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**RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN SOUTH ASIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY  
OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH**

**Abstract**

The present study was conceptualised to examine rural development policies in South Asia with special reference to specific programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India and 100-Days Employment Generation Programme (100 DEGP) in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, there have been some common elements in the rural development policies of South Asian countries because of the similarities in their social and cultural milieu and a shared legacy of their colonial past. Keeping the issues of poverty and unemployment in the rural areas of the developing countries, where most of the poverty ridden population stays, it has attempted to understand the impact and the relevance of employment generation schemes. Employment generation schemes or programmes which are created time to time tend to focus on evolving mechanism and sustaining them so that the issue of livelihood is addressed. It has been experienced in the context of developing countries that low level of industrialization and the narrow approach of development which is confined to specific areas have created several issues. It would be interesting to see that several social movements in the developing countries against the state have emerged as a consequence of poverty and underdevelopment. The post-colonial states due to the history of colonialism could not develop a viable economy based on strong resources. The issue of poverty and underdevelopment is not a phenomenon which emerged in the recent past. It is a result of long colonial exploitation of resources and labour along with the distortion of governance. This study has also attempted to capture the historical legacy of poverty and underdevelopment.

The study of these two programmes in India and Bangladesh emerges as important model or mechanism in not only eradicating poverty but also sustaining and empowering down trodden people from all the marginalised section of the society, rural areas in particular. The mechanism adopted by India also shows that a country can also target environment by

generating employment which help to preserve and protect the environment. Creating jobs under the social welfare programme or schemes such as MGNREGA and 100-DEGP in areas such as water preservation, land management, irrigations and road construction also promote and strengthen bases of sustainable development. The study essentially finds that the strategy for implementing these programme and their design have also developed the rural economy. Thus the important hypothesis which were put to test in the beginning of this particular study stand proved. The data provided in the respective chapters in relation to impact of such programme on poverty reduction shows a positive improvement. Similarly, the two specific programmes where direct transfer of case is one on the objective in the absence of assured employment try to generate employment based on rural economy has, to certain extent, built a viable rural economy. It has also impact on the rural migration to urban areas during the time of their off-season.

In nut shell, it can be strongly argued that NEP in terms of MGNREGA and 100-DEGP if implemented with strong political will and with sound strategic approach along with transparency can and will have very constructive outcomes in relation to poverty eradication and building a rural economy. In the critical analysis, unfortunately, due to red-tappism in the bureaucracy and corrupt political systems have constrained the desired outcome of such well thought of social schemes in both countries. There are reports of rampant corruption charges against the implementing authorities of MGNREGA in India and 100-DEGP in Bangladesh. There need to be more and active role from the civil society in terms of check and balance from both sides. The bottom to top approach has also exposed its weaknesses in the case of MGNREGA. However, in terms of conclusion after analyzing the two specific social welfare schemes aimed at eradicating poverty through employment generation represents a model to be adopted by several other developing countries where poverty and unemployment, rural area in particular, are serious issues.