

MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN NEPAL: AT A GLANCE

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Background

Planned development history in Nepal was initiated since from 1956 AD. Earlier development policies had produced little output due to the limitations and lack of experience. All the planned policy coverages have both similarities and dissimilarities but all focussed to increase the use of natural resources, to enhance the economic base.

1.1 National Development Plans/policies

1.1.1 First to Fifth Five Year Plan (1956 – 80)

Planned development initiative in Nepal started from 1956. First Five Year Plan (1956-61) & Second Three year Plan (1962-65) plans carried out survey and surveillance of horticulture and livestock in hill, mountain and other areas. Cheese production from yak was emphasized since the first plan.

In 1965, Nepal introduced “Remote Area Development Strategy”(**Third Five Year Plan (1965-70)**)

with an aim to reduce the social and economic backwardness existing in mountain ecological region. To implement this strategy, Government of Nepal promulgated and implemented remote area development program as a pilot programme in selected 4 districts in the initial stage. It included the development of basic infrastructures that was extremely lacking in the region.

Government continued the strategy of remote area development even in the Fourth Five Year **(1970-80)** Plan. While evaluating the achievements of Fourth Five Year Plan, government realized that the achievements of this programme were encouraging. Keeping this in view, government extended the coverage of area development programme to all the 18 mountain districts of the country in 1976.

1.1.2 Ten-Year Agricultural Development Plan (1975-85)

With the implementation of Fifth Five Year plan, Ten-Year Agricultural Development Plan was implemented in Nepal, which adopted the policy of regional specialization. This plan prescribed the animal husbandry as the most potential output area for development in the mountains and fruit production in mid-hills. Agricultural credit, marketing, pricing, food distribution and soil fertility were treated as most essential ingredients of the plan and interventions were focused accordingly.

Although this plan initiated new concept of specialized output development, it could not consider the basic infrastructures for socio-economic development such as roads,

irrigation and markets. Food problem of this region was well recognized and addressed with food subsidy from the government. Efforts were made for strengthening the agricultural extension system for supporting the mountain agriculture and rural development. However, the traditional structure of production, remoteness and presence of localized market in this region was not influenced by the plan.

1.1.3 Agriculture Perspective Plan, APP (1995-2015)

APP considers that nearly half of AGDP is contributed by the GDP of hill and mountains. It also recognizes that if the issues of mountain region are not addressed well, it will pose serious problems in the country.

This plan recommends to identify potential demands in order to make supply plan, as per new trade economics. This plan emphasizes to specialize the commodity in order to reap economies in research, marketing and other institutions. Planners should set commodity priorities and concentrate on only a few at the beginning of mountain development. According to APP, this growth model has been successful in *Himal Pradesh* of India. *Himachal* model of development can be suitable for the mountain development in Nepal, which is similar in geo-climatic features. The growth strategy includes: (i) a limited number of output and input priorities, (ii) phased commodity development, (iii) attention to risk aversion and other constraints, and (iv) a clear and persistent programs.

In the beginning, a heavy emphasis was given by the government on limited number of priorities- such as roads, education and apples- in Himachal Pradesh of India. A road budget of up to 48 percent of total government expenditure spent for Himachal Pradesh that connected the region with other districts and markets in all seasons. Secondly, Himachal Pradesh implemented the roads, massive education and apple production programs clearly and consistently for a long time. Thirdly, 20 percent of apple production was planned for local processing.

As a second phase of development, vegetable was emphasized. Then it was diversified to dairy, medicinal plants, honey and floriculture. For Nepal's mountain development, lead commodity for crop and livestock sector is identified for all sub-regions. Potato is identified as lead commodity for eastern and apples for all other sub-regions of mountains. Likewise, goat is identified as lead livestock in far-western Mountain, sheep in mid-western and western, yak in central and dairy in eastern mountains.

Government must focus on the development of lead commodities only. As a first strategy, it suggests locating the production of lead commodities. Secondly, it suggests the strategy of building agricultural infrastructures. National budget should be drastically increased for the electricity and irrigation, where mini-hydro projects have to be developed rapidly. Existing surface irrigation system has to be maintained and managed with maximum efficiency. Third element of strategy is technology development and

supply of inputs. With the application of appropriate technology, 2/3 volume of chemical fertilizers has to be supplied and used in the mountain and hill regions.

Fourth strategy is institutional evolution. Local governance as well as the non-government sector has to be empowered. These institutions must become democratic and open minded and work for common development goals as defined by plan. Government should encourage the private sector, like AEC, for processing, storing and marketing links.

1.1.4 Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

This plan encompassed the area development plan for 25 remote hill and mountain districts, which included the strategies to promote border trade with Tibet, prioritize the link roads, produce and collect herbs and focus research and production of fruits through the empowerment and involvement of local governance.

Realizing the ultra-poverty in this region, food production intervention with small irrigation systems by mobilizing local communities was prioritized, that aimed at reducing the mountain poverty through food security approach.

Income generating initiatives were also focused to address the lives of majority of poor in the region. The identified commodities for food security as well as income generation of mountain poor were fruits, cash crops and products of cottage industries. Pasture development, forest preservation, roads, bridges, water supply and buildings of schools were prioritized for development.

However, this approach of development recognized the need of special effort and budget for the regional development of mountain region, the remoteness with no road linkage and poverty have not been addressed even after the implementation of this program for a long time.

1.1.5 Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-7)

This plan contains a Special Program for the growth of remote areas as well as disadvantaged/ deprived social and ethnic groups. Weak linkage, scattered settlements, ultra-poverty, very inadequate health and educational constrain the social and economic living of mountain people. Considering the situation, the plan envisions to develop remote area (25 districts) as resource zone. High value agro-products, sheep, goat, herbs and tourism are identified as priority sector for economic development. This plan prioritizes infrastructures, agriculture and education in this development process.

This plan targets to redefine the remote area and develop the institutional structure for that matter. It also intends to build the capacity of local communities and the organizations, develop livelihoods and create employment opportunities.

Special programs are also formulated for the socio-economic up-liftment of Dalits, indigenous people and Janajatis. It is targeted to preserve the disappearing languages and culture of such groups. Similarly, modernization of the occupations of Dalits are targeted.

2. Development Programmes

2..1 Remote Area Development Programme (1965-)

This programme was initiated in Humla, Mustang, Solukhumbu and Taplejung districts since 1965, which was expanded over all the 18 mountain districts since 1976. Selected Village Development Committees of Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot and Achham were also included into this programme since 1991. This programme is still being implemented in the remote districts as defined by the government.

With a view to uplift the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the mountain people(including selected hills), government has focused on the development of physical infrastructures, tourism, herbs, fruits, livestock, food products and other potentials through this programme. This programme is formulated through VDCs and DDCs in the local levels and approved by Remote Area Development Board in the central level. Approved programmes are implemented by the DDCs and VDCs with the technical backstopping of specialized technicians available in the Area development Board.

In the past, this programme has focused the development of infrastructures. Development of drinking water, irrigation, suspension bridges, micro-hydro electricity, rural foot-paths, Gumba, warehouse, temple and School were highly emphasized by the programme. Similarly, soil conservation, river training, plantation, agro-forestry and tuin were also developed. A pasture was developed by the programme in Dolpa district. Agro-forestry was developed in Gorkha, Bajhang, Solukhambu and Bajura.

However, this programme conducted few training works on herbal production and attempts are also made to develop industries. This programme has not shown concrete outcomes on food and other commodity production enhancement. Few influences are found on the emergence of saffron production, as locals are supported with technology.

2.2 Food Production Programme (1975-)

With the implementation of Fifth Plan, Ten-Year Agriculture Development Plan began to support increase potential cereals and apple in mountain areas. The periodic plans in the subsequent years included the formulation and implementation of food production programme in the mountain region to subside the food problem in the region. This programme is being implemented through District Agricultural Development office. This programme provides technical advice, seeds and seedlings free of cost to the farm

households. This programme is continued in all the subsequent plans that contribute to enhance the area and production of apple in mountain areas.

With the implementation of food production programmes, the people were supported with food subsidy that could not encourage farmers for enhancing production and productivity.

2.3 Horticulture Development Programme (1975-)

Horticulture development was emphasized by the Ten-Year Agriculture Programme in hills and mountains implemented since 1975. Plans and policies in the subsequent years emphasized this crop for the mountain region. Consequently, the production of apple was increased substantially in the past due to the special emphasis of government. But, due to the lack of road accessibility in these districts the substantive volume of apples could not be marketed for benefiting the producers.

2.4 Karnali Zone Agricultural Development Programme (2005-)

Since 2005-06 fiscal year, Special Agricultural Programme is being launched for the development of farmers in all the five districts of Karnali zone. This program includes the strategies and projects that are designed to increase the agricultural production and incomes of the farmers in Karnali Zone.

This programme is formulated by DADO and ratified in the District Council and approved by MOAC. Concerned DADO is responsible to implement the approved programme, which runs under the guidance and supervision of DDC.

This programme underlines the growth of fruits by laying out market-led initiatives. Cellar storages, market centers, post-harvest management and transport subsidies are being promoted by this programme. This programme has significantly increased the marked surplus of apples contributing to the incomes of producer farmers.

2.5 Livestock Development Programme (1997-

The period plan introduced in Nepal in 1956 implemented the livestock programme for the mountain region. In the subsequent plans, livestock programme is launched with emphasis on mountain region. However, the periodic plans in the initial stage paid attention on the establishment of farms and delivery of extension services.

As recommended by the APP, Ninth and Tenth Plans, Government has carried out livestock development programme with an aim to alleviate poverty in mountain region. Department of Livestock Services has carried out production programmes in mountain districts, among others, that prioritize goat as a lead livestock sub-sector in far western mountain, sheep in mid western and western, yak in central and dairy in eastern mountains.

Concerned District Development Office delivers technical services to the farmers for raising potential animals, as per the annual programme. Improved breeds of buffaloes, cows and goats are being developed and transferred to the farms. Likewise, livestock production training and veterinary services are being imparted in the service centers of each district.

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