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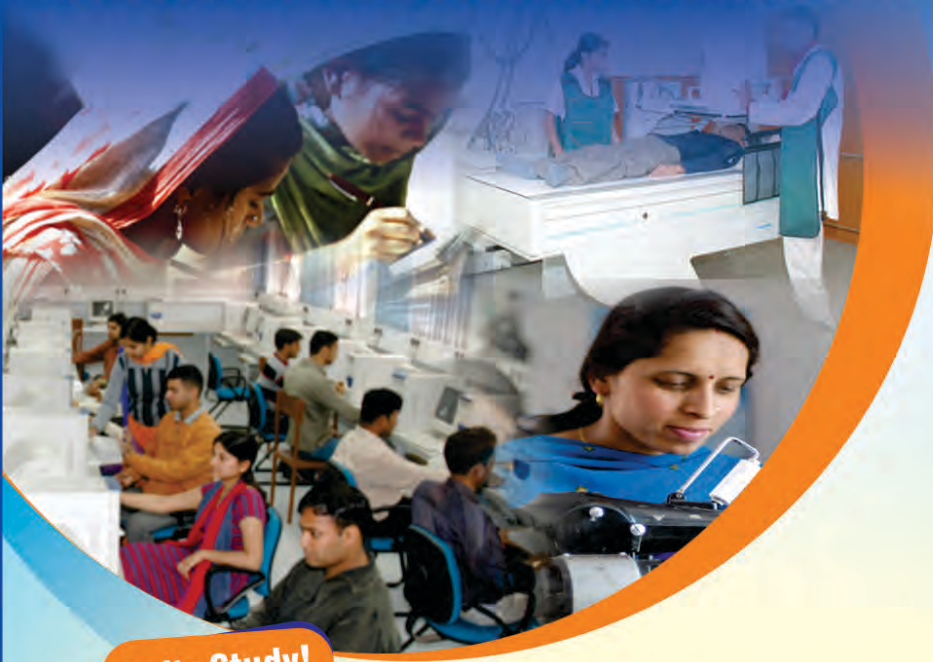
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INSIDE

There are glaring disparities in income distribution, consumption, and quality of life between rural and urban India-sometimes called the divide between Bharat and India. Several government programmes announced by the government, over the years have been aimed at bridging this gap. However, a short drive away from the cities tells the state of roads in rural areas which largely tells the story of rural-urban dichotomy.

While causes of this rural-urban divide could be many, it is accepted by planners and academicians that there should be active synergy between rural and urban India-as both are interdependent on each other.

Since the 1990's, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of agriculture-which is the mainstay of livelihood in rural India has been falling to a low of around 14 per cent whereas the GDP contributed by the tertiary sector, which largely operates from urban India, has risen sharply to around 60 per cent.

It is estimated that the average income per person in urban areas is now manifold more than the rural dwellers.

Despite the disparities, rural and urban India co-exist economically, socially and are interdependent on each other. However, the population in urban areas is rising at a phenomenal rate. It is estimated that urban population will be around 40 per cent up from around 27 per cent in 2001.

The government has decided to create smart cities to become effective linkages between rural and urban India so that greater opportunities are made available closer to rural areas. The government is planning to set up 100 smart cities across the country that will provide all modern amenities, education and employment opportunities.

The government is of the view that the opportunities of education, employment and entertainment are concentrated mostly in urban and semi-urban centres and these three factors are forcing more and more people to leave rural areas and migrate to towns and cities

By creating infrastructure in semi-urban and rural areas much of the overall increase in demand for inputs, services, distribution and many basic consumer goods can be serviced by firms operating in these areas.

The overall effort of all policies is to better the quality of life in rural India. The Prime Minister has announced several steps to make India's villages self sufficient and clean. A toilet in every home is one of the steps that can go a long way in making our villages a better place to live. □

RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Rekha Dhanai and Dr. R.S. Negi

Rural–urban linkages play a crucial role in the generation of income, employment and prosperity. The importance of such linkages is not recognised for various reasons and thus ignored in national economic and other policies. The infrastructural problems and institutional constraints with other barriers tend to discourage linkages between rural and urban regions and thus prevent a process of rural empowerment and economic development. As such, stronger rural–urban linkages could also play a crucial role in socio-economic development or poverty reduction in developing countries.

Rural-urban linkages are both a cause and a consequence of socio-economic development. It includes flow of agricultural and other commodities from rural based producers to urban markets. These commodities for local consumers and for forwarding to regional, national and international markets on one hand and on the opposite side flow of manufactured and imported goods from urban centres to rural settlements. It is now widely recognised that there exists an economic, social and environmental interdependence between urban and rural areas and a need for balanced and mutually supportive approach to development of the two areas. Agriculture is an important part of rural economy and change in agriculture can influence the non-farm activity, mainly in three

ways: through production, consumption and labour market linkages.

Production, a growing agricultural sector needs technical inputs of fertiliser, seeds, herbicides, equipment and repair services either produced or distributed by non-farm enterprises. Increased agricultural production also stimulates forward production linkages by providing raw materials to further value-adding activities like milling, processing and distribution by non-farm firms.

Consumption linkages arise when increasing farmer income, as a result of growing agriculture, boosts the demand for basic consumer goods. Such a demand typically increases over time as the rising per capita income induces the diversification



of consumption into non-food items. Much of the overall increase in demand for inputs, services, distribution and many basic consumer goods can be serviced by firms operating in rural and semi-urban areas.

Rising agricultural wages in the rural areas have raised the opportunity cost of labour in the non-farm activities. This has induced a shift in the composition of non-farm activities from labour intensive, low-return ones to those that require more skilled labour and higher investment and produce higher returns. Thus increasing farm productivity could be instrumental in inducing a structural transformation of the rural non-farm economy.

They also include flow of people moving between rural and urban settlements, either commuting on a regular basis, for occasional visits to urban-based services and administrative centres, or migrating temporarily or permanently. Flow of information between rural and urban areas include information on employment opportunities for potential migrants. Financial flow include, primarily, remittances from migrants to relatives and communities in sending areas and transfers such as pensions to migrants returning to their rural homes and also investments and credit from urban-based institutions.

Some factors can be generalised as having a key role in the increase of the scale of rural-urban linkages. Decreasing incomes from farming, due to lack of land, water or capital, are unable to intensify production and switch to higher value crops, mean that growing numbers of rural residents engage in non-farm activities that are often located in urban centres. For those who continue farming, direct access to markets is essential and markets are usually located in urban centres. Better access to markets can increase farming incomes and encourage shifts to higher value crops or livestock.

Flow of goods, access to urban markets and socio-economic development of local people

Infrastructure plays the key role in promoting agricultural and rural development which is the

basis of rural economy of a developing country like India where, infrastructural facilities are generally weak and inadequate and many people, especially the rural poor do not have access to even minimum infrastructure services. Good infrastructural facility not only ensures smooth flow of inputs and outputs but also facilitates higher accessibility to knowledge, market, remunerative prices and savings from wastages. Exchange of goods between urban and rural areas are an essential element of rural-urban linkages. The 'virtuous circle' model of rural-urban local economic development emphasises on efficient economic linkages and physical infrastructure connecting farmers and other rural producers with both domestic and external markets. This involves three phases:

Phase I: Rural households earn higher incomes from production of agricultural goods for non-local markets and increase their demand for consumer goods

Phase II: Increasing demand leads to the creation of non-farm jobs and employment diversification.

Phase III: Employment diversification in turn absorbs surplus rural labour, raises demand for agricultural produce and again boosts agricultural productivity and rural incomes.

However, access to urban markets is key to increasing incomes for rural and semi-urban farmers. Three aspects are crucial for access to urban

markets:

- ❖ physical infrastructure (road networks and affordable transport)
- ❖ relations between producers, traders and consumers; and
- ❖ information on how markets operate, including price fluctuations and consumer preferences.

There is a strong relationship between rural infrastructural development and socio-economic development of people. Poor physical infrastructure can have far-reaching consequences on producers' prices, as inadequate roads usually

Thus increasing farm productivity could be instrumental in inducing a structural transformation of the rural non-farm economy.

entail prohibitive transport costs. However, lack of storage and processing facilities and high transport costs increase the vulnerability of producers.

Rural–urban Linkages and Livelihood Strategies

Most individuals or households in low-income countries straddle the rural–urban linkages through income and occupational diversification and migration. Time devoted to, as well as the income derived from, non-farm and off-farm activities are therefore substantial parts of the lives of rural households. The most successful rural households use urban opportunities and exploit urban niches in addition to agricultural land resources. Most of the poor as well as rich households combine agricultural production with non-farm and off-farm income-generating activities to increase their income. The access of rural people into non-farm activities has only been possible where there is availability of non-farm employment opportunities that arise from urbanisation, innovations and sectoral transformations. In addition, new investments in non-farm sectors take place with an increase in farm incomes and rural savings. As farm income grows, the demand for non-farm goods and services increases in rural areas. To meet this demand, rural economic activities are diversified into production of rural non-farm goods and services. Thus, the rural non-farm economy provides economic opportunities for the rural poor. However, this requires investments in agricultural technology and innovations, rural human capital, health, communications, transportation and electrification.

Livelihood diversification and Migration

For increasing their income individuals can engage in multiple activities, some of which can be seasonal (and therefore depending on changes in the labour demands of different activities) or temporary or informal or can be related to the individuals' life courses such as women, different demands on their time from childcare, caring for older people, etc. Transformations in the ways in which households and individuals make a living are perhaps the most striking aspect of rural–urban linkages and in many cases, involve multiple occupations ranging from farming to services. The

rural households rely on non-farm and off-farm activities as well as migrant members' remittances. The non-farm activities of rural households are part of a survival strategy that aims to reduce risk, overcome seasonal income fluctuations and respond to external and internal shocks and stresses – e.g., economic and financial crises.

Emerging employment opportunities in urban areas in combination with affordable transportation services, have increased mobility or migration, which has facilitated income diversification. Gender and generational relations are also important in shaping rural–urban linkages, as reflected by the higher levels of multi-activity among the younger generations.

A rise in the income levels of the rural population due to the diversification of their livelihoods would not only increase demand for manufactured goods and services among these populations, which would in turn stimulate the growth of local towns and urban areas, it would also trigger agricultural growth. Thus, the existence of the rural-urban linkages can increase the level of economic growth and development, reduce poverty and improve livelihoods, but the scale, strength and sustainability of economic growth and development, poverty reduction and livelihood improvements depend not only on local but also on global interactions and international trade linkages.

As households took over responsibility for farming, production levels increased and in high-potential regions, this contributed to a decline in rural poverty and to increased demand for non-agricultural goods; at the same time, however, land scarcity gave rise to unprecedented migration to small and large urban centres. Mobility and migration are closely interrelated with livelihood diversification. Access to affordable transport expands the opportunities to find employment or to engage in income-generating activities through commuting. Internal migration is often seen as essentially rural-to-urban and contributing to uncontrolled growth and related urban management problems in cities. In fact, most of the growth in urban population is due to natural population increase. This has resulted in many policies to control or discourage migration. Since

rural to urban migration is fastest where economic growth is highest as migrants tend to move to places where they are likely to find employment opportunities.

Conclusions

Whilst, to some extent, flows and linkages exist between all rural and urban areas, their scale and strength are determined by the nature of economic, social and cultural transformations. The liberalisation of trade and production has changed or reshaped rural–urban linkages in most regions at the global level. The increased availability of imported manufactured and processed goods affects consumption patterns in both rural and urban settlements. These goods are often cheaper than locally produced which can affect local manufacturers and processors negatively. This is especially for small-scale enterprises using traditional or limited technology.

Increased access to information on distant places has an important role in younger generations desire to migrate and to move out of farming in favour of more “modern” types of employment. Changing employment

opportunities can have a profound impact on traditional social structure.

At the local level, the nature and scope of rural–urban interactions is influenced by several factors, ranging from geographical and demographic characteristics including the nature of agricultural land, population density and distribution patterns of farming systems to the availability of roads and transport networks, linking local settlements to a number of urban centres where markets and other services are located. Local government and other local actors are best placed to identify local needs and priorities and provide an adequate response to them. Local decision-making can help avoid the neglect of forward and backward linkages between agriculture and services and manufacturing. It can also negotiate and regulate the use of natural resources by rural and urban residents and enterprises, which can otherwise become a major cause for conflict.

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NEED TO STRENGTHEN RURAL-URBAN LINKAGE

Dr Kavita Kalkoti

According to Government of India's Census 2011 India has out 6,40,867 villages and 7,935 towns/urban centers. Out of a total population of 1210.2 million, Rural population accounts for 68.84 per cent [833.1 million] and urban population 31.16 per cent [377.1 million].

Rural refers to "remote farming areas" and urban to "crowded cities". Despite this, both rural and urban areas coexist along a continuum with multiple types of flows such as, people, goods, public and private capital, money and information, and interactions taking place. Thus, it manifests a close and organic linkage between rural and urban areas. The linkage has been mutually reinforcing and its potential can profitably be harnessed to ensure development of rural-urban economy in general and enable the poor and vulnerable rural and urban households to benefit in particular.

Pro-rural and pro-urban investment policies, programs and strategies have a strong influence on socio-economic development and transformations. Investments in rural and urban areas have often been perceived as mutually exclusive and competing. Investments in rural areas have mostly aimed at developing rural areas by providing amenities, facilities and services almost at par with urban centers but with focused objective to reduce rural-to-urban migration while urban centers, besides receiving significant public investment, attract substantial private investments that bring state-of-the-art technology to express full development potential.

Rapid urbanisation is almost inevitable, even if not desirable and there is no historical evidence

of policies and programs to successfully prevent rural to urban migration. Better educated rural work-force having aspirations and others having adequate resources/means would certainly seek either employment or get engaged/occupied in secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy in urban centers.

There appears to be a dynamic synergy between agriculture in rural areas and micro, small and medium enterprises in urban centers which is a key to the development of local economies and more "pro-poor" economic growth for the country as a whole. It is, therefore, necessary to substantially minimize rural-urban divide and simultaneously strengthen/intensify rural-urban linkage so as to help guarantee food-security, generate employment opportunities, reduce incidence of poverty, hunger and malnourishment and enhance income of rural and urban poor in particular.

Forms of linkages

Rural areas are potentially endowed with resources to develop farm and non-farm growth. Besides, migration is one of the potential avenues open to poor rural households to increase income and combat increasing impoverishment. Urban centers have better institutional infrastructure to cater services to rural households, viz. markets for their purchases and sales, banking and credit, government offices/agencies, medium and higher educational institutes, health services, transport and communication, among others.



Rural-urban areas are inter-connected by following categories of linkages:

1. **Agricultural products:** Rural areas are centers for production of commodities of agricultural and allied activities whereas urban centers provide flourishing markets for local consumption, processing industries and export. These commodities include, *inter alia*, food grains, vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, cotton, jute, plantation crops, spices, milk, meat, eggs. Similarly, production inputs, viz. seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, farm equipment and machinery etc. move from urban centers to rural areas to help increase farm output and consumer/durable goods to meet the needs of rural households. Studies have established that large scale development of agro/food-processing industries is a major key to strengthen rural-urban linkages for developing rural economy.

Rural areas are potentially endowed with resources to develop farm and non-farm growth. Besides, migration is one of the potential avenues open to poor rural households to increase income and combat increasing impoverishment.

2. **Demographic linkage:** Demographic linkage comprises:

[i] *Rural-urban Migration:* Rural to urban migration has been increasing because of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation opening vast employment opportunities in urban centers in construction and manufacturing industries, petty businesses and services (micro, small and medium enterprises). They sell their labor and remit their income to their rural household members. This improves rural economy since remittances from urban to rural areas help families/relatives of migrants meet their family expenses including payment of school fees for children, health services, investment in housing and farm and non-farm activities. Mostly, marginal and small farmers, tenant farmers, share croppers, oral lessees, landless laborers have to migrate temporarily when they do not find employment in villages due to various reasons including drought conditions. Nevertheless, migration creates pressure on existing population and infrastructure to

sustain well-being in developing countries. This has been manifested in the form of increasing rate of unemployment, homelessness, growth of squatter and slum settlements and inadequate infrastructure and services.

[ii] *Movement of People:* Rural households often visit urban centers either regularly or occasionally for their various requirements, viz. purchases, contacting government offices/agencies, hospitals whereas traders visit rural areas for business purpose and government officials/agencies visit rural centers for their assigned duties. It is also most common that some rural households also settle down temporarily or permanently in urban centers for business purposes and/or employment in government and private services.

[iii] *Tourism Linkage:* Tourism usually refers to movement of people away from their residences for recreation during holidays

and leisure hours, although many people sometimes combine it with conferences, visiting relatives and business trips. It is worth noting that these categories are not mutually exclusive and their nature and strength in a given area or spatial frame depend on local geographical, socio-economic and ecological conditions and are influenced by a number of factors.

3. **Money transfer:** With the progressive institutionalisation of banking and credit institutions and their increasing presence in rural areas, rural-urban linkage help rural households avail varying types of financial facilities/services, viz. remittances, savings, credit, insurance, payment of pension and other benefits under the government's schemes. Substantial amount of savings mobilised from rural areas is moving to urban centers for providing credit and long-term investment in manufacturing and business sectors whereas rural households benefit greatly from remittances sent by migrants and family-members serving in urban

centers. Thus, idle capital lying in one place is productively utilised in other areas for socio-economic development of the community, geographical area and the country.

4. **Information flow:** The development of Information and Communication Technology [ICT] has in recent years strengthened/intensified the rural-urban linkage. Access to information by farmers and other rural households about government's programs meant for them in one or the other form, availability of subsidies, markets etc. has facilitated significant improvement in the development of farm and non-farm sector. ICT helps potential migrant avail employment opportunities in urban centers. Some rural areas have indeed witnessed sea change in the socio-economic transformation. Print and electronic media has been playing critical role in this case.

5. **Environmental linkage:** Environmental degradation and pollution both in rural and urban areas have been progressively increasing at a faster rate since farmers in their efforts to substantially step up farm output use indiscriminately chemical fertilizers and pesticides and urban areas have been adding profuse amount of industrial wastes apart from carbon emission. Even infrastructure is under heavy pressure to sustain well-being of population. Urbanisation and industrialisation progressively expand their geographical boundaries extending to adjoining rural areas occupying arable land for development thereby polluting rural environment by letting out urban and industrial waste. This constitutes rural-urban linkage with many management implications.

Urbanisation and industrialisation progressively expand their geographical boundaries extending to adjoining rural areas occupying arable land for development thereby polluting rural environment by letting out urban and industrial waste.

Facilitating Factors:

Rural-urban linkage can significantly be strengthened by creating following infrastructure

facilities. Efforts need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing infrastructure.

- ❖ Pucca or all weather road connectivity, bridges, rivers/canals.
- ❖ Efficient and affordable transport facilities/services.
- ❖ Availability of electricity.
- ❖ Telecommunication network comprising radio, community radio, television, telephone, cellphones, social media network, internet etc.
- ❖ Print media e.g., newspapers, handouts, leaflets.
- ❖ Improving literacy rates among poor and adult education.
- ❖ Capacity building of local level PRIs, banking institutions, post offices and business correspondents to deliver services.
- ❖ Empowering Farmers' Clubs, Women Self-Help-Groups and Joint Liability Groups to widen and deepen development through credit and banking.

Changing rural scenario

In the changing rural scenario, need is now more than before to strengthen/intensify rural-urban linkages. Critical elements of the changing rural scenario, *inter alia*, include following:

intensify rural-urban linkages. Critical elements of the changing rural scenario, *inter alia*, include following:

- ❖ Progressive increase in the output of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry; changing consumer preference influencing the consumption of food and livestock products, changing life-style in rural areas.
- ❖ Increased trade/ business of goods and services.
- ❖ Substantial increase in the demand for credit and capital/finance for investment purpose.
- ❖ Rural households' access to Information and Communication Technology and its impact on exploring and exploiting the

potential new input and output markets and institutions providing technical services to develop agriculture in particular and rural economy in general.

- ❖ Emphasis on increased decentralised governance structure (at village/tehsil/district level) and focus on transparency and accountability while planning and implementing the growth and development-oriented projects and programs funded by the state/national government
- ❖ Improvement in the status of human resources development index in terms of 10 measurable indicators viz. Education (child enrolment and years of schooling); Health (child mortality and nutrition) and Standard of living (electricity, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel, flooring and assets).

Enabling Measures:

It is time now to appreciate that rural and urban areas are mutually reinforcing and, therefore, they should not be treated as different and competing development spaces. Both areas should be considered as a whole contributing to the integrated economic development of the country and linkages between rural and urban should be strengthened. Following areas need priority attention:

- ❖ Evolve programs to exploit the full potential increase in productivity and output of farm and non-farm sector through new technologies, investments and management know-how and simultaneously scale up infrastructure in urban centers to absorb the rural products for post-harvest management leading to storage, processing, packaging and marketing within and outside the country in a systematically planned manner. This would encourage entrepreneurs and investments in medium and large-scale manufacturing industries and business enterprises.
- ❖ To strengthen rural-urban linkages, improvement in the infrastructure necessitates effective involvement of all stakeholders (viz., local level PRIs, government departments, community-based organisations, NGOs and

private sector) and their capacity building for implementing the development programs in a Public-Private-Partnership mode.

- ❖ Rural-urban linkage has to be revisited in the context of the changing global scenario in the 21st century by Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat analysis. Policy to strengthen rural-urban linkage and integrate rural-urban economy can focus on:
 - [i] making country's economy competitive in the international trade regime.
 - [ii] substantial reduction in rural poverty, unemployment, economic inequalities and enhance the standard of living of rural households at par with urbanites.
 - [iii] to link hitherto unlinked tribal, forest, hilly and desert regions with urban centers.
- ❖ Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing infrastructure which is important to facilitate rural-urban linkages. The evaluation study can focus on:
 - [i] critical infrastructural gaps and institutional weaknesses to optimise links between urban and rural areas.
 - [ii] need to strengthen institutions to forge strategic links among primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy in different geographical areas.
- ❖ Identify policy options and institutional designs that enhance smooth rural-urban migration and the development of non-farm activities;
- ❖ Reduce institutional barriers that hinder inter-linkages between rural and urban product markets, particularly for high value commodities;
- ❖ Evaluate successful best practices in integrating rural and urban financial and capital markets and other services.

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RURAL – URBAN LINKAGES: AN OVERVIEW

T. Prakash and Dr. S. Thirumaran

A number of developments regarding rural-urban linkages have been observed in the last decade. Firstly, the implementation of structural adjustment policies, especially India has forced many urban households to seek additional sources of food and income, including urban agriculture. Increasingly, high and middle-income households are also engaging in urban agriculture to supplement declining incomes. Secondly, retrenchment and deepening of urban poverty occasioned by structural adjustment has triggered a process of 'return migration', with households returning to their rural homes in order to survive. Thirdly, urban-to-rural household remittances are declining, while the ability of poorer urban households to import food for their own consumption from their rural relatives is increasingly difficult due to spiralling costs of transport. Fourthly, in a number of countries, large numbers of temporary agricultural workers employed by commercial farms, especially during the harvest season, are urban-based, giving rise to a diversification of income sources among poor urban households. Fifthly, globalization is creating new forms of linkages for small towns and rural areas, often referred to as the 'rnetropolization of the world economy'. A web of horizontal and vertical networks among settlements is emerging, fuelled by recent technological advances in information and communication technologies.

Ambivalent attitudes

Pro-rural and pro-urban arguments have had a strong influence on development strategies. Among international development agencies, for example, investments in rural and urban areas have sometimes been seen mutually exclusive and competing. Investments in rural areas have often aimed at reducing rural-to-urban migration, while urban investments are often interpreted as urban bin. Some support policies aimed at reducing rates of rural-to-urban migration, while others regard such policies as futile, accepting rapid urbanisation as inevitable, even if not desirable. Evidence supports the latter point of view. There is no historical precedent of successful policies to inhibit rural to urban migration. Urbanisation is inevitable and national policy must learn to recognise its implications, cushion its impacts and harness its benefits. The paradox of rural development policies aimed at slowing migration is that they usually achieve the reverse. Increased productivity results in rural labour redundancy and is a better educated rural work-force which now has the means and ambition to seek employment in the city.

Basic System

A number of policy lessons have been learnt over the last few decades:



- (a) Rather than treating rural and urban as different and competing development spaces, they should be seen as a whole - and linkages should be strengthened. The most important rural-urban flows are economic and demographic, and policy responses which centre on the provision of infrastructure have often been inadequate to solve the structural problems of either. While policy responses designed to facilitate these flows have focused upon the pros of infrastructure and hierarchical networks.
- (b) Economically, rural and urban areas are linked by the reciprocal exchange of unprocessed and processed products, with both areas acting as mutually reinforcing markets, strengthening this linkage requires, in many countries, the decentralisation of urbanisation through the promotion of medium-sized cities. These can increase the accessibility of agricultural inputs for rural producers, while at the same time providing the necessary marketing infrastructure: especially bulk collection points. Small towns also provide the basic infrastructure for increasing rural farm and off-farm production.
- (c) However, regional policies alone will neither succeed in transforming the lives of the poor nor eradicate rural-urban inequalities. Regional, economic and spatial policies need to be part of general national development programmes to reduce poverty through different sectoral strategies, such as land redistribution, improved access to credit, health and education, amongst others. In order to reduce poverty and inequality, sectoral policies need to address the main reasons underlying poverty. Including; (i) urban and rural landlessness and insecurity of tenure; (ii) unfair terms of trade between urban and rural areas; and (iii) insecurity of income, largely a result of unemployment and underemployment in urban and rural areas and partly resulting from lack of diversification of income sources:
- (d) More emphasis should be placed on addressing urbanization-related problems such as high urban unemployment rates, pressure on urban infrastructure and services, and labour shortages within rural areas. However, rural-to-urban migration often has positive impacts, since towns and cities take on an important role in absorbing excess population from overpopulated and ecologically fragile regions. This is precisely the role that towns and cities played during the industrial revolution in Europe, enabling the consolidation and enclosure of previously fragmented and economically unviable units of agricultural land.
- (e) Further, urbanisation is not simply the growth of populations living within legal-administrative boundaries of towns and cities. It also transforms both urban and rural lifestyles. By the 20th century technological improvements, initially in transport but more recently in information and telecommunication, have allowed people in rural villages to become urbanised without necessarily migrating to towns and cities. As their access to modern infrastructure and services normally associated with urban areas increases, they become less dependent on towns and cities for rattling their economic and social needs:
- (f) It is increasingly apparent that the strengthening of rural-urban linkages requires the coordinated efforts of both public and private sector, whilst enabling all actors to participate in the development process. This entails fundamental changes on the part of the state, including broadening of the range of actors involved in infrastructure improvement, through the formation of partnerships with community-based organisations, NGOs and the private sector, increasing participation through the decentralization of government and the empowerment of local communities and more effective coordination of the actors involved.

From Hierarchies to Networks

Rural - urban linkages need to be understood and addressed in the context of increasing global urbanisation. The strength of these linkages will, to a large extent, determine the living conditions of people in both urban and rural areas. Towns, cities and villages are all experiencing significant socio-economic and spatial transformations that are likely to intensify during the first few decades of the new millennium.

The impact of globalisation on small towns and villages is an issue that needs to be analyzed and appropriate policy responses formulated. It is already clear that policies encouraging both horizontal and vertical linkages with settlements at the regional (sub-national), national and international levels will be necessary to improve the competitiveness of small towns and rural regions. It is no longer a question of how they integrate into the national economy, but how they do so in the global economy as well.

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RURAL-URBAN LINKAGE AND PMGSY

Sabita Kumari

Rural-urban linkages are important for poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development and urbanisation. Strong linkages can improve the living conditions and employment opportunities of both rural and urban populations. Domestic trade and the adequacy and efficiency of infrastructure are the backbone of mutually beneficial rural-urban relationships and of the success of the relationship between urban and rural areas.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has an important role for Rural-Urban Linkage in India. The State Governments are responsible for implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in the State, as such; it is the responsibility of the State Government to ensure quality of road works under this program. However, since the program lays special emphasis on the quality and timely completion of road works, a three tier quality management mechanism has been operationalised.

The first tier of quality management mechanism is envisaged as in-house quality control system to ensure the implementation of quality standards by way of carrying out mandatory tests, however, the second tier is envisaged as independent quality check and monitoring mechanism to be operationalised by the States. Whereas, the State Gov-

ernments are responsible for quality management through operationalisation of the first two tiers, the National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) arranges for quality monitoring through independent monitors termed as National Quality Monitors (NQMs). The objective of this third tier of quality mechanism is to monitor the quality of road works executed by the States with a view to ensure that the road works under the program confirm to standards and to see whether the quality management mechanism in the State is effective. The role of this tier is to provide guidance to State implementation machinery and the field engineers rather than 'fault finding', as such; the shortcomings are identified by the NQMs and a feedback is provided to the States for improvement.

The National Quality Monitors are performing inspection of works since March, 2002. The guidelines for inspection and reporting formats were prescribed during the initial period of operationalisation of this tier of QM; however, based on the feedback from various stakeholders, the guidelines and reporting formats were revised in July, 2004. Having gathered the experience of independent Quality Monitoring of rural roads in last four years and based on the valuable suggestions and feedback has been provided not



only by the State officials and NQMs but also by the field officers and auditing agencies, it is felt that certain revisions in respect of the following items are necessary:

1. The attention of the third tier of QM should focus on the quality of work, guidance related to quality rather than other aspects.
2. The observations of the NQMs should be objectively based on defined methods.
3. The NQM should be more accountable for the observations he has made.

Therefore, as an endeavor to continuously update to achieve the targets of best of the quality, the guidelines and reporting format for inspection of works under third tier are being revised and the process of continuous performance evaluation of National Quality Monitors by way of periodic review of reports and field verification by reputed institutions is envisaged.

Main activities/functions

List of services being provided by the public authority with a brief write-up on them:

1. To frame appropriate policy/action plan for the effective and optimum result-oriented implementation of PMGSY keeping in view the broad policies/ guidelines and the budgetary resources made available by the Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance, etc.
2. To interact with State Governments and other bodies with a view to take concerted action for effective and meaningful implementation of PMGSY/ Rural Road Component of Bharat Nirman in an effective and convergent manner.
3. To seek sufficient budgetary support for implementation of PMGSY/ Rural Road Component of Bharat Nirman and release the funds to the State Governments.
4. Meetings of the Performance Review Committee for periodic reviews of PMGSY/ Rural Road Component of Bharat Nirman.
5. Monitoring the progress of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) for providing rural connectivity.

Execution Mechanism

1. The National Rural Roads Development

Agency (NRRDA) is responsible for providing Operational and Management support to the program.

2. As Rural Roads is a state subject, PMGSY is executed by State/UT Governments. Therefore, State Rural Roads Development Agencies (SRRDAs) are created by all the States at state level as autonomous agencies for implementation of PMGSY program. The mandate and the performance review are carried out by the States on a defined charter, which may be as per the decision of the State. In three States, NEAs (Nominated Executing Agencies) have also been engaged for execution of PMGSY program.
3. At the District level, the Program is co-ordinated and implemented through one or more dedicated Program Implementation Units (PIUs).

Program Objectives and Coverage

The objective of the Government is to provide Road Connectivity, through good all-weather roads, to all rural habitations with a population of more than 500 persons by the year 2007 (end of Tenth Plan Period). In the process, all unconnected habitations having a population of more than 1000 persons would be covered in the next three years.. Where a State has no uncovered habitations of this population size, smaller habitations may also be covered, subject to the minimum population size being 500. In case of hilly/desert tracts, this may not be less than 250.

The primary focus of the program will be on construction of new roads. However, upgradation (to prescribed standards) of existing roads will be permitted to be taken up under the program so as to achieve connectivity through good all-weather roads. In taking up upgradation, the population norms indicated in above shall be observed. Upgradation would involve conversion, depending on the need of Gravel roads/Water Bound Macadam (WBM) roads to Black-Topped (BT) roads. Extension of existing roads to the SC/ST habitations in the village would also be covered under upgradation. Upgradation would, however, not cover repairs of existing roads.

The Program shall cover only 'Other District Roads' (ODRs) and 'Village Roads' (VRs).

The Rural Roads to be taken up will, by and large, be surfaced roads (black topped/cement concrete). However, depending upon the soil conditions, all-weather roads may also be Gravel Roads, but with all necessary cross-drainage structures.

District Rural Roads Plan

The PIU will formulate a Master Plan for each Block indicating the habitations in that Block and the existing status of road connectivity, including the proposed new construction as well as roads requiring upgradation. Roads under construction under other schemes such as RIDF, the erstwhile BMS, externally aided projects or State/District Sector Schemes should also be clearly specified. This shall thereupon be integrated into a District Master Plan, to be called the District Rural Roads Plan. The Plans so prepared would be subject to close technical scrutiny so as to arrive at the most economical cost of achieving the targets of the program and would also indicate the spacing execution of works. The Master Plan would be approved in the Governing body of the respective DRDA, taking into account the views and suggestions of the local members of Parliament and Members of State Assembly.

Development for further orders/approval

On clearance of the Project proposals, the relevant projects would be executed by the PIUs and completed within a period of 9 months, from the date of approval; in exceptional cases, this period may be extend up to 12 months. Delayed execution of projects could also hold up further sanctions.

The well-established procedure for tendering, through competitive bidding, would be followed for all projects. The projects would be tendered in packages of appropriate size (between Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 5 crore).

The road works, including the Cross Drainage works, will be executed as per the technical specifications prescribed by the Ministry of Surface Transport/Indian Roads Congress. The Ministry of Rural Development will, in due course, issue further Guidelines in this regard. Special care will be taken in coastal areas etc. to see that the shoulders are duly consolidated. Use of locally available material, including product like Ash, should be encouraged subject to adherence to technical norms. The roads must have proper drainage facilities. The bridges may be designed as to serve, where feasible, as

bridge-cum-Bandharas. No lead charge would be payable for transportation of soil (except in case of Black Cotton soil).

Supervision of Works and Quality Control

Quality of works being the essence of this program, all works will be effectively supervised. It will be the prime responsibility of the PIU to make certain that the work done (and all the materials utilised in the same) conforms to the prescribed specifications. In addition to checking the quality of materials at site, the steps warranted in this direction should include:

- ❖ Obtaining the test certificates of manufactured materials from the sources from which these are procured.
- ❖ In the case of mineral aggregate, inspection of the quarry, (or even stationing a representative) to ensure that only approved rock is crushed to the required sizes.
- ❖ For works involving processing (i.e. stabilisation or compaction involving equipment), requiring the contractor to do the work on a trial stretch so as to ensure that the equipment and procedures used, turn out work of the highest quality.

Periodic inspections of works will be carried out by the competent supervisory Authorities of the Executing Agency. It will be necessary for the Executing Agencies to set up Quality Control Units, independent of the PIU.

The State-level Standing Committee will oversee that the supervision of works is continuous and effective.

The Ministry of Rural Development will engage Independent Monitors (Individuals/Agency) for inspection of works under the Program. It will be the responsibility of the PIU to facilitate the inspection of works by the Monitors, who shall be given free access to all records, administrative, technical and financial.

Monitoring

The Ministry of Rural Development would evolve suitable software for an "Online Management & Monitoring System". The State authorities are advised to equip the PIUs with necessary computer hardware to enable on-line monitoring. The cost of the Hardware may be included in the project cost. The cost would also include the cost of digitisation of

maps, for which the Ministry of Rural Development would issue separate Guidelines.

Maintenance of Rural Roads

The Rural Roads constructed/upgraded under this Program will be maintained by the concerned Panchayati Raj Institution (District Panchayat/Intermediate Panchayat). The concerned Panchayati Raj Institutions would need to be identified while submitting the project for approval and the State Authorities will be required to furnish an Undertaking that they would remit (to the identified Panchayats Raj Institution), from the State Government funds, the requisite cost of maintenance. The State Government will also offer an Undertaking for the release of maintenance costs, along with their project proposals. The Ministry of Rural Development would oversee the implementation of this undertaking.

Efforts will be made to involve local people's participation in the maintenance of Rural Roads. Suitable mechanisms and procedures will be evolved by the State Governments in consultation with the Ministry of Rural Development.

Funding

Funds under the Program are being provided by the Centre to the States as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) and will follow the normal pattern of Additional Central Assistance. The Ministry of Rural Development will indicate the manner of release of funds, possibly including an "On-line payment system" for the Program from the next financial year.

The Ministry of Rural Development may allocate additional funds to any State taking into consideration, inter alia, the Special Problems/ Needs of specific areas.

The cost of the approved Projects will be released to the concerned DRDAs, through the State Governments, in two installments. The release will be made by the Ministry of Finance on the recommendations of the Ministry of Rural Development. State Government will be required to transfer funds to the concerned DRDAs within 15 days of release by Government of India. The funds will be non-lapsable at the DRDA level.

It will be incumbent on the DRDAs to open a separate and single Bank Account for the funds

received under this Program. These funds will remain entire separate from those of any other Program/Scheme. The interest earned on this Account will not be diverted to any other Program, even on temporary basis.

The funds for the Second Installment will be released after fulfillment of procedures prescribed by the Ministry of Rural Development, which will include satisfactory reports from Independent Monitors engaged by the Ministry of Rural Development.

The Head of the PIU, subject to not being below the rank of an Executive Engineer, will be competent to operate on this Account, subject to the normal rules and regulations of the State Government concerned. The funds earmarked for each Project are to be utilised for the Project only. The Head of the PIU will send a Monthly Account to the Project Director, DRDA. The Second Installment for each Project will be claimed by the Project Director, DRDA through the State Government. 8.7 It will be open to the State Government to nominate the Head of the District PIU as the ex-officio Project Director, DRDA for the purposes of this Program.

Accounts & Audit

The well-established accounting system of the Works Departments would be utilised for this Program. The Ministry of Rural Development may evolve suitable accounting procedures, including computer-based ones, keeping in view the normal procedures that are in force.

The Ministry of Rural Development would lay down the Audit requirements for the Program. In addition to such Audit procedures as may be prescribed, the works under this Program would be subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (C&AG). The Audit of the work done would cover aspects of quality, in addition to financial audit.

All the road works will be subjected to Social Audit by way of discussion in the Gram Sabha. Relevant information in this regard will be made available to the Gram Sabha. State Governments will issue necessary instructions in this regard.

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RURAL-URBAN CONNECTIVITY

Prof Prem Chandra Choudhary

It is an established fact that there exists an economic, social and environmental interdependence between urban and rural areas and a need for balanced and mutually supportive approach to the development of the two areas. A new perspective, of rural-urban linkage development approach, is increasingly becoming an accepted one. Rural-urban linkage generally refers to the growing flow of public and private capital, people (migration) and goods (trade, services) between urban and rural areas. It is important to add to these, the flow of ideas, the flow of information and the flow of diffusion of innovation. Infrastructure like transportation, communication, energy and basic services forms the backbone of the urban-rural development linkage approach. There is a positive relationship between adequacy of transportation infrastructure, ease of mobility and access to employment and enhancement of income. Adequate investments in infrastructure, particularly transportation infrastructure, improve rural productivity and allow access to markets, jobs and public services by both men and women.

It is important therefore that governments at the national or central level, at state level and at local (municipal) level of large cities, small and medium-sized towns and rural areas, recognise the potential of rural-urban development linkages, the impact of their development actions on urban and rural areas and the positive role they can play in poverty alleviation, migration etc.

Government's approach towards Rural-Urban development

Several Programmes or schemes have been launched to improve rural infrastructure and centered around welfare programmes. The schemes include Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Bharat Nirman, Indira Awas Yojna, Scheme Integrated Rural Development Programmes etc. All the programs couldn't achieve their benchmarks. Reason behind that might be procedural loopholes or involvement of all its stakeholders in that particular scheme. Present government has taken a few initiatives which might prove to be milestones for rural-urban linkage. These initiatives do not



focus only on but on development too which is based on generation of fund, involvement of all its stakeholders, bringing awareness among people, bringing innovative concepts in procedural things etc. The following are the few steps which define the country in terms of rural- urban development and make a country robust in terms of economic and social sphere:

River Linking Program

Government's river-linking plans have come to light recently. Government has proposed an ambitious Rs 25,000 crore plan to create a national waterway grid linking the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Mahanadi and Godavari rivers. The idea is to develop Ganga as a tourism destination, means of transportation, provide a boost to fisheries and diversify sources of hydro-power generation. Linking the rivers will also assist with the offset of seasonal flooding and provide more stable irrigation for agriculture. Government hopes for the rapid development of infrastructure as well as reforms will accelerate the growth of India's economy, not only through the creation of more jobs and wealth within the country, but also by attracting more foreign investments.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his government's mega scheme 'Jan Dhan Yojana', declaring that it was aimed at eradicating financial untouchability by providing bank accounts to the poor.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna

Under this scheme, every citizen will be ensured a bank account. On the very first day of the launch of the scheme, a massive 1.5 crore bank accounts were opened across the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his government's mega scheme 'Jan Dhan Yojana', declaring that it was aimed at eradicating financial untouchability by providing bank accounts to the poor.

Impact of Jan Dhan Yojna : On Common Man

- ❖ Anyone who does not have an account will get an account in bank.

- ❖ There will be a debit card associated with this account to ensure that there is no need of carrying cash all the time.
- ❖ Common man will get direct benefit of government subsidies.
- ❖ If these people get proper training for operating the account, there will be no requirement for going to perform various transactions like paying electricity bills, phone bills etc.
- ❖ Time saved is time earned that can be invested in other important activities.
- ❖ Every person associated under this scheme will get Rs 100,000 of insurance.

- ❖ Common man will also have a financial and credit history on government records.

- ❖ It will be easier to get loan directly from financial institutions instead of other modes that charge heavy interest rates.

On Business

- ❖ More and more people will be shopping via debit cards reducing time, manpower and risk involved in managing cash transactions.
- ❖ More people / debit cards will be available for online transactions.
- ❖ More relevant data will be available to perform various analyses to create marketing plans.

On Government

- ❖ It will be a great milestone achieved after linking with 'Aadhaar' card to make direct financial transactions, subsidies transfer and lot more.
- ❖ It will be easier to monitor transactions and collect financial data as more people will be using recorded mode of payments.

On Banking Institutions

- ❖ Banks will get new customers, that directly means more money inflow.

- ❖ These customers may result in potential clients for other banking services like loans.

Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

The Prime Minister has announced several steps to make India's villages self sufficient and clean. A toilet in every home is one of the steps that can go a long way in making our villages a better place to live. During his Independence Day speech, the Prime Minister asked MPs to build toilets for girls and women using their MPLAD funds. The scheme encourages Members of Parliament from both Houses to identify and develop one village from their constituency as a model village by 2016 and two more by 2019, covering over 2,500 villages of the 6 lakh villages country-wide. "This is not a rupiya-paisa yojana but a demand-driven, people's participatory scheme. There are 800 parliamentarians and in three years, 2,500-odd villages could get covered. If states were to initiate their own similar schemes with MLAs, 6,000 to 7,000 villages could get covered. The intention behind this project is-One good village can affect an entire area and a viral effect could begin," Prime Minister said while unveiling SAGY for which no new funds have been allocated

Digital India

The Prime Minister has initiated steps to create digital cloud and digital locker in order to ensure speedy delivery system. Attestation of documents by gazetted officers has been stopped and self-attestation introduced. In the Union Budget 2014-15, the government announced the plan to build 100 'Smart' cities and allotted Rs 7,060 crore in the Union Budget. These smart cities can reduce

the burden of big cities in certain extent and will be able to reduce the divide between urban and rural areas.

Conclusion

The Isolated consideration of rural development as completely distinct from urban development is no longer valid. Urban & rural development is correlated to each other. Today it requires holistic view to counter several problems which occur due to imbalance. If we look at previous government's schemes and their way of functioning, there were so many flaws which must be addressed by the present government. Despite good schemes, several government programmes could not succeed because it was not able to connect it as a movement. All of previous government's plans were excellent as concept wise, but they didn't get materialized the way they should have been due to so many problems. If we take social schemes as a challenge and able to link with movement, we will be able to give quality life to urban & rural people. We can hope that present government can change the rule of game and make space and involve them to bridge the gap between have and have nots and able to link urban-rural divide through Public Private Government Partnership Model, able to bring many more innovative ideas which make a country robust in the field of social and economic field.

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Kurukshetra

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Rural Development Budget 2015-16

: April 2015

RURAL-URBAN DICHOTOMY

Dr. Amit Bhowmick and Abhishek Sarkar

Human beings live in various communities and based on certain criteria there are two broad categories of human existence in society throughout the world- urban society and rural society. The proportionate number of people living in urban society and rural society differs in different countries and there are many reasons for such wide range of divergence. We have general conception of urban and rural societies as we make use of these terms in our daily life. However, it is not easy enough to define them categorically and draw a clear line of distinction between them. In fact, it turns out to be an intricate task to define them as from the perspective of population, area, demography and life style, one town differs widely from the next one and one village from the other. For example, the similarity between Kolkata and towns like Berhampore, Suri, Raiganj or Jalpaiguri is less than the point of differences, though broadly all of them can be categorized under urban society. At the same time, a rural area adjacent to Kolkata is different from another rural area far away from Kolkata. Further, the disparity between the rural society in developed western countries and that of ours is also glaring. So is the case with the small towns of theirs and ours. Hence, it becomes vital

to discuss important features of rural and urban societies.

Rural life is the principal pivot around which whole Indian social life revolves. India is a land of agriculture. The village is obviously, the primary unit of rural society. It may figuratively be thought of as the theatre whereon the rural life is enacted. So, rural society is the basic foundation of human life, the keystone of the developmental process and the basic unit of social structure. The rural communities being less voluminous, less densely populated and less mobile, the number of various persons whom the cultivator meets or with whom he enters into an intentional or unintentional, long or short, intensive or extensive contact and the number of the contacts per individual is much below that of an urbanite. Caste stands as a pivot of rural social structure. It acts as the most powerful determinant of individual behavior and social order in rural unity. The religious customs and practices in Indian village society vary in different parts of the country, depending upon their cultures and lifestyles. Fairs and festivals have always been an integral part of Indian village society. The villagers celebrate different types of



festivals like religious, regional, seasonal or sports based festivals together. The style of celebrating festivals also differs from one region to another. Many status differences in Indian society are expressed in terms of ritual purity and pollution. Notions of purity and pollution area extremely complex and vary greatly among different castes, religious groups and regions. There are many Indians, particularly among the educated urban elite, who do not follow traditional purity and pollution practices. The joint family is an ancient Indian institution, but it has undergone some change in the late twentieth century. Traditional joint family occupied a predominant position in rural areas in India. Rural family works as the unit of economic, cultural, religious, and political activities. A very important feature of traditional village life in India is the *Jajmani* system. In fact, the *Jajmani* system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. The village is a political unit with an elected Panchayat to run the day-to-day administration. The problem of untouchability is a serious social problem in the Indian villages and it is becoming weaker due to the influence of factors such as industrialisation, urbanisation, increase in the means of transportation, popularity of English education, political and social awakening by the democratic Government and laws abolishing untouchability, etc. Side by side most Indian cities are very densely populated. Congestion, noise, traffic jams, air pollution and major shortages of key necessities characterise urban life. Less spectacularly, on a daily basis, uncontrolled pollutants from factories all over India damage the urban environments in which millions live.

Rural life is the principal pivot around which whole Indian social life revolves. India is a land of agriculture. The village is obviously, the primary unit of rural society.

The general basis of differentiating rural and urban societies is the number of population and this varies in different countries. For example, in France it is 2000 and 2500, 20,000 and 30,000 in United States, Holland and Japan respectively to identify a location as town. In Iceland, the number is only 300. In many cases, the differentiation is based on geographical location. However, in that

case the demarcation between areas cannot be pointed out clearly.

Based on the discussion on the principles of census in 52 countries, an organisation of UN has submitted a report that categorizes the fact that, each country offers a distinct and precise definition of urban society and the rest of the location is allotted as rural society. The survey has pointed out the following five important features to categorize a location as urban society: a place that is/ has:

- ❖ the administrative headquarter; e.g district town, sub-divisional town etc.
- ❖ minimum fixed number of people living in a location
- ❖ governed by autonomous administration; e.g Municipality
- ❖ the criteria of municipality- e.g broad roadways, proper sanitation, lightened roads, drinking water pipe line, hospital, market, court, educational institutions, voluntary organization are maintained by that location and
- ❖ more people following occupations other than agriculture (e.g industry, business, automobile etc.) than the minimum proportion of total population.

The census of India held in 1961, has defined a municipality in the following way. An area under municipality or Municipal Corporation would be governed by notified area committee and would be regarded as cantonment municipal. Besides, if an area fulfills the following criteria that would also be regarded as municipal area:

- i) population density should not be less than 1000 per square mile,
- ii) minimum population should be 5000
- iii) three fourth of the employed population must have profession other than agriculture,
- iv) must possess the criteria of municipal area as per the direction of the State Census.

However, it is interesting to note that the above-mentioned features that distinguish rural

and urban societies hardly have much importance from sociological perspective. It is the difference of life style of rural and urban societies and not merely the external issues that finds room in sociology. Hence, to realize the difference of life style of rural and urban societies in sociological study, we must be familiar with the social organisations. Some important aspects of rural and urban societies are hereby made to create a clear idea:

- i) An important identity of urban life is the distinct character of behavioural pattern, dress- sense and food-habit of the people. High density of population in a comparatively small area affects such peculiarities. High rate of competition in such places results in differentiation of profession. Moreover, survival solely on the basis of agriculture becomes really difficult; so few have to look for business, industry etc. and consequently the network with the external world is established. Often people from other locations come to live in urban area in search of jobs, better facilities etc. Hence, the urban life style varies quite naturally. In rural areas, the possibility of such penetration is so thin that behaviour, dress- sense, food habit of the rural people remains the same.
- ii) Growth of education is an integral issue at the core of this dichotomy. In urban society, the number of educated people has always been higher than rural areas. Most importantly, in respect of women education the disparity is on higher side. Hence, social change finds more acceleration in urban society than rural society.
- iii) In urban community the 'we- feeling' is less strong than the rural community. Here more importance is given to individual than the family; whereas the influence of the community on the individual is greater that in towns.
- iv) The concept of neighbourhood thereby has a greater role to play in rural community. In fact, in urban areas human relationship is more indirect and less intimate. People are mainly

Growth of education is an integral issue at the core of this dichotomy. In urban society, the number of educated people has always been higher than rural areas.

familiar with each other on professional terms and thereby the bonding of mind is not firm.

- v) Specialisation in profession is another important feature in urban life. People are involved in diverse range of professions and this professional variety makes urban life advanced and dynamic. Here, more prominence is given to one's professional identity than birth identity. In rural areas such divergence is absent and consequently its developmental process is slow.
- vi) The predominance of competition, specialisation in profession, variety in profession and weaker social bonding promote the growth of individuality in people. A man in town life can participate in different ways and yet can maintain his or her individuality. However, in rural area such environment conducive to growth of individuality is absent. The life style and thought process of a villager are much governed and often controlled by the principles of the rural society.
- vii) The presence of multiple sources of amenities in urban society imparts an undeniable change in the lifestyle of the urban people. Well-trimmed parks, well equipped playgrounds, cinema halls, multiplexes, shopping complexes and such other facilities of civic amenities differentiate the spirit of an urban society from a rural society.
- viii) Besides such institutional differences the mind set of rural and urban people develops differently. In Indian perspective, agriculture is not mere profession or vocation. Its impact is omnipresent and it affects the entire lifestyle of people. Agriculture is based on nature or climate and people can hardly control over nature. Flood, drought and such other whimsicalities of nature (fate) affect agriculture. Consequently, peasants naturally depend on or believe in fate. However, people in urban society do not have to depend on such factors as their lifestyle does not depend

on such requirements. These results in the growth of superstitions, age-old ideas and beliefs and the reflection of such practices can be found in the festivals, fairs of the rural societies. Urban society is more dynamic and reflexive; hence, the role of superstitions, age-old ideas and beliefs is of little importance. People in an urban society are free thinkers and individualistic. They adapt themselves to new situations in their own way. So the presence of discipline in observing different festivals, fairs in urban society is not to be found as clearly as in rural society.

Rural society has been increasingly urbanised in modern times. In proportion to its urbanisation it exhibits the characteristics of urban society. The rural family more and more develops centrifugal tendencies. Its economic homogeneity based upon a single cumulative economic activity of its members declines. Joint family property tends to be disrupted since its individual adult members begin to demand its partitioning. Being increasingly engaged in different occupations, they earn independent separate incomes which they retain as their own. They live less and less together and spend extra-familial centres like clubs, hotels, unions, associations, cafeteria, which weakens family emotions.

However, as societal changes are taking place quickly the points regarding the difference of rural and urban societies are too fast changing. The reasons of such changes are:

- i) The rapid development in transport system that has made the direct connection between rural and urban people lot easier. Hence, the gap between them in respect of dress-sense, food habits, behavioural pattern is getting narrow.
- ii) With the flourishing of different social media and social networking sites along with the fast expansion of user-friendly technology, the influence of urban society is imparted on rural society easily and effectively. In fact, the

use of internet has been playing a great role in changing things around.

- iii) Due to the development in agricultural technology these days, agriculture does not depend on caprice of nature entirely. Like industry, agriculture becomes an independent vocation and gradually the central influence of agriculture in the life and living of people is diminishing. Sociologists refer this change as the Rural Revolution of the 20th century.

Though the wave of such Rural Revolution is yet to hit hard our society, its expansion is already in process. The introduction of advanced transportation system, newspapers, television, internet and the change of thought process of urban people due to different awareness programmes and campaigns of different political parties influence the mind set of rural people with great effect. Green Revolution in India has made its impact considerably; but its wholesome outcome has been limited to few pockets. However, it is expected that in times to come Green Revolution will spread in every nook and corner of the country with the expansion of power supply, production of fertilizers, land-reformation act and agro-based research and application of advanced technology in agriculture. Green Revolution thus will lead to Rural Revolution.

A close look at the flow of change throughout the world indicates the fact that the society in future will be fundamentally urban-centric. Though such changes have not been hospitable to many, there is no alternative to accept the change as the demand of time has to be endorsed.

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Rural society has been increasingly urbanised in modern times. In proportion to its urbanisation it exhibits the characteristics of urban society.

PURA: RURAL URBAN LINKAGE IN INDIA

Dr. Arpita Sharma

Lack of livelihood opportunities, modern amenities and services, necessary for decent living in rural areas result in a sense of deprivation and dissatisfaction amongst a large percentage of population and lead to migration of people to urban areas. This is primarily due to the big differences in the availability of physical and social infrastructure in rural and urban areas. In order to address these issues, the government has, in the past, launched various schemes at different points of time. However, due to several reasons, the impact has not been very visible. The deliveries of these schemes were not simultaneous and although huge sums were earmarked for capital expenditure, very little resources were spent on the operation and maintenance of the assets. Also, each of these schemes operated autonomously and the standards set for infrastructure services delivery in the rural areas were far below those set for the urban population. Hence, in spite of several schemes, there continued to be a substantial flow of migration from the rural to urban areas. In order to catalyze the convergence between

different infrastructure schemes and create a new model for management of urban services in the rural areas, the Provision for Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) Scheme has been developed.

About PURA: To make the basic amenities like good roads, drinking water etc. accessible to people even in remote villages, The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India has re-launched the scheme Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) as a Central Sector scheme during the remaining period of the eleventh five year Plan. PURA aims to achieve “holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Panchayat (or group of Panchayats) through PPP by providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas.” The PURA Scheme envisages rapid growth of rural India given enhanced connectivity and infrastructure, the rural population would be empowered and enabled to create opportunities and livelihoods for themselves on a sustainable and growing basis. The key characteristics of the



scheme are: [1] Simultaneous delivery of key infrastructure in villages leading to optimal use of resources.

[2] Provision of funds for O&M of assets for 10 years post-construction, along with capital investment for creation of assets.

[3] Transformation of several schemes into a single project, to be implemented as per set standards in a defined timeframe, with the requirements of each scheme being kept intact.

[4] Combining livelihoods creation with infrastructure development.

[5] Enforcement of standards of service delivery in rural areas almost at par with those obtaining in urban areas.

[6] Enforcement of service standards through a legally binding arrangement. The speed of urbanisation poses an unprecedented policy change yet India has barely engaged in a national discussion about how to handle this seismic shift in the make-up of the nation. The population of India residing in urban areas will increase from 340 million to 590 million by 2030. Urbanisation is expected to speed up across India, impacting almost every state. As India expands, India's economic make-up will also change. In 1995, India's GDP split almost evenly between its rural and urban economies. In 2008, its urban GDP was accounting for 58 per cent of its overall GDP and if the current trend continues it is expected that urban India will generate 70 per cent of India's GDP by 2030. The challenge for India will be to ramp up investment in line with economic growth. The objectives of PURA are proposed to be achieved under the framework of Public Private Partnership between Gram Panchayats and private sector partner with active State Government support.

Commitments by PURA: Indian cities are failing to provide a basic standard of living to their urban residents and life could become tougher as cities expand. As the urban population and its incomes increase, demand for every key service will increase five to sevenfold in cities of

every size and type. If India continues to invest in urban infrastructure at its current rate very low by international comparison gridlock and urban decay will result. India urgently needs to adopt a new approach to manage urbanization. Urban India today is distributed in shape with a diverse range of large and small cities, spread widely around the nation. To address the issue of urbanisation, India should continue to aim at a distributed model of urbanisation because this suits its federal structure and also helps to ensure that migration flows are not balanced towards any particular city or cities. To control the migration from rural to urban areas, it is necessary to provide basic amenities and facilities in rural areas which are similar to those in urban areas. Schemes like

PURA attempt to bridge these gaps in order to ensure that the rural areas have amenities which are at par with those in urban India. This would help in whittling down the migration from rural to urban areas. The objective of the scheme is to provide urban amenities and livelihood opportunities in rural areas to bridge the rural-urban divide, thereby reducing

migration from rural to urban areas. The mission of the restructured PURA scheme is holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat (or cluster of contiguous Gram Panchayats) through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework, to provide urban amenities and livelihood opportunities and improve the quality of life in rural areas.

PURA Concept: The development model that India adopted since independence has led to vast regional disparities. Urban areas are highly developed and have all the modern amenities, whereas, rural areas are grossly underdeveloped, dependent mainly on agriculture and lacking in even basic necessities such as pure drinking water, electricity and good all weather roads. Seventy per cent of our population resides in rural areas and agriculture being subjected to vary of nature cannot sustain such high levels of population. As a consequence large numbers of people are migrating

The PURA Scheme envisages rapid growth of rural India given enhanced connectivity and infrastructure, the rural population would be empowered and enabled to create opportunities and livelihoods

from rural to urban areas in search of employment. This has put great strain on the civic infrastructure of the cities leading to problems like congestion, unauthorized construction, slums, waste disposal and the like and this has also adversely affected the law and order situation. Cities have now reached their saturation limit and are unable to absorb further migration. Quality of urban life has been degenerated and the entire urban system is on the verge of collapse. To tackle this problem Former Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Kalam had proposed the concept of PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) in the vision – 2020 project initiated by him. Its objective is to make rural areas as attractive to investors as cities are. Then, rural areas too will generate urban-style employment to halt (if not reverse) rural - urban migration. Our country is poised towards execution of PURA for bridging the rural - urban divide and achieving balanced social-economic development in the 4,130 rural clusters across the country in the next five years. The north-eastern states, other special category states and backward areas, identified by the Planning Commission would get priority under the scheme.

The mission of the restructured PURA scheme is holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat (or cluster of contiguous Gram Panchayats) through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework

Scheme Envisages:

- [1] Linking a loop of villages by a ring road about 30 kilometres in circumference with frequent bus services. That will integrate the population of all connected villages into one market. Then, those villages become a virtual city with a potential to expand and accommodate 3-5 lakh people.
- [2] Compensation to farmers for the land acquired from them not by a lump sum but by an annual fee equal to twice the price of the produce they grow. That gives farmers perpetual inflation protected income.
- [3] Sub-leasing the land to employers both for business and for employee residences within walking distance of each other. That will virtually eliminate daily commuting to work, an unavoidable evil in city living.

Business Plan for PURA: After initial short term employment during construction and the like, we may have to plan for initiating actions for providing regular employment opportunities for 3000 employees. If the industrial parts are marketed well, they can generate employment opportunities in services and support sector for about 1000 people. This is one way of reducing the employment gap leading to upliftment of the 260 million people living below the poverty line and also to provide better jobs for many millions who are technically above poverty line, but poor by many other standards. In brief, we should generate the business plan for providing urban facilities in rural areas and evolve methodologies for creating a model that would:

- [1] Create a database of core competencies and comparative advantages in the chosen region
- [2] Estimate the cost of implementing the provision of urban facilities to rural areas.
- [3] Measures of quantitatively establishing the economic prosperity of people before and after providing urban facilities in rural areas are implemented.

Current Status of PURA:

- [1] Restructured PURA Scheme was launched on February 24, 2012 that combines rural infrastructure development with economic regeneration in Private Public Partnership (PPP) mode and seeks to harness the efficiencies of the private sector. The focus of the new PURA was on water supply, sanitation, physical infrastructure.
- [2] The Rural ministry plans to reform one of its ambitious yet not so successful programmes - Provision of Urban amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) - to facilitate creation of urban infrastructure in around 2,000 new towns that have been identified by the 2011 decadal Census. It is also trying to restructure the old PURA objectives laid down by the then President.

- [3] The Prestigious scheme proposed providing livelihood and urban amenities in compact areas around a potential growth centre in Gram Panchayats through Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework to provide guarantee employment to rural areas so that they could have an assured income for at least 100 days of a year. The scheme is now facing rampant corruption, cases of underpayment of wages have been received by the government from all over the country.
- [4] With a view to sensitize stakeholders for future pilot projects, MoRD and ADB hosted a 2- day workshop at Trivandrum, Kerala from 22-24 March 2012. This revisited the PURA vision, *PURA 2.0* features, pilot project structures and process as well as invited detailed presentations from PPP players on their pilot project clusters with a focus on key issues faced and future road maps. PPP partners especially noted the need for *PURA 2.0* projects to be categorized as 'infrastructure' projects to qualify for tax breaks and access to funds such as RIDF (Rural Infrastructure Development Fund) of NABARD.

Conclusion: The basic objective for the 12th Plan is aimed at faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth. The infrastructure investments have seen significant improvement during the 11th Plan, but the pace of infrastructure development needs further acceleration if the infrastructure gaps are to be bridged within a reasonable time frame. The approach paper on twelfth five year plan depicts that "Although PPPs have been successful in a number of infrastructure sectors and efforts need to be continued in further encouraging private sector involvement, it is felt that public investment in infrastructure, particularly irrigation, watershed development and urban infrastructure, will need an additional 0.7 percentage points of GDP increase over the next five years. As per the approach paper, skill development needs a major focus at all levels. We must involve PPP to ensure that the skills developed also lead to employability." Underlying this reason it shall be imperative for the government to upscale the PURA Scheme to cover several new towns and villages.

- [1] Economic returns and self-sustainability.

- [2] Marketing methods for providing urban facilities in rural areas, self-sustaining and to attract investments.
- [3] Identifying key business persons, public persons and others who can manage providing urban facilities in rural areas successfully and also bring in investments. PURA can succeed only with the help of all sections of society, that is, Government, NGOs and private sector. The essence of PURA is change, a change from the prevailing cynicism that rural development can be sustained only by charity. In parallel, urban attitudes too, that urban slums are inevitable, rural-urban migration is unstoppable, should also be given up. PURA needs a vision to realize that urban amenities do not need congested dirty cities.

PURA was envisaged by former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Kalam as a self-sustainable and viable model of service delivery in rural areas to be managed through an implementation framework between local people, public authorities and the private sector. The scheme was re-configured after extensive consultation and research process with State Governments, private sector and multi-lateral development organisations like ADB. It was initiated as a pilot in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode early this year when the Expression of Interest (EoI) evoked unprecedented response from the private sector for this untested and complex scheme, perhaps the first of its kind in the world. Ministry of Rural Development intended to launch about 8-10 pilots across the country. PURA represents twinning of rural infrastructure development with economic re-generation activities. This is the first ever attempt at delivering infrastructure and amenities through Private Public Partnership in the rural areas. Involvement of the private sector, for the first time, in creation and management of amenities through a partnership with Gram Panchayats is an effort to provide a completely different framework for the implementation of rural infrastructure development schemes and harness private sector efficiencies in the management of assets and delivery of services.

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PURA: A SYNDICATED APPROACH TO RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES

Dr. Ajai Pal Sharma

Rural and urban are two unique words that don't require any definitions but still there can be major variations in defining these two terms/areas. Generally the leading criteria taken into consideration for this purpose is population size and density and the availability of the primary facilities like provisions for primary healthcare, availability of drinking water, primary and secondary educational facilities, banking services, etc. Rural-urban interactions can be defined as linkages, may be in the form of transition of people, money, household items, information, agricultural products and service sectors. The increasing speed of urbanisation has/is posed/posing great challenges for the policy makers in handling this paradigm shift in the make-up of the nation. It is expected that the population of the country would increase up to 590 million by 2030 and urbanisation is expected to impact almost every part of the country because every human being desires to have urban facilities for better living. This pace

of urban expansion has definitely affected the GDP split which was almost evenly distributed between urban and rural economies during 90s but it is expected and projected that the urban India would generate almost 70% of its GDP by 2030. In this process the income of the urban occupants would increase resulting in increase in demand for key services which may also increase to many folds by that time.

Today urban India is distributed in shape with a diverse range of large and small cities, spread widely across the nation. To address the issue of urbanisation, India should continue to aim at a distributed model of urbanisation because this suits the federal structure of the country too and helps to ensure that the migration flow is not balanced towards any particular region. On the other hand if India continues to invest in the urban infrastructure at the same pace, it would be difficult to control the transition and flow of human beings from the rural to urban areas,



hence requires adopting some strategy so that the urbanisation can be controlled and managed effectively. The only way to do this is through distribution/provision of urban amenities to the rural areas so that migration towards the cities can be minimised. The government has started many schemes to control such challenges but the scheme like PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) is the right attempt taken by the government to bridge the gap between the urban and the rural in providing the amenities in rural areas which are at par with those of urban areas.

Understanding Rural-Urban Differences

It is well understood that there are typical characteristics which define urban and rural concepts very well and influence the livelihood of people of both the areas. Although efforts are being made to generalise but still there is great a diversity between urban and rural areas, few of them are mentioned below:

It is seen from the above tabulated characteristics of rural and urban people which highlight a huge gap in amenities that rural areas require, so that they can be brought at par with urban people and the transition can be minimised.

PURA (Provisions of Urban Facilities in Rural Areas)

When we think of equity and justice, there should not be any difference between the facilities being provided to the rural and urban people. But there is huge gap of facilities available in the rural and urban areas. Lack of such facilities like livelihood opportunities, modern urban amenities and other services for decent living in rural areas results in deprivation and dissatisfaction amongst the people. This deprivation results in migration of a large number of people from rural areas to urban areas. To address this issue, the former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2003 gave a vision of transforming the rural India through launching a mega mission/scheme PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas). In his address to the nation on the eve of Republic Day 2003, he visualized providing four connectivities; *physical connectivity, electronic connectivity, knowledge connectivity* and these three leading to *economic connectivity* for rural areas.

According to Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, the thrust areas of PURA are:

- ❖ Creation of employment opportunities for all the employable people particularly the youth of the country.

Livelihoods and the Rural-urban Continuum	
Rural	Urban
Livelihoods drawn from agriculture, forest, fishing or from other natural resources	Livelihoods drawn from labour markets through marketing of goods and services
Access to natural capital like mountains, forests, mines, etc.	Reliance on space for production and access to income generating opportunities
Land availability is more and easy to build a house on cheaper rates	Access to land is very difficult and land markets are highly commercialised
Huge gap in the awareness about the services provided by the governments for their welfare and benefits	People are more aware about the facilities but highly venerable to governance deficit
Access to various public facilities is limited because of distance criteria and limited capacity to pay except few	Access to infrastructure and other services is difficult to low income people because of high prices and commercialisation
Fewer rely on cash as they depend more on agricultural products that is prone to climatic conditions	Greater reliance on cash for availing the things for day to day requirements

- ❖ Capacity building of education-schools, value added employable skills and knowledge for all sectors of the society.
- ❖ Provision of quality and timely health care, safe drinking water, quality reliable electric power, energy and water efficient pucca houses.
- ❖ Physical, Electronic, Knowledge and Economic connectivity for the rural areas.

Mission and Objectives of the PURA Scheme

The mission of this scheme was holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat (or a group of Gram Panchayats) through Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework for providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas. The objectives set for this scheme was to provide livelihood opportunities and urban amenities in rural areas to bridge the rural-urban divide.

Analytical Discussion

PURA was thought to be a self-sustainable model of service delivery to be managed by local community through Panchayats in coordination with private sector under the guidance of public authorities who will provide the funding for initial

infrastructural support. It was expected that through PURA scheme the connectivity and infrastructure will enhance enabling in empowering the rural people and creating various growth opportunities for themselves and will ultimately control and reduce the transition from rural to urban areas.

It was resolved/planned that in the beginning of the scheme it will be launched on pilot basis and during 10th Five Year Plan (2004-2005 and 2006-2007) seven pilot projects were launched in Basmath (Maharashtra), Bharthana (U.P), Gohpur (Assam), Kujanga (Orissa), Motipur (Bihar), Rayadurg (A.P) and Shahpura in Rajasthan. During the evaluation study it was found by NIRD (National Institute of Rural Development) that there is a need of participation from the side of local community and private sectors, there is a need of infrastructure development including the site selection on the basis of need and moreover for better convergence with the schemes already being run in that area. It was also found that the scheme was having a lack of effective business plan too. Although initially each of these schemes were operated autonomously and the standards set for infrastructure services delivery in the rural areas were far below those set for the urban population. Based on the findings given by NIRD it was felt that this scheme

Composition of PURA Project		
Amenities to be provided under scheme of MoRD (Ministry of Rural Development) and Ministry of Drinking water and Sanitation (Mandatory)	Amenities to be provided under schemes of other Ministries (Non-MoRD) Illustrative list	Add-on Projects (Revenue earning, people centric projects) Illustrative list
1. Water and Sewage	7. Village Street Lighting	10. Village base Tourism
2. Street Lights	8. Telecom Services	11. Integrated Rural Hub, Rural Markets
3. Drainage	9. Electricity Generation	12. Agro-common Services centre and Warehousing
4. Solid Waste Management		13. Any other rural economy based project
5. Skill Development		
6. Development of Economic activities		

Source: Modified PURA Scheme Guidelines, Ministry of Rural Development, GoI

requires restructuring at larger level and should be implemented again on pilot basis during 11th Five Year Plan as a Central Sector Scheme. On the basis of the findings given by NIRD, the Planning Commission undertook an appraisal of the projects in 2007 and advised restructuring PURA as a demand-driven PPP scheme with the following key features:

1. Selection of the lead agency with clear goals and responsibilities
2. Selection of cluster on the basis of economic growth potential
3. Commitment of the State Government for facilitation support
4. Financial outlay for a PURA cluster to the tune of 70-80 crores, with the Central Government participation limited to 25-30 crores
5. Focus on livelihood opportunities and
6. Creation of a sustainable revenue generation model to encourage commercial banks and the private sectors to participate.

The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India re-launched the scheme PURA in the latter half of the 11th FYP as a Central Sector scheme with the support from Department of Economic Affairs and the technical assistance of Asian Development Bank to implement the scheme of PURA under PPP framework between Gram Panchayats and private sector partners. The scheme envisages the twin mission of developing rural infrastructure with economic generating activities which was a major goal of the scheme.

Points to Remember for Re-structured PURA Project

1. Convergence of schemes from Ministry of Rural Development and other Central Government schemes.
2. Competitive and transparent bidding process adopted for selection of the private sector partner.

3. Twinning of rural infrastructure with economic activities generation.
4. Public Private Partnership (PPP) between Gram Panchayat and private partner.
5. PURA is treated as a 'Project' and not a government scheme where private sector partner has to prepare a detailed business plan.
6. Single window mechanism for approvals and release of grants where major funding is to be done by MoRD.
7. It is not a CSR activity but private sector partner can earn profit from the PURA project.

Conclusion

After understanding the PURA project it can be said that despite launching of various schemes by the government for rural employment generation, removing poverty, providing urban amenities, availability of healthcare facilities etc., a huge gap still exists between the rural and urban areas. And the basic reason which comes out is the lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Due to this reason it has been observed for long that there is transition of people from the rural to urban areas in search of jobs, education, better healthcare facilities and other amenities which are not available in the rural areas. It is also very important to note down here is that there has been a sharp decrease in the share of agriculture in the GDP which has been taken over by service sector to a large extent. In this process the concept of PURA can be very fruitful in generating the employment in the rural areas through PPP and expected to bring prosperity to some extent in the rural areas.

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PURA is treated as a 'Project' and not a government scheme where private sector partner has to prepare a detailed business plan.

RURAL E-GOVERNANCE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Dr. Rakesh Singhal and Dr. Madhu Rathore

Rural India has exclusive problems that are peculiar and not present in the developed world. Lack of connectivity, inadequate power supply and low literacy are some of the major problems which require deep introspect and proactive action on the part of the government. Lack of infrastructure and innovative software solutions designed especially for rural needs is another aspect which needs to be focused upon. Disjointed efforts have been made to develop software solutions which cater to specific problems which have resulted in avoidable duplication of efforts leading to wastage of precious resources in terms of time and money. Although many models are applied to showcase ICT interventions for rural development and many NGO's and governmental agencies are collectively working in this regard, most pilot projects are facing adequate infrastructural challenges like lack of electricity, sufficient trained technical manpower and financial resources to implement them effectively. Inaccessible terrain and geographically dispersed villages as well as inadequate communication infrastructure are added obstacles to the rural

population for generating sustainable income generating opportunities at the local level.

To achieve Millennium development Goals (MDGs), effective new strategies will have to be developed. An alignment of e-government with the needs of the poor will make e. government politically more attractive in most developing countries.

The objectives focused on rural information and communication technology include:-

- a. Challenges of governance such as participation, decentralisation and accountability,
- b. Role of market, state and civil society organisation in realising good governance.
- c. Strategies for effective governance which enhance human capabilities.

A national e-government plan (NeGP) has been formulated to address the above issues. It aims to:

- a) implement mission mode projects in key departments that focus on development or serve rural population.



- b) ensure that even the remote areas can benefit from ICT.
- c) provide generic programme components including capacity building.

Four projects under NeGP have a direct focus on serving the rural populations. First is the creation of 1, 00,000 Citizen Service Centres (CSCs) with private entrepreneurship which aim to create access points for one out of six villages for delivery of services as mentioned by CSCs. Each state has been divided into several regions and bids have been invited from private sector and NGOs to formulate the creation of CSCs within the specified regions. The progress of this programme is slow. The two projects on e-district and e-panchayat will support computerisation of the backend in local governments at the district and panchayat level to offer services to rural population. The fourth project is on creating a unique identity for every citizen (UID). This would serve as the basis for efficient and effective delivery of social and welfare services to persons below poverty line (BPL). Institutionalising national e-government plans and designing implementation mechanisms will ensure the development of applications and make them sustainable.

Suggestions for Improving e-Governance:

Various services being offered through e-Governance projects have been successful in delivering benefits to the citizens. All the stakeholders have also gained i.e., direct benefits to consumers in terms of cost and convenience, increased credibility of government, increased employability, providing better services to the citizens by various participating departments. However, there are still some areas of concern which need to be looked into for improving the services offered through these projects. A few suggestions made in this regard include:

Re-engineering of Government Processes

The socially and economically backward communities in the rural areas must also find the scenario relevant and beneficial to them. They must aim at minimising the need for citizen's trips to the district headquarters. The application must record the progress of user transactions and retrieve them on the user's query. They must offer privacy and security to the user data. These call

for significant re-engineering and mechanization of backend processes.

There are numerous instances where with little re-engineering of processes, the system can be made more effective and efficient such as :

- a. Time required to process transactions at service centre can be further reduced by minimising the data entry by taking data directly from the server of the participating agency.
- b. A unique transaction/customer identification number on each bill can be bar coded, so that time taken for manual entry and errors is eliminated.
- c. The e-Governance services may also be made available at places like ATMs, petrol pumps etc; these would help in increasing the number of access points for the services and would enhance the reach.
- d. Services which do not involve financial transactions may also be offered through IVRS or SMS such as intimation about bill or payment or grievances.

Change in Mindset of Service Providers

Objectivity and transparency are not considered important virtues of e-Governance. Service delivery operators and officials must be adequately trained on the application context and all possible services through the service window. There must be a system of record keeping which should measure the service utilization and quality. Periodical reviews to monitor and improve the quality of service will also be helpful.

Developing Human Competency / Capacity Building

An important stakeholder in the rural development domain is the rural citizen who carries a special profile characterised by their remoteness, poor literacy and lack of knowledge of English. If the benefits of ICT diffusion in the rural development sector have to reach the rural people, then special efforts will have to be made to build awareness and capacity among the rural populace.

Creation of ICT Infrastructure

Usually at the time of identifying software, hardware and networking devices; future upgradability and costs, need for open system environment are not considered adequately. The cost of these projects is turning out to be quite high as proprietary network; proprietary software and infrastructure are being set up, installed and used. Therefore, the use of public domain network, common internet facility and open software (such as Linux) should be used to reduce the cost significantly. The ICT infrastructure available in schools can be used as a pivot for rural ICT services after school hours.

Supporting Multichannel Service Delivery

Taking advantage of the introduction of devices such as smart phones, tablets, interactive voice response systems, digital television and self-service terminals, the private sector has been making use of multiple channels for a long time. Such initiatives encourage citizens to envision new forms of interaction with the desire that service providers – public and private – be as accessible and responsive as modern technology allows.

Public Private Participation

All rural e-Government project champions have to involve private agencies for tasks through PPP contractual arrangements like, design and development of application software, tabulation of data, content in the regional language, procurement and installation of computer systems, deployment of software and delivery of services. Such arrangement reduces the burden on the government, brings expertise, enhances the speed of implementation and offers better value proposition to the citizens. However, pure commercial benefit should not determine which services to offer.

Private participation in these applications is likely to put sensitive and valuable data in the hands of the private agencies. Judiciary mechanisms will also have to be worked out and put in place before launching of services to ensure that no injustice is done to the citizens by misuse of such data.

Training needs to be given to all government functionaries on behavioral issues dealing with themselves, citizens and private agencies so that

they can accept the changed transparent environment facilitated through ICT based processing which reduces paper transactions.

Local Language Support

It has been observed that most of the applications running for e-Governance projects are in English and there are users who do not find themselves comfortable in English. Therefore, the applications running should also have option of displaying forms in Hindi or other local language and also allow user to do the data entry in Hindi. Thus, following steps may be taken:

- a. All the applications should be multilingual.
- b. Training Programmes may be conducted to train different classes of users for the use of local language technologies.
- c. Existing Speech-to-text and Text-to-speech prototypes/products may be tested for their usability in addressing localisation-issues.
- d. Various features of the Internet like voice, touch screen technology should be used.
- e. Use of graphics for the illiterate should be extended.

Emerging Technologies for the last minute connectivity

The Wind Energy and Solar energy solutions may be provided for electricity in the rural areas, which is slightly expensive in the initial stages and difficult to maintain.

The light weight applications for providing various citizen centric services may be designed, so that they can be easily used on mobile phones, as the mobile phones may be most reliable media in coming days due to increased availability.

Enhancing Awareness of e-Governance Services

Publicising and creating awareness about the usefulness of e-Governance is of utmost importance. This can be done through advertisement in newspapers, TV, radio, hoardings, live demonstrations etc. The publicity by way of having information displayed in the offices, bus stands, railway stations etc., can be very helpful. Special awareness campaigns/ sensitisation programs may

be organised in the rural areas. Private sector and NGO participation in the publicity campaign may also be sought.

Monitoring and Regular Assessment of the Service Centres

Even though e-Governance projects are generally rolled out after testing them at the pilot stage, owing to the scale and complexities of the roll-out, such projects need continuous monitoring. Such monitoring could be based on a variety of parameters – financial viability, ease of use, assessment of in-house capacity, volume of transactions, appropriateness of technological solutions, adequacy of business process re-engineering, ability to handle difficult situations etc. The basic objective would be to identify problems in a timely manner so that corrective measures could be taken.

Complaint and Grievance Cell with Toll Free Number

If government wants to move towards Smart governance or e-Governance, where citizen also participate in the governance, it is important that grievance handling mechanism should function properly. This could be done by establishing complaint and grievance cell having a toll free number, where consumer can file their grievance. Simultaneously, a web portal can be developed where the complaints related to such projects can also be filed. The government has already taken initiatives by introducing *e-Sugam*, where users can file their complaints for various departments, but the experience is not very encouraging. The complaints received from consumers are forwarded to the concerned department, which takes long time to resolve the issue and there is no system of feedback to the consumer. Due to delay in response or no feedback, users lose their interest or are no more concerned with it. It is therefore, recommended that:

- a. Service providers may be oriented towards customer care by providing them training. This provision should be part of MoU.

- b. There should a public grievance cell set up, so that consumers can register their grievances and suggestions, which should be looked and resolved by the authorities in a time bound manner to earn goodwill of the public.

On-line Service Integration

At present various government departments create their own infrastructure, database and applications for providing services to citizens. While most of the data are common about citizens, most of these applications used by various departments cannot interact with each other due to various issues, such as compatibility with database, platform used for developing applications etc. It is therefore important for government organisations to share and integrate information by using common standards so that the systems deployed throughout government are able to communicate with one another.

Conclusion:

Panchayat Raj institution ought to be the prime mover for achieving e-Governance in the true sense. Development of local content and appropriateness of technology is a non-negotiable condition for social change and moral progress in rural communities. Computers are still a luxury in rural India where safe drinking water is a scarce resource.

Freezing of computer technology is another matter as obsolescence rates for computer hardware is more than radio. Availability of spares and resources to maintain ICTs are also challenging. Language and culture pertinence is also another non-negotiable condition. Competences of developing local content, provide the fusion to meet with local needs and to develop “citizen networks” are essential success factors. ‘e’ in “e-Governance/development” should connote ‘effective’, ‘empowered’ and ‘efficient’ rather than ‘electronic’.

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Objectivity and transparency are not considered important virtues of e-Governance. Service delivery operators and officials must be adequately trained on the application context and all possible services through the service window.

STRENGTHENING RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES THROUGH RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN ASSAM

Mr. Anupam Sarma

“The best, quickest and most effective way is to build up from the bottom. Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Rural development simply aims at improving the rural lives with the participation of the rural masses targeting the social, political and economic development of the rural people. It should genuinely be noted that elimination of poverty and delivery of high quality services are the basic premises upon which the planning of rural development is based and concerted efforts of the successive governments have improved the living standards and set the benchmarks for the quality of rural lives. Therefore, the primary objective of the government is to make provision of basic infrastructure facilities and social services in the rural areas of Assam. Creation of rural infrastructure is not only a key component of rural development but also an important input in ensuring any sustainable poverty alleviation program that can accentuate GDP growth of the state economy.

As a North-East State, Assam is sheltering 2.6 percent population of the country as per 2011 census out of which 85.92 percent of people are living in rural areas and the remaining 14.08 percent in urban areas. Without providing the basic facilities to these rural people, urban areas cannot properly be developed that can weaken the linkages of rural-urban areas. In this regard, no one can deny the fact of the role of development of rural infrastructure in the Assam economy. Therefore, failure to accelerate investments in rural infrastructure will be a stumbling block to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Lack of proper development of basic infrastructure also severely limits opportunities to benefit from liberalisation of trade, international capital markets including other potential benefits offered by globalisation. Under such circumstances, it can be stated that the creation of infrastructure



in emerging rural-urban clusters remains a major challenge not only for the state economy but also for the economy as a whole. All this mainly depend on how the government is provisioning of all-weather road connectivity to rural areas, provision of better electricity facility, improved telecommunication networks etc. that will act as a catalytic intervention for the rural population by ensuring their access to a vast range of economical activities. Importantly, it can also ensure well regulation of fair market, health, education including other social services, availability of warehouses and godowns in rural areas of the state economy which maintains positive correlation with agricultural production and productivity, maintaining the issue of food security, etc. In this way, a concerted effort towards building rural infrastructure can bridge the existing rural-urban gap to a greater extent which has created a green signal to push up the growth of rural economy.

Rural Electrification in Assam

Modernisation of agriculture and rapid industrialisation in an economy depends mostly on the availability of cheap and sufficient supply of power because of which power is regarded as the most important component of infrastructure for the economic development of the region. But unfortunately it can be observed that Assam is lagging far behind the national average in the field of power development as it has not been possible to carry out exploitation of power resources of the state to the fullest level. Even Assam is very poor regarding the development of solar energy system that can play a substitutory role to some extent for filling the huge existing demand supply gap of power.

The status of power generation in the state is extremely unsatisfactory from the point of power requirement of the consumer. However, the Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) has been trying to meet the power shortage by importing power from foreign sources. As a result of functioning of Hydel Power Project since 2006-07, the scenario in respect of power generation has slightly been improving as power generation has increased to 1498.13 MU in 2007-08 from 867.53 MU in 2006-07. But during 2010-11, the generation of power has nominally fallen by 0.25 percent which has further increased by 3.82 percent in 2011-12. Unfortunately, the installed capacity of generating plants at present in Assam has come down to 376.7 MW which include

Coal, Hydel and Gas plants due to de-commissioning of Bongaigaon Thermal Power Station (BTPs) and Mobile Gt sets and de-rating of age-old units of Namrup (NTPS).

Rural electrification program is gaining momentum since the last few years which is very essential for the execution of development programmes both in the agricultural and rural sector that can ensure better strengthening of the linkages of rural-urban areas. But the progress of rural electrification in Assam is not upto the expectation. During 1995-96, the percentage of villages electrified had worked out at 68 percent indicating an unsatisfactory performance in respect of rural electrification in the state as compared to some other states of the country. But, before implementation of Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vaidutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) on March 30, 2007 has shown that 74 percent villages are electrified in Assam. Thus we can clearly observe that the rate of growth of rural electrification in Assam is very slow which is retarding to establish better strengthen of rural-urban linkage. The RGGVY has granted a project cost of total ₹2207.79 crore during 10th and 11th five year plans under Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) and Power Grid Corporation Ltd. (PGCL). The task of electrification of 2202 remote villages is being taken up by the Remote Village Electrification Wing of ASEB, Forest Department, Government of Assam and Assam Energy Development Agency through non-conventional method of rural electrification.

Transport System in Assam

A well developed transport system is highly important in a state like Assam specially in rural areas as most of the essential products are imported from rural areas to urban areas. Due to lack of superior transport system heavy transport costs have to be incurred because of which size of the market is influenced. Even the state is importing practically machineries, equipment, raw material for the agro-based and other industries and at the same time a huge amount of produced goods in the rural areas of Assam like tea, jute, timber, bamboo and bamboo products are exported. In spite of huge demand for developed transport system, Assam is still continuing to suffer from inadequate transport facilities, which still continues to act as an impediment to the economic development of the state. In view of the vital importance of such a sector, Assam government

with the support of central government so far made considerable efforts through successive five year plans to make up the leeway but much more still remains to be done.

The Assam Public Works Department (PWD) is primarily responsible for improvement of road communication through construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and culverts for speedy development of the state. In Assam, the road network comprises of total 52099.22 KM of roads consisting of 3069.22 KM National Highways, 3134 KM State Highways, 4413 KM major district roads, 2496 KM urban roads, 36544 KM rural roads and 2443 KM project and other non PWD roads. The presence of large number of submersible stretches and existence of large number of semi-permanent timber bridges have hampered all-weather roads communication in the state. Therefore a considerable portion of the maintenance fund has to be spent on maintenance of such bridges and roads that hinder the interest of speedy development of the state.

Postal and Telecommunication Services

One of the important determinants of identifying rural-urban linkages in Assam is the postal and telecommunication services. In respect of both these two services in Assam, the state has been recording a steady growth. The Assam Postal Circle has a network of 4013 post offices out of which 92.84 percent post offices are located in rural areas as on March 2013. It is found that each post office serves a population of 7,776 persons covering 19.58 square km area. The Department of Posts has introduced a facility for opening of zero balance Savings Accounts for the MNREGA beneficiaries. In spite of some improvement registered in the postal services in Assam, the position of the state in this regard is not found much satisfactory in comparison to the position of the country as a whole. Even Assam is among the six states across India where initiative has been taken to start Core Banking Solution (CBS) in 12 selected post offices under pilot project to bring the postal customers under postal banking coverage which help the customers to access their saving bank accounts from any of these post offices.

In Assam, regarding the availability of telecommunication facilities is concerned a slow and gradual increasing trend has been noticed during recent years. Assam Telecom Circle of Bharat

Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is the largest telecom operator in the state which was constituted in 1987. It should be noted that BSNL, Assam circle is the only service provider which is making focused efforts and planned initiative to bridge the rural-urban Digital Divider ICT sector. In Assam, BSNL is operating with 585 telephone exchanges at present where 46.50 percent is the overall tele-density of the state against the national average of 73.34 percent at the beginning of 2013. In a state like Assam, it is observed that the urban tele-density is 136.38 percent in 2013 as against the rural tele-density is only 30.18 percent. Thus it clearly shows that the telecom penetration has been uneven across the urban and rural segments of the state. The present status of telecom facilities in Assam provided by the operators is shown below:

Public Health Infrastructure in Assam

Health care is the foundation of rural health care system which is an integral part of the national health care system. In the rural areas of Assam, services are provided through a network integrated health and family welfare system and health care programmes have been restructured and reoriented from time to time to meet the objectives of the National Health Policy. While public health facilities are reasonably well developed in urban areas but there is inadequate development of health infrastructure in rural areas of the state. It puts a lot of pressure on the urban areas and thus can weaken the rural-urban linkage. In this regard, investing in health is important because of which in each five year plan total expenditure on health increases which has achieved 78000 lakh in 12th five year plan as against 69793.45 lakh in the previous plan period. Consequently, the infant mortality rate in rural areas of Assam has been observed to decline gradually.

From the ongoing analysis we can say that for strengthening the linkages between rural and urban areas of the state, infrastructural facilities should be created in such a way that it minimises the wastage of resources in the state economy. Various programmes should also be generated by keeping in view grass root level development that can open up the pace of GDP growth.

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RURAL-URBAN LINKAGE: EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITY

Lalan Kumar Mahto

Over 35% of the rural people in India are living in poverty. While most of the poor are dependent on agriculture, important natural resources required for increasing agricultural production, are in shortage and heavily eroded. Hence, the major challenge for agencies engaged in rural development is to provide employment opportunities and food security by making sustainable use of the natural resources and promoting non-farm enterprises.

The rural communities feel that the government is responsible for providing all the basic amenities and tackling the problems of the poor. However, the resources available are limited and in the absence of appropriate systems and organisations, even the available resources are not utilised efficiently. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the existing infrastructure and build institutions at the grassroots level to serve the community, for improving their livelihood. The role of institutions operating at the grassroots level is dependent on the problems of the farmers. Some of the problems which have dragged our farmers to poverty are limited access to natural

resources and severe depletion of these resources leading to low productivity, outdated technologies, lack of critical inputs and finance, lack of management, poor infrastructure and support services. Frequent failure due to natural calamities, chronic poverty leading to poor health and illiteracy and exploitation by the vested interests and moneylenders has shaken their confidence. This has forced them to depend on relief work without making any serious effort for their own development.

Background

Despite significant advancement in industrial development, Indian economy is still dependent on agro-based activities. Over 70% of the population living in rural areas is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. A majority of these families spend over 90% of their earnings on basic needs such as food, fuel and health care. Over 50% of the rural families who are not able to meet even these essential needs fall under the category of the poor. Industrial development and adoption of modern technologies are likely to generate additional employment in



urban areas and pay rich dividend to elite and rich investors. This in turn might widen the gap between the urban and rural as well as the rich and the poor, with respect to wealth accumulation, resulting in further hardship for the poor. Therefore, we need to address the problems of the poor to ensure social justice and better quality of life.

Problems of the Rural Poor

The time is now ripe for a change in the strategy. The rural development programme should identify the problems of the poor and address the local needs, instead of forcing them to accept preconceived plans. The participating families should take active part in the programme. There should be equal opportunity for the weaker sections of the society and women. The programme should facilitate sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection and lead to better quality of life.

Presently, there is no formal mechanism to understand the problems and address their needs. Different organisations created by the government in the form of various development departments and Panchayat Raj Institutions are not adequate to service large heterogeneous sections of the rural communities. Hence, the development agencies felt the need to promote different types of grassroot level organisations to facilitate the process of sustainable development. It is useful to review the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions and select appropriate organisations for wider replication.

The utility of various types of organisations is dependent on the problems faced by the community. Rural poverty can be attributed to the following problems:

- ❖ **Limited Access to Natural Resources:** With the growing population and lack of off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas, the farmers are compelled to sub-divide their ancestral landed properties for their livelihood. This has resulted in uneconomical size of land holdings unsuitable for making efficient use of water for irrigation and advanced technologies for optimising the production. This problem can be solved through awareness and motivation to adopt family planning and search for alternative sources of employment instead of depending on traditional farming practices.
- ❖ **Low Agricultural Productivity:** While over 75% of the farmers own less than 2 ha land, most of

them do not have the ability to invest in critical inputs to optimise the crop yields. In the absence of eco-friendly farming practices and neglect of soil and water conservation, these land resources have been heavily denuded resulting in lower crop production. Although irrigation facilities are available to cover about 28% of the cropping areas, over 10 million hectares of fertile lands have turned into sodic wastelands, due to excessive use of water for irrigating crops. In the absence of proper coordination among water users, farmers having land at the tail end of the command area are often deprived of their due share, while some of the powerful farmers use excessive water and damage their fertile lands. As a result of unsound farming practices, the average crop yield in India is only around 2 tons per hectare, as compared to the world average of 2.5 tons and 4 tons/ hectare in China.

- ❖ **Out-dated Technologies and Shortage of Critical Inputs:** Agriculture no doubt has advanced significantly over the last few decades. However, most of these technologies are suitable for large-scale commercial farming which require heavy investment and advanced skills. Therefore, such technologies are neither appropriate nor affordable to small holders. Hence, it is necessary to facilitate selection of suitable technologies to improve the needs of these small farmers.
- ❖ **Lack of Management:** Lack of planning and management is another major reason for low profitability in agriculture. In the absence of an integrated approach to tackle multidimensional problems, sectorial development activities may not deliver expected results. Apart from integration of various sectors, many of these projects also lack proper planning and resource mobilisation. Unlike industries, rural development projects are not implemented on sound management principles taking into consideration the required inputs, technologies, human skills and opportunities for marketing the produce. In the absence of any connectivity with the market and information centre, these farmers are exploited by traders.
- ❖ **Poor Health Status:** With the annual birth rate of 28 per 1000, as compared to 23 in Asia, the family size has been growing without any addition to the income. Most of the rural people

suffer from poor health due to starvation, lack of immunisation, poor hygiene and sanitation. Over 25% villages do not have year-round supply of drinking water and about 75% of the potable water sources are polluted. Consumption of polluted water is the main cause of illness particularly during the rainy season. Medical and immunisation services do not reach remote villages. There is a need to create awareness on sanitation and establish linkage with the Primary Health Centres, operated by the Government.

- ❖ **Illiteracy and Indebtedness:** Illiteracy in rural areas is high particularly among women, varying from 55% to 75%. This has a direct bearing on employment, income, child care and education. While many migrate in distress to cities, the rest live in chronic poverty. They often try to forget their problems by consuming alcohol. They lose confidence in others as well in their abilities to live a decent life.
- ❖ **Lack of Confidence:** As a result of complex problems, the poor farmers have experienced bitterness while availing assistance from the development agencies. Many scientists and agricultural extension specialists have approached the farmers in the past with new technologies, many of which failed due to lack of inputs or technologies. Others have approached the farmers with an ulterior motive of exploitation and cheated them. Hence, the farmers have lost confidence in outsiders as well as in themselves. They are not prepared to listen to the extension officers of development organisations anymore. They feel comfortable depending on the relief work provided to them either by the Government or other donor agencies. This can be referred to as mental or psychological poverty. It is therefore imperative to address the problems of mental poverty before tackling rural poverty.

Grassroot Level Organisations for Sustainable Development

The development programme should be able to identify suitable solutions for the above problems, based on available resources and technologies. However involvement of the target families in taking active part in development and sustaining the programme beyond the project is necessary for ensuring success, apart from reviving the infrastructure for delivering critical services, developing the capacity of the target groups and

arranging for procurement and distribution of essential inputs and marketing of the produce.

Farmers should be oriented to make a swift forecast of the demand for various commodities and exploit the opportunities. There is good scope for setting up market outlets to reach the customers without involving many middlemen. Such agencies can support farmers with seeds of improved varieties, finance and other critical inputs for optimising their crop yields.

Marketing services are presently provided by the Agricultural Marketing Boards, Milk Cooperatives and Federations which are inefficient and politically oriented. Many of these cooperatives are not competent and controlled by vested interests at the cost of overlooking the interests of its members. Very often, they end up in losses because of mis-management and their inability to compete with private traders, who indulge in unfair trade practices. In this process, innocent farmers suffer heavily. Presently, only a few Farmers' Organisations, Sugar Cooperatives, Milk Unions, Fruit Growers Cooperatives, Coffee and Tea Growers' Associations, etc. are fairly successful because of their professional approach to manage the business. The strength of these organisations can be extended to other crops in different regions. Development of village level farmers' organisations which can directly deal with reliable business houses or trade outlets should also be encouraged. To establish such linkages, village level growers' organisations will have to be strengthened. Industries can play a significant role in strengthening such market oriented village level organisations.

Linkage through Organisations

Important Organisations existing in rural areas are the Gram Panchayat, *Anganwadis*, primary and secondary schools, Primary Health Centres, veterinary hospitals, banks and cooperatives for credit and input supplies and the office of the Village Level Worker for Agricultural Extension. Except for the cooperatives, the other organisations are supported and controlled by the State Government. One veterinary hospital which is expected to provide health care and breeding services, covers about 10–15 villages. However, the services provided are often unsatisfactory.

With the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution, the role of the Gram Panchayat has become predominant in implementing almost all

the development programmes launched by the government. The intention of the government is to empower the local bodies at the grassroot level to promote micro-level planning, implement various need based development programmes and ensure transparency. The Gram Panchayats are expected to develop their plans through a participatory approach and discuss such plans in the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha is expected to act as the watch dog and monitor the programmes implemented by the Gram Panchayat and other organisations.

Although the Gram Panchayats have the responsibility of implementing various development programmes, they are not equipped with necessary staff and skills for implementation. In such a situation, the work is assigned to contractors having close link with powerful members in the Panchayat. Instead, such responsibilities can be undertaken by People's Organisations, with greater efficiency. This practice is ideal for ensuring transparency in all public dealings while providing opportunity for the local people to generate additional employment. The members of the Gram Sabha and strong local organisations can influence the Gram Panchayats to adopt such a system.

Agricultural extension services are presently being provided by the Zilla Panchayat through Gram Sevaks. However, most of them are ineffective in dealing with farmers who are located far away and least receptive. Thus, the technology transfer in backward areas is extremely slow. Cooperative credit societies were promoted to ensure credit needs of farmers. However, most of the efforts to disburse bank loans to farmers either directly or through cooperative societies in the past have not been successful due to lack of motivation and inadequate pressure from their peer groups. Hence, to overcome the problems of finance, self help groups and micro-finance institutions are being promoted during recent years.

Generally, a Self Help Group (SHG) of 10-20 farmers can be an effective non-formal organisation to provide essential services and facilities to the members. The SHGs of homogeneous groups, separate for men and women are more efficient. These groups can start with savings and micro-credit. Subsequently, they can plan for promoting micro-enterprises by individual families as well as by the group. They can also organise procurement of agricultural inputs, credit, technical services and marketing of the produce. Several SHGs can jointly form a village level or block level Farmers' Association

or Cooperative Federation to organise technology transfer, processing, marketing and other services.

Voluntary Organisations working at the block level can play a significant role in capacity building of the SHGs and Farmers' Organisations and facilitate a close link between the SHGs and Gram Panchayat. NGOs are good in motivating the poor farmers to build their capabilities to participate in various development programmes. They can also help the SHGs to organise processing and marketing of the produce through various industries and consumer organisations. Presently, water users' organisations, various fruit growers' organisations and Dairy Cooperatives are functioning efficiently. The reason for their success is their direct linkage with livelihood. Food insecurity and poverty being the major problems of the rural communities, agriculture and agro-based activities were given priority. These organisations need to have strong linkages with various support organisations such as Technology Development Institutions and Financial Institutions, Industries and Market outlets to sustain their efficiency and utility.

As the members of the SHGs and Farmers' Organisations form the Gram Sabha, these enlightened members take active part in the deliberations of the Gram Sabha. The office bearers of various village level organisations such as cooperative societies, banks, *Mahila Mandals*, youth groups, farmers' associations and voluntary agencies should take part in meetings and influence the Gram Panchayat to implement various development programmes through POs. Some of these institutions can also assume the role of facilitators of the Gram Sabha and form a link between the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha.

With good linkage with various institutions at the village level, the community will be able to monitor the services provided by the government and take maximum advantage for their economic development. Any shortfall in the services can be arranged through private entrepreneurs. There are instances where the members of the village self-help groups monitored the attendance of school teachers and *Anganwadis* and health workers. Such groups have prevented vested interests from mismanaging the Gram Panchayat. This can be possible where the POs have established a strong linkage with other organisations, horizontally and vertically.

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PMJDY-AN INCREDIBLE FEAT ACHIEVED BY INDIA

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), has become the biggest financial inclusion initiative in the world. India has entered the Guinness Book of World Records for opening the maximum number of bank accounts in the shortest possible time under the government's flagship financial inclusion scheme, Jan Dhan Yojana. The Guinness Record authorities officially acknowledged it on January 20, 2015 with a certificate to Union finance minister Arun Jaitley.

Altogether, 11.5 crore accounts have been opened under Jan Dhan Yojana in less than five months. The scheme was launched on August 28, 2014, with a target of covering 7.5 crore households till January 26. The scheme has been recognised for opening the most bank accounts—about 1.80 crore— in one week as part of the financial inclusion campaign.

The number of accounts opened under PMJDY stood at 11.5 crore as of January 17, 2015 after a survey of 21.02 crore households. Of total bank accounts opened, 3.23 crore have deposits worth Rs 9,188 crore.

The main features of the scheme include Rs. 5,000 overdraft facility for Aadhar-linked accounts, RuPay Debit Card with inbuilt Rs. 1 lakh accident insurance cover. Account holders

under the scheme are to get life insurance cover of Rs. 30,000—an additional benefit announced by the Prime Minister when the scheme was launched. RuPay cards have been issued to more than 10 crore beneficiaries.

The Union Finance Minister said that the PMJDY is a game changer for the economy as it has provided the platform for Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) which, in turn, will help in plugging leakages in subsidies and thereby provide savings to the exchequer. Under the PAHAL scheme which is the Direct Benefits Transfer in LPG subsidy, he said that an amount of Rs. 1,757 crore has been transferred to the beneficiary accounts through the banking network since 15th November, 2014. So far, 19 schemes out of 35 DBT schemes have been rolled-out across the country, including MGNREGS in 300 districts. The Finance Minister informed that the State Governments have also been requested to transfer cash/benefits directly in the bank accounts of beneficiaries thereby cutting layers in the delivery process.

To provide universal access to banking facilities for all households across the country through a bank branch or a fixed point Business Correspondent (BC) called Bank Mitra, 1.23 Lacs Bank Mitra have been set-up in the country. Steps are also being taken to ensure that the Bank Mitra

are provided with devices capable of online interoperable transactions using RuPay cards and Aadhaar-enabled payment system. Use of RuPay cards at other access points will help in reduction in cash transactions and making them digital, which will move the economy towards a less cash society.

(Based on PIB Material)



GENDER ISSUES: CAN 'BETI BACHAO-BETI PADHAO' CAMPAIGN ADDRESS THEM?

Dr. Puran Singh & Ajay Kumar

In the Rig Vedic period, the women occupied respectable place and enjoyed high status in the society. Their condition was good. With the passage of time, their position started declining and it degraded at a faster pace in the medieval period of history. The social evils like purdah, child marriage, dowry, discrimination against girl child, Sati and other such practices disadvantageous to women crept into the system. Though the women in India mostly from the higher classes enjoyed education and other privileges but the common woman still suffered ignominy, deprivation and hurdles. Despite increase in literacy rate of women from 8.86% in 1951 to 65.74% in 2011 and crude literacy rate from 0.60% in 1901 to 56.99% in 2011, the plight of women has remained the same except a microscopic minority who have acquired education, got some government job or are from the economically well of sections of the society. The plight of women is reflected in the adverse sex ratio/ child sex ratio (number of females per thousand males) for more than a century given in the table as under:

The child sex ratio (0-6 population) has shown continuously declining trend for last 50 years since 1961 and declined to 914 in 2011 from 976 in 1961. This has declined in all the states/UTs of India except in eight states/UTs viz, Andman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Gujarat,



Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. There has been sharp decline in child sex ratio in states like J&K, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand. Child Sex Ratio has declined in both Rural and Urban areas. Interestingly this decline in Rural India is more than three times as compared to drop in Urban India in 2011 – a matter of great concern. This is despite efforts made by the successive governments in this direction.

Decline/changes in Child Sex Ratio index reflect underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society, especially its attitude towards the girl child. The adverse consequences are increasing incidents of immoral trafficking of women, harassment of women/ girls, violence

Sex Ratio in India 1901-2011

Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Sex Ratio	972	964	955	950	945	946	941	930	934	927	933	940

towards women, which has in turn affected the sex ratio. Celebration of International Women's day on 8th March every year has become a ritual, where, only speeches and pseudo resolutions are made and the poor or the lower middle class women/ daughters find no place there and their lot remains the same. Despite this all, this is visible that status of women in terms of financial position, social status, education, health has improved after independence. The government has also taken up a number of initiatives within the constitutional, legal and social frame work to improve the lot of women and daughters and tried to eliminate the gender discrimination.

Reasons for declining sex ratio

The reasons for skewed sex ratio and discrimination against women are deep entrenched into our social fabric and traditional mind set of subjugation of women. May be due the fact that efforts have not been made on the lines of the community as to what the people at large think about the gender. Therefore, the answer lies in our social system than outside it. Some of the factors are mentioned below:

- **Male Progeny:** Majority of the people (male/female) in the society have first child preference of a male child. They consider son as proliferating lineage of the family and hence 'son is son' propagates need of a progeny 'son is son'. None of them think of a female as a first child.
- **Safety:** There is a feeling of insecurity about the safety of girls not only while going to the school /college, in the school or college or any other place but also at their own home or in relations.
- **Social trauma for a suitable match:** Even in this electronic era, generally people are afraid of upcoming situation while the girl is of marriageable age that while searching for a suitable match for marriage for their girl as they will have to go through the trauma of her being presented before a number of perspective grooms and family members.
- **Financial burden:** Daughters' marriages are quite costly in India across the communities.

Fear of Expenditure on daughter's marriage is also a factor which forces them to think against having a girl child. Majority of the people still consider daughter a financial burden on the family.

- **Dowry:** Even if a suitable match is found, parents are afraid of dowry demand and even dowry is not a guarantee of comforts and dignity to her in her in-laws home.
- **Work place:** Parents are afraid of gender bias/ harassment of their daughters at the work place, more so in rural areas, where she is not treated well even today.
- **Gender roles:** Broadly speaking gender signifies the earmarking of roles of men and women by the society which also decides (whether we like or not) what is good or bad for them. Over the years, due to growing bias in definition, women ended up with an inferior position. Traditions and practices further contributed to discrimination. May be she is at disadvantage due to her gender specific roles as she has to look after the kitchen work, washing, tending to cattle, rearing child and doing all gender specific roles despite her sharing of male specific works. This scenario can be corrected only through sustained efforts of individuals, govt. and other developmental organisations.

Suggestions for improving sex ratio

If India is really interested in reversing the trend of continuously declining child sex ratio and wants to improve it in long run, it will have to accord women, a place of pride in the society, will have to refrain from the traditional approach of treating the female gender. When she feels secure in the society her participation will spontaneously increase in all the spheres of life, which will not only automatically motivate them but to their spouses to opt for the girl child. Along with the recent Beti Bachao- Beti Padhao campaign to save the girl child, a multi-pronged strategy should be adopted to address the issue of female gender, which has assumed serious proportions. Some of the suggestions for improving the status of women in the society and reversing the trend of child sex ratio are as given below:

1. Focussed implementation of Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana: The Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana, which has already been launched for accessing banking services to the people and more than 10 crore bank accounts have been opened, should now focus on separate account of women in the family so that she operates the account herself at her will free from any family pressure. It will also boost their participation in decision making in the family and in taking up economic activity on scale. The bankers either through existing SHGs or their direct approach should organise village camps for opening of accounts solely in the name of women in a campaign mode.

2. Organising women SHGs and their skill development /upgradation: The focus should be strengthening of existing SHGs and organising 100% women from the poor sections and middle class (both urban and rural) into self help groups (SHGs) and should be given basic orientation and vocational training for taking up economic/ income generating activities so that they add more to the family income for greater participation in the decision making. It should be taken up under National Rural Livelihood Mission and Aajeevika Skills recently named as *Deen Dayal* Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).

3. Effective implementation of 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' campaign: Though 'save-the girl child' programmes are in vogue all over the country, 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' Abhiyan being launched by the Prime Minister of India from Panipat district of Haryana on 22nd January,2015 will make an impact on improving child sex ratio , if it is taken up in the right earnest beyond the television hype and routine talks. Effective steps need to be taken up to break the traditional mental barriers/ blocks of the society in favour of the girl child. More incentive should be given to the poor couple having first child as daughter or both the children as daughters.

Decline/changes in Child Sex Ratio index reflect underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society, especially its attitude towards the girl child.

4. Promoting Education: Education is said to be the liberator and biggest tools of empowerment. All the girls, whose parents are not income tax payee should be given liberal scholarship for pursuing education upto the highest level. To encourage the girls for pursuing higher education, the local administration through out the country should ensure for safe travelling or transportation of girls upto the schools and back to home and to far away places to colleges through the specially deployed public transport. As, the parents for lack of safe travel facilities from their villages or nearby, do not prefer to send the girls to schools and colleges for the fear of harassments of their daughters at the hands of anti social elements. This can be done through Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) **(National Higher Education Mission).**

5. Creating hostel facilities for girls and working women: Provision of concessional Hostel facilities to working women and studying girls can help remove fear of safety from the minds of parents , which in turn can bring about a change in the mind set of the society in favour of girl child.

6. Corporate sector in education: Corporate sector funds, which always remain unutilised, should be utilised for providing travel facilities to the girls from village to school/college and back. The funds could also be used for scholarships to the girls who pursue higher education.

7. Plantation of Sapling: As emphasised by our Prime Minister, every rural household should plant a sapling at the birth of the girl child to be liquidated at the time of her marriage so that it becomes a source of financial support and a source of freedom.

8. Liquor vends away from habitation : Alcoholism of men is another curse on the women. She has to bear in case the husband is drunkard. Whatever rural poor women earns,

the husband forcefully wastes her earnings on alcohol and smoking. The governments should amend the excise policy to set up the liquor vends away at a safe distance from the habitation.

9. **Proper implementation of existing women welfare/development schemes:** Schemes like Sabla being implemented for protection of adolescent/girl child should be implemented in a proper manner. Instead of introducing new schemes, the existing schemes of health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, pre-natal care, anti-natal care, employment and social security should be integrated and strengthened for appropriate and timely benefit to women/girl.
10. **Sanitation and hygiene:** For dignity, privacy and safety of women every households should be persuaded to opt for individual household toilet and there should be adequate and clean toilets in schools and educational institutions. In addition to the above, Menstruation Hygiene Management, which has hitherto remained a taboo, should be taught to both the male and female.
11. **Enforcement of existing legal provisions:** To prevent the harassment of girls/women like eve teasing, molestation, harassment, rapes, acid attacks on girls, the existing provisions of Indian Penal Code (IPC)/ or of any other relevant law should be further amended expeditiously and be enforced timely and forcefully in a proper manner. The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act and Rules should be implemented in right spirit.

Conclusion

There has been continuous decline in child sex ratio in India since 1951 and marginal improvement has started in sex ratio since 1971. If the sex ratio is to improve to check the social consequences and beti bachao-beti padhao has to be made a grand success, it should not remain a mere slogan, it should be supported by proper enforcement of law related to protection of girl child and women. Medical fraternity should come forward in support of this social cause and they should boycott such practitioners who resort to such immoral and unlawful activities. Organising training programmes of girls for their self defence of martial arts in mission mode. Effective IEC campaign through media and inter-personal communication for building a strong movement in favour of girl child should be accompanied by Beti bachao-beti padhao. There may be regular and effective counselling of parents of the girl child and the mother in laws in favour of girl child. Strengthening and building movement for organising women into the self help groups for bank linkage and vocational training for their self dependence would go a long way in improving the sex ratio. Let the society make sincere efforts to bring a change in what Sabana Azmi has rightly remarked that "I have never heard or written in students' book that "my father is in kitchen and my mother is in the office or both are in office".

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The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' programme in Haryana on January 22, 2015. The scheme aims to address the dipping child sex ratio and empower the girl child in the country. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said 'Beta Beti Ek Samaan' should be our Mantra. "The thought that only a son will take care of you during your old age is incorrect," said the Prime Minister. 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' will focus on 100 gender critical districts where the child sex ratio is particularly low by enforcing existing laws that criminalize pre-birth gender selection, and by improving girls' school attendance, among other measures. 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign is the fourth major initiative of the after 'Jan Dhan Yojna', 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' and 'Make in India'.



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