

TOPIC: Rural Development Program of Pakistan

Introduction:

The concept of rural development has changed significantly during the last three decades. Until the 1970's rural development was synonymous with agricultural development and hence, focused on increasing agricultural production. Today's concept of rural development concerns not only with improvements in growth income, and output but it also includes an assessment of changes in the quality of life, such as improvement in health and nutrition, education, environmentally safe living condition, and reduction in gender and income inequalities.

Concepts and Definition of Rural Development:

- The term 'rural' is ambiguous as there is no exact definition of the term, but that rural areas are 'clearly recognizable'.
- Rural areas constitute the space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape, most of which is dominated by fields and pastures, woods and forest, water, mountain and desert.
- Rural development centered around:
 - a. **Income criteria** in which the concept is made to address the problem of rural poverty.
 - b. **Sociological concept** in which the rural poor represents a reservoir of untapped talent that should give the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of development through improved education, health and nutrition.
 - c. Rural development may also be seen as an **ideological and a practice**.
- Rural development is essentially a process of structural transformation characterized by diversification of the economy away from agriculture.

Picture of Rural Pakistan:

Access to the basic social services, such as education, health, potable drinking water and shelter to poor strata of society are not easily available. An overview of the issues in rural development has been presented in Table-1. According to an estimate 70-80 million people do not have required level of access to education and health services. Similarly, 30-550 million people are malnourished. This gloomy picture of rural Pakistan is further accentuated when we witness that the

agricultural sector, because of declining, productivity has failed to employ rural masses any more. The employment capacity of agricultural sector has been reduced. With poor health, inadequate food-resources, illiteracy, unemployment and many other prevailing constraints, coupled with degrading natural resources-base, thinking of productivity gains in agricultural sector, in general, and that of rural human and social capital, in particular, would be impossible (Pirzada, 1990).

Table1: Summary Implications for Rural Development in Pakistan

SHORTAGE OF:	
• Educational facilities	• Living space
• Health services	• Arable land
• Housing units	• Clean water
• Food	
INCREASE IN:	
• Unemployment	• Over crowding
• Land fragmentation	• Katchi abadies
• Import of food etc.	• Poverty
• Environmental problems	• Unrest
• Congestion in households	• Crime

Issues of Rural Sector:

Rural scenario can generally be characterized as follows:

1. Rural development policy always had a heavy bias towards large farmers, whereas small landholders making more than 90 percent of total farms were ignored along with landless labor community.
2. Rigid cropping pattern prevailing in the country results in lack of intensification and diversification of agriculture sector, thereby increasing unemployment in rural areas.
3. Natural resource base is deteriorating overtime. Due to inappropriate agricultural practices and climate change, land degradation is more and

land productivity is declining. Almost 40 percent land in Sindh alone has turned saline. The rangelands on which 70 percent of local livestock thrives has been degraded and no rehabilitation plans are in place.

4. Literacy rate is very low in these areas and illiterate farmers cannot realize the benefits of modern, scientific and technical know-how in farming business. Moreover, rural areas are deprived of schools. In case, if schooling facilities are available, then qualified staff is not available. Most villages are lacking hospitals dispensaries and other health centers.
5. Poor health, malnutrition and high population growth rates are widespread in rural areas, badly affecting productivity. According to an estimate, 30-50 million people are malnourished.
6. Water supply and sanitation condition is not satisfactory in rural areas. Population having access to safe water is 87 percent and 35 percent of total population has access to sanitation.

Past Rural Development Programs in Pakistan:

Since the independence, Pakistan has embarked upon a number of rural and agricultural development programs to increase the productivity and quality of life of rural people. These programs were **village Aid program, basic democratic system, rural Works Program, Integrated rural development, people works program, local govt. and rural development, peoples program, Tameer-e-Watan, Social Action Programs, Khushal Pakistan**. These programs were partially or fully extended to all parts of the country. To overall objectives of these Programs were the social welfare, improvement in quality of life and agricultural development. These programs did not achieved the desired results because the objectives of one program conflicted with those of others, and there was no institutional mechanism for reconciling them. Consequently, many programs not only failed to produce the intended benefits, but also cause harm to other Programs. Common causes of failure of these Programs were loose and uncoordinated institutional framework; lack of mutual understanding and collaboration within the nation-building departments and with the departments of rural development; absence of efforts to help evolve rural leadership from the grass roots; lack of proper supervision, follow-up, research and evolution of projects.

THE VISION: (Of Rural Development Program)

The present scenario requires the agriculture sector, and all the stakeholders to understand the declining economic growth-rates. The relatively better growth rates in the agriculture sectors reported couples of years back are also illusive, as we did not have an environmental accounting system. As such, if we take into account of the land/natural resource depreciation e.g., land degradation, salinity, water-logging deforestation etc. The actual growth in agricultural sector and economic sector may be following a negative trend.

In the situation, we need to develop our vision from sustainable rural development. The essential ingredients of vision for rural development must also include: a well-organized plan, sharp and strictly focused strategy, double activities and clearly defined short-term and long term goals.

MOVING FROM VISION TO ACTION:

The vision however, demands to be translated into doable action in order to realize the sustainable rural economies and must focus on to:

- Adopt measures to promote rural and agricultural-based industries.
- Create and promote public health, food-hygiene and integrated family planning through communication and advocacy initiatives.
- Develop community human resources for both on-farm/non-farm employments.
- Integrated the gender and children in the development process.
- Mobilize social capital for creating and utilizing community-resources including physical, capital and social by adopting community-based participatory approach in order to realize development.
- Plan and develop a policy that focuses on social development of impoverished communities – the poorest of the poor.
- Undertake conservation and development of natural resources, focusing on protection of environment and biodiversity.

These actions may help to improve rural economy of the country and restore it. Consequently the urban fringes too shall harvest the fruit of development, in terms of enhanced food availability and decreased urban violence and healthier and cleaner

suburbs, besides the net economic gains with trickle-down effect on the common masses.

Future Strategies:

To develop the community to become active participants of the economy, the following steps need to be prioritized:

1. The rural poor (small landholders and landless class) need to participate in the development and implementations of the relevant policies and programs. It requires institutional and technological reforms.
2. For sustainable rural development, conservation and development of natural resources, focusing on protection of environment and biodiversity must be undertaken.
3. Strengthening rural institutions in the can satisfy the thrust for rural development. There is a need to address the issues of inequality in terms of resources along with the innovation and adoption of cost saving technologies.
4. There is a strong need to develop and promote agro-based industry in rural areas to create employment opportunities through private-public interventions. This will definitely help in reducing the rural urban migration on one hand and rural poverty on the other. It could be achieved by promoting savings in rural areas, thereby increasing investment opportunities for overall improvement in the income of the rural communities.
5. Proper monitoring and evaluation of rural development programmes must be carried out to ensure successful implementation of programme activities and those who are responsible for not achieving the results must be accounted for.
6. Initiatives must be taken to address the problems of public health and education for fast growing population. The demand for establishment of schools and health facilities on modern lines. Such facilities would provide productive, healthy and educated labor force to agriculture in particular and to the economy in general.