



INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH 24 PARGANAS DISTRICT: TYPES, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

The district South 24 Parganas has a sharp contrast in spatial distribution of natural resource base, locational advantage and socio-economic environment. The Various dimensions of development, in terms of economic, human and social elements, are the resultant achievements depending on the nature of utilisation of the natural and human resources. So the people without access to certain resources are considered as backward. Various constraints make the path of development very complex. Socio-economic constraints are mainly related with demography, economic activities, role of the different institutions and cultural heritage. Location also plays a crucial role in making disparity. Demographic constraints are related with high rate of population growth, low human and gender development indices, high rate of immigration and low female work participation. Economic activities are associated with the rate of performance in agriculture, fishing, industry and livestock rearing. Role of various educational and health care institutions is very important to eradicate the obstacles of development. Both primary and secondary data have been collected, computed and analysed for the purpose. Due to difference in level of development from earlier days, the district suffers from perpetual inequality in different spheres of life such as in gender development, rural-urban differentiation as well as mainland-island differentiation. Such inequalities are gradually widening despite scientific and technological advancement. This is an endeavour to find out the causes and types of disparities, and to put forward suggestions to eradicate such menace in different levels.

KEY WORDS: *disparities, work participation, rural-urban differentiation, social elements*

I INTRODUCTION

Inequality refers to unequal distribution of resources or opportunities. It is lack of evenness among different area, people or society. Socio-economic constraints like overpopulation, unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, low work participation social unrest and related obstacles on the path of development create inequality. Physiographic differences such as island location may be responsible for creating inequality. The reason is multifaceted, but result is backwardness or underdevelopment of an area or region.

II OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the types of disparities prevail in the district
2. To show the spatial distribution of disparities
3. To find out the causes of inequalities on society and environment
4. To find out impact of inequalities on society and environment

III AREA UNDER STUDY

South 24 Parganas District of West Bengal has latitudinal extension between 21°29'N and 22°33' 45" N on one hand and longitudinal extension between 88° 3' 45"E and 89° 4' 50" E on the other. Area of the district is 9,960 sq. km. It has seven municipalities and 29 community development blocks. Bangladesh is located in the east of the District, East Medinipur and Haora District of West Bengal lie in the West, while Kolkata and North 24 Parganas District lie in the north and Bay of Bengal is in the south of the study area.

The district has rich endowment of natural, social, cultural and economic resources, but, the quality of life is in the phase of 'Struggle for existence'. Natural resource base includes soil, land, water and forest of the mainland and the island ecosystems. Sunderban Biosphere Reserve, located in the southernmost part of the District is a UNESCO world heritage site. Socio-economic resources include human resource, agricultural crops, fresh and saline water, fish, household industry products and range of infrastructure. Diversity and disparity prevail in between rural-urban and mainland-island environment. The major causes of backwardness of this district is underutilisation of resources and not scarcity of resources.

IV MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study both primary and secondary data have been collected. Secondary data have been collected from District Statistical Handbook (2017), Census of India (2011), Socio-economic and Caste Census-2011, India Meteorological Department, State Water Investigation Department, and Central Ground Water Board.

Primary data for present study have been generated from 29 Community Development blocks and seven Municipalities on the basis of pre-designed questionnaire following the purposive method of sampling. Collected data have been tabulated, followed by necessary calculation and graphical representation.

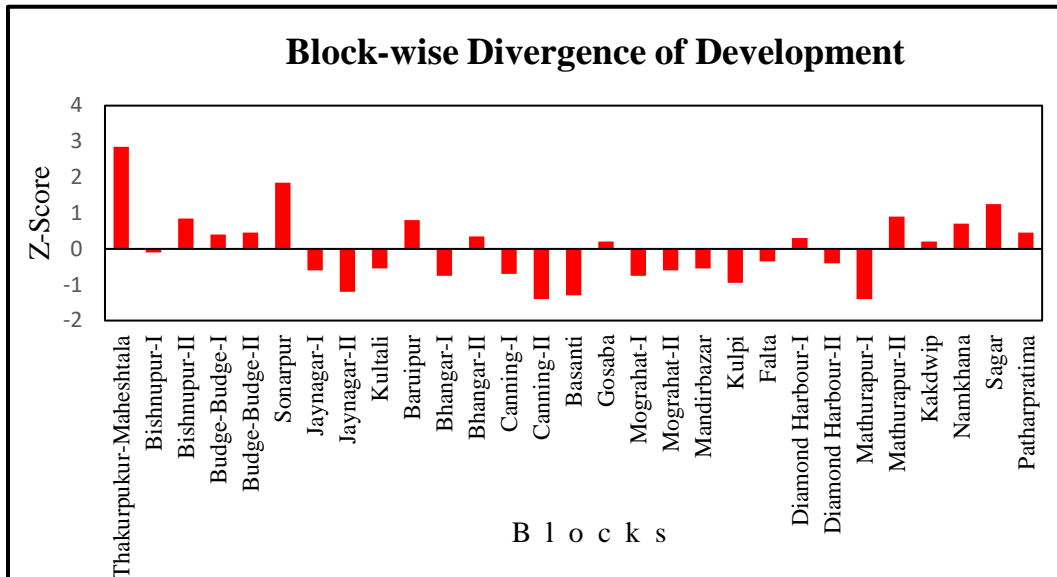
V RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unequal development develop inequalities in different sphere. Not only development, physiographic condition, such as mainland-island location, deltaic environment, excess salinity in soil and water create adverse condition of development. Different types of inequality found in this district are:

1. Block-wise inequality
2. Subdivision-wise inequality
3. Mainland-island inequality
4. Inequalities in municipalities
5. Gender inequality
6. Rural-urban inequality

Block-wise Inequality: Block-wise inequality have been seen in case of human, economic and social development. Different socio economic data, such as literacy, income, age of living, sanitation, no of health centres, length of road, drinking water availability etc have been taken as parameter to calculate Z score. Block-wise divergence from standard score of development have been shown in fig-1. From fig no-1, it is clear that 14 blocks have scored more than average and 15 blocks have scored below average. All the blocks in near to Kolkata, like Baruipur, Sonarpur along with blocks within Sunderban region like , Kakdwip, Namkhana, Sagar, Patharpratima, have recorded more than average development score. Gosaba, Bhargar-II, and Diamond Harbour-I too have more than average score. Other blocks have below average development. These differce in development develop inequality among blocks.

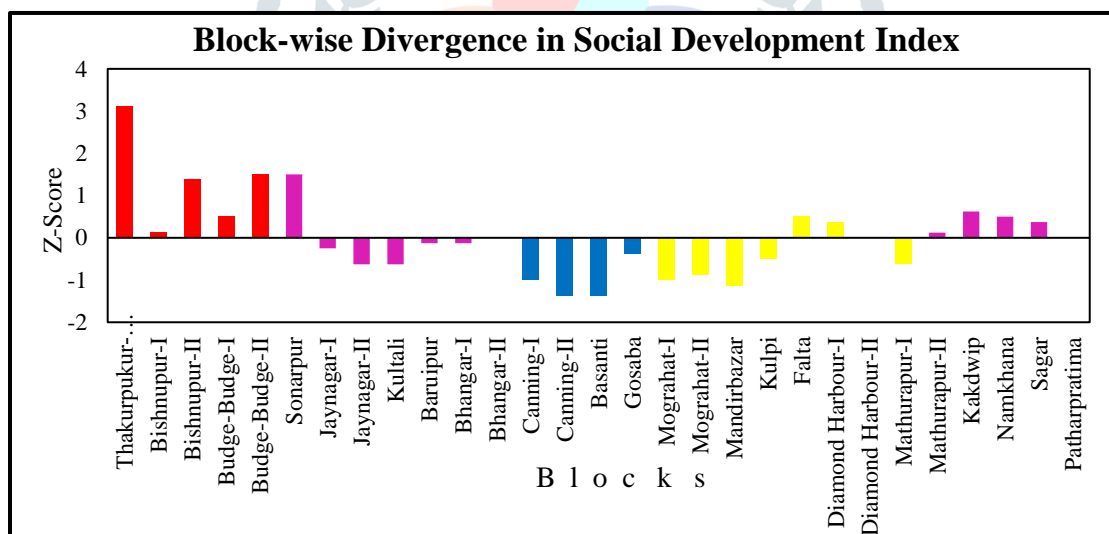
Fig-1



Source: Census of India, 2011

Sub-division wise inequality: Five sub-divisions viz. Alipore (consisting of five blocks), Baruipur (seven blocks), Diamond Harbour (nine blocks), Canning (four blocks) and Kakdwip (four blocks) are there present in the district. Disparities in sub-divisions have been measured by the components of social development index. Five subdivisions viz Alipore, Canning, Diamond Harbour, Baruipur and Kakdwip are present in this district. All blocks of Alipore and Kakdwip subdivision have social development above average level.

Fig-2



Source: Census of India, 2011

Most important causes are: i) Historical legacy: Budge Budge was famous for its port since the British period. Location of this subdivision is in proximity to Kolkata. So the surrounding area is also developed in comparison to remote rural blocks. ii) Economic factors: Work participation rate is more than 35 percent in Alipur subdivision and below 33 percent in Diamond harbour subdivision. Alternative livelihood except agriculture is also absent in Diamond harbour and Canning subdivisions. So disparity prevails between Alipur and Canning on one hand and so also between Alipur and Diamond Harbour subdivision on the other. (Bandyopadhyay,2018)

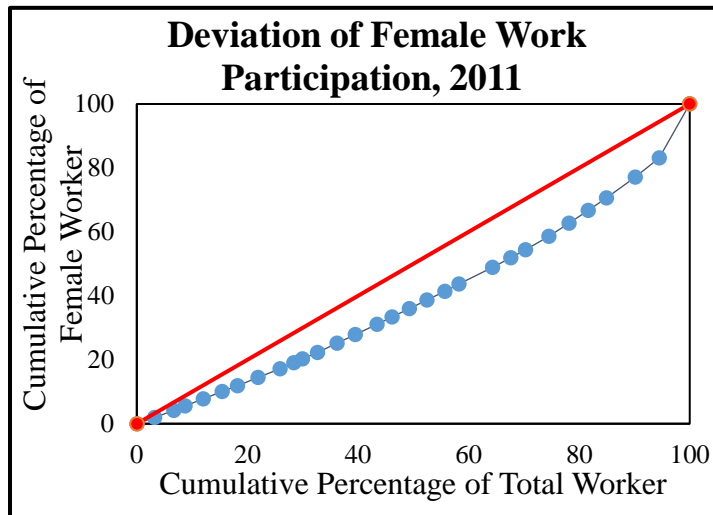
Mainland-island Disparity: Islands mainly exist in the Sunderban blocks. The environment and economy do not have much difference, but infrastructural facilities mainly constitute the difference. The parameters chosen are: irrigated land, number of deep tube wells for irrigation, percentage of households having electricity as source of energy, length of the surface roads, population served per bank, percentage of households availing banking facility, number of library, number of livestock animals, distance to the nearest railway station and percentage of workers engaged in primary activities. It is very clear enough that mainland blocks like Thakurpukur-Maheshtala, Sonarpur, Bishnupur-II are more developed than the island blocks like Gosaba, Kultali, and Patharpratima.

Because all the parameters have immense effect on livelihood like agriculture, fishing and livestock rearing. Extension of surface road or location nearer the railway station extend benefit of providing the products in lesser cost or get time benefit to reach the destination in urban area. Lesser percentage of workers engaged in primary activities indicate the availability of alternative livelihood in lieu of agriculture.

Inequalities in Municipalities: Municipalities have unequal development in terms of infrastructure, economic and human resource development. On the basis of seven socio-economic parameters, such as percentage of working population, literacy rate, percentage of households getting electricity as source of energy, latrine facility, having waste water outlet, availing banking facility, and possessing computer connection with internet development index have been calculated by Kendall's score of development. Older municipalities are more developed rather than newly built municipalities.

Gender Inequality: Difference in every sphere of development create gender disparity. Parameters like literacy, longevity, work participation, income, are low in case of women rather than men. Not only are that female deprived from enjoying freedom of movement or recreation even in municipalities. So there is a huge gap among gender development.

Fig-3



Source: Census of India, 2011

Rural-Urban inequality: Rural-urban disparity shows the difference in levels of development in rural and urban areas of a particular block and in addition to the total district. Here urban areas include the census town of different C.D. blocks. Kendall's score of development have been opted to measure the level of development. Parameters taken are: percentage of working population, literacy rate, percentage of households having good residence, potable drinking water, electricity as main source of energy, latrine facility, LPG as source of cooking fuel, availability of banking facility, possession of computer with internet facility and motorbike. Analysing the score it may be stated that in all the C.D. blocks except Diamond Harbour-II, urban areas are more developed than rural areas. This is because of good infrastructure and connectivity of the urban centres as compared to that of rural areas.

VI CONCLUSION

At the end of the inequality analysis it may be stated that rural agro based economy despite support of fishing has lesser sustainability than secondary or tertiary sectors predominant in urban areas and as the district is mainly rural in nature, target of sustainable development goals are distant one. The Sundarban region is underprivileged in respect of all parameters and variables. Developed blocks are agglomerated around the city of Kolkata. Finally the rural-urban dichotomy is evident which shows that the blocks comprising of at least high number of more census towns are more developed in comparison to the rest of them. It is necessary to keep on record that in order to reduce the spatial disparity in level of development, people should be educated and aware enough to demand basic amenities and privileges provided by the Government under different schemes, of which the most important is providing Urban Amenities for Rural Areas (PURA).

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