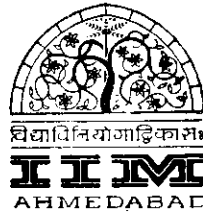
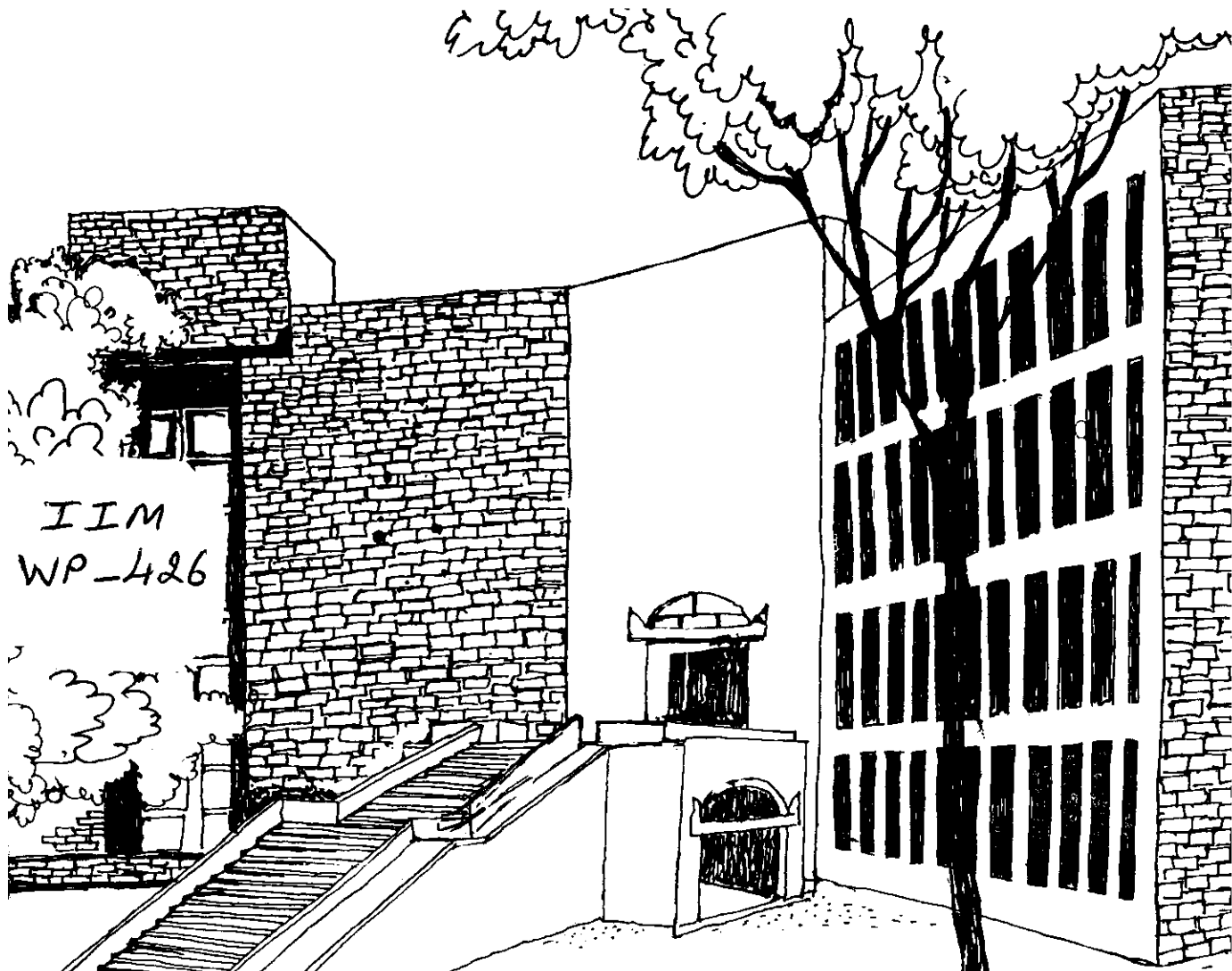


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LEARNING FROM ANTYODAYA:
SOME LESSONS FOR IRDP

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LEARNING FROM ANTYODAYA; SOME LESSONS FOR IRDP

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Introduction

The Government of Rajasthan, through its Antyodaya programme, hoped to lend a strong hand to a substantial number of the poorest families and lift them out of their state of abject impoverishment. As the term connotes, Antyodaya was the 'last man's' programme.

Most of the governmental programmes were being implemented in Rajasthan in the mid-1970s when Antyodaya was launched. The Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA), the Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers' (MFAL) programme, tribal sub plan: drought prone area and desert development programmes and special animal husbandry programmes were in operation in the State with their focus on the 2.12 crores rural population. In June 1977, the new state government felt that the existing programmes were inadequate in terms of coverage, resources and local participation. As a response, the Antyodaya programme was launched in October 1977.

The programme was to touch all of the 33,305 inhabited villages of the State. The poorest 3 to 10 families, depending on the size of the village, were to be helped initially and the benefits would travel upwards gradually over a period of time. Four special features marked the programme (SSO, 1978):

1. The family was to be identified concretely in its village setting and helped;
2. Emphasis was to be given to the delivery of productive assets;

3. The administration was to perform an active outreach function rather than remain passive and
4. The identification criteria were to be strictly economic.

The existing bureaucratic machinery from the State secretariat down to the Block Development Officer and the Village Level Worker (VLW) was used for the execution of the programme. In order to strengthen coordination (1) a district level coordination committee (2) a State level inter-ministerial policy committee and (3) a State level inter-departmental committee of Directions were organised. The interest of the political leadership generated a momentum in the administrative leadership (SSO, 1978; 1979).

Studies of the programmes of the 1970s have pointed to problems in implementation at the field level (RBI, 1975; PEO). Identification of beneficiaries, inadequate information available to the beneficiaries, corrupt practices among the various agents of developmental institutions, delays etc., are significant problems and action for their resolution would certainly improve the performance of programmes. However, it may be argued that even when implementation is made more effective, the performance of the programme will depend considerably on its design. In other words, strategic choices made by the planners with regard to the beneficiary (who is to be served), the type of service (what is to be offered to the beneficiary) and the means of provision of the service (the organisational form and process) are critical. Inappropriate strategic choices made may constrain the programme management. Thus, while operational efficiency may be enhanced, the overall effectiveness may not be accomplished. In this paper, therefore, we wish to

identify the elements of design in the Antyodaya programme and understand its implications for that programme in particular and for other anti poverty measures like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The paper draws on data from a case study of 50 families from two blocks of a district in Rajasthan. They were interviewed in September 1981, almost four years after the initiation of the programme. The sample contained recipients of three types of benefits: (i) pension (ii) land and (iii) credit for self employment, from a less developed and a more developed block of the district.

A Glimpse From Below

The first two rounds of the programme were implemented in the years 1977-78 and 1978-79. Some changes were made in the second round as a result of the experience gained in the first round. The beneficiary families were identified at a gathering of the gram sabha. The active involvement of the potential beneficiary groups and the community at large in identifying the Antyodaya families was a significant feature of the programme. Revenue camps were then held along with the gram sabha to distribute benefits such as land and pension. Similarly, credit camps were held to ensure distribution of credit to the beneficiaries.

Up to March 1979, nearly two lakh families were assisted by the programme after two rounds of implementation (SSO, 1979). Assistance was extended in the form of the following benefits: (1) pension (2) land and credit to be used for land improvement (3) self employment through animal husbandry or the setting up of community services such as shops and (4) wage employment.

Land was an attractive benefit as it constituted an asset. Its

use seems to have varied between the less and more developed parts of the district. In the less developed area, more than half of those (given the land benefit) interviewed did not get possession of the land. The others included those who (1) had not taken possession, (2) were not cultivating the land, and (3) were cultivating with meagre returns.

In the more developed area, the beneficiaries in the villages near the main road and close to the only large town in the district retained the land, presently unproductive, but nevertheless an asset with the potential of future appreciation in value. Those near the municipality octroi post had some alternative employment possibilities due to the truck queue at the post. In addition, the fact that the village was included in the urban master plan of the nearby town, seemed to have motivated 'holding' the land rather than using it. Most of the beneficiaries in the interior parts were cultivating their land, obtaining returns of 1 to 2.5 quintals of maize per year. On the whole, those who went in for credit for land improvement managed to make more productive use of the land.

Complaints of poor quality of land, lack of other inputs, distance, availability of alternative employment and poor yield were the major factors responsible for non use of land.

The self employment benefit was of two kinds: credit for animal husbandry or for setting up a community service. In the less developed area, the only non-tribal among those interviewed, who had got a buffalo through the programme, seemed to have gained from it and

earned enough to cross the poverty line. He had cleared his loan in three years and obtained loan for another buffalo. He was also collecting and selling the milk of his village in a pilgrim centre, some 7 kms. away. At the time of the study, he was diversifying into other lines on his milk sale visits by procuring vegetables so as to sell in his own village. All the others (tribals) showed a little or no improvement in their economic status.

In the more developed block of the district, a beneficiary was helped to set up a cycle shop. He was earning Rs.3000 per annum from the shop which considerably supplemented his family's income. If one were to identify a single factor that contributed to the success of the enterprise, it was a set of very favourable circumstances in the environment. People from the village in which the cycle shop was located commuted to the town for work. A number of industrial units had come up on the way to the town. A large educational complex was in existence and was growing. These factors created the demand for repairs and hiring of cycles. Competing transportation modes were the autorickshaw, tonga and bus. They were either too expensive, infrequent or time consuming for a trip to the town. In the town itself, the bus services were of limited routes and frequency. Thus the cycle was the ideal mode of transport to and within the town.

While there were some returns from the services set up by the beneficiaries, it was only the two cases mentioned above—for whom the programme was a support—who seemed to continue to earn more than Rs.3600 per year even four years after the programme.

There was also the case of yet another beneficiary who was helped across the poverty line in the programme's first year. This person used the credit to buy a tonga. In the first year, he was earning up to Rs.4000 from it. However, the entry of tempos in the area adversely affected his business. The tonga was sold by the third year.

Some Learnings and Questions

The objective of the programme was to raise the level of income of selected families above the poverty line of Rs.3600 per year. This objective was to be accomplished by enabling the families to obtain assets or employment. The family was the unit of attention. The services offered to this family were (1) information giving, (2) assistance in the choice of benefit and (3) financial assistance to enable receipt of the benefit. Thus the choice of the beneficiary, and the services for him, were clear in the design of the programme.

There were several positive elements of the programme. As mentioned, there was support from the political leadership. Linkages were created within the bureaucracy for efficient functioning. Implementation showed some favourable elements. For example, the identification process, done in public in the presence of all concerned officials, was surely an outcome of the experience of the earlier target group programmes like the SFDA and the MFAL.

In terms of the impact, the social gains which accrue when a person gets a piece of land in the rural area, or when a beneficiary grows in his capabilities to handle organised institutions such as banks cannot really be assessed. It is, however, to the primary objective of raising the income level to which we shall return. This brings us

to questions regarding the design of the programme.

The first question that comes up is whether the services planned were in line with the attributes of the intended beneficiary. The study suggests that it is the credit for land and for self-employment that had some potential for lifting the beneficiary family upwards in his economic status. However, all of the linkages required to make the land productive and to market the produce were not available. Some did obtain credit for land improvement. The programme did not plan to provide for marketing assistance. It must be remembered that the Antyodaya families would hardly have been in a position to organise the necessary resources themselves.

The two beneficiaries among those contacted whose income stream was above Rs.3600 per year in 1981 were those who needed just a little support from the programme in order to seize the opportunities of a very favourable market. In both these cases, it was the individual's entrepreneurship and the favourable environment which really sustained him through these years. The programme benefits provided only the initial prop.

The tonga case takes the argument further. Changes in the environment forced the owner of the tonga to sell it after a year or so of productive use. Thus, even if the beneficiary was assisted to generate a productive and beneficial activity, there was no means by which it would be sustained through a continual managerial response to the environment.

The design of the programme was perhaps ^{over} optimistic about

the beneficiary being able to organise adequately and convert the 'benefit' extended—land or credit for an asset or for self employment—into an activity producing a steady cash flow over the years. This learning suggests three propositions:

1. Those who are able to establish the necessary input and market linkages on their own can use the programme as a support.
2. Services for which the environment provides favourable conditions have a good chance of yielding reasonable gains.
3. Even if a right fit between an activity and the market is initially established, a changing environment requires a dynamic managerial response if the benefit is to be sustained.

The second question relates to the organisation. The administrative structure, from the state secretariat down to the VLU was used. In the past, the experience with this structure has been that it was inadequate for developmental functions which require sustained long term follow up action (Satia, 1981; Gupta 1981). The indication from the study is that a service which involved one shot action without need for follow up, such as pension distribution, was perhaps relatively more successful. Similarly, distribution of a benefit such as credit was pursued with good results. But, where follow up and action for sustenance of benefits distributed were required, there were difficulties. A PEO study (1978) of the first year's programme hints at the absence of technical and marketing linkages. Mukherjee and Sengupta's (1979) case study showed an inappropriate choice of benefit—ten carts in a village where there were many more. In a related context, a study by the Madras Institute of Development Studies (1981), reviewing the activities of the IRDP experiment, expressed the need for concern for follow up and sustenance of activities on the part of the beneficiary

rather than for statistics of coverage. The 'after distribution, what?' issue seemed to have received little attention in the design of the programme. For instance, the participation of non governmental local organisations such as the voluntary agencies did not figure in the design. It was only a year after the implementation that the follow up question came up for discussion and action.

It is quite likely that the objectives of the programme changed implicitly from one of raising families above the poverty line to that of distributing a set of benefits and covering arithmetical targets. The question then arises: Was this the limitation of the organisation which was to implement the programme? A more central question may be posed: Can families from a widespread, diverse population be offered multiple 'benefits' for their sustained betterment through the available administrative structure?

It is in this context that planning for IRDP becomes critical. The programme, on the lines of Antyodaya, is to assist those 'possessing little or virtually no assets.....to acquire productive assets and/or appropriate skills and vocational opportunities and then (be) backed effectively with services to increase production and productivity. If through special programmes of specific beneficiary oriented assistance, this group could be brought above the poverty line, a major impact would have been secured' (Planning Commission, 1980).

The features of Antyodaya in terms of the diversity of the beneficiaries and the range of services are also apparent in the IRDP. While provision of the inputs and linkages in an integrated fashion for

all the activities conceived of under the programme would be very desirable, the feasibility of the district level agency being able to execute this needs a careful examination, case by case, especially in view of the household focus. There is a need for urgent consideration of the fact that in the light of the complexity of linkages necessary, the programme may revert to an objective of distribution of benefits rather than raising the income levels of the beneficiary. In this connection, it is useful to underline the role of credit as an adjunct rather than as the mainstay in any programme (Vyas, 1975). Otherwise, commercial institutions can too easily become the whipping boy in the absence of effective income generating programmes of an adequate scale.

Attempts to provide a one shot service are bound to miss the objective even while being efficient. At the same time, attempts to take on an overload of diversity and functions are also bound to be ineffective and perhaps even inefficient. ~~As~~ ~~propos~~ of this factor, the desire for IRDP to extend social services such as health and education to beneficiaries suggests that much caution is needed in raising far too many expectations from the programme than the local structures and agencies will permit. Creating such an overload may deter the IRDP agency from pursuing its already onerous responsibilities and objectives. On the basis of our experience with Antyodaya, it may be advisable for a programme like IRDP to consider options for reducing the diversity of functions and activities and the consequent overload on the organisation. For instance: (1) While political pressures may not generally encourage limitation in size, it may be possible in certain areas to limit the activities to selected homogeneous

beneficiary groups over a given period of time so that necessary empathy with and understanding of their attributes and needs can be developed (2) The beneficiaries may be helped to participate in on-going, well managed programmes of animal husbandry or rural industry, wherever feasible, thereby 'piggy backing' on their technological and managerial capabilities and at the same time, supplementing them in the field and (3) Local non-governmental agencies—academic, voluntary and others—may be involved in the sharing of functions of after care, maintenance and sustenance of the benefit obtained.

Conclusion:

The Antyodaya programme was launched by the Rajasthan government to improve the socio economic well being of the 'last man' in 1977. Benefits were to be first extended to the poorest families in all of the villages in the state. In two years, nearly two lakh families were assisted by the programme after two rounds of implementation. Pension, land, self employment and wage employment were the benefits offered. There were several positive changes in the implementation of the programme in terms of proper identification of beneficiaries and ensuring the availability of credit. On the basis of observations in other states and in the present case study, it is suggested that the Antyodaya programme's objective changed implicitly from one of raising the income level of the beneficiaries to that of distributing benefits. This is perhaps due to the overload of the programme in terms of the activities and functions. Before initiating a programme, it is, therefore, essential that careful consideration be given to the strengths

$$E'(U) = p_1 \frac{(R_1 - r)}{[r(W-G) + GR_1]^{1-\delta}} + p_2 \frac{(R_2 - r)}{[r(W-G) + GR_2]^{1-\delta}} = 0$$

$$\text{or } \frac{r(W-G) + GR_2}{r(W-G) + GR_1} = \left[-p_2(R_2 - r) / p_1(R_1 - r) \right]^{1/(1-\delta)}$$

$$\text{putting } -p_2(R_2 - r) / p_1(R_1 - r)^{1/(1-\delta)} = C,$$

$$G^* = \frac{r(C-1)}{(R_2 - r) - C(R_1 - r)} W$$

$$\text{putting } Q = \frac{r(C-1)}{(R_2 - r) - C(R_1 - r)},$$

$$\frac{G^*}{Q} = W$$

and limitations of the implementing organisation. Thus, in designing anti poverty programmes such as Antyodaya and IRDP, means of providing a range of services—from distribution of benefits to 'after care' advice and support—will have to be assessed and measures taken to overcome the limitations. Otherwise, the programme may pursue short term targets and lose sight of the ^{main} objective.

Notes:

(Shri Raj Kataria's assistance with the field study is acknowledged with appreciation)

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