

PURA: A SYNDICATED APPROACH TO RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES

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Rural and urban are two unique words that don't require any definitions but still there can be major variations in defining these two terms/areas. Generally the leading criteria taken into consideration for this purpose is population size and density and the availability of the primary facilities like provisions for primary healthcare, availability of drinking water, primary and secondary educational facilities, banking services, etc. Rural-urban interactions can be defined as linkages, may be in the form of transition of people, money, household items, information, agricultural products and service sectors. The increasing speed of urbanisation has/is posed/posing great challenges for the policy makers in handling this paradigm shift in the make-up of the nation. It is expected that the population of the country would increase up to 590 million by 2030 and urbanisation is expected to impact almost every part of the country because every human being desires to have urban facilities for better living. This pace

of urban expansion has definitely affected the GDP split which was almost evenly distributed between urban and rural economies during 90s but it is expected and projected that the urban India would generate almost 70% of its GDP by 2030. In this process the income of the urban occupants would increase resulting in increase in demand for key services which may also increase to many folds by that time.

Today urban India is distributed in shape with a diverse range of large and small cities, spread widely across the nation. To address the issue of urbanisation, India should continue to aim at a distributed model of urbanisation because this suits the federal structure of the country too and helps to ensure that the migration flow is not balanced towards any particular region. On the other hand if India continues to invest in the urban infrastructure at the same pace, it would be difficult to control the transition and flow of human beings from the rural to urban areas,



hence requires adopting some strategy so that the urbanisation can be controlled and managed effectively. The only way to do this is through distribution/provision of urban amenities to the rural areas so that migration towards the cities can be minimised. The government has started many schemes to control such challenges but the scheme like PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) is the right attempt taken by the government to bridge the gap between the urban and the rural in providing the amenities in rural areas which are at par with those of urban areas.

Understanding Rural-Urban Differences

It is well understood that there are typical characteristics which define urban and rural concepts very well and influence the livelihood of people of both the areas. Although efforts are being made to generalise but still there is great a diversity between urban and rural areas, few of them are mentioned below:

It is seen from the above tabulated characteristics of rural and urban people which highlight a huge gap in amenities that rural areas require, so that they can be brought at par with urban people and the transition can be minimised.

PURA (Provisions of Urban Facilities in Rural Areas)

When we think of equity and justice, there should not be any difference between the facilities being provided to the rural and urban people. But there is huge gap of facilities available in the rural and urban areas. Lack of such facilities like livelihood opportunities, modern urban amenities and other services for decent living in rural areas results in deprivation and dissatisfaction amongst the people. This deprivation results in migration of a large number of people from rural areas to urban areas. To address this issue, the former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2003 gave a vision of transforming the rural India through launching a mega mission/scheme PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas). In his address to the nation on the eve of Republic Day 2003, he visualized providing four connectivities; *physical connectivity, electronic connectivity, knowledge connectivity* and these three leading to *economic connectivity* for rural areas.

According to Dr. A.P.J. Kalam, the thrust areas of PURA are:

- ❖ Creation of employment opportunities for all the employable people particularly the youth of the country.

Livelihoods and the Rural-urban Continuum	
Rural	Urban
Livelihoods drawn from agriculture, forest, fishing or from other natural resources	Livelihoods drawn from labour markets through marketing of goods and services
Access to natural capital like mountains, forests, mines, etc.	Reliance on space for production and access to income generating opportunities
Land availability is more and easy to build a house on cheaper rates	Access to land is very difficult and land markets are highly commercialised
Huge gap in the awareness about the services provided by the governments for their welfare and benefits	People are more aware about the facilities but highly venerable to governance deficit
Access to various public facilities is limited because of distance criteria and limited capacity to pay except few	Access to infrastructure and other services is difficult to low income people because of high prices and commercialisation
Fewer rely on cash as they depend more on agricultural products that is prone to climatic conditions	Greater reliance on cash for availing the things for day to day requirements

- ❖ Capacity building of education-schools, value added employable skills and knowledge for all sectors of the society.
- ❖ Provision of quality and timely health care, safe drinking water, quality reliable electric power, energy and water efficient pucca houses.
- ❖ Physical, Electronic, Knowledge and Economic connectivity for the rural areas.

Mission and Objectives of the PURA Scheme

The mission of this scheme was holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat (or a group of Gram Panchayats) through Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework for providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas. The objectives set for this scheme was to provide livelihood opportunities and urban amenities in rural areas to bridge the rural-urban divide.

Analytical Discussion

PURA was thought to be a self-sustainable model of service delivery to be managed by local community through Panchayats in coordination with private sector under the guidance of public authorities who will provide the funding for initial

infrastructural support. It was expected that through PURA scheme the connectivity and infrastructure will enhance enabling in empowering the rural people and creating various growth opportunities for themselves and will ultimately control and reduce the transition from rural to urban areas.

It was resolved/planned that in the beginning of the scheme it will be launched on pilot basis and during 10th Five Year Plan (2004-2005 and 2006-2007) seven pilot projects were launched in Basmath (Maharashtra), Bharthana (U.P), Gohpur (Assam), Kujanga (Orissa), Motipur (Bihar), Rayadurg (A.P) and Shahpura in Rajasthan. During the evaluation study it was found by NIRD (National Institute of Rural Development) that there is a need of participation from the side of local community and private sectors, there is a need of infrastructure development including the site selection on the basis of need and moreover for better convergence with the schemes already being run in that area. It was also found that the scheme was having a lack of effective business plan too. Although initially each of these schemes were operated autonomously and the standards set for infrastructure services delivery in the rural areas were far below those set for the urban population. Based on the findings given by NIRD it was felt that this scheme

Composition of PURA Project		
Amenities to be provided under scheme of MoRD (Ministry of Rural Development) and Ministry of Drinking water and Sanitation (Mandatory)	Amenities to be provided under schemes of other Ministries (Non-MoRD) Illustrative list	Add-on Projects (Revenue earning, people centric projects) Illustrative list
1. Water and Sewage	7. Village Street Lighting	10. Village base Tourism
2. Street Lights	8. Telecom Services	11. Integrated Rural Hub, Rural Markets
3. Drainage	9. Electricity Generation	12. Agro-common Services centre and Warehousing
4. Solid Waste Management		13. Any other rural economy based project
5. Skill Development		
6. Development of Economic activities		

Source: Modified PURA Scheme Guidelines, Ministry of Rural Development, GoI

requires restructuring at larger level and should be implemented again on pilot basis during 11th Five Year Plan as a Central Sector Scheme. On the basis of the findings given by NIRD, the Planning Commission undertook an appraisal of the projects in 2007 and advised restructuring PURA as a demand-driven PPP scheme with the following key features:

1. Selection of the lead agency with clear goals and responsibilities
2. Selection of cluster on the basis of economic growth potential
3. Commitment of the State Government for facilitation support
4. Financial outlay for a PURA cluster to the tune of 70-80 crores, with the Central Government participation limited to 25-30 crores
5. Focus on livelihood opportunities and
6. Creation of a sustainable revenue generation model to encourage commercial banks and the private sectors to participate.

The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India re-launched the scheme PURA in the latter half of the 11th FYP as a Central Sector scheme with the support from Department of Economic Affairs and the technical assistance of Asian Development Bank to implement the scheme of PURA under PPP framework between Gram Panchayats and private sector partners. The scheme envisages the twin mission of developing rural infrastructure with economic generating activities which was a major goal of the scheme.

Points to Remember for Re-structured PURA Project

1. Convergence of schemes from Ministry of Rural Development and other Central Government schemes.
2. Competitive and transparent bidding process adopted for selection of the private sector partner.

3. Twinning of rural infrastructure with economic activities generation.
4. Public Private Partnership (PPP) between Gram Panchayat and private partner.
5. PURA is treated as a 'Project' and not a government scheme where private sector partner has to prepare a detailed business plan.
6. Single window mechanism for approvals and release of grants where major funding is to be done by MoRD.
7. It is not a CSR activity but private sector partner can earn profit from the PURA project.

Conclusion

After understanding the PURA project it can be said that despite launching of various schemes by the government for rural employment generation, removing poverty, providing urban amenities, availability of healthcare facilities etc., a huge gap still exists between the rural and urban areas. And the basic reason which comes out is the lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Due to this reason it has been observed for long that there is transition of people from the rural to urban areas in search of jobs, education, better healthcare facilities and other amenities which are not available in the rural areas. It is also very important to note down here is that there has been a sharp decrease in the share of agriculture in the GDP which has been taken over by service sector to a large extent. In this process the concept of PURA can be very fruitful in generating the employment in the rural areas through PPP and expected to bring prosperity to some extent in the rural areas.

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