

## Development Practice at the Crossroads-An Overview

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**Abstract:** The concept of 'development' has undergone spectacular changes over the years. The formation of the United Nations and the emergence of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund provide a boost to the strides of development. The charity approach and basic needs approach are the foremost approaches that have made significant changes in the economy. These approaches continued to insist on the inevitability of economic growth but restrained greater prominence upon diverting development towards meeting the needs of the poor. The emerging approaches to development were also substantiated by the growing concern for environmental security. Specific world events stimulated the concern for the environment and the initiative to preserve the human environment. Consequently, the notion of environmental sustainability gained priority in development thinking and practice all over the world. The realm of development receives an extended description with the acceptance of the human development approach which was generated in the late 1990s. The human development approach is the most accepted approach to development since this approach focuses on human well-being and the enhancement of diverse opportunities for them. This approach identifies the crucial elements of development which are sustainable in nature. Indian economy also witnessed a remarkable change in the notion of measuring economic development and growth. Thus, it is realized that the development paradigms have outspread from economic growth to human-centric development. Human centric-development mandates the overall development as well as the involvement of underprivileged sections in societal activities. Against this backdrop, this paper analyses the changing notion of development, its determinants and initiatives taken by the government on this ground. Secondary data sources are used for the study.

**Keywords:** development, economic growth, sustainability, human-centric development, well-being

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### INTRODUCTION

The approach to development signaled a new trajectory when the non-growth dimensions were identified and placed at the centre stage of development discourse and practice. It is identified that the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, and inequality would curb the economy from enjoying the fruits of development. During the fifties and sixties, the growth of output was reasonable but not rapid enough to transform the developing economies. Hence, this output growth was not marked by a proportionate betterment of the very poor in penury (Desai, 1995). This prompted the world community to cast their attention to the amelioration of the depriving forces of poverty and unemployment. The 1970's marked by a novel line of thought in the guise of development.

The sphere of social development was propagated with the basic needs approach over the charity approach. Even though the importance of growth sustains in the sphere of economic growth, the emphasis on re-distribution with growth accrues

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priority in policy formulations. The needs approach weakens the act of deciding arbitrarily the needs of the poor, rather it appreciates the participation of the poor to identify the needs and to decide the means to attain it. These approaches continued to insist on the inevitability of economic growth but restrained greater prominence upon diverting development towards meeting the needs of the poor (Hopper, 2012). The emerging approaches to development were also substantiated by the growing concern for environmental security. Specific world events stimulated the concern for the environment and the initiative to preserve the human environment. Accordingly, the notion of environmental sustainability gained priority in development thinking and practice all over the world.

The onset of the ideology of neo-liberalism becomes a distinct feature of the development history of the 1980s. The policy model which stresses free market competition resembles the policy of *laissez-faire*. Though the emergence of neo-liberalism strengthens the idea of minimal State intervention, the new strategy firmly adheres to sustained economic growth as a means to achieve human progress. As a fallout of varied events all over the world, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank were replaced by Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs). The decade also witnessed the rise of the concept of sustainable development.

### **Development-Different Approaches**

The realm of development receives an expanded description with the acceptance of the human development approach, which was generated in the late 1990s. The new millennium advocates an incorporation of different approaches to development ranging from needs and participatory approaches, sustainable development, and a blend of human approaches to development. The multi-dimensional nature of development shows the true guise of development which involves material and non-material artefacts. Sen (1999) elaborates on the notion of a human-centered approach to development. The approach focuses entirely on human lives and well-being. Economic development could be accomplished if people enjoy absolute freedom and the capability to ameliorate their poverty. In the words of Sen, ‘the lack of substantive freedoms relates directly to economic poverty which robs people of the freedom to satisfy hunger, or to achieve sufficient nutrition or to obtain remedies for treatable illness or the opportunity to be adequately clothed or sheltered, or to enjoy clean water or sanitary facilities’ (Sen, 1999). In this sense, the implications of the human development approach include both effective participation and achievements in income, structure, and capabilities (Panda, 2015). Effective participation warrants the need for the inclusion of underprivileged sections in finding out the specific needs of their family as well as the needs of the society where they are living. Thus, by assessing their needs, they could identify the means to achieve them. Participation in the decision-making process is also vital for the effective participation of these groups in the mainstream economy. It is established that more participation, increase in income and capabilities of the people can be ensured only through the exertion and protection of their basic rights (Padhi & Sahu, 2012). Freedoms and capabilities could only be negated with a violation of human rights.

Thus, it is seen that the development paradigms have unfolded from economic growth to human-centric development. Human centric-development mandates the overall development as well as the involvement of underprivileged sections in the societal activities. This signifies the importance of rights in development. Hence,

along with the concept of sustainable development, the notion of Rights Based Approach to development also captured the attention of development thinkers all over the world.

### **Rights-Based Approach to Development**

Human Development Report (HDR, 2000) probes human rights as an important aspect of development and development as a means to accomplishing human rights. Denial of basic rights curtails the freedom people enjoy and in turn, it prevents human development. The realisation of basic rights simultaneously entails capabilities inherent within the people which enable them the freedom to boost human development. Human rights bestow human development by assuring a better space where the evil effects of any policies and actions become ineffective. The human approach rooted in the rights framework also expanded the scope of political authorities to facilitate and foster development.

The Right to Development has its genesis in 1977 when the United Nations Commission on Human Rights recognised it as a right. The right was enshrined in 1986 in the Declaration on the Right to Development. The right to development necessitates more than development itself, it demands a human rights approach to development, a novel and distinct approach in the sphere of development (Aguirre, 2008). The Rights Based Approach portrays a wide range of human rights and positions the fulfilment of these rights as the pivotal condition for acquiring development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) also accepts human rights as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. The rights-based approach minimised the relevance of charity and needs-based approaches to development.

The Human Rights Based Approach to development recognises that the infringement of human rights is the prime reason for the prevalence of poverty and other social and economic inequalities. The approach suggests that to reduce and eliminate poverty, the underlying distribution of rights and responsibilities must be addressed (Vizard, 2006). Human rights violations have serious repercussions on creating inequalities, social exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups and individuals. As pointed out by Daniel Aguirre, the Human Rights Based Approaches to development exposes the social, economic, political and other reasons of deprivation to patterns of discrimination in law institutions and policy (Aguirre, 2008). Consequently, the human approach urges the Government to take proactive measures to remove discrimination, reduce the hurdles and distribute the resources to the disadvantaged sections of society in such a way that stimulates the quality of both access and opportunity to use it equitably. The approach propagates that the people are not passive actors but active participants in the process which enables them to act to maintain access to food and other basic human needs (Appadurai, 1984).

Prof. Sen opines that development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom; poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive States (Bhukta, 2001). Hence, to have developed with a human touch, the entire development process requires meaningful participation and empowerment of common people. The rights-based approach to development thus heralds a new trajectory that dovetails the intention of emancipating the poverty

which impedes the poor from their access to goods and services and equips them as a contributor to their development. The approach has enormous scope, especially in developing countries where poverty and employment are rampant.

### **Human Development- Global Scenario**

Strategies to tackle unemployment and poverty always give priority to improving the well-being of the people. Denial of work opportunities prevents people to earn a better living. This in turn will bring them into poverty. Remunerative work opportunities can stimulate the betterment of the living standards of the people and can hence promote development. Therefore, any development policies should thrive to focus on poverty reduction and the creation of remunerative employment opportunities. Governments all over the world try to overcome this vicious circle by creating ample employment opportunities at the doorstep of the poor and the needy. The employment programmes implemented in different countries carry different perspectives, the central theme being the well-being of the people by providing them with diverse employment opportunities.

### **Argentina**

The Argentinean Government introduced a massive employment programme in 2001, as the employer of last resort to recover from the crisis that has been gripping the economy. This limited programme is called Plan Jefes de Jefas de Hogar Desocupados (Programme for the Unemployed Male and Female Heads of Households). The programme was meant for unemployed households who have children at home, a person with handicaps, or a pregnant woman. This was framed with a federal financing structure and a locally administering structure. To utilise the programme to its fullest, the Government has reduced the funding for other employment and relief schemes. Providing various services through the works and the presence of almost 60percentage women in the programme made Argentina's employment programme a success. Like any other programmes some anomalies were also noted in the implementation of the programme.

### **Bangladesh**

Food-For Work (FFW) programme is the employment generation programme in Bangladesh operating since 1975. The experience of famine in the country in 1974 paved the way for the implementation of the programme. This policy instrument of the Government of Bangladesh intended to create employment and enhance the income of rural labour by providing work during the agricultural slack period. Public works such as roads, embankments, canals, etc. are promoted under the programme. The programme aims to enhance the performance of the agricultural sector, reduce physical damage and loss of human life due to natural disasters, and generate productive seasonal employment for the rural poor (Ahmed et.al, 1995). The employment generation programme in Bangladesh enacted as a food-assisted intervention by the Government proved successful in the history of employment programs in the world. Several criticisms were also raised in providing the workers' payment in kind rather than cash.

## **Indonesia**

A set of Social Safety Net Programmes was introduced in Indonesia after the financial meltdown in the 1990s. As part of this, an employment creation programme was also initiated known as the 'Padat Karya' (which means as an adjective, 'labour intensive') programme (Sumarto et.al, 2004). The programme was a culmination of several labour-intensive job schemes that prevailed in the country in the name 'Padat Karya'. These schemes were joined together to form the new employment creation programme under the same name Padat Karya and thus it was re-launched in the year 1998. The main aim was to tackle unemployment mainly in the formal sector. The programme has proved as an effective social net programme for the unemployed and the under-employed labour force in the country.

## **South Africa**

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was launched by the South African Government in 2004 to fight poverty and to create employment opportunities by promoting skill development. EPWP is an employment generation scheme aimed to provide work opportunities and training to unskilled and unemployed individuals in the country. Despite the seasonal variations in work opportunities in the country, the problem of unemployment and poverty has been gripping the country throughout the year. The EPWP was implemented in response to this twin crisis, to protect the most vulnerable sections of the society. EPWP is being used by Government and State-owned enterprises to generate employment opportunities which are labour intensive by providing public infrastructure such as schools and roads. The programme has provided various community services such as home-based care, community security and the cultivation of community gardens (ILO, 2010).

## **Botswana**

Botswana is one of the better-performing countries in Southern Africa, which altered itself from the status of a Low Income Country to a Middle Income Country. The country has experienced many labour-intensive public works programmes. These programmes were implemented as part of the nationwide planning measures to overcome the downturns in the economy. Labour-intensive public programmes are created to enhance income from the generated employment. The income generated from the creation, utilisation and maintenance of public goods is used to assure food security for the targeted group of people (Teklu, 1995). Employment generation measures taken by the country is directly linked to assure food security to its citizens. Apart from the labour-intensive public work programmes, the country has also practised some other relief programmes such as food distribution, direct income transfer for the destitute, farm support schemes, etc. to safeguard the economy from the out-turn of a growing population.

## **Liberia**

In response to the 2007-08 food crises, the World Bank in partnership with the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), implemented the Cash for Work Temporary Employment Project (CfWTEP). Like all other employment programmes, the main motive of CfWTEP is also to help the poor manage the crisis. Poverty alleviation is the prime objective these programmes also look forward to

enhancing basic infrastructural facilities and providing sustained beneficial impacts. Unskilled and low risky work which are labour intensive is promoted under the programme.

In many developing countries, the employment growth was inadequate to absorb the labour force. To absorb this unemployed labour and confront various crises, countries take special efforts and programme to create employment. Each programme is designed and implemented based on a particular condition existing in each country. These programmes have been initiated in three forms- Food for Work Programmes, Cash for Work Programmes and Public Works Programmes. The Food for Work Programme has been adopted by countries to overcome any emergency that afflicted the economy. The self-targeting nature of the Food for Work Programmes has enhanced the reliability of some countries exclusively on this to generate employment in the country. The participation of women in this workfare is comparatively larger when compared to other programmes. There is no gender-based difference in food compensation. Nevertheless, these programmes have been questioned on the ground that this is a measure of charity rather than an extension of human rights (Devereux and Solomon, 2006).

Public Works Programmes are being used by many developing countries as an important tool for employment generation. These programmes have developed as a policy instrument to alleviate unemployment, underemployment and poverty in situations of chronic as well as temporary distress in the economy. Well-designed public works can also help to create useful physical infrastructure and to conserve natural resources. Pro-poor growth is well promoted under public works, hence these have the potential to address not only poverty and unemployment but also to ensure the provision of public assets and productive infrastructure. Similar to Cash for Work programmes, Public Works Programmes also transfer cash to their beneficiaries.

All these programmes are meant to create employment and reduce poverty by assisting the poor through varied means. The work requirement criterion, the mode and level of the payment system, etc. focus exclusively on the vulnerable sections of the society. The wage rate in most programmes is low to self-target the poor. Criticisms were often made by social protectionists against fixing the wage rate below subsistence or the market wage. The participation rate of women is high in most of these programmes. Most of the employment creation programmes have been started to reduce poverty by transferring income to the poor. Studies on various programmes indicate that the income of the participants has increased to a considerable extent, a significant positive contribution to stabilise the lives of the poor and the vulnerable. Apart from creating employment, the employment creation programmes also aim to create durable assets of reasonable quality.

### **Right-Based Approach to Development- The case of MGNREGA**

India witnessed historic legislation in 2005 when the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed in Parliament. With much euphoria, on February 2006, the Act came into operation in 200 most backward Districts in India. This is the largest public employment programme ever visualised in human history (Ambasta, Shanker, & Shah, 2008). Later in 2009, the Act was renamed and now be called as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). MGNREGA has been hailed as a fine tune illustration of Right Based Approach to

employment since it guarantees employment to every rural household that is willing to do unskilled manual work for 100 days in a financial year. The Act proves to be a robust shift from a policy of welfare activity of the Government to a policy that recognises basic development needs as rights of the citizens (UNDP, 2010). The rights-based design of the Act necessitates a paradigm shift in India's long history of self-employment and wage employment schemes.

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) Article 39, Part IV of the Indian Constitution stresses the importance of a rights-based approach to employment. The rights-based approach to employment and development induces the inbuilt scope of realising the right to work a reality. The rights-based approach in India assures people the entitlements to basic needs, empowers them to obtain these rights, and provides a judicial remedy to citizens if State fails in action. The crux of the approach is that these rights are enshrined legally through Acts of Parliament. The rights-based, law-bestowing rights and entitlements of the wage seekers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) itself serve as the main instruments for articulating the Right Based Approach to employment.

The persistence of poverty and unemployment and the failure of erstwhile poverty reduction strategies compelled the Government to mold the 'guarantee of employment' a reality. MGNREGS has its roots in the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS)-the employment guarantee programme of the Government of Maharashtra. A major part of the policy formulation of MGNREGS has been drawn from the MEGS. However, MGNREGS has taken several new initiatives for the better operationalisation of the rights-based approach to employment. The major entitlements MGNREGS assumes special significance in terms of reaching out to the poor, who have hitherto been bypassed by the process of economic growth (Shah & Mehta, 2008). The recognition of the right to work and the entitlements provided under the Act makes MGNREGS prima facie a people's programme rooted in the ideology of participatory and sustainable development.

Below table depicts the major limitations in works implementation of the earlier wage employment programmes and the corrective measures adopted under MGNREGS.

**Table 3.1 Limitations and Corrective Mechanisms**

Sl.No.	Limitations in earlier Wage Employment Programmes	Corrective mechanisms adopted under MGNREGS
1.	Priority to the road and other physical structures	More importance to the development of land and water resources
2.	Lack of planning for creating productive assets by using land and water resources	Priority to multi-layer planning at Village, Block and District level, use of Information Technology in planning and specially trained persons for technical support
3.	Presence of Contractors, use of machinery and less priority for direct labour employment	A complete ban on contractors, involvement of NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations
4.	Absence of measures for future maintenance of assets	Provision for proper maintenance of the created assets by forming local institutions like SHGs, user groups etc.
5.	Lack of convergence with ongoing developmental programmes	Emphasis on convergence with other programmes to derive more outcome

Source: Shah and Jose, (2009)

The MGNREGA as well as the national guidelines have included all these corrective measures through various provisions intended to make sure the necessary inputs are required for strengthening rural livelihood. As noted by Ambasta et.al (2008), these provisions in the Act and the guidelines are unique in the sense they give due emphasis on the planning of works and mechanisms of social audit. The most distinguishing feature of MGNREGA is the central importance given to the quality of work. Therefore, in addition to the aforementioned perspectives of a wage-earning scheme and a livelihood-generating programme, MGNREGS could also be seen as a development initiative that can give an impetus to the growth process in the most backward regions of rural India. Hence, the pre-requisites for effective implementation of works under MGNREGS emanate from the newly framed corrective measures such as; sound planning for MGNREGS works which can meet the long-term needs of the regional economy, systematic and scientific planning of works, ensuring the construction of good quality assets, ensuring productive use of the created assets, proper maintenance of the assets and dovetailing of MGNREGS works with the ongoing developmental process and programmes in the respective region.

## CONCLUSION

Economic growth should be attained simultaneously with employment growth and poverty reduction. On the other hand, the problem of unemployment should be treated with selective tools independently in different plan periods. The design and structure of employment programmes should not be altered by changing political structure and power. The distinctive features of the Indian economy such as the dominance of the unorganised sector, prevalence of unemployment and underemployment, ineffective institutional agencies, seasonal variations in production, and dependence on both farm and non-farm activities, etc. should be considered while formulating and implementing employment policies. Sustainable employment in the rural economy



could only be accomplished through synchronisation of different activities viz. promotion of labour-intensive productive works planned and implemented as per the needs of the local people, by ensuring the active participation of the public as well as the PRIs and by adopting proper accounting and transparency mechanisms. Such an integrated step to ameliorate unemployment and to create productive assets in the rural economy was taken by the Government of India during the Tenth Plan Period by passing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005.

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