

# POLICY, PLANNING AND PRAXIS OF DEVELOPMENT IN BIHAR'S TARAI REGION

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## Abstract

The increasing injustice, inequalities and unemployment in Tarai Region of Bihar have serious ramifications on its socio-economic and political balance. The marginalisation of Tarai area which has been sub-servient to the urban and developed areas is reflected by simmering rebellion in tharuhat of Bagaha sub-division of West Champaran.

Bihar Tarai region is spread over seven districts and 32 C.D.B.S. It covers about 4.80% geographical area of Bihar and 6.20% of Bihar's total population. Many big and small Himalayan rivers traverse through it galloping vast areas during rainy season. Lack of development of proper infrastructures and traditional agricultural pursuits have told upon the socio-economic health of the region. In this article it has been tried to focus high on policy, planning and real state of development in execution.

A study group of state planning Board, Patna surveyed the Tarai region of Bihar in 2011 under the pressure of movement launched by 'Tharus' known as Tharuhat movement. As per its report about 98.5% population of Tarai region lives in villages. These villages manifest poverty, oppression, suppression, diseases, flood hazards, inequalities, atrocities and feudalism.

The increasing Injustice, inequalities and unemployment in the Tarai areas of Bihar have serious ramifications on Bihar socio-economic and political balance. The marginalization of rural areas which have been subservient to the urban system is reflected by simmering rebellion in many rural and tribal areas in Bihar.

About 96 per cent of Tarai region of Bihar lives in its thousand odd villages. These villages manifest poverty, oppression, disease, inequality and feudalism. Recent Bhatta Parsaul agitation symbolizes the plight of the farmers, authoritarian acquisition of agricultural land for real estate and police brutalities. It is time for the policy planners to look beyond 'development' and come to grips with the basic issues-social oppressions, inequalities, colonial governance, corruption and exclusion. The increasing injustice, inequalities and unemployment in the rural areas have serious ramifications on India's socio-economic and political balance.

Inspite of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which envisages self-governance, power is still concentrated in the hands of few and the village administration is by and large urban-controlled. The concepts of citizen empowerment, participatory governance and decentralization are confined to the academics. The decision making is often piecemeal, ad-hoc and motivated. A lion's share of funding is eaten up by the establishment structure and their salaries. The programs invariably exceed the time and financial allocations. The rural schemes often suffer from lack of linkages with livelihood, health, ecology and poverty alleviation. The spatial dimension of the rural programs and their convergence at regional, district and local village levels are often missing. The process of rural development in the region often starts with a well worked out policy framework, which is followed up by the plans, programs and projects. At the stage of implementation the projects encounter several hurdle-like local politics, vested interests, corruption, lack of local capacity, outdated procedures, societal oppressions, etc. These result into a wide gap between the plans and implementation.

Taking the clues from Amartya Sen's idea of 'Development as Freedom', the issues of rural development can be presented in the following inter-connected areas:

1. Eliminating widespread oppressive social practices.
2. Transparency guarantee.
3. Spatial enablement
4. Water, sanitation and environment.

Understanding these frameworks provides the clues to the gaps between the rural policies, plans, programs and their implementation.

Four critical areas, viz. empowerment, community action, governance reforms and communications are vital for inclusive transformation of the rural areas. The aspects of inclusion are (a) financial inclusion-enhanced productivity, employment generation, (b) social inclusion-connectivity, communication, education, healthcare, gender equity, empowerment, human rights, etc. (c) democratic inclusion-governance, participation, decentralization and localisation (d) ecological inclusion and (e) transparency and service delivery. This involves (i) political, legal, election and governance reforms (ii) social change from oppressions to opportunities, (iii) district and local planning, spatial enablement, and (iv) coordinated and inclusive implementation.

With the globalization and rapid economic development, the village infrastructure needs are multiplying. These have to keep pace with the demands of economic development and should be state of the art, sustainable and forward looking. 'Low cost' may not be critical, as finance is not the issue, but its mobilization by leveraging and partnerships.

The MG NREGA Scheme after 6 years of implementation should now embrace an enlarged paradigm. Moving from the traditional model of projects, programs and financial allocations, it should combine the wider dimensions of sustainability, spatial integration and human rights.

The rural program, such as MG NREGA should harmonise with the emerging aspirations of the rural folks and third generation reforms, such as transparency guarantee, self-governance, local autonomy and new technology (such as solar energy, bio-gas production, wastewater recycling, systems building, etc.)

### **Breaking the Barriers of Rural Development**

At present the MG NREGA and other rural development schemes are government driven and publically financed. In the long run, it is necessary to incentivise the private sector to invest in the rural areas. For this, it would be worthwhile to consider channelizing about 50 per cent of the central government funds for rural development for PPP projects. To widen the base and scope of rural employment, the expansion of non-farm sector, development of Rural Business Hubs, and social entrepreneurship can be the focus areas. The widening of the rural self-sufficiency needs a series of intertwined enablement:

- Financial and Institutional Enablement.
- Spatial Enablement
- Social Enablement
- Technology Enablement

No plan or program can be successful unless it is tied up with community empowerment and addresses to the oppressive traditions, customs and practices. This means evolving a strategy based on equity and social reforms. Accordingly, the governance system needs to change towards an effective delivery of human rights and equity in access to resources, which enable the transformation of the prevailing images of backwardness, inferiority, oppressions, depressions and poverty.

### **Rural Development Planning**

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, is a watershed in rural development and self governance. This has made it mandatory for State Government to constitute District Planning Committees (DPCs) which have to consolidate plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities. The preparation of development plans requires exploring the potential of the districts, priority of various plans and schemes, financial resources mobilisation, environmental sustainability and specific projects for achieving integrated planning and inclusive growth of urban and rural settlements as a composite district development.

The development of rural area depends on location of various economic and social activities, their integration and proper linkages within a larger district framework. Development activities and organizational framework at different levels affect the economy and form of the village settlements. As such the development plans of Districts, Taluka, Tehsil, Block and Panchayats need to be prepared and merge together for a balanced development.

### **Community Development**

The concept of community development aims to capture the positive aspects of collective living and the village ambience. A variety of housing typologies can be developed through community and cooperative efforts where people of similar vocations/faith or lineage live together. The architects and public authorities facilitate them to design and build their house as per their particular needs, resources and living pattern. Each cluster will have common space for the community, and for common services, work area and venue for religious and cultural functions. The layout of housing will attempt recreating traditional values of community living in the following ways:

- Housing cluster approach (comprising minimum of 8 houses) in place of individual shelter/structure.
- Integrated development together with employment generation, economic activities, and community facilities.
- Ample green areas, parks, tot-lots play/ sports fields and rain water harvesting ponds.
- Chowks and squares at cluster level to recreate traditional community living.
- An attractive and cohesive picture.
- Housing integrated with self-employment opportunities and artisan workshop,
- Modular system of housing development.
- Gradual augmentation of services, innovative decentralised systems of solar/wind energy, sewerage, solid waste disposal and drainage.
- Rural Building Center to evolve and apply traditional construction skill, interface with modern construction technology.

This requires reviewing the ongoing Indira Awas Yojana, which like urban housing is individual family centric. This is far from the traditional joint family in a wider context of rural ambience of community living. This will greatly help in reshaping the rural geography of India together with inclusive growth.

### **Conclusion**

With the progress of time various schemes have been launched by the state as well as the central govt. to eradicate poverty and remove regional socio-economic imbalances. MG NREGA, the Land Acquisition Relief and Rehabilitation Bill, 2011, National Food Security Mission, Macro management of Agriculture Rural infrastructure schemes, National old age Pensions Dhanlaxmi Yojna, Swachha Bharat Mission, development of food processing sector, Bee-farming and many other developmental schemes are undergoing schemes which have done benefits to the people of Tarai region to some extent. But there is still a vast scope to bring improvement. A new seed of hope is sprouting in Tarai region where more and more people are buying automobiles, and mobiles and their dreams would also change into reality if development schemes are properly utilised coupled with efforts to bring inclusive growth closer to the study area by providing safeguards for both landowners and livelihoods losses. The dawn of prosperity will take place later or sooner if developmental models are oriented to the least developed areas like Tarai area of Bihar.

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