

SOCIAL UPLIFTMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL POPULATION THROUGH POVERTY ALLIEVIATION PROGRAMME WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE DIATRICT

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ABSTRACT

Improvement in quality of life has been one of the objectives of the five year plans. In context of the tribes it is urgently required. It may be achieved through medical and health, nutrition, sanitation, provision of safe drinking water, education, adult education, employment generation, and occupational mobility. Since India opted for planned development, special attention has been paid to uplift society tribal areas, by providing enhanced allotment of funds and evolving special development programmes and integrate the tribes with the at large society within the shortest possible time. Vzhndhu Kattuvom Project is an empowerment and poverty alleviation project implemented by Government of Tamil Nadu, funded by World Bank is in progress currently in much rural area covering large size of population below poverty line and also tribal communities. An attempt has been made in the paper, to highlight up on the empowerment of tribal household who benefited from Vzhndhu Kattuvom Project in a selected Tribal area.

KEYWORDS: Five Year Plans, Occupational Mobility, Tribal Population.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the new millennium, 260 million people in the country did not have income to access a consumption basket which defines the poverty line. Of these, 75 per cent were in the rural areas. India is home to 22 per cent of the world's poor. Such a high incidence of poverty is a matter of concern in view of the fact that poverty eradication has been one of the major objectives of the development planning process. Indeed, poverty is a global issue. Its eradication is considered integral to humanity's quest for sustainable development. Reduction of poverty in India, is, therefore, vital for the attainment of international goals.

Agricultural wage earners, small and marginal farmers and casual workers engaged in non-agricultural activities, constitute the bulk of the rural poor. Small land holdings and their low productivity are the cause of poverty among households dependent on land-based activities for their livelihood. Poor educational base and lack of other vocational skills also perpetuate poverty. Due to the poor physical and social capital base, a large proportion of the people are forced to seek employment in vocations with extremely low levels of productivity and wages. The creation of employment

opportunities for the unskilled workforce has been a major challenge for development planners and administrators.

Poverty alleviation has been one of the guiding principles of the planning process in India. The role of economic growth in providing more employment avenues to the population has been clearly recognized. The growth-oriented approach has been reinforced by focusing on specific sectors which provide greater opportunities to the people to participate in the growth process. The various dimensions of poverty relating to health, education and other basic services have been progressively internalized in the planning process. Central and state governments have considerably enhanced allocations for the provision of education, health, sanitation and other facilities which promote capacity-building and well-being of the poor. Investments in agriculture, area development programmes and afforestation provide avenues for employment and income. Special programmes have been taken up for the welfare of scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs), the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Antipoverty programmes that seek to transfer assets and skills to people for self-employment, coupled with public works programmes that enable people to cope with transient poverty, are the third strand of the larger anti-poverty strategy.

Vazhdhu Kaattuvom Project is an empowerment and poverty alleviation project implemented by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department of Government of Tamil Nadu with World Bank assistance. The project is implemented over a six year period at an outlay of Rs.717 crores. The Project covers 2509 village Panchayats in 70 Backward Blocks in 16 districts (including the newly formed Tirupur district). Though the project was launched in November 2005, effective implementation has commenced only from August 2006.

The project started in October 2006, targeting the poorest blocks across 16 of Tamil Nadu's districts. The additional financing will expand the project into an additional 46 new blocks of villages spread across 10 new districts, and into four new blocks in existing project districts, selected on the basis of poverty indicators.

The objective of the Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project – called “Vazhdhu Kaattuvom” locally, meaning “Let's show how to live” – is to create economic opportunities and build social capital in the poorest communities. This puts poor people at the center of the planning and implementation of the changes that affect their lives. It builds on Tamil Nadu's existing programs and good practices using what is called the Community Driven Development approach. Although Tamil Nadu has achieved significant development outcomes over the past decade, large numbers of people still live in poverty, especially in rural areas where agriculture is vulnerable to drought.

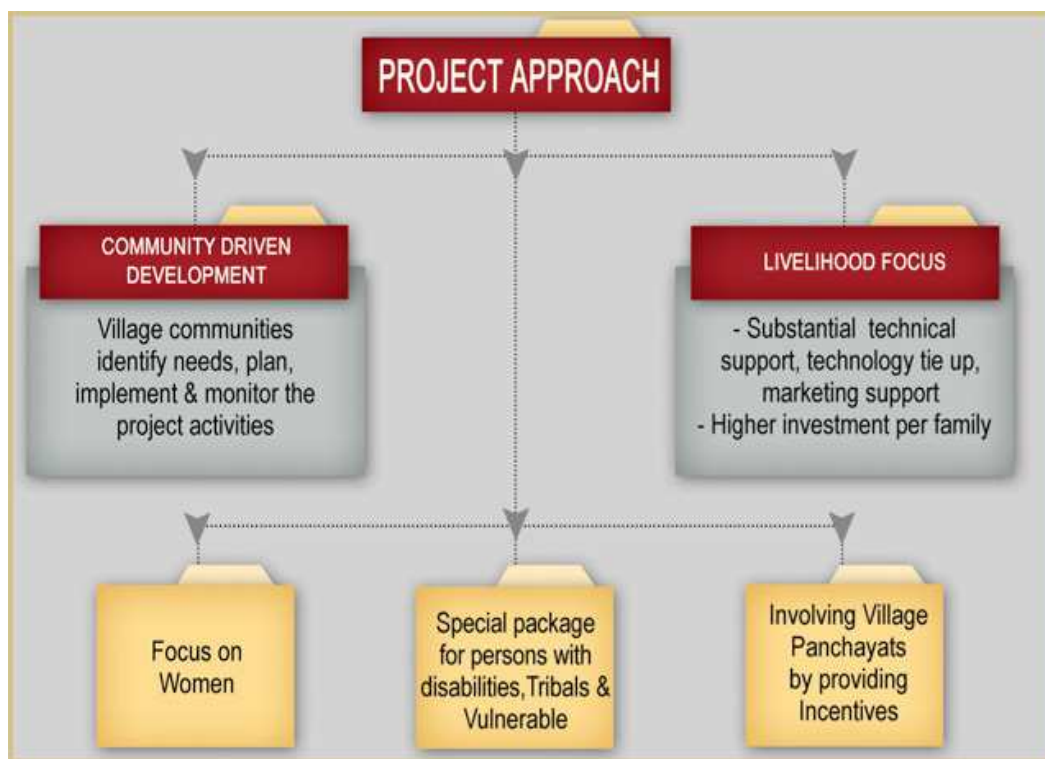
The target population of this Project is the poor households, the most vulnerable sections including the physically challenged and the marginalized communities including tribal population. The project follows the CDD approach wherein village communities identify their own needs, design and plan interventions and implement and monitor them by adopting key non-negotiable principles of the project. There is a strong sense of ownership of the project among the community members.

So far the Project has reached 2,509 villages covering an estimated 1.5 million people. The Government of Tamil Nadu is providing \$39 million (approximately Rs 180 cr) towards the project. Assessments have demonstrated that over 87 percent of households have shown an improvement in their economic status, with mean incomes of \$668 or about Rs 30,060 against the project baseline of \$469 or about Rs 21,105. In addition, 53,810 young people have been trained for employment in areas such as the construction industry, service sector, telecommunications, and garment production.

OBJECTIVE OF VAZHNDHU KAATTUVOM PROJECT

To Empower the Poor by Improving their Livelihoods and Reducing Poverty by:-

1. Developing, strengthening pro-poor local institutions at the village level.
2. Building the skills and capacities of the poor.
3. Enhancing their livelihoods by financing demand driven sub project investments.



The project implemented in 2,509 Village Panchayats in 70 backward Blocks spread over 15 districts.

Table: 1Details of Project Area

S.No	District	Number of Blocks	Number of Village Panchayats
1.	Coimbatore	5	77
2.	Cuddalore	4	236
3.	Kancheepuram	4	231
4.	Nagapattinam	4	182
5.	Namakkal	6	121
6.	Ramanathapuram	4	164
7.	Salem	6	146
8.	Theni	4	80
9.	Tiruvallur	5	204
10.	Tiruvarur	4	159
11.	Tirunelveli	6	156
12.	Thiruvannamalai	4	160
13.	Thoothukudi	4	190
14.	Vellore	5	207
15.	Villupuram	5	196
Total		70	2509

http://www.tnrd.gov.in/schemes/ext_worldbank.html

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The responsibility for implementation of the project vests with the Vazhndhu Kaattuvom State Society at State level and District Vazhndhu Kaattuvom societies in the project districts. At the cutting edge level, a 5 member project facilitation team covers 10 – 15 Village Panchayats constituted into a cluster. At the Village Panchayat level the implementation agency is an inclusive community organization by name Village Poverty Reduction Committee (VPRC). In addition, a Social Audit Committee (SAC) is constituted by Grama Sabha which plays role of guardian of the project principles.

Progress in Project Implementation

The Project implementation was taken up in 15 Blocks in the first phase 578 Village Panchayats from October 2006 and in the second phase 584 Village Panchayats in 15 Blocks from April 2007 and in the third phase 635 Village Panchayats in 20 Blocks from February 2008. The fourth phase has commenced from February 2009 and covers 712 Village Panchayats in 20 Blocks, where initial activities are underway.

1. The Project activities are in progress in 2,509 Village Panchayats in all the four phases. The following activities have been accomplished as on 30.09.2010.
2. The Project staff both at district and cluster levels are in position in all districts after induction of training.
3. Village Panchayat initiation fund of Rs.35,000/- per Village Panchayat has been released to 2,509 Village Panchayats.
4. Participatory identification of the poor has been completed in 2,509 Village Panchayats and the list approved by Grama Sabha.
5. VPRC and SAC have been formed in 2,736 Village Panchayats. In addition 286 special VPRCs have been formed exclusively in tribal areas.
6. An amount of Rs.340.47 crores has been released to the VPRCs so far.
7. 13,847 new SHGs have been formed from among the left out poor. Similarly 7,629 new SHGs have been formed among the disabled.
8. 13,050 new SHGs have received Revolving fund and linked with banks for an amount of Rs.75.08 crores and second credit linkage to 1,981 SHGs to the tune of Rs. 17.97 crores.
9. 53,663 disabled persons have been given national ID cards through the intervention of the project.
10. 1,30,991 disabled & vulnerable persons have been given financial assistance to start livelihood activities.
11. 11,295 disabled have received aids & appliance costing Rs.375.11 lakhs.
12. 93,926 unemployed youth have been imparted job oriented skill training in collaboration with Mahalir Thittam.
13. PLF restructuring has been completed in 1,703 Village Panchayats.
14. 97 Economic activity federations with a cumulative membership of 4388 persons have been formed and Rs. 390.28 lakhs have been released to these federations from Project funds till September, 2010.

METHODOLOGY

Current Paper is based on information gathered through a field study which is empirical in nature and it is based mainly on primary data. The total sample size consists of 135 tribal people, who were surveyed from Mullangadu village in Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu with the help of structured interview schedules.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY IN BRIEF

Skill Training

Job oriented skill training for youth leading to employment in corporate sector or self employment, had been given to the rural poor and tribes also took part in the training programme. The time period of training ranged between six to eight months.

Economic Activity

Promoting individual livelihoods through small loans from VPRCs or through the livelihood corpus are available with Panchayat Level Federations (PLFs) of SHGs. Promoting small group activities through Revolving fund and other Bank linkages are the main aim of these federations. To achieve sustainability and scale, the project supports formation of Economic Activity federations around major economic activities in which the poor are engaged.

Table-2 depicts the details on the skill training programme provided to the tribal adults under VKP in selected area

Table:2 Skill Training Programme Under VKP in Selected Area

CATEGORY OF TRAINING	TRAINING PERIOD	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
DRIVING	6 months	23	-	23
TAILROING	8 months	4	5	9
BEUTICIAN	6 months	-	2	2
LEATH WORK	6 months	19	-	19
TOTAL		46	7	53

Source: Field Survey 2009

Nearly 40 per cent of the tribals are undergone the skill development programme under VKP which includes both male and females. Out of tribal respondents have been benefited from skill training and are found gainfully employed

TABL: 3 Beneficiaries of VKP in Selected Area

AGE GROUP	TYPE OF WORK	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
19 – 28yrs	DRIVING	18	-	18
18 – 22yrs	TAILROING	4	5	9
24 – 30yrs	LEATH WORK	19	-	19
TOTAL		41	5	46

Source: Field Survey 2009

Table-3 indicates that majority (87 per cent) of tribals had benefited through VKP skill training programme. So it clearly states that the efforts taken by the government is very effective and clear, focusing on the welfare of the rural poor and its upliftment and progress. Because of the training, they found employment with higher wages in the labour market which improved their economic conditions and led to empowerment.

CONCLUSIONS

Inclusive growth is currently being promoted as a key strategy for addressing rural poor. The contribution of VKP is yet another step towards the path of the socio-economic status of rural poor and it also proved to be instrumental for the rural transformation.

The study concludes that the VKP has been successful in empowering rural through income generating activities. Increase in income, expenditure and savings habit of rural people.

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