

RURAL DEVELOPMENT : MISSION -2020

SUNIL GARG*

KAVITA AGARWAL**

DR. ARCHANA GAUTAM*

Abstract

India is emerging as a major power economy and our cities and urban centers are beginning to display marks of affluence. Unfortunately our development is lopsided. The rural hinterlands are not able to march in tandem with urban India. About 69% of the country's total population continues to live in rural India There is no trickledown effect.

Rapid structural transformation in rural India poses both opportunities and challenges to the national economy. However, rural India continues to struggle with challenges such as economic and human development gaps with its urban counterpart. Within the countryside there are rising social disparities and economic inequalities and regional imbalances. The dynamics of rural transformation are further exposed to both domestic and global factors due to operation of neo-liberal policies. In the context of structural changes in the Indian economy, there has been growing imbalance between and within regions and also between the socio-economic development between urban and rural areas.

Economic development in any country to a greater extent depends on rural development and it assists the economy to grow and sustain. In the rural areas agriculture is the main source of livelihood to the people. There is a direct relationship between agriculture production, income and the demand for industrial goods.

People living in the rural areas have to struggle to earn wages or are forced to migrate to urban areas. The migration pattern varies with the region, opportunities and socio-economic status of the families. The poorest families, particularly the landless and marginal holders owning poor quality land tend to migrate with the entire family. Many tribal families migrate to cities as construction workers and return at the onset of the rains. Such migrations severely affect the quality of life, due to poor health, lack of education and social pressures leading to erosion of moral values.

* Assistant Professor, Hindustan College of Science and Technology, Farah, Mathura, U.P, India

** Assistant Professor, S.R.K.P.G College, Firozabad, U.P, India

The objectives of the paper is to analyze the challenges facing the rural areas and suggest ways to overcome these challenges and to create opportunities of gainful self-employment for the rural families, especially disadvantaged sections, ensuring sustainable livelihood, enriched environment, improved quality of life and good human values. This is being achieved through development research, effective use of local resources, extension of appropriate technologies and up gradation of skills and capabilities with community participation.

Keywords: Challenges, Rural, Strategies, Sustainable Development

Introduction:

An interesting aspect of the urbanisation trend revealed by the Census is that the number of towns in India increased from 5,161 in 2001 to as many as 7,935 in 2011. It points out that almost all of this increase reflects the growth of „census“ towns (which increased by 2,532) rather than „statutory“ towns (which increased by only 242). „Statutory“ towns are towns with municipalities or corporations whereas „census“ towns are agglomerations that grow in rural and peri-urban areas, with densification of populations, that do not have an urban governance structure or requisite urban infrastructure of sanitation, roads, etc. As more Indians will inevitably live within urbanized conglomerations, with densification of villages, sprouting of peri-urban centres around large towns, and also migration of people into towns, the quality of their lives and livelihoods will be affected by the infrastructure of India’s urban conglomerations. The infrastructure of India’s present towns is very poor. Sewage, water, sanitation, roads and housing are woefully inadequate for their inhabitants. The worst affected are the poor in the towns. As more urban conglomerations form and grow without adequate infrastructure, the problems will only become worse. Therefore, India’s urban agenda must get much more attention.

Master Plan for Delhi-2021

The Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) with the perspective for the year 2021 was notified by the Ministry of Urban Development on 7.2.2007. As per the MPD, Delhi is divided into 15 Zones. Two zones out of that, namely, K and P Zones are further divided into two sub-zones each. The Zonal Plans for all the Zones [except Zone-D (New Delhi)] have been approved and authenticated by the Ministry and, thereafter, Zonal Development Plans of those zones have been notified by the Delhi Development Authority.

Model Municipal Law: Although the Constitution (74th Amendment Act), 1992 has already completed a decade and urban local bodies (ULBs) have been delegated with specific responsibilities and functions, adequate financial resources are not made available to them. As a result, they are not able to perform their assigned functions in an efficient and effective manner.

Thus, the State Governments were required to amend their State Municipal Laws to give functional and financial autonomy to ULBs as envisaged by the 74th Amendment Act.

Keeping this in view, Ministry of Urban Development also developed and circulated a Model Municipal Law, which intends to assist urban local bodies in the areas of accounting reforms, resource mobilization, levy of user charges and entry of private sector partnership. The Model Municipal Law, *inter alia*, aims at simplification of municipal by-laws, provision for enhanced borrowing, allowing entry of private sector and authorizing concessionaire to penalize users for non-payment of tariffs.

Implementation of the 13th Central Finance Commission Recommendations: The 13th Central Finance Commission has made certain path breaking recommendations in respect of transfers of grant to local bodies for the period 2010-11 to 2010-15. A sum of Rs. 23,111 crores has been recommended for ULBs. The grant has two components (i) Basic Component and (ii) Performance Based Component. Out of the amount of Rs. 23,111.00 crores the performance grants amount to Rs. 8000.00 crores. (approx) While the general basic grants can be released on certification by States and does not require any conditions to be met. State Governments have to comply with these conditions before they can access the performance grant from 2011-2012 onwards.

The Roadmap Ahead

As urbanization proceeds faster, the trend the world over is towards smart cities. It is assumed that 70 per cent of the world's population will be living in such cities by the year 2050. In a smart city there will be integration among all concepts and tools in a variety of areas such as urban planning, mobility, energy efficiency and population management, all with a view to ensuring sustainable urban development. Innovation and technology leads to greater efficiency in the provision of clean energy, smart buildings, open government systems, better water and waste management, sustainable resource management, smart vehicles, integrated transportation, and so on.

The successful cities of the future will run on information. Today, in addition to cities trying their best to govern better so that all residents benefit from the best civic facilities, there is also intense competition among cities. Connectivity has become a critical element in how they function. The ability to connect businesses and people enables new services and capabilities; for businesses, being connected means access to the global market and a platform to offer their services to a larger outside market. Digital communication and the internet today have assumed the role of a fourth utility.

Not all the mission cities and towns have been able to achieve even this minimum target. There is a lot more to be done still to have e-governance spread in all the 4,000-plus municipal bodies, and to steadily extend it to more functions in cities which have already taken the first steps. Even though done in silos, some prominent examples of technology leverage in our cities are: Greater

Hyderabad using GPS and GPRS technologies to cover solid waste management, and maintaining parks and street lights through cell phone images, subsequently put in the public domain; Surat introducing an on-line water quality monitoring system; Coimbatore's computerized building-plan approval scheme; Bangalore opting for geographic information systems (GIS) to standardise property tax administration; Jamshedpur Utilities Company providing an IT-enabled 24/7 single-window call centre and customer database; and Kanpur improving municipal revenues using a GIS-linked property database.

Challenges for slow Progress of Reforms

Main reasons for limited improvement in functioning of ULBs inspite of 74th CAA, are that functions, finances and functions have not been transferred to ULBs in most states.

These are elaborated below:

- 1) Limited understanding of reforms in cities/states.
- 2) There is insufficient political consensus at state and municipal levels for the reform agenda, particularly regarding private sector participation and proper pricing of services.
- 3) Preparation of electoral rolls for ULBs is carried out by State Election Commission (SEC). In many states, SECs prepare separate rolls for local elections and do not adopt rolls prepared by Election Commission for state assemblies.
- 4) In many states, governments retain the power of delimitation of wards for ULB elections. In many cases, SECs have to delay local elections till governments complete delimitation exercises.
- 5) Elections in some ULBs postponed for more than six months due to reorganization of ward boundaries, extension of limits, etc.
- 6) In most states, elected Mayor does not have executive powers.
- 7) Under 12th schedule of the 74th CAAA, it is not necessary that all the identified functions have to be transferred to ULBs.
- 8) Small and medium sized ULBs are not in position to manage all the functions identified in the 12th Schedule.
- 9) There are no regulations requiring certain minimum pricing of services to recover costs.
- 10) Property tax, the main source of own income of ULBs, has not been able to achieve adequate buoyancy due to constraints like rent control, inefficiency in updating property rolls, resistance to periodic assessment, etc.
- 11) Limited project development and implementation capacity.
- 12) There are no regulations requiring provision of certain minimum level of services to be provided by ULBs.
- 13) ULBs have weak revenue base as tax base is inadequate, user charges are relatively low and revenue collection is low.
- 14) State transfers to ULBs are often low and unpredictable.

- 15) Support from Central Finance Commissions to ULBs has been ad-hoc and not linked to any central revenue source.
- 16) Existing administrative structure does not require that there is certain minimum level of technical staff in ULBs.
- 17) Role of parastatal (such as utility boards) and ULBs is often not clearly defined for project planning, implementation and operation and maintenance.
- 18) Presently, DPCs and MPCs play a minimal role in urban planning and investment decisions.
- 19) Certain industrial areas are exempted from setting up ULBs.

Strategy for urban development

The Second Administrative Commission Report (ARC) has looked into urban governance quite closely. It has revisited the ULB structure, functional devolution, executive system finances and the related aspects of delivery of services and suggested a number of measures to strengthen ULBs (India 2007). The Government has accepted a large number of its recommendations of the AEC. A National Commission of Urbanization (NCU) was set up in late 1980s and it brought a report in 1988. Since NCU Report is over two decades old, ARC recommended setting up of NCU-II and Government has also accepted this recommendation. As per population projection in 2026, level of urbanization will be different in various states. In terms of urban population distribution in 2026, India will be mainly dominated by 11 states identified as first group and 11 Mega cities. India's future urban strategy should recognize these differences and plan accordingly. The WDR 2009's main message is that economic growth will be unbalanced but development can still be inclusive and it also suggests a policy framework to benefit from urbanization.

Key considerations or themes for urban strategy in India should be:

- 1) Constitutional amendments are required to achieve objectives of urban decentralization.
- 2) Different approach of supporting reform-linked investments needed for different states based on level of urbanization.
- 3) Focus of investments should be on asset creation as well as management.
- 4) Continue focus on public urban transport and integrate urban transport with land use planning.
- 5) Inter-government transfers should have in-built incentives to improve performance.
- 6) Integrate various urban development and related programs at local, state and national levels to develop sustainable city or metropolitan regions.
- 7) Strengthen urban institutions and clarify roles of different organizations. Capacity building should be an important component of the program.
- 8) Second generation of urban reforms should further focus on regulation, innovative financing and PPP, and climate change initiatives.

Conclusion

Urban infrastructure needs to be strengthened across the board. Primarily: Provision of basic amenities like safe drinking water, sewerage, waste management facilities and sanitation facilities in urban conglomerations, while also ensuring that the urban poor have access to these facilities at affordable cost. Improved water management, including recycling of waste water in large cities and new townships.

Transportation in urban centres is a major constraint. Currently, public transport accounts for less than a quarter of urban transport in India. Therefore, urban mass transit including metro, rail, electric buses and trams as well as other forms of public transport must be greatly strengthened especially in under-served urban centres.

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