

EVALUATION REPORT ON ACCESSIBILITY AND IMPACT OF BENEFICIARY ORIENTED PROGRAMME ON RURAL WOMEN

1. The Study

Since the inception of development plans in India, in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of women a number of women welfare and development programmes/schemes were introduced. It was, felt that so far the development programmes have not benefitted the rural women in a true sense. In the light of this, the Programme Evaluation Organisation at the behest of Planning Commission undertook the study to examine whether and to what extent the three major rural anti-poverty programme viz. IRDP, TRYSEM and NREP; and House-site/construction assistance to landless rural poor, have affected the socio-economic development of rural women.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as under:

- i) to study the process of implementation and the accessibility of these programmes to rural women,
- ii) to study the awareness, knowledge and attitude of women members of the beneficiary households towards these programmes,
- iii) to study the nature of schemes/benefits provided to beneficiary households and the specific roles of women in these schemes, and
- iv) to study the impact of these programmes on women beneficiaries.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Sample Selection

Two States namely, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were selected for the study on the basis of good and average performance in terms of achievement of targets for all the three programmes. One district from each of the States were selected with regard to the performance in respect of the number of family actually benefitted under the programmes. From these districts four blocks two from each district were selected on the basis of the

criteria that one block was located within the radius of 15-20 kms and the other more than 20 kms, from the District Headquarter.

From each of the two selected blocks, one representative village within a radius of 10-15 kms distance from the block, where the beneficiary oriented programme was in progress for the last two or three years, was selected.

4. Reference Period

The reference period for the collection of data related to the first four years of the sixth plan i.e. 1st April, 1980 to 31st March, 1984.

5. Main Findings

1. It was observed that desired attention was not being given towards the rural women with regard to implementation of poverty alleviation programme. The women beneficiaries were neglected by the implementation Department.
2. The total number of households in the four sample villages were 1418. Of these 781 households were below the poverty line. Out of 781 households, 671 were male-headed and 110 female headed. The number of households benefitted were 321 in the selected villages of the 2 States. The coverage of women beneficiaries was 15 (16.12%) in Andhra Pradesh and 1 (5.82%) in Uttar Pradesh, respectively. Out of 110 female headed households below the poverty line, 72% belonged to the income group of less than Rs.1500 per annum.
3. It was observed that women of the selected four villages were still very backward. Out of 375 benefits distributed during the four year period 1980-84, only 17 were given to female i.e. 4.5% of the total benefits distributed. The limited access of rural women to opportunities in development programme was mainly due to lack of access to appropriate information media, etc.
4. It was found that the State Governments have not made concerted efforts to include rural women as beneficiaries in these programme as per guidelines and instructions issued in this regard by the Government of India.
5. It was found that the programme in the present system had no significant impact in the life style of the women beneficiary/women members of the male beneficiary households. The programme of allotment of constructed houses were beneficial, but did not generally improve the employment generation

potential the beneficiaries. IRDP could not make any impact on their employment or income.

6. It was observed that the implementing agencies failed to develop a cadre of rural Managers who were sensitive to the process of women development and their problems.
7. It was observed that the main reasons for the reluctance towards the programme were lack of awareness about the programme, insistency of bank security for granting loan, cumbersome procedure for availing schemes and high rate of interest for the loans.
8. It was also observed that selection of beneficiaries was done as per the discussions with functionaries of local level institution rather than the systematic survey.
9. The highest percentage of respondents, i.e. 80% reported dissatisfaction with the implementation of House Sites/Construction Assistance/Constructed House Programme.
10. Though in the sample villages, the selected benefit programmes were implemented by and large, it was the menfolk who were executing these programmes and the participation of women was very low.

6. Major Suggestions

1. It is imperative to evolve a mechanism for promoting interaction between State and field level functionaries to discuss various aspects relating to the identification of beneficiaries and implementation of schemes.
2. Under IRDP, allotment of housesites, construction assistance, allotment of constructed houses, detailed household surveys should be undertaken in all the villages for identifying the beneficiaries.
3. The State authorities should ensure that the houses constructed for the rural poor are pucca so that these can withstand strong winds and natural hazards.
4. It should be ensured that the benefits given to the target groups are according to their needs, capacity and background so that they are not compelled to sell them for repaying the bank loan resulting in failure of the programme.

5. The State Government should take suitable action for disseminating the beneficiary oriented programme with focus on the rural poor especially women below the poverty line.
6. There should be comprehensive village planning taking into consideration the need of entire community the women from weaker sections like tenant cultivator, landless worker and artisans, for their upliftment due to the assistance provided by the Government.
7. It is suggested that the involvement of women workers in the benefit schemes is essential to broaden the outlook of village women as only women can have access to other woman, especially the poor.
8. It is also suggested that implementing agencies should identify and develop a cadre of rural managers who could be considered kingpins in the process of development.
9. Voluntary agencies should be actively involved to organise women groups for taking advantage of these schemes. The effectiveness of the beneficiaries oriented programme for rural women depends upon an integrated approach.
10. It is essential to focus attention directly on rural women in connection with all the developmental programme so as to benefit the rural women particularly in their specific problems.