

## **Strategies for rural development through DRDA**

**Sheik Shahanaz**

Lecturer in Public Administration, Ayyanna Degree College, K.Kotapadu.

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the strategies employed by District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and its role in rural development. Rural development is a strategy involves multi -faceted growth of rural poor by extending the benefits of development to them. For the development of rural society in all its facets- social, economic, institutional and administrative, a synergistic approach called Integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP) was introduced. DRDA is the key agency of the government for the implementation of IRDP. It identifies key beneficiaries and the needs of rural population to reach the schemes of MoRD where they are needed. This study examines the DRDA role in contribution for comprehensive development plans, compiling and coordinating schemes with CDOs and NGOs based on area, target groups or both, promoting community participation, livelihood generation programs with capacity building, ensuring credit support through banks and SHGs, rural infrastructure development by providing integrated planning , coordination, community empowerment, DRDA focuses on vulnerable groups in rural areas to identify areas for improvement through monitoring and evaluation. District Collector as a chairman of governing body, project director, member secretary provides guidance and directions to DRDA. This study critically examine the role of collector in DRDA. DRDA for all practical purposes securing sustainable livelihoods, improving the quality of life of poorest of the poor in rural areas by rural development services. Using a mixed method approach, the research identifies challenges and proposing strategies to optimise DRDAs efforts towards achieving sustainable rural development by highlighting more holistic participatory approach and provides actionable insights for rural transformation.

**Keywords:** DRDA, IRDP, Sustainable Livelihood, Community Empowerment, Capacity Building, NGOs, SHGs.

### **Introduction:**

As India's majority population lives in villages, holistic and integrated development of rural India is very crucial to reduce area wise disparities and to improve their quality of life by securing sustainable livelihood.

Rural development is a strategy involving multi dimensional efforts so the poorest can demand and benefit from it.

Efforts from GOI to improve rural economy includes District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), a government agency to implement rural development programmes through block level

functionaries in each district. Each district has its own DRDA registered under Societies Act,1958.

DRDA serves as a vital link between government and rural communities, facilitating the implementation of development schemes and promoting sustainable growth in rural regions.

*Role of DRDA in rural development:*

- It implements rural development programmes like MGNREGA,NRLM, pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Awas Yojana etc.
- It identifies target beneficiaries focusing on BPL, vulnerable sections.
- It works towards poverty alleviation and infrastructure development by improving livelihood and enhancing basic services like sanitation, water facilities,healthcare,education,employment.
- DRDA promotes community participation by rural communities in planning,and monitoring the rural development programmes.

#### **Research Problem:**

Despite DRDA crucial role in rural development, it faces numerous challenges that hinder the effectiveness of implementation of programmes. This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by DRDA in implementing programmes with a key focus on identifying obstacles, their impact on program outcomes,and providing potential solutions and strategies.

#### **Research Objective:**

This study main objective is to identify strategies for rural development through DRDA.

It will explore the strategies and challenges faced by DRDA towards achieving sustainable rural development. It also provides recommendations for effective work of DRDA.

It provides comprehensive understanding of strategies employed by DRDA and their implications for rural development.

#### **Significance of study:**

- Contribution to the existing literature on rural development
- Identifying strategies and key challenges faced by DRDA which will inform policy makers.
- Provide insights into the impact of these challenges which will help to mitigate those by developing some strategies.
- Offer recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of DRDA.

### **Literature Review:**

#### *Overview of rural development:*

Several studies highlighted the role of DRDA in rural development. Rural development programmes generated a ray of hope for the underprivileged sections of society but they yet not brought about a rise in the income of these sections. There is problem in identification of really poor as it is of great help to rural elite than to poor. Involvement of poor in development process is low.

#### **GOI, Department of Rural Development, Annual Report (2023-24):**

Substantial progress of rural development was shown with key achievements of programmes like Digital India Land Records Modernization programme (DILRMP), Watershed Development component of Pradhan mantri krishi sinchayee yojana (WDC-PMKSY), Bhoomi Samman.

Highlights the social inequality as a significant challenge with certain groups facing exclusion.

Initiatives like Unique Land parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), National Generic Document Registration System were adopted along with transliteration of land records.

Existing strategies like Decentralisation, Capacity Building, convergence of partnership services with other departments, stakeholders, NGOs, CDOs with the help of DRDAs significant role.

#### **Guidelines on DRDA administration by MoRD:**

These guidelines on DRDAs administration, functions and organisation structure are provided by Department of Rural Development.

DRDA has been the principal organ at the district level to oversee the implementation of different rural development programmes.

#### Functions of DRDA:

- Effective in enhancing the quality of implementation through overseeing the programmes and ensuring necessary linkages are provided. DRDA is a supportive and facilitating organisation to zilla parishad
- Develop the capacity to build synergies and connectivity, cooperation among different agencies.
- It makes arrangements for institutional credit support to the identified beneficiaries by coordinating with PRIs, NGOs, banks, SHGs and also secure inter sectoral or inter departmental coordination.
- It identifies the families of BPL, vulnerable sections for including them as beneficiaries.

- It prepares comprehensive development plans for every block in the district and inform them about basic requirements.
- It also builds up awareness of programme and also sends a periodical report of its working.

DRDA implements programmes based on area such as DDP or based on target group or both With close supervision of DRDA, panchyat samithi implements those schemes.

*Organisation and Structure of DRDA:*

District Collector was the chairman of the DRDA. DRDA had a governing body with composition as

1. District Collector
2. Mps and MLAs of district
3. Head of Central Cooperative Bank
4. Chairman of Regional Rural Bank
5. Zila Pramukh
6. Senior most officer of lead bank
7. General manager of District industries centre
8. District Family welfare officer
9. Regional district officer , Scheduled caste finance corporation
10. Representative of district milk union
11. 2 representatives from weaker sections
12. One representative of rural women
13. Project director cum additional collector, development

District Collector was empowered to form executive committee to assist DRDA to finalise the sectoral plans, requirements, training programmes and infrastructural facilities needed and also monitored and reviewed the implementation of IRDP and other programmes. Each DRDA would be headed by a Project Director.

Each DRDA is expected to have following wings under it .

1. Self Employment Wing
2. Women's Wing
3. Wage Employment Wing

4. Watershed Wing
5. Engineering Wing
6. Accounts Wing
7. Monitoring and Evaluation Wing
8. General Administration Wing.



**Role of governing body:**

1. DRDA prepares annual action plan approved by the body before it's submission to state government.
2. Approves sectoral work in each particular block.
3. creates target group list block wise annually which are approved in the meetings of the body
4. Review the progress of IRDP in its meetings
5. DRDA in the interest of rural masses decides on the transfer of utilised funds to the sectors
6. When there is a excess expenditure in the interest of development,DRDA approves the funds.

***(Kumar 2020), Challenges Faced By DRDA:***

This study highlighted the challenges faced by DRDA like inadequate funding,lack of capacity,lack of coordination with other stakeholders.

***(Rajesh Tandon 1979), Rural development - problems and prospects:***

This study highlighted two characteristics in the strategies of rural development that most of the implemented programs are on the basis of target area where bulk of rural population lacking socio, economic and political leverage.And most strategies emphasised the creation of new

delivery mechanism without creating effort to enhance the capacity of rural population to utilise these services.

*Gaps in literature:*

Literature in DRDAs rural development often operates in isolation from broader development theories like sustainable development, human development, sustainable livelihood, social exclusion. Most of the studies are cross sectional and limited analysis for impacts and challenges.

**Research Methodology:**

Mixed Method Approach : Combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies of Rural Development through DRDA.

Data collection:

1. Collect secondary data from existing sources like Government reports, Research studies and articles, MoRD websites and publications.

2. Primary data collection through observational studies of DRDAs programs and activities, Interview with DRDAs officials, Collectors, rural communities interaction.

Sampling :

1. Purposive Sampling - Select states or districts like Andhra Pradesh that have implemented innovative and successful rural development strategies through DRDA.

2. Random Sampling - Select a random sample of beneficiaries from visakhapatnam district, DRDAs officials to participate in interview.

Data analysis: Quantitative data analysis including descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Qualitative data analysis including content analysis

**Findings:**

This study found the strategies for rural development through DRDA by analysing the impact of its facing challenges.

**Strategies for rural development:**

- Promoting Decentralisation and Community Participation through DRDA by
  - Giving more autonomy to local government.
  - Involving local communities in decision making process and also all stakeholders and marginalized sections.
  - DRDA responsive to the needs and concerns of local communities

- DRDAs are accountable to the local communities.
- Ensuring community empowerment leading to sustainable development outcomes and promotes social equity and justice.
- Technology driven programmes to improve the delivery of rural development programmes like Digital payments, GIS, mobile apps, ULPIN, DILRMP.
- Fostering partnership with NGOs, CDOs, SHGs, FPOs, private sector, other government departments for cooperation.
- Building Climate resilient Agriculture, Water Harvesting, Disaster risk reduction programme, reducing the environmental impact on programs by upholding sustainable rural Development.
- Capacity building by DRDA for acquiring skills, knowledge and awareness to drive development and improve livelihoods.
  - Strengthening local institutions to plan , implement and monitor the development programs.
  - Providing training and building skills to individuals including farmers, entrepreneurs, community leaders.
  - Participatory Rural Appraisal, (PRA) a method involves rural communities in planning and analysis of their own development.

***Challenges and its impact on program:***

Despite the various measures taken by GOI in the field of rural development ,they fail to serve the purpose for which they launched.

- Implemented programmes without testing their local suitability.
- Unfilled space in identification of really poor and default on beneficiaries.
- Low popular participation do not affect rural poor substantially.
- Inadequate understanding of the complexities of problems faced by rural poor.
- Rural development programmes for employment are basically offer only manual jobs.
- Administrators not bearing on holistic development as every village and district is diversified with different problems and resources.
- No after care services to beneficiaries.
- Lack of cooperation between agencies as there is inadequate funds, delay and time consuming decisions, no knowledge of government funds.

- Collector cannot accomplish all developmental tasks
- Challenges with respect to banks like the loans sanctioned by banks are inadequate and untimely, resulting in funds using for unproductive purposes.
- High administrative costs with top down approach.
- Programmes benefits majorly to rural elite, rich farmers as they have more land .

***Potential solutions and strategies recommended:***

1. Rural development programmes while designing, policy makers should consider factors like local conditions, lifestyle, culture, psychological receptivity.
2. Effective governance with the coordination of PRIs, NGOs, banks, SHGs. Interaction with villagers to identify their problems.
3. Implementing programmes purely based on concerns of rural poor which requires responsiveness and accountability.
4. Providing jobs for rural youth with respect to their skills by providing adequate training.
5. Involvement of beneficiaries in making programmes.
6. Although regulatory and developmental functions of collector role in decision making cannot be separated, as his or her influence in DRDA is substantial, a collector can adopt to decentralised decision making.
7. DRDA should carry out inspection of villages before making arrangements for financing.
8. DRDA making comprehensive plans for every block in the district from bottom level.
9. Frequent monitoring and evaluation through audits and reports. Identifying the areas for further improvement and also focusing on target population.
10. Organising tours and camps for creating awareness of programmes leading to community empowerment.

***Addressing Problems through DRDA:***

1. Extreme socio economic inequality - High social status to elite section who has majority of land in rural areas having political influence at State and district level. Therefore DRDA officials working with village level workers should by and large include the majority section who are socio , economically politically oppressed. DRDA makes plan in such a manner that target group derive maximum benefits.
2. Development based on both target group and area - Area based programs are beneficial to only small section of target areas. Therefore combination of both approaches such as Modified Area Development for tribal mini blocks. DRDA focusing on the individual

beneficiary schemes which are implemented by panchayat under the supervision of DRDA and for target based schemes DRDA works with district level officers.

3. Lack of mobilisation of rural population - Equipped with new ideas and innovations with the involvement of community in the implementation of programs, DRDA can make arrangements for the informal credit system , cooperative institutions are well utilised with coordination.DRDA helps in taking initiative in common interest with community empowerment.
4. Awareness - Educational interventions consisting of awareness raising through the process of dialogue and skill building by giving publicity to the achievements by DRDA.

DRDA can trigger the mobilisation and organisation of rural poor by enhancing the implementation of various rural development schemes. DRDA is a planned strategy of rural development focusing on the empowerment of rural poor by providing sustainable livelihood .

#### ***Recommendations for DRDA:***

Here are some of the recommendations for the enhancement of working of DRDA in rural development.

For strengthening the DRDA ,a new centrally sponsored scheme known as DRDA Administration was introduced in 1999.Here are further improvements needed regarding DRDA.

1. There is no uniformity in the staffing structure of DRDA.Although DRDA administration was introduced for a uniform staffing it also expected to coordinate well with regular functional departments.A cell has to be created in the Zila parishad to maintain a separate account that will be audited separately for states with DRDAs merged with Zila Parishad.
2. Ensuring adequate staffing and recruitment of specialists and experts,to support the effective implementation of rural programs.Generally,IAS officer who is appointed as collector too early lacks in experience.Hence it was suggested that some other officer made in charge of development activities in district.Nevertheless, Collector role is appreciated in coordination of activities of various departments.
3. Decentralised decision making partially by involving local communities in decision making. So that there is effective resource allocation and improved responsiveness.As it is partial still Collectors role and his or her influence in decision making in DRDA is substantial for better transparency and coordination.
4. Convergence of services with other line departments and programs to avoid duplication and enhance impact by adopting integrated approach and holistic development with participatory planning.

5. Minimize wastage by regular audits and disclosure of financial information and identifying areas for further improvement.
6. Promote Digital literacy and e- governance initiatives including technology based interventions to address rural development problems and to enhance efficiency in DRDA operations.
7. Data management challenges need to be addressed to monitor and evaluate programs.
8. Field level officers should be appointed for every DRDA officials in each district.
9. Governing body shall consist of chairman of zila parishad, chairman of DCCB, president of mandal parishads, representatives from state and centre. The chairman of zila parishad shall be the chairman of DRDA.
10. DRDAs officials should not be deputed from other departments .
11. Uniform action process with local suitability in execution of schemes should be adopted. Rather than individually made decisions , executives should consult with local communities.
12. Not all guidelines are followed in each district. Therefore It need to be addressed by implementing recommendations given by GOI for improvement of working of DRDA.
13. Timely identifying beneficiaries and reviewing it periodically by DRDA without any delay.

***DRDA addressing the multi-faceted needs of rural communities:***

*Financial Inclusion*

- Facilitates bank linkages and provide financial assistance to rural communities, promoting self sufficiency and consumption requirements.
- Sreenidhi implement a bank registered under Cooperative act to provide emergency loans to SHG women

*Livelihood Promotion*

- Encourage SHG women to establish new enterprises through community investment funds.
- Promote value addition to increase productivity and income to the existing livelihoods.

*Social Security*

- Implements Aasara pensions for vulnerable sections of people like old age, women , disabled , widow, weavers, fishing community etc.

*CDOs and NGOs*

- Partnership with NGOs and CDOs. Strengthening community based organisation through training, facilitation and hand holding .

*Food Processing units and agriculture development*

- Establishing Processing units to promote value addition to agriculture production ,generating employment and income for rural communities.
- Implementing procurement and marketing systems to ensure fair price for farmers and reducing role of middle men
- DRDA coordinating with Farmer producer organisation (FPO) to increase income levels of small and marginalised farmers for their produce and linking them with markets.
- Establishing Custom Hiring Centers (CHC) to provide farm equipment rental services to small, and marginalized farmers, women and agriculture labours.

*Digital inclusion*

- Providing e-governance services including online payment, applications, certificates , licenses. Digital incubation centres and digital entrepreneurship training to rural youth.

*Infrastructure*

- DRDA invests in infrastructure development including rural roads, and bridges to improve connectivity and accessibility. Providing basic services like education, health care, sanitation, clean drinking water facilities etc.
- Improved infrastructure not only facilitates better access to market and services but also attract investments further boosting economic activities in rural areas.

*Rural -Urban linkages*

- DRDA promoting Rural urban linkages through market access, value chain development and rural urban migration management.

*Non farm livelihoods*

- Promoting non-farm livelihoods, including handicrafts and rural tourism , to diversify rural incomes.

These findings underscore the importance of continued investment and working of DRDAs support for rural development initiatives to achieve lasting change in rural communities and striving for rural transformation.

### **Observations:**

DRDA often have limited capacity including inadequate staff, resources, and funds. It also often faces bureaucratic hurdles which leads to slow decision making process and lack of local autonomy and often lack of community engagement.

Regarding to rural development programmes implemented by DRDA focuses on short term income generation rather than sustainable livelihood, inadequate emphasis on social and environmental aspects.

Some of the programs lack in convergence with different programs or sectors leading to inefficient use of resources.

Program specific observations were made such as:

*Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)* - It has limited impact on poverty reduction due to inadequate targeting and insufficient funding.

*National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)* - It improved livelihoods of women, but faced challenges in terms of limited funding and inadequate institutional capacity.

*Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)* - It provided employment opportunities for rural households, but faced challenges in terms of delayed payment and inadequate implementation.

### **Conclusion:**

DRDA as a professionalized government agency enhance the quality of implementation of rural development programmes with Decentralised multi-level Planning, coordination, and efficacy.

Rural development through specially established agencies like DRDA is to focus mainly on implementation of IRDP with high level of coordination within which programme are complementary and holistic.

DRDA mainly coordinates with PRIs in each district. Generally, DRDAs in India consisted of planning teams with a economist, a credit planning officer, and rural industries officer, to undertake preparation of a plan, formulation or implementation of a program. But in each districts such field level officers are not appointed, only some of the districts follow it strictly.

District level Coordination Committee plays an important role in coordinating with various agencies which is formed under DRDA.

Therefore DRDA should be harmoniously coordinate with PRIs and converted into more professionalised institution to avoid any conflicts and delay in development process.

Hence, In the impact and experimentation of sustainable rural development process, DRDAs contribution is substantial.

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