

Rural Development: No More a Day-Dream

Dr. Rupendra R. Gaikwad¹

¹Associate Professor, Vidya Pratishthan's Institute of Information Technology, Baramati

ABSTRACT

Self-reliant villages are an age-old concept. If we peep into the history of ancient India, we come to know that once upon a time, our villages were self-reliant. There was 'Barter' system present, which was beneficial to make the villages self-reliant. Therefore, as a result, the people were happy. After the invasion of Aryans, the barter system and thereby self-reliance of the villages was disturbed. Entire social system was changed and the independent people became slaves of the system. Now there is a need of time that we should once again go back to our proud historical system to become self-reliant. Of course, the ways would be different. In today's world of currency economy, we may not achieve hundred per cent barter system. But definitely we can go closer to the system and can have the golden combination of modern technology with historical and proven economic exchange system. One Village One Product (OVOP) can be one of the ways to make rural life sustainable and to improve Human Development Index (HDI).

Key words: HDI, OVOP, Rural Development

Introduction

OVOP means One Village One Product. Villages are blessed with abundant natural resources. If these resources are extracted carefully and if they are commercialized properly, we can make wonders in making the villages self-reliant. The villagers need some technology to convert the naturally available resources into value added products. Here they need the training of technology and they also need management to market these products at national / international level. This will definitely improve the Human Development Index (HDI) in India.

OVOP program will provide direct employment to rural people in manufacturing sector and people may get involved in the indirect employment, i.e., providing services to this manufacturing sector and tourists. Thus, rural economic development is possible with great pace.

History of OVOP

The concept of OVOP was developed and adopted by the government of Japan in the early 1980's. Through this program, the Japanese government encouraged their rural people by giving them proper training about the concept and benefits of it. The concept involves development of one dedicated product by one village depending on the natural resources available in that

particular village. After development of world-class product, marketing of such products is done domestically as well as internationally. However, the model of OVOP should be tailored as per the local availability of natural resources and marketability of the developed product. To implement the OVOP concept in India, exhaustive survey of the villages is needed to identify the availability of natural resources. Through this effort, an Environmental Threats and Opportunities Profile (ETOP) of every village can also be made. This will give guidelines to the policy makers to decide which product to be developed and to be marketed.

Kenya has also adopted the concept of OVOP for reducing rural poverty in the country since 2008 with the help of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Kenyan government has emphasized on the identification of the locally available resources and converting them into globally marketable products by adding some value in those natural resources.

Brunei is another country that has adopted OVOP since 2013. The results in Brunei are awaited but looking at the success of the concept in Japan and Kenya as well, Brunei will also become successful.

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia are few more countries who have adopted OVOP program, but it is still into research stage.

Can India Adopt OVOP

India is a geographically wide-spread country having diversified cultures and customs. Therefore, one stroke implementation of OVOP in India is a very challenging task. Though 'Unity in diversity' is our strength; it becomes our limitation also to implement such a program nationally. Due to huge geographical spread, it may take a few years to implement OVOP. As stated earlier, an exhaustive survey at the village level is required. So the situation demands implementation of OVOP at district or tehsil level. Even we can do pilot implementation in few districts of a state to start with. As far as human development index (HDI) of India is concerned, it is at the bottom level of the world. India stands at 136th position among 186 countries on its Human Development Index (HDI). This report was published by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2013. HDI is a collective measure of income levels, education and life expectancy of the people in that country. OVOP is a good opportunity to improve our HDI. Because it will bring prosperity to rural parts of the country by increasing income levels, improvement in the access to education and thereby, affordability to medical services to increase life expectancy.

One of the main objectives of the 'One Village, One Product' project is to encourage and motivate the rural people to strive to make their villages more self-reliant, not solely dependent on the government support, but progressive and united. It is also suggested that, one research and

development (R&D) center should be made available to make the research on possible products and once the products are developed, to make them more sustainable, acceptable and competitive in the domestic and international market. Such R&D centers are required to be developed at district level. So, yes, India can definitely adopt OVOP program. Developing Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, etc., are already trying to adopt the OVOP program for overall development. India too needs such a program for the development from grass-root level. If the villages develop, the country develops.

Scenario in India

Typically, the OVOP program should run on the basis of some principles like, self-reliance through creativity, improvement in HDI and 'think globally, act locally' type of attitude. To achieve self-reliance, we need to find out the natural resources which are available at the village level. Once these resources are identified, the information should be provided to some management consultancy or a learned management group. That agency will think and suggest the most suitable product which can be manufactured locally with minimum investment. They may take help of R&D center for this. Due to diversity in India, we may get wonderful products from each of the villages. Whenever a business is set up in the village, there is generation of direct employment in the manufacturing process and indirect employment in the allied business or services. If employment generation happens, income level of the rural people will increase. They will start getting a stable income, which they cannot get due to over dependability on the monsoon and agriculture. Once the stable income starts, prosperity starts. Standard of life of rural India will improve. Most importantly, migration of villagers will be minimized or stopped. All together, the result will be increase in human development index (HDI).

This will also lead to development of entrepreneurship, as the rural people will get a confidence that any business can be run in their own village. This is how even human resource will be developed. Participative development is one of the main elements in development cooperation and development strategies. Due to participative development more number of people get an opportunity to participate in the process of development. This increases transparency in the implementation of government policies. Participatory development aims at self-reliant, sustainable development through active participation in development activities. Participatory development is also an approach to the development process. This is designed to increase self-reliance and enhance sustainability to achieve social justice by improving the quality of people's participation in the capacity of agents and beneficiaries of the development.

As perfectly stated by late Mr. C. K. Prahalad, the fortune is really lying at the bottom of the pyramid. If we sow the seeds of development at the bottom itself, the results would be

marvelous. The people at the bottom of pyramid can participate in the developmental process, i.e., participative development. Today, what we see the development is actually the development of top of the pyramid and bottom is still deprived of the overall development. Today the development does not only mean increasing production of tangible goods but also enhancing the quality of life of people and their involvement in the society. This should also lead to improve various capabilities of people. Participation of local residents ensures the bottom-up economic development. This kind of development becomes community driven. So it is very important. Today, the approach of development is top-down, but participatory development ensures the bottom-up approach towards development.

Implementation of OVOP Program

OVOP Program is a real manifestation of participatory development. This will encourage the economic development of rural India. Also it will empower the rural people, if their participation is ensured right from the beginning of the implementation of OVOP program. For effective implementation of OVOP, bottom-up initiative and cooperation of rural villagers with government in deciding the product according to the available resources is highly essential. In this endeavor, local self-government will play a key role who will ensure the involvement of villagers. Local government can also assist in the inventory of raw material as well as finished goods. They may also help in distribution of the goods. Government or a management consultancy should help them in offering exposure to these products by organizing exhibitions and making efforts for marketing of the products. Such kind of activity needs high level of cooperation between villagers, government and the management consultant.

Challenges/Constraints in the Implementation of OVOP

Whenever we try to implement a program like OVOP, we may face certain challenges in the implementation, like, inconsistency in the policy of government. Every after five years, our government may change. That may hinder the implementation procedure. Secondly, lack of attention or unwillingness of the government officials towards this program. Thirdly, unskilled human resource in the rural area. If we can tackle these challenges, we can successfully implement the OVOP Program in rural India.

Conclusion

Whenever people are involved in the process of development, such kind of development is long lasting, sustainable and self-reliant. If we stick up to the principles of OVOP, we can once again make India as a powerful country. That may lead India to become superpower in the years to come. For this, we need self-reliance at the bottom of pyramid and OVOP is an answer to it. Thus rural development is no more a day dream but a reality with innovative efforts.

References

- (n.d.). Retrieved August 2014, from <http://www.gdrc.org/u-gov/doc-jica>.
- Ajimu, P. (1997). *Through the Utilization of Local Resources, Promotion of Ajimu-style Green Tourism, Ajimu Town; Oita Prefecture*. Ajimu Town.
- Igusa, K. *Globalization in Asia and Local Revitalization Efforts: A view from One Village One Product (OVOP) Movement in Oita*. Oita.
- India-ranks-136-in-human-development-index/articleshow/18990526.cms*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 2014, from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/>.
- Kuswidiati, W. (2008). A Case Study of Participatory Development in the One Village One Product Movement: Green Tourism in Ajimu Town, Oita, Japan and Agro Tourism in Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia,. 122-130.
- N., K. (2011). *One Village One Product - Rural Development Strategy in Asia: the Case of OTOP in Thailand*,. Thailand.
- one-village-one-product-in-need-better-shelf-space*, . (2013, 12 31). Retrieved September 2014, from <http://www.bt.com.bn/business-national/>.
- ovop-way-self-reliant-villages*. (2013, 12 27). Retrieved September 2014, from <http://www.bt.com.bn/frontpage-news-national>.
- RCAPS_WP11-3.pdf*, (n.d.). Retrieved August 2014, from <http://www.apu.ac.jp: http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/workingPapers/>.