Scenario of Rural Development in Tripura: Its problems and Solutions

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**INTRODUCTION**

Rural development has assumed greater importance in India today. It is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and diary are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy. Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. Increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are envisaged for providing the rural people with better prospects.

The Nodal Department performed most of the development and welfare activities in the rural areas. The Department of Rural Development of Tripura plays a vital role in the overall development strategy of the State. The vision and mission of the Department is sustainable and inclusive growth of rural Tripura through a multipronged strategy for eradication of poverty by increasing livelihoods opportunities, providing social safety net and developing infrastructure for growth.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are follows:

1. To present the scenario of rural development in Tripura.

2. To assess the problems of rural Tripura.

3. To suggest how could we overcome about the problems of rural Tripura.

4. To improve the rural people’s livelihoods.

**LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is basically based on the state of Tripura. Tripura is one of the most ancient princely states of north-east India. It is a small hilly state belonging the group of eight sister states- Tripura, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim. It shares international borders with Bangladesh, national border with Mizoram and Assam. Tripura is largely dominated by Bengali community, although the 19 schedule tribes from a major chunk of the population.

At present, there are 08 districts (Dhalai, Gomati, Khowai, North Tripura, Sepahijala, South Tripura, Unakoti and West Tripura), 23 Sub-Divisions, 58 Blocks, one Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) {created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution}, 595 Panchayats, 878 revenue villages and 527 TTAADC villages.

**DATA COLLECTION & METHODOLOGY**

The data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Content analysis method applied for this study. Under this method different book, journals, newspapers and surveys have been critically studied and reviewed to use them as a source of information. A survey on different colleges and schools students & Scholars help to get reliable information related to the study. Interviews and questionnaires have applied to collect data. As a coordinator of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan of RK Mahavidyalaya I get a chance to survey and visit in near about 300 village houses of Unakoti District in Tripura. It helps me to contact directly with the rural villagers and discussion take place about the problems in rural areas.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME : A REAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

The Government's policy and programmes have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor. The introduction of Bharat Nirman, a project by the Government of India in collaboration with the State Governments and the Panchayati Raj Institutions is a major step towards the improvement of the rural sector. Various ministries in the central government are engaged directly or indirectly for implementation of many programmes and schemes for the development of rural areas like Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, New and Renewable Energy, Science and Technology, Women and Child Development and Tribal affairs etc.

In addition, to strengthen the grass root level democracy, the Government is constantly endeavoring to empower Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Grama Sabha, NGOs, Self-Help Groups and PRIs have been accorded adequate roles to make participatory democracy meaningful and effective. Also Unnat Bharat Abhiyan programme of MHRD is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TRIPURA:** The Department of Rural Development of Tripura, spearhead the issue of eradication of rural poverty, through its various programmes & endeavors’ to reach out to the last and most disadvantaged sections of society and also provide them with avenues of employment, be it self-employment or wage-employment. The Department also looks after improvement infrastructure relating to their life support systems.

**i. Major Aims of Rural Development in Tripura are:**

* Providing livelihood opportunities to those in need, including women and other vulnerable sections with focus on marginalized households.
* Providing basic and proper education, awareness etc.
* Connecting all rural habitation with all and up gradation of roads weather existing roads to provide market access.
* Providing basic housing and homestead to all vulnerable household in rural areas.
* Providing social assistance to the elderly, widow and disabled persons.
* Providing urban amenities in rural areas for improvement of quality of rural life.
* Developing skill, Capacity and important development and training of rural development functionaries.
* Promoting involvement of voluntary agencies and individuals for rural development.
* Watershed development for initiating effective land reform measures for providing land to the landless rural poor.

**ii. Scenario of Rural Development in Tripura:**

The State has good agro-climatic conditions, suitable for a large variety of Agro/horticultural crops. Further, industrial development has also been picked up over the past few years. In fact, during last about a decade, the state has recorded impressive growth rates.

 1. The agriculture and allied sector is the backbone of the State's economy. It formed 32.36% of SDP (which is much higher when compared to all India share of 17.6%). Agriculture and allied activities primarily refer to crop cultivation, animal husbandry, agriculture, horticulture and floriculture. About 74% of State's population live in rural areas. With the forests covering over 60% area of the State, only 27% of the land is available for cultivation, which is far below national average.

2. Limitations of communication infrastructure in terms of adequate rail/road connectivity have made the process of economic development extremely difficult for the State. We can expect that present railway connection may bring sea change in terms of connectivity and marketing and may have the effect of bringing changes in the level of economic activities in the state in near future.

3. Supporting creation of rural infrastructure is an area where the interests of the State and NABARD converge. Over the years, RIDF has become the major source of rural infrastructure financing for the state. Encouraged by the state's response and gaining from the experience of implementation of RIDF, NABARD is diversifying its activities and strategies for rural infrastructure.

 4. Tripura Skill Development Mission (TSDM) lay down the broad policy objectives, strategies and governance models to promote skill development.

* To cater to the needs of the local, national, and international job market
* To encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among students
* To develop state-of-the-art training ecosystem with world-class infrastructure
* To fully align the skill training with the needs of the industry
* To provide for up-skilling of trainers and Government officials in the State
* To increase participation of women and people from marginalized communities in workforce.

One of the major issues in skill development is mismatch between the demand and supply of skills. The problem has arisen due to supply driven skill delivery system. Presently the labour market is facing a strange situation, where on the one hand, an employer does not get manpower with requisite skills and on the other; millions of job seekers do not get employment. Such a mismatch compromises potential economic development. This requires establishing a mechanism for providing access to information on skill inventory and skill map on real time basis.

**MAJOR PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS:** The problems which have existed in the above policies and also hamper the effective implementation of the same are discuss bellow.

**i. Geographical Factors**: The entire state can be broadly divided into two characteristic zones – mountain and plains. The hills account for about 70 per cent area and accommodate about 30 per cent of population of the region and the plains constituting the remaining 30 percent of area hold about 70 per cent of its population. [1] The state’s accessibility has always remained weak due to geographical reasons and underdeveloped transport links with the rest of India.

**ii. Infrastructural Factors:** One of the reasons for the economic backwardness of the state is basic infrastructural facilities. Infrastructure i.e. physical (like roadways, waterways, energy and so on) as well as social infrastructure (for instance educational institutions, health facilities) plays an important role in human development and economic growth of any region. The prominent indicators of shortfalls in infrastructure in this region are: increasingly congested roads, power failures, shortage of drinking water etc.

**iii. Constraints on Industrial Growth:** Tripura has remained historically undeveloped in terms of industrial growth. No industrialist are willing to invest as raw materials are not found in good number, labour are unskilled, lack of capital, proper road connectivity with rest of India as well.

**iv. Agriculture:** Agriculture is the major subsistence occupation of the tribal population of the state. The pattern of agricultural growth has however been uneven across the state. The pace of agricultural growth here is slower than the rest of the country. By and large, the production conditions in agriculture here in Tripura are traditional. The agricultural productivity is the lowest, irrigation facilities are almost non-existent in some areas and consumption of fertilizers is extremely low in the region.

**v. Insurgency and Political Issues:** Insurgency or terrorism is a political weapon and is often the result of accumulated anger due to political, economic and social causes. The state of Tripura has witnessed a rise of insurgent activities and regional movements. These movements derive their roots from differences in language and ethnicity, human rights, tribal rivalry and ethnic resentment, migration, underdevelopment, control over local resources, access to markets and a widespread feeling of exploitation and alienation from other states.

Often insurgent groups indulge in subversive activities like damaging rail tracks, smuggling, extortion, kidnapping, strikes and curfews and illegal cross-country migration.

**vi. Natural Resource Base**: Tripura is endowed with rich natural resource, but the resources are being exploited and mismanaged, thereby leading to depletion of the very assets that are usually highlighted as triggering the greatest potential for growth and development of the state. Resources have been extracted primarily for survival and for further capital formation and also the biodiversity of the region is under severe threat.

**vii.** **Transport facilities:** No proper arrangement of transportation in rural Tripura. The major part of rural roads is made by mud and there are unhealed road. So the villagers are facing various problems for export-import of rural products. Blockage of roads and civil unrest may lead to increase in input costs and market failure making cultivation unviable.

**viii.** **Knowledge and awareness:** Lack of knowledge and awareness of the villagers about the various Govt. development schemes in rural Tripura. Therefore the villagers of rural Tripura are very much deprived from this Govt. development schemes. Farmers are not educated so they find problem in reading the names of pesticides so they go by the advice of retailers who sometime offer duplicate products. Farmers are not aware of new improved techniques, such as staggering method that improve productivity significantly.

**ix.** **Other Issues:** Insufficient funds and lack of sufficient official staffs is another cause of backwardness in rural area in Tripura. This is a big challenge for implementation of Govt. development schemes. Lack of adequate extension services from govt. department and due to lack of sufficient cold storage facility in the state, farmers sell the produce immediately after the harvest at throw away prices.

**SUGGESTIVE MEASURES:**

After several discussions with the Teachers, Students, Scholars and reliable persons having comprehensive knowledge we have come to an end that following steps may taken care off to solved the problems:

1. Removing the problems in rural Tripura Govt. inanities is must and need broad Strategies like Govt. jobs, special funds, loans, and works for the rural people.

2. Need educational improvement of rural Tripura because without education cannot changes in the wider economic conditions in rural people.

3. Encourage rural people to increase their knowledge and awareness about various Govt. developmental schemes.

4. Majority of people in rural area depends on agriculture, so need development in this sector i.e. require proper training, use scientific methods and tools, huge cold storage, sufficient irrigation, fertilizer etc.

5. Need huge amount of electricity for the proper running of industry and all kind of industrial activities. Encourage village level power plants that run on locally produced renewable fuels.

6. By arrangement of basics services like education, health facilities, clean drinking water, work, home facilities etc. we can change our rural life.

7. Take inanities about large and small scale industry by Govt. and privately for the development of rural Tripura basically forest wealth of the region and the substantial deposits of tea and bamboo limestone.

8. Need proper transport facility in rural area because it is the key way of the development in rural Tripura.

9. Need proper implementation of all central and state Govt. developmental schemes.

10. Requirement of Focus on productivity enhancement.

12. Focus on building capacity on markets and marketing and entrepreneurial skills and direct marketing of produce.

13. Decentralize production and collective procurement and marketing of produce.

14. Need arrange regular training on better PoPs/technologies

Besides this requirement for educational development in rural Tripura that sufficient teaching or non-teaching faculties, proper infrastructures, sanitation facilities, pure drinking water facilities, sports facilities, nutrition and hygiene, special coaching for poor child’s etc.

Support services such as cold storages are available in big towns but small farmers are not avail to them due to small volumes and long distances. State government could set up more cold storages at strategic locations after doing a feasibility study to support small and marginal farmers.

**CONCLUSION**

In short, there are various social, economic, political and geographical problems which have hindered development of this state. In recent years, the government has been trying to put in place policies regarding the economic development and social integration of Tripura, It is generally believed that agriculture in the state has a lot of potential. The agricultural policies for the region should thus focus not only on increasing agricultural productivity but also pay attention on eliminating the constraints on agricultural productivity and providing incentives for promoting sustainable agricultural practises and setting up of related activities such as fisheries, animal husbandry etc. The need for stepping up of investment in the agricultural sector has been felt very strongly given the fact that this region has been historically capital-starved.

From the point of view of medium and large industry the most promising resources are the forest wealth of the region and the substantial deposits of tea and bamboo limestone. The development of horticulture and plantations can assist in the growth of small and medium agro-based industries. The growth of sericulture and the demand for yarn in the handloom sector provide a base for the development of textile industries. These along with a variety of small units for serving local consumption demands can provide the basis for a more rapid industrialization of the area. National programmes and schemes are needed to support indigenous community forestry institutions and practices. Also it can be used to develop the tourism sector which will generate employment opportunities.

The area has tremendous potential for Hydro-Power generation which needs to be appropriately harnessed as it is not only environment friendly but will also provide immense financial benefits.

Thus we conclude that the state has done reasonably well in terms of human development indicators. Also the government has put into place policies for development and integration of the region but in the end it is up to the local people to work hand in hand with the Central and State Governments to ensure prosperity of the region.

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