The Research Paper is intended to serve only as a background aid to the Members of Parliament. It is for restricted circulation and not for publication in any form.

Introduction

A country of continental proportion with vast geographical difference, 136 billion population, myriad of cultures and languages, India is indeed a land of veritable diversity. 73 years into the Independence, India has achieved substantial progress in many areas including rise in income levels, high economic growth, literacy, life expectancy, strong infrastructure network and a wide range of other economic indicators. The development story, amidst all those, disparities across different regions persists despite efforts taken to achieve balanced regional development.

Various strategies have been adopted in the past to identify the backward areas/regions and to usher development. The erstwhile Planning Commission constituted various Committees from time to time to study and prescribe measures in this regard.

- Study Group Constituted in the context of the formulation of the Draft 4th Five Year Plan (1966-71) to identify areas with high population density, low income level, employment and living conditions etc. in the country through a set of indicators of regional development.
- The B.D. Pande Committee of 1968 with the aim to suggest a strategy to minimize regional imbalances or even eliminated by arranging establishment of industries of all sizes in selected backward areas or regions through financial and fiscal incentives.
- In 1968, Niranjan Nath Wanchoo Committee was appointed by the National Development Council to make a careful study on regional imbalance.
- A Committee on Classification and Identification of Backward areas was constituted under Prof. Sukhamoy Chakravorty in 1972.
• National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas (N.C.D.B.A.) under the chairmanship of Shri B. Shivaraman was appointed by Planning Commission in November, 1978 to identify the backward areas.

• Planning Commission appointed another committee headed by Dr. E.A.S. Sarma on 6.2.1997 to evolve criteria to identify 100 most backward poorest districts in the country.

• A Committee for evolving a composite development index for States submitted a report under the Chairmanship of Dr. Raghuram Rajan on 2013

With the objectives of removing the barriers to growth and improving the quality of life of the people under the overarching objective of balanced regional development, the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY), a special program was launched by the Planning Commission in the year 2004. RSVY had three components, namely, (a) Backward Districts Initiative component; (b) Special Plan for Bihar; and (c) Special Plan for the undivided Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) districts of Orissa. The Backward Districts Initiative was taken up with the main objective of putting in place programs and policies which would improve the quality of life of the people in who selected these districts backward districts spread over 27 States of the country.

To give a boost to regional development, the Government of India, on 5 January 2018, under the auspices of NITI Ayog identified 117 districts in the country as Aspirational Districts which lag behind the frontier/advanced districts in each region. NITI Aayog is presently anchoring the programme with the support from central ministries and the state governments to help develop the aspirational districts, first, to catch up with the best district within the same state and subsequently, aspire to become one of the best in the country.

Special Infrastructural Development in Economically Backward Areas:

Infrastructure development is one of the important components of the ADP. Since the ADP came into being the districts are being monitored on a regular basis with regard to their progress in various indicators. Studies on the impact of ADP undertaken by the US-based Social Progress Imperative (SPI) and the Institute for Competitiveness (IFC),
India has revealed positive outcome\(^1\). Health and nutrition, education, and basic infrastructure were the most improved sectors and significant ground was covered in many medium-term indicators related to building health infrastructure. The study also found that one of the prime reason for districts exceeding, achieving, or nearly achieving their targets in the basic infrastructure has been possible because some of the indicators – such as Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) and household electrification – driven by mission mode schemes such as Swachcha Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA).

Q1. What are the criteria recommended by different committees in the past for identification of backward areas? How are they different from data bases and their weightage in the composite index of Aspirational Districts?

The criteria recommended by different committees constituted by Planning Commission for identification of backward areas can be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. Density of population per sq.km. of area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Percentage of agricultural workers to total workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Percentage of literate population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Percentage of school going children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Total per-capita income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Per capita income from agriculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Sex ratio, industry and mining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii. Availability of infrastructural facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix. Per capita consumption of electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x. Chronically drought prone areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi. Chronically flood prone areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xii. Length of surfaced roads per 100 sq. km. area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiii. Public health care system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiv. Safe drinking water facility. And</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xv. Poverty rates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aspirational Districts Programme on the basis of a composite index. List of the data bases and their weightage in the composite index is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Databases</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landless households dependent on Manual labour (Socio Economic Caste Census – Deprivation 7)</td>
<td>Deprivation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ante natal care (National Health and Family Survey (NHFS-4)</td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional delivery (NHFS-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stunting of children below 5 years (NHFS-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasting in children below 5 years (NHFS-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary dropout rate (Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE 2015-16))</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverse pupil teacher ratio (U-DISE 2015-16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-electrified households (Ministry of Power)</td>
<td>Infra</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households without individual toilets (Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-connected PMGJS village (Ministry of Rural Development)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Household without access to water (Ministry of Drinking water and sanitation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aspirational Districts Programme is being implemented in 112 districts of 27 States with West Bengal (5 Districts) opting out of the programme. The list includes 35 districts selected by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the basis of their being affected by

\(^1\) https://competitiveness.in/adp-report/
Left Wing Extremism (L.W.E). For the selection of the rest of the districts, they have been identified on the basis of a composite index. Jharkhand has a maximum of 19 districts and most of the small states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala and Haryana have one district each. 

Q 2. Many regions in the past fell under the category of Backward District as defined by the then government. For example, Area Development Project for Poverty Termination was taken up for implementation in some tribal Blocks of Kalahandi and Koraput in 1988. However, the programme was terminated in December 1989. Long term Action Plan (LTAP) was launched for Kalahandi, Bolangir, Koraput (KBK) was launched in 1995. The name of these districts also figures in the list of Aspirational Districts. The same is with the case of many other districts. What is the difference in approach of on-going Aspirational Districts Programme from previous programmes? Is there any performance audit?

Economic disparity has left large regions with low employment and incomes, depriving them of their share of the dividend from the nation’s growth. India’s poorest people, primarily from the marginalised sections such as the SCs and STs, live in these regions which were the most backward on most parameters.

The ongoing ADP is based on those components such as convergence of Central and State schemes collaborate among citizens and functions of Central and State governments and competition among districts. Evaluation and monitoring being critical factors, districts are assessed on the basis of monthly progress and the best performing districts are rewarded. The 1st and 2nd rankers in overall terms are awarded Rs. 10 crore and 5 crore respectively. The 1st ranker from each of the five sectors is awarded Rs. 3 crore each. Under this arrangement, since inception of the programme, Gajapati district in Odisha has secured good ranks in various sectors including Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, Agriculture and Water Resources. Many districts have secured good ranks across various sectors and have become eligible for additional allocation. As per the scheme guidelines, districts are to prepare list of innovative projects. Accordingly, at

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2 Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question no. 2168 answered on 11.07.2019
present these districts are formulating project proposals in the areas under focus in the programme viz. Health, nutrition, education, agriculture, financial inclusion, skill development etc.

The programme aimed at ensuring rapid improvement in 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) through convergence of existing Schemes, better monitoring and ranking of the districts which, in turn, has induced a healthy competition among the districts to improve their performance. Districts are also encouraged to undertake validation of development related data so that progress made in districts could be objectively reported.

Aspirational Districts are uploading the progress made in different key performance indicators on a web-portal. Uploading of indicators and ranking of the districts are being used for monitoring the progress under this programme besides generating competition among different districts for better performance. In addition, Government of India has nominated a Central Prabhari Officer for each district who monitors the performance of the district and acting as a bridge between Central and State Government in addressing the emerging challenges in these districts. States have been requested to undertake review of the programme frequently. At Central level, the programme is anchored in Niti Aayog which regularly monitors the progress and places the same to an Empowered Committee of Secretaries, constituted for this programme.

Q3. MGNREGA, in the first phase, was implemented in 200 most backward districts with effect from 2 February 2006 and later extended to additional 113 and 17 districts from 1 April 2007 and 15 May 2007 respectively. The remaining districts were covered from April 2008. Currently, the Act covers all the rural districts of the country. Has there been any shift in approach towards implementation MGNREGA, which is a major employment generation programme in rural areas?

The governance reforms have brought many positive changes to the program within the overall framework of MGNREGA in last few years. Higher budgetary allocation has ensured along with decentralized planning and decision making by rural communities. Innovative measures like effective implementation of electronic
fund management system (eFMS), Aadhaar seeding, Geo-tagging of assets, strengthening of Social Audit System, implementation of Software for Estimate Calculation Using Rural Rates for Employment (SECURE) and GIS based planning have brought in greater transparency and accountability. Performance Review Committee meetings of the Ministry, Common Review Missions, regular video conferencing and establishment of independent social audit units are also done. These steps brought positive results. Since its inception, around 2800 crore person-days of employment have generated under MGNREGS till the year 2018-19, out of which more than half of the jobs were done by women workers and almost one-third by members of Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes.

Results of various studies indicate that not only the assets quality has improved over the years but also these assets are creating sustainable livelihood for rural population. Evidence shows that MGNREGS is now playing a major role in revitalizing the labour market in rural areas, which is slowing down the rural-urban migration and contributing towards increase in agricultural productivity through the creation of rural infrastructure. Water conservation efforts under MGNREGS have benefitted 143 lakh hectares over the last 3 years. Studies on National evaluation by Institute of Economic Growth and assessment of individual beneficiary schemes for livelihood by Council for Social Development have indicated improvements in productivity, acreage, incomes and water table through 3.

States are urged to accord maximum priority to Water Conservation works during the first quarter of 2018-19 including River Rejuvenation. Successes in River Rejuvenation have encouraged MGNREGS to undertake similar works in other States as well. Prime Minister on the National Panchayati Raj Diwas on 24 April 2018 has insisted Gram Panchayat Pradhans to lead a Community owned movement for Water Conservation using MGNREGS resources to insulate villages from vagaries of monsoon.

3 Ministry of Rural Development, Annual Report, 2019-20
He urged all the Chief Secretaries of States in the Pragati Review to assign top most priority to Water Conservation works under MGNREGS in the April to June period.

**Fund released to States/UTs under MGNREGS during the last three years indicating increasing allocation is:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central fund released</td>
<td>48387.16 *</td>
<td>55706.06 #</td>
<td>60861.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Including Rs.56268.00 lakh of failed FTOs of all NeFMS State/UT during financial year 2016-17. # including Rs.136890.498 lakh deducted against wage expenditure on account of rejected transaction amount credited back during financial year 2017-18.

**Drinking Water**

Q4. *Government of India has launched Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in August, 2019, which aims at providing potable water at service level of 55 litre per capita per day (lpcd) to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) by 2024? How is it going to transform the lives of rural household? Is there any assessment on the status of this project?*

The *Jal Jeevan Mission* aimed at universal coverage and emphasis on the principle of ‘equity and inclusiveness’ i.e. every family in the village gets tap water connection in their household and ‘none is left behind’. Consequently, States are giving priority to SC/ST majority populated villages, aspirational districts, villages in drought prone and desert areas and quality-affected habitations. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) envisages availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030. Potable water supply to water quality-affected habitations is a top priority under JJM as the ill effects of Flurosis and Arsenicosis is to be reduced. In the light of interim order of National Green Tribunal, States have to ensure piped water supply to all households in Arsenic and Fluoride affected habitations before December, 2020.

The JJM, announced by the Prime Minister on 15 August 2019, is a Centrally Sponsored programme, the fund sharing pattern between Centre and State is 90:10 for Himalayan, North Eastern States and UTs with legislature, 100 % for UTs without legislature and 50:50 for rest of the States. The planned outlay of the mission is Rs. 3.60 Lakh Crore. This is a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign. During the campaign, officers, groundwater experts and scientists from the Government of India will work together with state and district officials in India’s most water-stressed districts.
for water conservation and water resource management by focusing on accelerated implementation of five target intervention.

As on 15 March 2020, 81.76% rural habitations having 77.54% population have provision of minimum 40 litre per capita per day (lpcd) of potable drinking water and 15.32% rural habitations having 19.23% population have service level of less than 40 lpcd potable water, whereas 2.91% rural habitations having 3.24% population with water sources having quality issues.

In 2020-21, Rs. 23,500 Crore has been allocated for the implementation of JJM. At present, more than Rs. 8,000 Crore of Central fund is available with the States/UTs for the implementation of the Mission. Besides this, in 2020-21, 50% of 15th Finance Commission grants to Rural Local Bodies, i.e. Rs. 30,375 Crore have also been earmarked for water supply and sanitation. Prime Minister has called upon to ensure ‘ease of living’ in rural areas by providing facilities like financial inclusion, houses, road, clean fuel, electricity, toilets, the Jal Jeevan Mission is providing drinking water in every rural household, which will go a long way in improving the lives of rural population. The Mission will also reduce the drudgery of women and girls on whom the primary responsibility of fetching water is vested with.

**Malnutrition**

**Q5. In 2019 released Global Hunger Index, India ranked 102nd out of 117 countries mapped, which placed India among the countries that have 'serious' levels of hunger. How can India achieve Zero Hunger by 2030 at this pace as per Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)?**

Global Hunger Index, 2019 is based on four indicators namely: the percentage of population that is undernourished (weightage 1/3rd); percentage of children under five years old who suffer from wasting, percentage of children under five years old who suffer from stunting (weightage 1/3rd) and child mortality (weightage 1/3rd). As per estimates, the way index is constructed over 70% of the weightage of index is on child undernourishment, which in itself is on account of multiple social determinants and deprivations and its impact.
Removing hunger and malnutrition has been given high priority by the Government and to this end several schemes/programs are being implemented to improve food security situation in the country. Food grains at highly subsidized prices has been allocated to States and Union Territories under National Food Security Act 2013 at present covers 800 million persons (75% population in rural areas and 50% population in urban areas). The coverage under the Act is substantially high to ensure that all the vulnerable and needy sections of society get its benefits. Central Government is also implementing other welfare schemes like Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to provide supplementary nutrition to children, pregnant women and lactating mothers, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Annapurna Scheme for the senior citizens, Emergency Feeding Programs, Swachh Bharat Mission, Anemia Mukt Bharat, Poshan Abhiyaan, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Intensified Home Based Newborn Care etc.

POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched on 18 December 2017. Its goals are to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children from 0-6 years, Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers in a time bound manner with fixed targets as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Prevent and reduce Stunting in children (0-6 years)</td>
<td>@ 2% p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children</td>
<td>@ 2% p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0-6 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among young Children (6-59 months)</td>
<td>@ 3% p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years.</td>
<td>@ 3% p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW)</td>
<td>@ 2% p.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every year the Poshan Maah, launched in 2018, is celebrated under Poshan Abhiyaan (PM’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment). The objective of the Poshan Maah is to encourage Jan Bhagidaari, in order to create a Jan Andolan, for addressing malnutrition amongst young children, and women and to ensure health and nutrition for everyone.

Exploring Opportunities for Local Products

Q6. How can entrepreneur from Rural and Backward areas transform the economic outlook of the Nation? How can promotion of local products help the economic growth?
Rural areas in India are today becoming driver of Indian economy. Government initiatives are motivating more rural population especially women to come forward to take entrepreneurship. In the course of self help group (SHG) operation, women are gradually motivated to set up small enterprises for their self employment and creating opportunities for others. Government has been giving thrust to bring out development of backward districts in the country. It can facilitate in:

- Reduction of poverty and Unemployment
- Check the rural migration to urban areas
- Balance regional development
- Promote local artisanship
- Improve living standard
- Encourage rural youth undertake entrepreneurial activities in their locality
- Optimum utilization of local resources

Ministry of Rural Development is implementing two schemes for entrepreneurship promotion among rural youths under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM):

- Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs): Skill development through RSETIs, thereby enabling the trainee to take Bank credit and start his/her own Micro-enterprise. RSETI is being implemented across the country through Lead Banks of the district and presently there are 583 RSETIs in the country. The trainings are provided in 61 National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) aligned trades.
- Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP): Objective of the scheme is to help the rural poor to set-up enterprises at village level in non-agricultural sectors.

Till 31 May 2019, 54.07 lakh women Self Help Groups (SHGs) were formed under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

World Bank while acknowledging the contribution of the SHG mentions that, Women Self Help Groups in India have risen to the extraordinary challenge of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. They are meeting shortfalls in masks, sanitizers and protective equipment, running community kitchens, fighting misinformation and even providing banking and financial solutions to far-flung communities.

**Some Best Practices**

- Pangwala, the inhabitants of Pangi in Chamba located at an elevation of 2,100-3,500 metres are known, is an underprivileged community. The condition of women in this community is even more miserable. Nain Dei and 1,200 other rural
women together formed 75 self-help groups which empower themselves and improve their socio-economic conditions and a transformation took place in Pangi. The success stories of Nain Dei In 2016, Collective Efforts for Voluntary Actions (CEVA), a non-profit organisation, working in the Pangi valley for eight years, collaborated with National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). Initially they were engaged in handloom and handicraft. This was mainly tribal woollen produce — socks, scarf, caps and gloves. In ‘ajeekika mela’, organised by the Union ministry of rural development in Delhi the ‘Pangi Hills’ received outstanding response. One member of a self-help group, comprising 7 to 8 members, earns between ₹25,000-₹30,000 in an exhibition and ₹2 lakh - ₹2.5 lakh per annum.

- Bayan Gram or weavers’ village, in Jagatsinghpur’s Jaipur village has been the ‘karmabhoomi’ of 30 women weavers, who formed the self-help group, Sanskruti Handloom Producer Group. The village has nearly 300 residents and around 40 to 50 looms and almost everyone is a weaver. The new techniques are taught by Ormas (Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society). A weaver earns anything between Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 a month in the peak season.

- Two SHGs consisting of 26 members mostly Dalits and Backward of village Thavalaiveeranpatti of Trichirapalli District started a dairying unit after taking micro-credit from Rashtriya Mahila Kos (RMK) through LEAD a grass root NGO. Initially the unit was started with a loan of Rs. 76,000/- but subsequently another loan of Rs. 2.99 lakh per group helped the unit to develop. The production of the unit was raised to 200 liters of milk per day. Increasing output led to improve the livelihood of all the group members. The unit has provided additional employment of 3 women worker. Keeping in view the fast growth of the unit the women have started growing fodder grass and trees in their farms.

Reference:
- Rajya sabha unstarred question no. 1530, answered on 02.12.2019
• Jal Jeevan Mission: One lakh tap connections provided daily, 
• Employment Generation Strategies, http://mowr.nic.in/Previous-
site/presentations/Employment%20Generation.pdf
• Vision Document 2019-2024, Ministry of Rural Development
• Rajya Sabha, Un-Starred Question No. 2226, Answered ON 12.03.2020
• Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question No. 1745, Answered ON 05.03.2020
• Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question no. 640 Answered on 06.02.2020
• Rashtriya Poshan Maah celebrations get under way across India, WCD Minister urges various ministries to 
  step up outreach activities during the Poshan Maah,
• In India, women’s self-help groups combat the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic
coronavirus-pandemic-india
• Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3716 Answered on 16.07.2019.
• https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/self-help-groups-make-himachal-s-tribal-pangi-
women-self-reliant/story-6aepwiZdk3l2O31JngGOtK.html
• https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/shg-women-weave-success-story-in-
jagatsinghpur-village/articleshow/72374056.cms
• https://rmk.nic.in/success-stories

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Director and Smt. Kalpana Sharma, Additional Secretary for the use and information of the Members in the discharge of
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