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Vol XXVIII
No. 4

ISSN 0019-5014

CONFERENCE
NUMBER

OCTOBER-
DECEMBER
1973

INDIAN JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS



INDIAN SOCIETY OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS,
BOMBAY

uplift of the rural masses. This task is, probably, impossible without having a proper link with the rural and urban activities. One is the problem of the proportion in which the various activities of the centre ought to be combined to serve the specified geography in response to the changes in population, employment opportunities and in farm technology. Thus, the concept of a growth centre is highly dynamic and flexible as well as increasingly productive. We do hope that the march towards rural uplift has begun and the goal is not very far.

SUITABILITY OF A DISTRICT AS AN UNIT FOR FORMULATION OF INTEGRATED AREA DEVELOPMENT PLANS

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The essence of integrated area development consists in an integrated approach, a detailed study of resources in a given area, mobilizing such resources, identifying the problems and the requirements of that given area and planning for the optimum utilization of these resources so as to produce the maximum development possible. The advantage flowing from the acceptance of such a concept of integrated area development will be to secure maximum co-ordination of all aspects of development besides being able to concentrate on the special and peculiar problems of the area, with the help of local resources and local leadership.

Unit for Integrated Area Development

The need for an unit of integrated area development is a necessary corollary to the concept defined above. The integrated area development is suggested with reference to the development of a contiguous and physically homogeneous area. The area can, however, be a province, a region, a country, or a group of countries. But the integrated area approach, in the Indian context, has been used with reference to small units of the country, namely, district, taluka/tehsil or a block of villages.

Why Smaller Unit

The necessity of having smaller area for integrated development has been increasingly recognized for the following reasons.

* The views stated above are those of the author and does not necessarily express the views of the Corporation.

1. The small area planning is more effective for the best use of certain natural resources as in sectors like agriculture, small irrigation works, animal husbandry, forestry and rural industries.
2. From the above point of view, the likelihood of the conditions in a small area such as district or taluka being homogeneous is much greater than in the case of larger regions or the whole State.
3. The State is too large an area to evoke popular participation in planning process. Popular participation is useful to ensure the contribution of materials, finance and labour by the population in the given area.
4. The democratic system will be strengthened with the integration of developed functions at smaller level.

Thus, a small unit of area which has broad similarities in regard to its physical and climatic features, economic potentials and cultural background would be an ideal unit for integrated area development because the resources would be more or less evenly scattered; as also would have similar set of problems. Such units, however, would rarely exist. In India, as also anywhere in the world, physical and other resources are unevenly distributed. And larger a country, greater are the inter-regional disparities.

The Indian sub-continent can be demarcated from various angles, *e.g.*, geographic, demographic, racial, language, political, cultural, administrative or climatic. The States in India were recognized in 1956 predominantly on the language basis. And the fact has to be recognized that the present inter-State boundaries would more or less be kept intact. The present demarcation of State boundaries, however, are not the best suited for the purpose of planning in general and integrated area development in particular. For that matter, the political division of the sub-continent has been very much of an arbitrary nature.

It is obvious that for proper formulation and implementation, the unit of integrated area development has necessarily to coincide with the normal administrative units of different sizes existing in a State. However, an integrated approach being the essence of such concept, it is clear that the unit can only be district or taluka/tehsil or block, as the case may be. The advantage of having the district as the unit will be its historical set up in almost all the States in the country, the availability of a well knit administrative and implementing machinery of district level officers under the control of the State Governments as well as under the general supervision and control of the District Collector or the Deputy Commissioner.

But as in the case of State boundaries, one may question the inter-district boundaries within the State. It will be recognized that the district

boundaries are administrative ones. These, except marginal changes here and there, have continued to be the same for many a decade. The purpose, criteria and the conditions were different when the districts in the States were organized during the British regime. The primary objective of all the alien rulers was political administration and not development administration, as now envisaged. Therefore, it is a wonder that one of the essential criteria of "homogeneity of physical and economic features" is not satisfied by the existing district boundaries for the purpose of integrated area development. Homogeneity would, however, be greater if a taluka/tehsil or a block of villages were to be taken as unit for this purpose. Better still would perhaps be a village.

The Size and Nature of the Unit

The size and the nature of a unit for integrated area development would also be considerably influenced by the objectives and scope of area development programme. For instance, if the aim of integrated area development is to develop irrigational potential through minor and medium irrigation projects, the unit may be smaller than as it would be in the case of multi-purpose projects. Similarly, if the objective is to develop large scale industries, the unit of area development may be considerably larger than as it would be in the case of the limited objectives of developing cottage and small scale industries.

There are obvious advantages in restricting the size of an integrated area development unit, say, a block, such as its proximity to the people and consequently greater responsiveness to the aspirations of the people and the local problems. This is specially the case in States where the *Panchayat Samiti* is the pivotal unit in the democratic decentralisation. However, the adoption of such a universal programme of integrated area development cannot be financially supported and would be difficult from the administrative point of view. The next alternative could be in having a taluk/tehsil as the basic unit for formulation of integrated area development plans. The financial and administrative burden would undoubtedly be smaller, but still not within the present national capacity. The total number of districts in the country is 370. Some States have 3-5 subdivisions wherein others, the number is as large as ten talukas/tehsils in a district. Thus, looking to the viability and paramount need for an objective approach to the whole problem with minimum of regional pressures and the need for an integrated approach between the problems of the rural area and the emerging urban areas, it is felt that in the long run the district will be most suitable and viable unit for formulation of integrated area development plans in this country.