

# Decentralization and Rural development in India: An Overview

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focused on rural development under the decentralization process. Rural developments are the root causes of the overall infrastructural development, which will lead to the progress of every people. Without rural development, the entire country will seem ineffective because the people elect the prime minister to panchayats, The Government of India should take care of people's lives by strengthening local government administration. The Government of India launched several policies to support the development of a strong rural economy. The Government efforts to progress rural India have usually prioritized reducing poverty, limiting child labour, and migration, making villages self-reliant, and strengthening local economies. The Rural Development Scheme has been called India's largest poverty alleviation initiative.

**Keywords:** Decentralization, Poverty Rural development, policies, Empowerment.

## INTRODUCTION

Decentralization and rural development have been key focus areas in India's governance and development strategies for several decades. The decentralization process in India aims to empower local governments and communities to take charge of their development agendas, thereby addressing the specific needs and challenges of rural areas. Rural development has become an object of formulation of

various policies and programs for socio-economic development. Rural development in India has not taken place due to lack of devolution of power to local bodies. However subsequent decentralization planning has devolved power between union and states. Decentralization processes are considered being "heart and soul" of development in rural areas. Many rural development policies have been introduced in India under the decentralized planning process. Rural development is the main concern of our country because the majority population lives in rural areas suffering from low standards of living, unemployment, and poverty. The main aim of rural development is public welfare and economic development which cannot be identified only by increasing national income or per capita income. Therefore, increasing income distribution should alleviate poverty by providing minimum employment to those who want employment. Therefore, the main aim of development will be to create the necessary facilities with an overall quality of life. More than 80% of our country lives in rural areas out of which 32% of the population is below the poverty line. Hence through the implementation of rural development programmes rural economy, unemployment, and mass poverty can be eradicated. Therefore, rural development is essential in future economic planning.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To express various rural development policies and programmes.

2. To observe impact of rural development policies and programmes.
3. To analyse Decentralization for empowerment of rural poor through rural development policies

### **METHODOLOGY**

This present research study used a descriptive method. This present research study is based on secondary sources of data. The secondary information was collected from various books, journals, newspapers, research papers, websites, etc.

### **DECENTRALIZATION FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL POOR**

Decentralization plays a vital role in empowering the rural people by transferring decision-making authority, resources, and responsibilities from central or state governments to local institutions such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. Poverty alleviation programs can't be effective if the policies are not properly planned and implemented then it must be assumed that rural development is flawed. Therefore decentralization of government functions is necessary for implementing rural development programmes. Decentralization enables the rural poor to participate in decision-making, ownership and accountability, appropriate development solutions, increased access to services, capacity building and skill development, promotion of livelihood opportunities, and social inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups. Decentralization is instrumental in empowering the rural poor by fostering participatory governance, enhancing local ownership, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development tailored to the needs of marginalized communities. By strengthening local institutions and promoting grassroots democracy, decentralization creates opportunities for the rural poor to lead dignified lives and realize their full potential.

### **Constitutional Framework and Decentralization**

In India, the states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan adopted the policy of decentralization for the first time. The Panchayat Act 1959 was adopted by the majority of states and by 1960 Panchayat Raj institutions were established across the country. Decentralization is measured as a part of democratic decentralization which was adopted by providing a constitutional framework in India. Decentralization has served as a means that has helped local organizations achieve the inclusion of rural people, better governance by local people, mobilization of local resources, and social and political change. Rural development ultimately helps in the adoption and implementation of government plans and policies in rural areas. A large part of the Indian population lives in rural areas and human development in rural India is not possible unless these rural people are developed. For this reason, the development of Panchayat Raj institutions is of great importance.

A Panchayat Raj organization was established in most of the states from 1959 to 1966. From 1967 to 1976 no powers and resources were delegated to these bodies for the development of Panchayat Raj institutions. Ashoka Mehta Committee from 1977 to 1991 recognized the weakness of panchayati raj institutions and later in 1977, decentralization started all over India. After 1992, 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution legitimized and empowered the Panchayats. This 73rd Amendment Act likewise extends an essential role in determining rural development, to assimilate the deprived and further their advancement.

### **DECENTRALIZED PLANNING IS A KEY FUNCTION OF THE PANCHAYATS**

Decentralized planning refers to the process of transferring decision-making powers and resources from central authorities to local or regional levels. The 73rd Amendment Act

to the Constitution introduced the 11th Schedule and conferred many powers on Panchayats by devolving powers to local bodies. Panchayat Raj is a local self-government organization in India that was established to ensure the decentralization of power and grassroots governance. Decentralized planning involves the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of development plans at the local level with the active participation of rural people. Panchayats are responsible for formulating and implementing development plans according to the specific needs and priorities of their respective areas. The Panchayati Raj institution forms the backbone of rural decentralization in India and is governed by various legislations and policies.

### **SOME RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

The central and state governments implement various rural development programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, agricultural growth, employment generation, and social welfare. These programmes are often implemented in collaboration with PRIs to ensure local participation and ownership. To raise development in rural India, many rural development policies were undertaken by the center and state governments from time to time.

### **PROGRAMMES FOR SELF AND WAGE EMPLOYMENT MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MGNREGS)**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme ensures a Minimum Wage Workforce. This MGNREGS scheme was implemented on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 and implemented in 625 districts. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) is an Indian labor law to ensure the “right to work” to provide 100 days of wage employment every year.

### **SWARNAJAYANTI GRAM SWAROJGAR YOJANA (SGSY)**

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana was a government scheme, aimed at promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas. SGSY also known as the Self-Employment Promotion Initiative was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999. To provide self-employment opportunities and economic empowerment to marginalized women in rural areas, SGSY has facilitated the formation of Self-Help Groups. Self-help groups have been formed so that women can take advantage of opportunities for independent work. These self-help groups are provided with financial assistance from banks to initiate income-generating activities suited to the skills and interests of their members. SGSY has played an important role in promoting entrepreneurship and livelihood development in rural India.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES- NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (NSAP)**

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is one of India's key social security programmes aimed at providing financial assistance, to old age, widows, and persons with disabilities. Launched in 1995, NSAP is administered Government of India by the Ministry of Rural Development and operates all over India.

### **INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OLD AGE PENSION SCHEME (IGNOAPS)**

This Scheme provides financial support to eligible elderly individuals aged 60-79 years and above. The pension amount 1000 is distributed to IGNOAPS stakeholders every month. The objective is to provide income security and support the well-being of senior citizens who lack adequate financial support.

### **INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL WIDOW PENSION SCHEME (IGNWPS)**

Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme is a social welfare in India, aimed at providing financial assistance to widows. A widow in this scheme gets 1000 monthly pensions for their livelihood and basic needs. This scheme includes below-poverty-line widow to improve their economic and overall quality of life. This scheme provides financial assistance to widow's age 40-59 years. The Scheme aims to help widows cope with economic hardships following the death of their spouses and ensure socio-economic well-being.

### **INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL DISABILITY PENSION SCHEME (IGNDPS)**

This Pension Scheme of NSAP offers economic support to disabilities aged 18-59 years. For the age of 18-79 years and above the Pension amount is Rs.1000 monthly. The pension seeks to provide a safety net for individuals with disabilities who face challenges in accessing employment opportunities and require additional support for their livelihoods and basic needs.

### **NATIONAL FAMILY BENEFIT SCHEME (NFBS)**

NFBS claims one-time central assistance to families (BPL) in the death of such primary breadwinners should death. The objective is to provide immediate relief to families grappling with sudden loss of income due to the death of the primary earning member, thereby preventing them from falling deeper into poverty. 20,000-rupee financial assistance will be given to the bereaved family in case of the breadwinner's death

### **ANNAPURNA SCHEME**

IGNOAPS Under this scheme, eligible who have an old-age pension but are not receiving any other social security benefit are provided 10 kg of food grains "rice, or wheat" given monthly for each beneficiary free of cost. The scheme aims to ensure food security for destitute elderly

individuals who are unable to support themselves financially.

### **AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

The Special Area Development Programmes is an important programme of planning progress of the Government of India, which was started in the Fourth Five Year Plan. It is a strategic plan of the special requirement to deal with reducing poverty of the various regions due to their distinct geophysical structure and location like mountains, deserts, and socially economically backward regions like tribal.

### **IMPACT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES**

Rural development planning plays an essential role in the development of socio-economic conditions in rural areas. A key objective of rural development planning is to decrease poverty in rural areas, generate employment, eliminate socio-economic inequalities, and eradicate hunger. Rural development planning also improves infrastructure, providing social services, creating employment opportunities, and eradicating illiteracy and poverty for sustainable livelihoods. The union and state governments have jointly focused on rural development and spent hundreds of crores of rupees throughout various programmes. However, the impact of rural development planning may vary depending on the administrative structure and local context factors. Challenges such as corruption, and inadequate monitoring systems can hamper the effectiveness of these schemes and limit their impact on rural development, Therefore ensuring transparency, accountability, and people's participation in the implementation of rural development measures to yield positive outcomes. Providing livelihood opportunities to rural people without migrating has resulted in reduced migration. MGNREGS and social security NSAP schemes provide employment and monthly allowance to rural families to reduce poverty. Improved infrastructure not only improves the quality



of life in rural areas but also facilitates economic activities. Policymakers need to properly assess whether various rural development policies are working properly, and how much influence those rural development policies have had in social and economic terms. This study aims to provide a proper interpretation and evaluation of these problems in rural development so that appropriate future policies can be properly analyzed later. Also, research on rural development policies in more depth and investigate through case studies of successful examples whether the findings can be extrapolated to larger regions using different economic and sociological methods.

## CONCLUSION

Decentralization and rural development in India are ongoing processes aimed at empowering rural peoples, improving governance effectiveness, and addressing the socio-economic challenges in rural areas. Decentralization has given all necessary powers to local bodies and decentralization is the soul of success in economic and human development in rural India. Panchayati Raj Institutions are playing an important function in the modern era and have to undertake greater activities to achieve rural development. The Gram Panchayat administration has played an important role in all aspects of rural development. Its role and activism in overall rural development in the Indian context seem to be increasing day by day. Effective and efficient administration of Gram Panchayats has led to improvements and changes in rural development in India.

## Declaration by Authors

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