anti-liquor campaigns, and the promotion of organic farming. Furthermore, mass awareness campaigns by women's groups in China has significantly resulted to reduction in wasteful and extravagant expenditures on weddings and other social customs such as 'funeral feasts'.

c) Rural Credit Cooperatives:

The Rural Credit Cooperatives (RCCs) in poor and remote areas in China have a stronger incentive to offer rural credit to its members. In the main, the RCCs are allowed to give credit facilities to households and enterprises within their geographic areas (their township). As a rule, over 50 percent of the RCCs loans must be provided to only their members. On the newly increased loans by the Chinese government, over 70 percent of the total loans are usually used for agricultural loans, including loans to individual households and agricultural collectives (Aziz, 1998).

It is crucial to note that RCCs from China can transfer funds to other RCCs existing in other countries through inter-country transfers. However, the RCCs that meet the under listed criteria are allowed to lend their funds to other RCCs and financial institutions. First, they must have good capital for at least two years. Second, the inter-banking lending must not exceed two percent of all the deposits organized by the RCC in question.

d) *The People Communes Approach:*

Another strategy of Chinese model of rural development is the establishment of the 'People's Communes' as the basic unit of rural transformation agenda. Its purpose is to organize and mobilize the rural population to develop their land and other resources in order to meet the essential needs such as principle of self-reliance. The essence is to reduce social inequalities by creating rural societies based on justice and equality (Aziz, 1998:15).

According to Olarenwanju (2008), the system of "Communes" provides a very effective mechanism of local planning in accordance with the simple philosophy of rural development which emphasizes bottom-up approach. This is clearly because after discussion with the "Communes", the country passes on the total production targets and demands for onward transmission to the Central Planning Commission for inclusion in the Chinese general budget (Rossi and Wright, 1977).

e) *Skill Acquisition and Technology Development:*

In addition to institution building, programmes and activities, there is also Skills Development Centres aimed at building up the skill base of villagers, particularly the women. Thus, available evidence shows that in some villages, women have been trained to repair and maintain hand-pumps. In others some have been trained as masons and artisans. Hence, most communities receive organizational and financial management trainings to support the effectiveness and sustainability of village-level institutions.

Similarly, some key resource people are often provided with technical skills to plan, implement and maintain the development activities (David, 1979). The ultimate goal is to ensure that people in the participating communities have access, confidence and competence to make informed choices and decisions from a wide range of appropriate development options at their disposal.

It is, therefore, important to note that, these policy strategies were essentially aimed at increasing the awareness of the savings and credit programmes among the people. It also aimed at exposing the people to certain rural development models and further ensures that the communities are adequately acquainted with the principles of natural resources management.

f) *Creation of Rural Assets:*

In people's Republic of China, institutional structures are created at the village level to enable the poor people to prioritize their needs and decide how best to manage common resources. Thus, some communities build community capital through efficient management of their natural resource base such as water storage, water use, irrigation systems, soil conservation and forestry management. These efforts include the construction of small scale infrastructure, such as check-dams, irrigation canals, water harvesting structures and other agricultural storage facilities.

However, over 400 structures have been created for harvesting and storage of rainwater that is directly lifted for irrigation. These have led to an additional 4000 hectares of irrigated crop lands in the affected programme areas being further expanded through the adoption of water-saving devices such as drip irrigation and sprinklers (Robert, 2011).

g) *Benefits and Impact on Quality of Life:*

In China, the assets that have been created at the rural areas have just an increased income generation to households. Thus, government's rural development policies and programmes have benefited over 300,000 households in over 1,000 villages in the Western and Central China since 1983 (Woo, 2003). Hence, development activities have ensured more water for drinking, irrigation, higher agricultural productivity, rural incomes (including household savings), greater resilience to droughts and the ability to appropriately manage the natural resource base of the people.

However, with over 10,000 households currently having access to safe drinking water, more people, especially women have benefited significantly from this policy strategy by the Chinese government. Thus, since farmers no longer walk long distances to get required quantity of water, the time saved in this regard by the Chinese citizens is sometimes spent at home for proper education and good up-bringing of their children.

Paradoxically, the general literacy level has risen by 10 percent for men and 8 percent for women, contrary to situations in China some years ago. Thus, the growing gender sensitivity and changing gender equations in China are quite evident. However, available statistics shows that issues bordering on the inclusion of more women in policy decisions in China are currently receiving government attention.

V. STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA

In India, the rural and urban economies are integrated into the overall national economy. However, any discourse on development without the rural people, particularly in a country where three-quarters of citizens

below poverty line reside in rural areas, is grossly incomplete. Thus, the rural development strategies in India are based on the following schemes, and are contained in the "National Rural Employment Act of 2005:

a) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP):

This was first introduced in 1978. The IRDP has provided assistance to rural poor in the form of subsidy and bank credit for productive employment opportunities through successive plan periods. Subsequently, Programmes such as training of Rural Youths for Self-Employment (TRYSE), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), among others, have been receiving adequate attention in India. Ultimately, the IRDP is no doubt, people-oriented programme aimed at improving the living standard of rural people in India.

b) Wage Employment Programmes:

As important components of the anti-poverty strategy, Wage Employment Programmes were designed to achieve multiple objectives. Thus, they not only provide employment opportunities during lean agricultural seasons, but also assist farmers during periods of floods, droughts and other natural calamities. Further, they create rural infrastructures which also support economic activity in rural India.

These programmes, however, put an upward pressure on market wage rates by attracting people to public works programmes. The essence is to reduce labour supply thereby pushing up the demand for labour in the rural areas. It encompasses National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), which were initially part of the Sixth and Seventh Year Development Plan in India (Rohini and Alakh, 2001).

c) Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and Food for Work Programme:

In India, the EAS was launched in October 1993 covering 1.778 drought-prone, desert, and tribal and hill area blocks. It was later extended to all the blocks between 1997 and 1998. The EAS was designed to provide employment to the youths in the form of manual works during lean agricultural seasons. The works taken up under the programme were expected to lead to the creation of durable economic and social infrastructures thereby addressing the critical needs of the people of India. Also, there is the Food for Work Programme which began in the year 2000 as a component of the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) in eight notified drought-affected states of India. This programme was designed to boost food production in India so as to meet the country's critical challenge of over-population.

However, food grains are supplied to states free of charge as part of measures to address the challenges of poverty particularly in the Indian rural

areas. It is important to note that lifting of food grains for the above scheme from Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been slow largely due to bureaucratic bottlenecks.

d) Rural Housing:

This scheme was instituted in 1985 by the Indian Government. The Rural Housing Scheme is the core programme for providing free housing to families in rural areas in India. Thus, it was designed for Targets Scheduled Castes (TSCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Poor households and freed-bonded labourers. The rural housing programme has enabled some poor families in India to acquire pucca houses. However, the coverage of the beneficiaries is limited given the available resources in India. The Samagra Awas Yojana (SAY) was taken up in 25 blocks to ensure convergence of housing, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and common drainage facilities (Aziz, 1995).

The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has extended its activities to rural areas in India with a view to providing loans at a concessional rate of interest to economically weaker individuals. Thus, this strategy has been extended to low-income group households to enable them acquire houses in the state.

e) Social Security Programmes:

The democratic decentralization and centrally supported National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) that was launched in August 1995 marks a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles of State Policy in India. The NSAP has three components:

- i. National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)
- ii. National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS), and
- iii. National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)

The NSAP is a centrally-sponsored programme that aims at ensuring a minimum National Standard of Social Assistance above the assistance that states provide to the aged. This includes monthly pension of Rs. 75 to destitute above the age of 65 years in India. The NFBS is a scheme designed for poor. Thus, such families are given Rs. 10,000 by the government as a result of the death of their breadwinners.

The NMBS provides Rs. 500 to support nutritional intakes for pregnant women in India. In addition to NSAP, the Annapurna Scheme was launched in April 2000 to provide food security to senior citizens who were eligible for pension under NOAPS but could not receive it due to budget constraints in India (Rohini and Alakh, 2000:28).

i. Land Reforms:

In an agro-based economy, the structure of land ownership is central to the wellbeing of the people (Huang and Ma, 2000). The Indian Government has strived with fair degree of objectivity to change the ownership pattern of cultivable land in the state. The

government has also tried in the areas of the abolition of intermediaries, the abolition of ceiling laws, security of tenure totenants, consolidation of land holding, banning of tenancy area, among others.

Furthermore, a land record management system is a pre-condition for effective land reform programme in India. Thus, these policy measures were designed to reposition the urban and rural areas to play critical role to national development in India.

ii. *Agriculture:*

India is primarily an agriculture-based economy. Thus, agriculture contributes about 65 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of India. In order to increase the growth and development of agriculture government continually encourages the skills in crafts, fisheries, poultry and diary farming. This strategy was in recognition of the fact that these ventures are primary contributors to the rural economy of some developed countries in the world.

For instance, the Sampoorana Granin Yojana (SGRY) Scheme was established to increase food production by means of wage employment in the rural areas, especially those adversely affected by the natural disasters. Besides, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development to improve the general wellbeing of the rural dwellers in India.

Apart from these policy instruments discussed above, other community organizations such as Farmers Federation and Women Self-help Groups that facilitate the process of community-driven development also exist in India. Thus, the Federation of Farmers Groups has considerably reduced the cost of agricultural inputs such as seedlings, fertilizers, and pesticides. This was achieved through bulk purchases based on demand from member initiations.

It is crucial to note that appropriate strategies are always adopted to ensure quality agricultural inputs are supplied to farmers in India. These organizations have also contributed immensely to improved cropping and farming techniques, rational use of fertilizers and the adoption of appropriate low-cost technologies in agricultural practice in India. (Rohini and Alakh, 2001:38).

However, in pursuance of the above strategy that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development of India was created in order to provide credit facilities for the development of crafts, agriculture, small scale industries, village industries, rural crafts, cottage industries, and other related operations in the rural sector of India.

VI. THE CHALLENGES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION IN CHINA AND INDIA

In spite of the impressive efforts made by China and India in rural development, these countries still face

some perceived challenges. In China in particular, one of the greatest problems militating against agriculture and by extension, rural development programme, is the problem of "drought". The extended drought which usually caused desertification and severe damage to crop production sometimes cascade development efforts and programme implementation in the People's Republic of China.

Secondly, the traditional Chinese calendar outlines dates for planting specific crops and dates when illnesses could be expected. However, China has not surmounted this age-long problem which adversely affects rural development Programme implementation in the country. Also, however, large proportion of adults are usually absent for long periods of time due to constant search for better paid employment in metropolitan centres across the country. This has resulted to empty villages, unprecedented increase in the population of aged engaged in agricultural production and its attendant consequent on productive enterprises in the country. Worse still, the Chinese education policies which require village children to be educated in boarding schools have further impacted negatively on agricultural production. This has further reduced the rural population and adversely affected productive enterprises, particularly in the Chinese rural areas.

In India, some environmentally degraded states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Nadhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are characterized by erratic rainfall, contaminated ground water and poor soil conditions which result to other natural calamities. In India, lots of cultural practices/ belief systems adversely impact on rural development policies and programmes. These factors adversely affect agricultural production and per capita income of the people in China and India. These practices and beliefs need to be re-examined by the Indian Government in order to reposition agriculture to play critical role to national development.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Chinese successful transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist marked economy, with geometrical growth in rural development was as a result of the institutionalization of formal and informal structures that emphasized on skill acquisition, technology development and aggressive implementation of rural development programmes. This aggressive drive in rural development is ultimately based on exhaustive village level organizations such as Village Trust and Rotating Savings, Credit Organizations, Policy Loans Schemes, among others.

Also, small scale industries, technologist and farmers are the backbones of China's economy. Thus, they are given their due rights place though generous access to loans, technical and agricultural assistance by the government.

Similarly, the rural development approach in India is multi-dimensional. Its organizational elements and programmes are area-based. As a result, rural development strategies are strictly anchored on a defined population. Also, the Indian rural development reflects programme implementation and planning what could best be described as long-term planning. Thus, the essence is to enable both the government and the people pursue vigorously, rural development policy objectives in their best interests.

Indeed, these two countries (China and India) have made significant improvements in rural development programme implementation in spite of some identified challenges in their areas. Hence, these gestures should be emulated by other developing countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Benin Republic, South Africa, Mali, among others. It is, therefore argued that if other development countries emulate the Chinese and Indian Strategies of rural development programme implementation, it will go a long way to improve their national economy and the living condition of their people.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the impressive efforts hitherto made by these most world populated countries, this study makes the following recommendations for China, India and other developing countries to enable them achieve their policy goals on rural development:

1. Other developing countries should adopt the Chinese and Indian models of rural development such as community-based organizations and aggressive rural financing organizations, in the implementation of rural development policy objectives in their countries
2. It is recommended that the Indian Government should abandon its superstitious beliefs since they appear to have adverse consequences on the overall national development in the country.
3. The traditional Chinese calendar for planting specific crops should be discouraged. Instead, new technology should be developed for crops to be planted at anytime of the year (continuous cropping), irrespective of the traditional planting season.
4. The Government of China should sanction officials who receive kickbacks from farmer before processing loan applications for them as this is capable of hindering the rural development efforts by the government.
5. Modern dams and irrigation should be constructed in China and India to boost agricultural production during drought in order to enhance the per capita income of rural farmers in these countries.

6. Other developing countries particularly those in Africa, Asia and Latin America should involve NGO's in their rural development efforts as it is the case in China and India. This will not only enhance agricultural production but also address the challenges of food insecurity in their respective countries.

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