



Review

Rural development in transition: Global trends

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Although rural development has been a priority area for external donors its importance has increased in the second half of the last 50 years as concerns about food security, the population explosion, environment and climatic changes, as well as poverty, equality and social justice have come to be increasingly perceived as being in the purview of global, rather than national policy agendas. Rural development stood at the cross-cutting path of these concerns. However, the multiplicity of the objectives which rural development was expected to achieve often deprived it of a central focus and often contributed to its failure. It is well experimented through various strategic interventions by both developed and developing countries and highlights the various paradigm shifts in the rural development concepts. Rural development generally denotes economic development and community development actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighborhood, remote villages. Against this backdrop, the paper, examine the changing global trends in rural development and further it explores the potential areas of rural sector as a growth engine towards inclusive development.

Key words: Rural development, poverty, rural employment, government non-governmental organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of rural development has changed significantly during the last 3 decades. Until the 1970s, rural development was synonymous with agricultural development and, hence, focused on increasing agricultural production. This focus seems to have been driven primarily by the interests of industrialization to extract surpluses from the agriculture sector to reinforce industrialization with the focus on increasing agricultural production, the stated objective of most countries was to promote smallholder agriculture. Over time, this smallholder agriculture-centric concept of rural development underwent changes. By the early 1980s, according to Harris, the World Bank defined it as "...a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people—the rural poor." Four major factors appear to have influenced the change: increased concerns about the persistent and deepening of rural

poverty; changing views on the meaning of the concept of development itself; emergence of a more diversified rural economy in which rural nonfarm enterprises play an increasingly important role; and increased recognition of the importance of reducing the non income dimensions of poverty to achieve sustainable improvements in the socioeconomic well-being of the poor.

Before the 1970s, rural development was seen to be synonymous with agricultural development. Rural development, defined in the 1980s by the World Bank as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the rural poor, has since been variously defined. For instance the USDA defines it as 'improvement in the overall rural community conditions, including economic and other quality of life considerations such as environment, health, infrastructure, and housing' (USDA

2006). Apart from the changing context of rural development, increasing incidence of poverty/extreme poverty and recognition of its non income derivative have contributed significantly to the evolution of new narratives of rural development. A major non-income need of rural people, the dearth of which contributes to their backwardness is political participation - which was used to define what is known as inclusive rural development - when combined with the pursuance of their economic and social needs. Another concept is that of integrated rural development, which favours the amalgamation of development activities in various economic sectors (agriculture, commerce, industry, etc) in the rural development process. It also includes the integration of the traditionally disadvantaged groups (such as children, the youth, women, the elderly, minorities, etc) into the rural development process.

Today's concept of rural development is fundamentally different from that used about 3 or 4 decades ago. The concept now encompasses "concerns that go well beyond improvements in growth, income, and output. The concerns include an assessment of changes in the quality of life, broadly defined to include improvement in health and nutrition, education, environmentally safe living conditions, and reduction in gender and income inequalities. Today there seems to be universal consensus that the ultimate objective of rural development is to improve the quality of life of rural people. Despite the above changing contexts, the necessity for greater and deliberate efforts targeting development of rural areas and their inhabitants has continued growing, especially in Africa and other developing countries

Rural development would continue to be a frontline issue in global development agenda, for both traditional, well known reasons and the emerging ones. Whatever view is held on the future of rural development, it is still difficult to deny the immortal contribution of the rural environment and its people to global agriculture, food security and the perpetuation of the human race. In most developing countries, rural communities are home to majority of the citizens and still produce the bulk of the food and fiber. Rural development is a crucial tool for combating global poverty, disease, human slavery and inequality. It not only creates a new level of self-sufficiency and satisfaction for members of a society who may have never experienced such development, but as a consequence of globalization and the new associated challenges in the developing world, rural development is more necessary and pressing than ever before (GAPS, 2007). Rural development is also important in arresting rural-urban migration that has become the bane of many developing countries. It would ensure optimum utilization of human and natural resources in rural communities and

reduce pressure on already overloaded utilities in the urban centers. It should go without saying that rural development *is* the essence of national development in developing countries. The kind of pleasant arguments earlier mentioned that is taking place in the West may never be witnessed this century in Africa and other poor regions of the world, going by predictions in available statistics. The pace and level of rural development in Third World countries would continue to define their overall socioeconomic development as sovereign states. Western countries got to where they are today as a result of implementation of deliberate rural development planning and programmes, among other factors. Virile rural development processes would give rise to development at national and regional levels and contribute to global progress.

In the Changing global scenario, understanding of the concept of 'development' itself in relation to sustainability gave rise to the concept of sustainable development. FAO (1988) defined sustainable Development as: "the management and conservation of the natural resources base and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations.

Such sustainable development in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable." According Marcelino Avila and Lavinia Gasperini (2005), sustainable rural development is understood as a process of constant change and transformation of the rural areas, encompassing a wide scope of processes and programmes such as:

- Enhancement of governance at the local, district and provincial levels, including
- Linkages with the private sector, civil society and government line agencies.
- Development of productive sectors: agriculture, non-agricultural industry, mining,
- Tourism, natural resources, environmental management, etc.
- Development of institutions and their capacities in key areas, i.e. education and
- Training, health, research and extension, marketing, savings and credit, environment, transportation, etc.
- Development of rural infrastructure for roads, electricity, telecommunications, housing,
- Water, sanitation, etc.
- Contemporary 'narratives', 'definitions' or 'prescriptions' concerning rural development.

- Characteristically tend to address everything that affects rural people and the quality of their life as entities and as integral members of the larger society and, indeed, the world.

Recent connotation of rural development aimed at establishment of the Millennium Development Goals has significantly reinforced the concerns about non income poverty. With the paradigm shifts in economic development from growth to broadly defined "development," the concept of rural development has begun to be used in a broader sense.

Theoretical Foundations of Rural Development

Research indicates that there is a constant shift of development paradigms, which also affect the methodologies for rural development. These paradigms often only get to gain momentum 10 years after they have emerged (Ellis & Biggs, 2001). Rural development is all encompassing and it highlights the improvement of economic and social infrastructure. This can be combined with an agrarian transformation which helps in increasing production, improve the sustainable use of natural resources, establishing and strengthening rural livelihood and food security.

Rural development objectives can only be achieved if there is an improved land reform programmes which deal with issues around land redistribution, land tenure reform and land redistribution, claims.

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The seriousness of the rural underdevelopment problem further increases when other dimensions of development are taken into account.

For example, evidence indicates growing disparities between urban and rural areas confront serious environmental problems, increasing the vulnerability of the poor in particular. The current status of the rural economy and the overall quality of life of majority of the rural population suggest that neither the overall economic growth and development nor the growth and development in the rural economy have been inclusive. Increasing recognition of this situation has begun to

generate a great deal of attention to inclusive growth in general and inclusive rural development in particular.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based mainly on secondary data and draws substantially on earlier studies Carried out by the Institutions and individuals and existing literature with a specific focus on emerging perspectives of rural development.

Basis of study

The study is based on the practical experience of rural development experiments derived from Published and grey materials

The review was prepared over through insights analyzed from the descriptive statically data

The following steps are adopted:

- Collection of documents and resource materials
- summarize the lessons learned

Trends in Rural Development

It is well experimented through various strategic interventions by both developed and developing countries and highlights the various paradigm shifts in the rural development concepts. Rural development generally denotes economic development and community development actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighborhood, remote villages and the countryside typically relate to the primary sector production and processing of food stuffs and raw materials. The new policy for rural development seeks to find a rationale and sustainable framework for the future of rural areas. It will complement the reforms introduced into the market sectors by promoting a competitive, multi-functional agricultural sector in the context of a comprehensive, integrated strategy for rural development (EC, 2010). In spite of rapid urbanization in most parts of the world over the past two decades, rural development remains a major challenge for developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Soo-young, 2008). According to a recent World Bank report, "75 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas and most are involved in farming" (World Bank, 2009).

There is also renewed urgency for addressing rural problems generated by population Pressure on land, water and other resources, threats to the environment, climate change, and widening income disparity between rural and urban areas. National governments and international development agencies are once again placing increased emphasis on rural and agricultural

development as critical for reducing poverty and achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

These factors, among many others, tend to highlight the importance of rural development. The policy makers in most of the developing economies recognize this importance and have been implementing a host of programs and measures to achieve rural development objectives. While some of these countries have achieved impressive results, others have failed to make significant dent in the problem of persistent rural underdevelopment.

Towards Global Exposure

Rural areas are highly heterogeneous, whether the scale is agro ecological, set in terms of distance from cities, or to do with the degree of agricultural 'Modernization'. However, some broad-brush classifications are possible and useful, particularly to distinguish peri-urban, middle and remote areas.

All rural areas are rapidly changing, in size, structure and capability of population, in the Pattern of economic activity, and in the degree of integration with national and International economies. Urban populations will soon be larger than rural, most rural people will be functionally landless, and, in most areas, agriculture will be a relatively small productive sector, commercial in its orientation and incorporated into national and international commodity chains. Most rural households will have a diverse and geographically dispersed portfolio of income sources: they will pursue multi-location and multi-occupational livelihood strategies.

The first of these is about whether agriculture can be the engine of rural growth, especially in 'early development'. There are many good reasons to believe it can, and the empirical evidence is encouraging. However, natural resources are pressured; and the long-term decline in agricultural commodity prices weakens both the sector and the case. Lower taxes and large-scale investment in public goods (physical and institutional) will help, by lowering transaction costs. Some also argue that developing country agriculture should be protected, for example by a 'food security box' in the WTO.

The case for agriculture-led poverty reduction rests heavily on the productive efficiency of small farms and on their contribution to local economies, especially by virtue of demand for services (including construction). However, the future viability of small farms, and of the small-farm model, is increasingly in question: technological complexity, greater connectedness to markets, and the globalization of commodity chains are all to blame. Public goods, again, will help lower transaction costs; and social

welfare transfers can be re-designed to boost production (for example, fertilizer subsidies rather than food aid).

If agriculture is faltering, the non-farm rural economy may take up the slack, though much is agriculture-dependent. The RNFE is indeed growing fast. It takes different forms, according to the degree of connectedness to the urban economy: early stage on-farm enterprises benefiting from the natural protection of poor roads may disappear as infrastructure improves; but new enterprises will grow as businesses try to escape congested cities. Investment in the RNFE is important; particularly to reduce entry barriers to the poor, but must be driven by local comparative advantage.

There is more to rural development than production, on or off the farm. New thinking on poverty links back to earlier thinking on integrated rural development, and Caroline Ashley and Simon Maxwell also points the way forward, with a new emphasis on the risks of liberalization, on the importance of income distribution, on human capital, and on risk, vulnerability and social protection. The poverty agenda dominates in international development: rural development planners need to work with it, not against it.

The state is seen to have an important role in both poverty reduction and rural development, informed by the view that liberalization and structural adjustment moved too quickly, with insufficient attention to the need for strong and prior institutional Under-pinning of markets. In particular, the state needs to ensure that the poor can access reasonably performing and stable markets for finance, inputs and agricultural outputs – in some cases state-facilitated services will be needed to meet this need.

Participation features prominently in poverty reduction discourse, and also in rural development but the issue is perhaps better understood as one of governance. Democratic decentralization is the popular political technology, not always yielding the immediate benefits for rural poverty reduction that might be expected, but amenable to improvement. New partnerships with civil society are central.

CONCLUSION

Rural development policy has yet to catch up with these changes. Multi-sectoral approaches are necessary, and the state has much to do. However, past experience reminds us that implementation constraints, whether caused by low administrative capacity or bureaucratic capture, are the enemy of good intentions. Plans need to be ranked with capacity to deliver as a criterion.

Furthermore, a different approach may be needed in areas affected by chronic Conflict or political instability.

A major challenge is to balance government interventions in these and private sector investments in a way that the interventions should facilitate rather than discourage private investment. These are not a hierarchy of priorities. However, because development problems in rural areas are interlocking and linked significantly to what happens outside the rural economy, they must be addressed together in a coherent, manner as they could encase the global changing development realities.

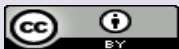
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