



Effectual implementation



A time has come for India to look at rural programmes more thoroughly on the processes and strengthening the processes between the implementing agencies and the beneficiaries, writes **V Mukunda Das**



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Rural development in India has witnessed many seasons in terms of government interventions in different states. However, the government interventions planned and programmed by the Central Government and the state government were all looking at impact through numbers and statistics different from processes. Every rural initiative in India has to be understood from these two dimensions of statistics and processes.

Through this column, I would like to highlight more on the 'processes at the grassroot level'. These processes have to be understood in a larger context of the social and economic situations and realities at grassroots level. The downtrodden and the disadvantaged are also to be studied as consumers and recipients of these programmes and projects benefits and initiatives at the grassroots level.

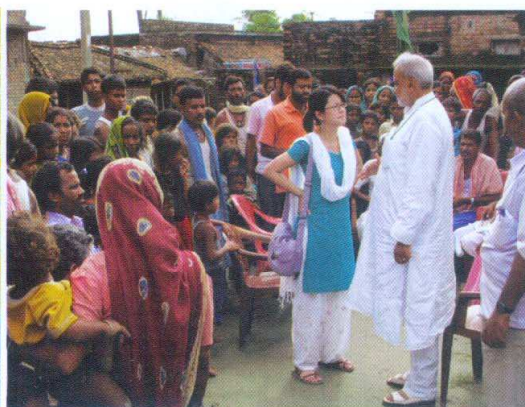
The land tenure system and the socio-economic inequality have never been considered seriously while outlining projects and activities in rural development.

REVIEWING THE PROGRAMMES

A critical review of the rural development programmes implemented in India shows that monitoring the process of reaching out benefits from grassroot level implementing agencies (such as Panchayats, Blocks and others) to the real beneficiaries has been the biggest source

of inadequacy. A time has come for India to look at rural programmes more thoroughly on the processes and strengthening the processes between the implementing agencies and the beneficiaries. It is even seen that programmes are made, for example, thinking that the social environmental, ecological and economic milieu is homogeneous. Local adaptations of the objectives and processes are the main area of ineffective benefit distribution through entitlement to the beneficiaries. It can be seen, for example, in the adult literacy programmes implemented in India three decades back, that the classes were prescribed from 6-8 PM, all over India without taking notice that in Arunachal Pradesh it becomes dark much earlier compared to the western side of India.

The present attempt is to suggest a new mode of reaching out programmes to rural areas. This approach is based on 'consumer voice mode' for rural areas. The beneficiaries need to express their satisfaction and dissatisfaction vis-à-vis every stage in the process of implementation to vigilant authorities, above the village system. What is suggested here is something similar to RTI which is Right to Information Dissemination (RTID) from the individual beneficiaries to responsible people at the district and state and national level. The RTID can be initiated as a new organisational process where local, grass root level, beneficiaries and consumers can transmit and reach out or bring to the notice of the system above the village, about the anomalies and other discrepancies. This system will root out the new set of 'development intermediaries' at



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Observations and field level information analysis of several projects show that a new set of intermediaries between the implementing agencies and the real beneficiaries has come in to force. These intermediaries are similar to the money lenders at the

grass root level. In the ultimate analysis, these intermediaries are either with or without political support, virtually exploiting or siphoning off the benefits from the actual customers of programmes.

The issue now comes is whether the vigilance and others do really know more about this new generation intermediaries. We need to develop legal measures to take punitive action against such intermediaries. The beneficiaries per-se do not have any avenues for venting dissatisfaction or complaints against such intermediaries.

THE RESTRAINTS

What was attempted above is to pick up the limitations of the implementing agencies, since independence, in their efforts to deliver services and benefits to the rural populace. Resurrecting rural India needs to look at programmes and projects specially meant for socially and economically weaker sections. Concurrent evaluation and monitoring has to become much faster than it is today. Information technology can play a vital role

in this process. Village kiosks can transmit information on the progress of projects, customers view of the projects and customer satisfaction from the projects implemented various parts of India. The moment consumers of programmes and projects get a chance to transmit their opinions, perceptions and dissatisfaction to concerned people, and simultaneously initiate legal measures that can be conceived to take action against the intermediaries or "Local Exploiters", the impact of programmes and projects will totally improve. What is required is to also capture the "Cognitive Dissonance", as in marketing science, from the customers of government programmes, projects and services. It is difficult to accept the argument that rural India has a large number of people who are illiterate and therefore this system will be ineffective. Some of our village level initiatives and perception show that this is not true.

To conclude it can be stated that resurrecting of rural India through Development Programmes and other interventions can be made faster with the issue of noble monitoring systems including provisions for consumer feedback. Add up to this is the thinking required to plan for developing information technologies and other technologies for speeding up the delivery of programme benefits as well as real time and transparent feedback system from rural beneficiaries and customers. ▀

(The writer is an acclaimed expert on rural management and is currently the Director of Chandragupta Management Institute Patna).