

# Rural Development and the Governmental Programmes: A focus on Programmes of West Bengal Government

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**Abstract:** Rural development is a crucial factor to the way of development of any country. The women of rural area and programmes of the governments-both central and the state- play an active role in the process of development. The Indian Government took so many programmes for upliftment of rural population and development since independence. Simultaneously the West Bengal Government introduced a dozen of programmes to the aim of development of rural population and women also. Women play a greater role to rural development.

**Keywords:** Rural Development, Governmental Programmes, Women Development

## I. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is big criteria for economic development of any country, specially for developing countries. In developing countries rural mass is majority in quantity. Except the development and upliftment of rural poor, the development and upliftment of a nation is not possible. 63 per cent people of Asia and Pacific region live in rural areas. The people who reside in rural areas have been mostly suffering from poverty. Socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas is growing tremendously and affect the Asian developing economy. Specially Dalit women of rural area are more deprived and it affects the procedure of rural development. To assess the role of women in rural development is also needed to understand the programmes of governments. The local governments play a crucial role to implement the programmes in the grass root level. Mahatma Gandhi had treated the village as the unit of development and the rural economy or agricultural economy as the base of the country's economy. But the share of agriculture in GDP is gradually declining. In 1971 this sharing was 40.47 per cent and it became 12 per cent in 2017-18. The urban areas are economically more progressive than the rural areas (Gupta, 2022, p.11).

The Planning Commission of India had made a concept that with maximum population of 15,000 is considered as 'rural' area and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) defines an area rural when the area is comprised with up to 400 per square kilometer population density, with clear boundary and 'a minimum of 75 percent male, the working population' is involved in agricultural and linked activities (Gupta, 2022, p.12).

Since 1957 in India the government took many steps to make decentralisation. Among them the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. (1992) is too much important which tried the rural development process boost up from the grass root level through local government (Panchayati Raj Institutions).

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the relevance of rural area development in the way of development of the women of a country as well as a country.
- To find out the necessity of the governmental programmes to rural development.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mohd Akhter Ali and M. Kamraju (2023) in their paper The Role of Women in Rural Development Programs focused on the role of women and their inclusive activity in to the rural development, agricultural work or productivity etc.

Rajive Gupta (2022) in his writing Identification of Suitable Rural Development Indicators has discussed the concept of 'rural' and rural development, opinion of Mahatma Gandhi on village as unit of development, parameters to measure rural development etc.

Dr. Swarooprani (2020) discussed in her paper Rural Development in India about several programmes of the Indian Government and rural development.

A. Sudarshan Reddy and H. Girija Rani (2014) in their paper Role of Women in Rural Development focused on women's contribution in agricultural sector as well as in production process. They work hard than their male counterpart.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

The researcher to make this study used secondary data. The researcher used several books, research articles to gather knowledge. The governmental data were collected from the governmental websites.

##### **The Government of India and Rural Development Programmes:**

The Indian Government took several programmes to ensure rural development. Those are:

- (a) 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' (MGNREGS),
- (b) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G),
- (c) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY),
- (d) Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY NRLM),
- (e) Sachchh Bharat Mission,
- (f) National Rural Livelihood Mission,
- (g) Roshni: Skill Development Schemes for Tribals,
- (h) Training to Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM),
- (i) Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY),
- (j) Village Grain Bank Scheme,
- (k) National Rural Health Mission,
- (l) Aam Aadmi Bima Yojna,
- (m) Kutir Jyoti Programme,
- (n) Sarva Sikha Abhiyan etc.

These programmes are related to rural women development as well as rural community development. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. [NREGA] provides 100 days work scope to unskilled manual workers, volunteer adult members of the rural area. The another programme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (clean India Mission) is make environment health supportive through promote sanitation and hygiene. This programme is women friendly, they actively participate in this programme and make campaign to promote behavioural changes in the members of the community as a whole and make them aware to maintain hygiene and sanitation practices. Other all programmes are for all of the rural people to develop their livelihood, transportation and other relevant requirements (Ali, & Kamraju.2023. p.70).

Women play a greater role in rural development to make sustainable and inclusive growth (Ali, & Kamraju.2023. p.68). Women make a great contribution to the agricultural sector or work force in the world and take a big part in food production. "Rural development entails an increased social and economic transformation of the populace" (Ali, & Kamraju.2023. p.67). Women are treated as key agent of this with enhancement of food security, reduction of poverty and sustainable development. Even empowerment of women is linked with the outcomes of rural development. The development of health and education sector give some positive vibes to themselves and their families (Ali, & Kamraju.2023. p.68).

The Government of India has implemented so many programmes to enhance the socio-economic status of rural women. Those were the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). The objective of those programmes was to provide access to women of resources, like land, credit, training and decision-making processes (Ali, & Kamraju.2023. p.68).

Rural women play a multitasking role than men in case of responsibilities and knowledge. They play role as farmers, planters, harvester, croppers and live stockers. They take care their children and relatives with manage their household works and cooking. In many cases they earn extra income and working as "wage labourers, producing and selling vegetables, or engaging in small-scale trading and enterprises" (Women and rural development.p.1). Except those they collect firewood from forest or livelihood areas and fetch water. Women do work more 12 hours than men per week in Africa, Asia and the Pacific-developing countries (Women and rural development.p.1). The men of marginal, poor and climate changing area have forced to search work through migration and women got whole responsibilities for farming and grooming children (Women and rural development.p.1). But they have partial access to the resources (Women and rural development, p.1. & Bishoyi, 2018, p.3).

## V. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELEVANCE OF PROGRAMMES OF THE WEST BENGAL GOVERNMENT

The West Bengal Government has also announced some programmes for livelihood and employment, like:

- (a) **Anandadhara (WBSRLM):** The State of West Bengal, 'Rural Livelihoods Mission' was launched in 2012 as Anandadhara. It focuses on poverty alleviation by organizing rural women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and providing them with financial credit and skill training.
- (b) **Karmashree:** The state-specific scheme launched in 2024 to provide as a minimum 50 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural job card holders, addressing gaps in central funding.
- (c) **Utkarsh Bangla:** This programme is a lead to skill development scheme which provide placement-linked short-term training to rural and urban youth.
- (d) **Gatidhara:** This programme is introduced to provide subsidies of up to rupees one lakh to unemploy rural and urban youth to purchase commercial vehicles to generate self-employment.

Some programmes are introduced to provide housing and infrastructure:

- (a) **Banglar Awaas Yojana (BAY):** This scheme is a rural housing scheme to provides financial assistance to those people, who are reside in dilapidated or kutcha houses to build pucca houses.
- (b) **Pathashree-Rastashree:** This programme focuses to improve connectivity in remote areas through construction of roads in rural areas and maintenance of them.
- (c) **Mission Nirmal Bangla:** This programme is a counterpart of the programme of the Indian Government the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) with aimed Open Defecation Free (ODF) status and managing solid and liquid wastage.
- (d) **Jal Swapno:** This programme has an aim to provide every rural household a functional tap with water connection in the state.

Some programmes are related to social security and welfare announced by the Government:

- (a) **Krishak Bondhu:** The Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal in January,2019 introduced the scheme "Krishak Bandhu". The aim of this scheme was to provide financial support to all farmers of West Bengal and social security to their families for their untimely death.

Now it is renamed as "Krishak Bandhu (Natun)". This was launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal on 17th June 2021. The amount of rupees ten thousand to farmers will provide for agricultural expenses and death benefit to farm families as two lakh rupees.

- (b) **Lakshmir Bhandar:** The Government of West Bengal has introduced another programme for female members of all families of the state with an assured monthly income, namely Lakshmir Bhandar. The aim of this programme is to improve the financial condition of women and their families with empowerment of women (financial independence). The age of beneficiaries will 25 to 60 year.

Women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will receive now rupees 1700/- which was stated with one thousand rupees. Women from other households -except SC/ST households - will receive now rupees Rs. 1500/- which was started with five hundred (Rs. 500/-) per month.

- (c) **Matir Katha:**

The West Bengal Government brought an ICT-based platform for the agriculture department. This scheme ensures that all kinds of problems regarding cultivation will be solved. All cultivation related information will be accessible through this portal.

- (d) **Bina Mulye Samajik Suraksha Yojona:** The West Bengal Government has introduced the scheme SAMAJIK SURAKSHA YOJANA (SSY) in 2017 to provide social security to every eligible unorganised worker as per the approved list of unorganised industries (46) and self- employed occupations (15) notified by the Labour Department, Government of West Bengal from time to time along with construction and transport workers.
- (e) **Somobyathi:** This scheme was launched in 2016. Through this scheme the West Bengal Government will provide one time two thousand rupees to the next kin or the nearest family member to make cremation or burial.

This help will provide to the poor rural families for funeral rites only for the resident of the state and the funeral must be happen in any crematorium, burning ghat, burial ground of the state.

- (f) **Swasthya Sathi:** This scheme was officially launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal on 30th December 2016. Basic features of the scheme are - will provide secondary and tertiary care up to five lakh rupees per family per annum. This scheme is paperless, cashless and smart card based. All pre-existing diseases are under the coverage of the scheme. The complete cost of the treatment will be provided by the state government. Online Swasthya Sathi Smart card is also provided to each family on the enrolment day.
- (g) **Widow Pension:** This scheme was introduced to provide social security to the disadvantaged unit of the society. The nodal department of the scheme is the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare of West Bengal Government.
- (h) **Taposili Bandhu and Joy Johar Pension Scheme:** The Taposili Bandhu scheme is related to Scheduled Castes and the Joy Johar Pension scheme is related to Scheduled Tribe people. Those both schemes were launched or introduced on 1st April 2020 to provide social security to the people who belong to the SC/ST target group and attain the age sixty (60) years.
- (i) **Yuvasree or Yuva Utsaha Prakolpo:** This programme was launched as financial assistant to the unemployed youth of West Bengal. Yovasree Prakolpo was previously known as Yuva Utsaha Prakolpo (YUP). This scheme was implemented in October 2013. The aim of this programme was to provide 'employment assistance to the unemployed youths of West Bengal for increasing their employment ability and skill'. This programme provided monthly 1,500/- rupees to every registered job seekers of West Bengal, whose aged 18 to 45 year and minimum educational qualification is class VIII pass. The state government has declared the new scheme Yuva Sathi.

The Government of West Bengal has introduced some programmes to assist education and youth support.

- (a) **Shikhashree and Medhashree:** The West Bengal Government to increase participation of the students of Pre-matric level and to minimize the trend of drop-out. The Shikhashree scheme was launched in 2014 for SC, ST Day scholars, who were studied in classes V to VII. This scheme has been merged with the schemes of 'Book Grant and Maintenance Grant'.

The Medhashree scheme has been launched by the West Bengal Government to support OBC (other backward classes) students of class five (V) to eight (VIII) in government or government sponsored, government aided or funded schools in West Bengal. This scheme is fully funded from the financial year 2022-23 onwards from the State Budget.

- (b) **West Bengal Student Credit Card:** This was introduced to enable students to pursue their education without having 'any financial constraint'. The students of secondary education, higher secondary, madrasah, undergraduate and post-graduate are included in this scheme. The students of several professional degrees and other equivalent courses in similar institutions are included in the scheme within or outside India.
- (c) **West Bengal Bhyabisyat Credit Card:** This scheme was declared for the young entrepreneurs in the age group of eighteen (18) to forty-five (45) years 'by offering subsidy linked and collateral' free loans for setting up new ventures/ projects /micro-enterprises in manufacturing, service and business/ trading /agro based. activities.
- (d) **Sabooj Sathi:** This programme was introduced to distribute free bicycles to the students of classes nine (IX) to twelve (XII). The aim of this programme is to improve school retention in rural areas.
- (e) **Taruner Swapna:** This programme was introduced in 2022 to provide 10,000/- rupees to the students of class XII of the Schools or Madrasahs initially to purchase tablet or smart phone or PC. Those students are considered to apply for this benefit whose family income is below Rs. 2,00,000/- per year.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The initiative of the governments- central and the state- gave a positive impact on the society. But some limitations are faced by the beneficiaries. The procedure to apply for any scheme they face some challenges due to lack of education and some device unavailability or technical obstacles. But the procedure finally enhances the scope of e-governance and transparency towards the beneficiaries.

The matter of success of the programmes MKSP and NRLM is questionable due to some gender norms and several cultural barriers (Ali & Kamraju.2023. p.68)]. Women have need to ease their burden of household duties and need to increase productivity (Women and rural development.p.1). When women get more access to land, education, training and financial services, the entire community will be benefited socially and economically. Women empowerment help to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition of any society or country (Women and rural development.p.1).

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