

Preface

The present work entitled An Assessment of the Level of Rural Development in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal, is very much effective in order to find out the different aspects of rural development in Jalpaiguri district which is predominantly a rural region. In India, development of the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections in rural areas has been receiving considerable attentions of the planners, policy makers, researchers and different development agencies. Rural development is a comprehensive and has multiple dimensions. Development should be seen as an activity or a process of both qualitative and quantitative changes in the existing systems in order to improve the living conditions of the people. In other words rural development is viewed as a programme intended for all round development of the entire rural population through development of all sectors of the rural society. The basic objective of rural development is to organize, develop and utilize the available resources in such a manner that the rural population who are dependent upon these resources get the equitable opportunity to meet their minimum basic needs.

Over the years a number of rural development programmes have been implemented in the rural areas of the country for achievements of various aspects like full employment, eradication of poverty, provision of basic necessities, increase in the productivity of rural economic sectors and infrastructural development. Despite the augmentation of the social and economic provisions available to the people yet majority of the rural population still lies below poverty line with agriculture and allied activities as their primary occupation. It is due to the lack of infrastructural facilities and unfavourable socio-economic conditions which creates inequalities and disparities in the levels of socio-economic development. The purpose of the present study is to identify and evaluate the existing infrastructural facilities, potentialities of rural development programmes and to suggest appropriate remedies necessary for the future development of rural Jalpaiguri district.

Jalpaiguri district is situated in the northern part of West Bengal and is bordered by Bhutan in the north, Darjeeling district in the west and north-west, Koch Bihar and Bangladesh in the south and Alipurduar district in the east. In order to assess the level of rural development various socio-economic and infrastructural parameters of the district have been evaluated. For this, various problems like scarcity of pure drinking water, poor health care facilities, poor communication system, low irrigational facilities, poor nature of transportation, problems of sanitation facilities and households without electrification are among the most serious constraints which have been taken into account.

This study is an empirical field based study. To examine the level of rural development in Jalpaiguri district a suitable sample size has been chosen for the study from the total inhabited villages of the district. It is based on both primary and secondary data collected personally through field survey at a household level and through published and unpublished government records. The study has concentrated on the demographic, social, economic and infrastructural aspects in relation to rural development. Besides these aspects, the study attempts to evaluate the existing income generated rural development programmes in relation to the level of rural development. The quantitative methods prevailing in this field of research have been applied in the analysis and for the preparation of the maps.

The present study has been divided into ten chapters. The first chapter uses to account the introductory part of the research. It introduces the review of literature, objectives, hypothesis, data sources, methodology of the work done and the research design. Chapter II briefly traces the historical and the geographical background of the study area. It presents the physical as well as the cultural set up of the district including topography, geology, drainage, climate, natural vegetation, distribution of population, economy and transport. Chapter III is concerned with the meaning, conceptual framework, scope and importance of rural development. It discusses the history of rural development and a brief description of the five year plans and the rural development policies and programmes.

Chapter IV deals with the demographic aspects of the study area presenting the population distribution, growth, density, sex ratio, age-sex composition, occupational structure, population by religious group, ethnic structure and literacy rate of the study area. Chapter V examines the social structure reflecting the rural development. It highlights the number of educational institutions, level of literacy, health care facilities, housing structure, sanitation facilities and the awareness of women in terms of economic and social development. Chapter VI focuses the economic structure and rural development. The study presents the land utilization pattern, size of land holding, waste land holding, cropping pattern, category of labourers, sources of income, monthly income and expenditure, annual indebtedness and purpose of indebtedness.

Chapter VII presents an outlook of the infrastructural provisions and facilities in Jalpaiguri district. It focuses upon the various facilities like drinking water, electrification, availability of regular and periodic market, banking facilities, rural communication system, rural connectivity and recreational provision. Chapter VIII presents the impact of the rural development programmes and policies upon the rural masses. It highlights the social development and income generated rural development schemes implemented in the study

area. Chapter IX give a brief description of the problems of the study area suggesting some relevant measures necessary for the development of the study area and at last chapter X deals with the conclusion of the entire research.

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