



Rural India and National Rurban Mission

Swati Kulashri*, S. K. Negi

Scientist, CSIR – Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, UT, India

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*swati.kulashri@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

After India gained its independence, despite of surplus welfare policies and schemes that targeted at the upliftment of rural areas, a polarized development was witnessed. The past record of development initiatives in terms of plans and policies had clearly indicated weak attempts to curb the rural-urban disparity. Not only were the policies short-sighted but their implementation were lacking on ground level as well. Even in the current scenario, there is a dominant variation in the degree of development across India, and simultaneous existence of developed urban sub-regions. Concentration of essential physical and social infrastructure remains in the urban areas and hence their development outweighs that of the rural areas. The inefficiency of rural areas to provide for basic infrastructure, economic opportunities and modern amenities has forced the rural population in migrating to the urban areas. This imbalance has led to weaker agricultural productions and has increased infrastructure pressure on urban areas. Urban areas are continuing to attract investments and resources, primarily in terms of housing. The government's inability to meet the rural infrastructure deficit is the primary reason for out migration and creation of informal and unauthorized settlements. Owing to low levels of education, medical and other essential facilities, the rural areas are increasingly becoming dependent on their urban counterparts. Not only is there a need for efficient rural amenities, there is also a need for additional income generating provisions to make the rural areas self-dependent. In this context, the Government of India under the National Rurban Mission aspires to stimulate local economic development and enhance basic services in rural areas to create well planned Rurban clusters.

Keywords: Cluster action plan; National Rurban Mission; Rural development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing countries have recorded the highest numbers of migrants from their rural areas to urban areas. The inadequacy in rural areas to offer adequate social and economic opportunities has contributed to inclined policies by the governments that have favoured urban areas at the expense of developing their rural counterparts.

In developed countries, the rural areas are exploited to their fullest potentials and are visibly leveraged for development in a balanced setting. No developed nation has grown with its limited urban growth. Many developed countries like the USA and Europe give significant importance to their village clusters that contributes to their overall economic development. In such cases, urban primacy is also much lower than compared to other developing countries. Hence, the need for rural development for an overall development of the country is crucial.

The rural population of India as per the Census data has grown up to 12% in the last decade and is over 833 million. There has also been an increase in the number of villages by 2279 during the same period. Government is thus making attempts to curb migration through provision of rural infrastructure and quality housing. Quality housing is a system of internal and external support systems that work together in providing

a holistic liveable environment. It provides for internal as well as external aspects of housing along with economic sustainability with housing at its centre. 'Housing at the centre' can thus be envisaged as a network of support systems comprising of various components that lead to a quality housing and limit the skewed development in a region.

In 2012, Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA) was announced by our late former president Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam. PURA aimed at bridging the rural urban divide by facilitating urban amenities and livelihood opportunities in rural areas and consequently reducing the migration from rural to urban areas. PURA was envisioned for physical and social development of compact areas around a potential growth node. The project was criticised for focusing primarily on physical infrastructure more than the overall economic development.

In India, majority of the rural settlements are dependent on its neighbouring nodes for education, health, agro services, etc. These coexisting settlements are in accessible proximity to each other and form a network of service facilitators within themselves. These networks of interdependent rural settings show homogenous economic potentials and with the unavailability of amenities, these settings tend to rely on growth nodes outside their cluster and to sub-urban and urban regions. The government of India has envisioned

the economic development for such rural settings and has proposed the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM).

2. NATIONAL RURBAN MISSION

The rural areas in India are not stand-alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, which are relatively contiguous to each other. These clusters have potential for growth, and once developed, can then be classified as 'Rurban'. Hence taking these potential rurban clusters into consideration, the Government of India, has launched the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) or National Rurban Mission (NRuM), aimed at developing them by providing economic, social and physical infrastructure facilities. The Mission was launched on 21st February, 2016.

For a balanced development and growth of the country, the mission aspires to strengthen the rural areas and de-burden the urban areas, to induce a balanced growth and benefit the rural as well as the urban areas simultaneously. It aims at development of 300 Rurban clusters in the next five years.

These clusters are planned to be strengthened with the required amenities, for which the resources will be managed through convergence of various schemes of the central and state Government.

The aim of National Rurban Mission is to: “stimulate local economic development, improve basic

services and create well planned Rurban clusters. Enable cluster based development with a “rural soul and urban amenities” along with focus on equity and inclusiveness.” The emphasis is on stimulating local economic development by reducing poverty and increasing employment opportunities in the rural region. A 'Rurban cluster', is envisaged as a cluster of geographically contiguous villages with a population of 25000 to 50000 for plain and coastal areas and 5000 to 15000 for hilly, tribal and desert areas.

3. NRuM MISSION COMPONENTS

Fourteen components have been identified to facilitate the aim of the mission:

- Skill development training
- Agro Processing/ Services
- Sanitation
- Digital Literacy
- Solid and liquid waste management
- Piped water supply
- Village streets and drains
- Street lights
- Upgradation of educational institutes
- Medical care and Mobile health units
- Citizen Service Centres and Digital connectivity
- Public transport
- Inter-village road connectivity
- LPG gas connections.

(Ministry of Rural Development, 2015)

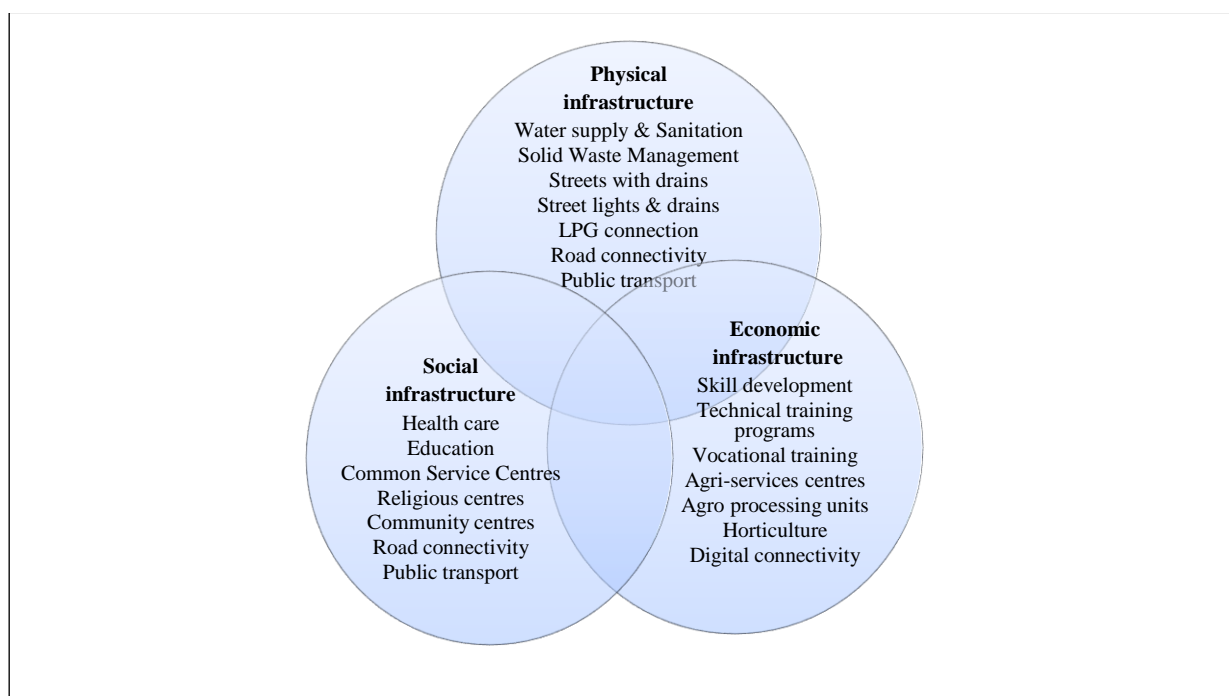


Fig. 1: Components of rural development under National Rurban Mission.

Diversity in income sources of the rural population is vital for their overall economic development. With skill development as one of its key components, the economic conditions of the rural areas can be improved. Regrouping of small individual villages to a cluster of larger settings with higher agricultural potential can help in uplifting the overall quality of life and also to easily facilitate use and delivery of infrastructure and other amenities. Rural India has vast potential to add to various sectors of micro, small and medium enterprises. The mission aims at converging with various skilling programs to cater to the occupational aspirations of unemployed and semi-skilled youth and to upgrade their skills for the various growing sectors of the economy.

Villages with good road connectivity to nearby growth nodes are known to develop faster as many services are accessible to them. Improving road linkages and facilitating public transport will catalyse access to social infrastructure and amenities. The scheme aims at improving accessibility of unconnected habitations to various facilities like education, health, market, etc. It will also help in mobilising raw agricultural materials to agro-processing industries, raw materials for construction of schools and medical services within the villages.

Physical infrastructure facilities like piped water, sanitation facilities like provision for individual household toilets, pucca drains, facilities for solid and liquid waste disposal and treatment, street lights are envisaged to be provided as per standards. Digital connectivity to each village is to be provided by providing communication networks and Common Service Centres for electronic delivery of citizen centric services.

4. NRuM AND CSIR – CBRI

CSIR-CBRI has been associated with the Government of Uttarakhand as their State Technical Support Agency in the preparation of the integrated cluster action plans for two ‘rurban’ clusters of Uttarakhand namely

- Bhagtanpur Abidpur cluster in Haridwar district
- Athoorwala cluster in Dehradun district

The task of preparation of the cluster plans for the Bhagtanpur Abidpur and Athoorwala clusters was carried out in a period of 8 months and involved technical expertise in the fields of rural development, shelter

planning, infrastructure planning, economist, transport planning and geo technical aid.

5. METHEDOLOGY

The Integrated Cluster Action Plan prepared for the Rurban clusters will enunciate the following objectives:

1. Summarizing the existing physical, demographic, social, economical and cultural profile of each Gram Panchayat within the cluster.
2. Assessing the existing infrastructural and economical gap within the cluster and outline the deficiency and needs.
3. Strategizing the cluster visions by the integration of vision and need for each Gram Panchayat in the cluster
4. Detailing out the desired components for the cluster development and scope for resource convergence with various central and state government schemes and funds.
5. Proposing a financial model with investment costing for the proposed components and the critical gap funding required under the NRuM. (Ministry of Rural Development, 2015)

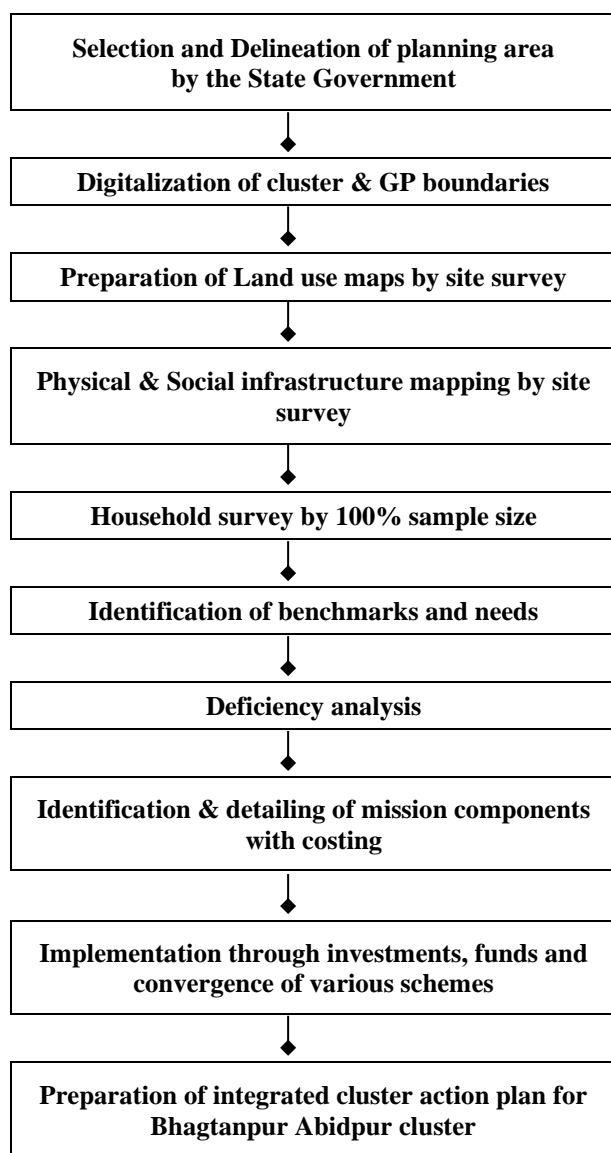
Most of the data for deficiency and need analysis of the cluster available with the various divisions of the state authority was according to the 2011 census. Hence, CSIR-CBRI proposed to update the data base for a precise performance evaluation. Hence, the methodology adopted by CSIR-CBRI was vastly data extraction centric.

Data extraction and documentation was carried out by the following means:

- Household surveys were carried out by the state government based on questionnaires prepared by CSIR- CBRI for both clusters with 100% sampling size. The results established the demographic, social, physical, cultural and economic profile of every revenue village of the two clusters.
- Digitalization of the existing as well as updated administrative boundaries of all Gram Panchayats was done by CSIR-CBRI using the GPS technology on sites and geo-referencing the coordinates on the outdated revenue maps along with the assistance of the associated land record officers.
- Preparation of Land use maps for every village of the two clusters was carried out by CSIR-CBRI. The land use maps gave an accurate representation of the physical development

profile of the villages. The built-up areas and spatial composition along with the physical and social infrastructure were mapped.

The structure outline in the preparation of the integrated cluster action plans for the clusters of Haridwar and Dehradun district is as follows:



6. ENVISIONED OUTCOMES

Conclusively, the scheme aspires to address the rural population by focusing on their various components of housing and infrastructure. In a bigger picture, the National Rurban Mission intends to make rural clusters more economically self-dependant and reduce the crisis of overcrowding in the urban areas. The development of these clusters will also attract the population from even smaller villages to them rather than leap frog to the urban

- Periodic meetings with the stakeholders and concerned authorities to channelize the proposal process in a constructive direction.

settings. Hence the mission will help in achieving twin objectives of strengthening the rural areas and de-burdening the urban areas thereby leading to a balanced regional development and growth of the country.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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