

Rural Infrastructure under Bharat Nirman – A Review and Critical analysis

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ABSTRACT

India has around 80 percent (census 2011) of the population living in the rural areas, with low levels of per capita income, there is need to impart greater attention in improving rural infrastructure. Infrastructure is regarded as a major indicator of the growth of any nation as it provides the economic and sociological strength to the country. Infrastructure sector has a number of backward-forward linkages with the agricultural and the industrial sectors and therefore, the development of this sector is a prerequisite for the development of the economy. To address the issue of rural infrastructure, Bharat Nirman programme was launched by the Government during the year 2005-09 as a time bound programme to boost rural infrastructure in order to alleviate poverty and provide employment to people. The paper mainly focuses on progress of rural infrastructure under Bharat Nirman and puts forth suggestions for improvement and expedition of rural infrastructure to ensure inclusive growth.

Key words: Bharat Nirman, Development, GNP, Rural Infrastructure, Rural-Urban gap.

1.INTRODUCTION

Rural development is one of the most important factor for the nation's socio-economic development. Rural development can be no longer be identified with mere increase in Gross National Product (GNP) or even per capita income. The increased income should be distributed so as to result in significant diminution of inequalities of income and wealth. Rural development in India has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies and programmes. Rural development can be more meaningful only through the implementation of clienteles of development. Just as the implementation is the touchstone for planning, people's participation is the centre-piece in rural development. The development of rural India is imperative for

inclusive and equitable growth and to unlock the huge potential of the population that is presently trapped in poverty with its associated deprivations. The analysis of incidence of poverty across Indian states indicates that poverty is very closely linked to the absence of social infrastructure. The large magnitude of the rural population, their prevailing socio-economic conditions and the quality of life calls for an all-round development in rural infrastructure to achieve the rural long cherished objectives of equitable and inclusive growth with social justice. During the last six decades of the planning period, the country's economists and planners have identified the potential of a vibrant rural India and advocated for the improvement and the expansion of rural socio-economic infrastructure. While the 11th 5 year plan (2007-12) noted a direct and significant casual relationship between infrastructure and the incidence of poverty in states, thus approach to the twelfth 5 year plan (2012-2017) laid a renewal emphasis on the creation of physical infrastructure like roads, railways, power and telecommunication.

Rural population migrates to urban cities for employment opportunities and better facilities. There is a need to encourage reverse migration to rural areas through proper development of rural infrastructure and basic amenities by creation of income generation avenues and improving quality of life. Failure to do so and isolated development of urban centres will neither help the urban areas in long run as it will put more pressure on the urban cities due to pull factors nor will it help in development of rural areas. Therefore the development of rural areas along with urban areas in conformity with the theory of balanced growth will help in addressing the infrastructural issues of rural areas. The argument of Nurkse in favour of balanced growth in both the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy vindicates the fact that development can't afford to bypass the major and important sector of the economy. The Theory of Balanced growth states that there should be simultaneous and harmonious development of different sectors of the economy so that all sectors grow in unison. In order to achieve balanced growth, development of rural infrastructure is necessary. Considering the importance in the sustenance of economic growth, the Govt. of India (GoI) had launched a programme on rural infrastructure called 'Bharat Nirman' as a time bound business plan for implementation in four years (2005-2009).

II. BHARAT NIRMAN

Bharat Nirman is a time bound comprehensive programme implemented by the Govt. of India in partnership with State Governments and Panchayat Raj Institutions and it was launched on Dec 16, 2005. The initiative had sought an active and transparent public-private partnership for immediate execution of various infrastructure related development projects in a mission mode. Although Bharat Nirman registered considerable progress by 2009, non achievement of goods set under the programme prompted Govt. of India to expand the time line for the completion of targeted activities to 2012. The objective of the Bharat Nirman programme is to impart a sense of urgency to create rural infrastructure and mitigate the urban-rural divide in terms of infrastructure access. There are six components of Bharat Nirman, and these include irrigation, drinking water, rural electrification, rural roads, rural housing and rural telephony.

Objective of the study

1. To study the components of Bharat Nirman;
2. To evaluate the targets and achievements thereof, under different components of Bharat Nirman programme.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive and mainly based on secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from different sources like articles, manuals, research papers, govt. website of Bharat Nirman.

Components of Bharat Nirman

There are mainly six major components of the programme providing a better quality life to rural households.

These are:

1. Rural roads
2. Rural housing
3. Rural irrigation
4. Rural telecommunication
5. Rural water supply
6. Rural telephony.

III.TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENT

The targets under the programme were made in different variables under six components.

Rural Roads

Bharat Nirman entailed providing connectivity to all habitation of 1000 and above (500 and above in the case of hilly states, tribal and desert areas) by 2011. The programme envisaged to provide connectivity to 63,940 habitations till the year 2011. It was embedded in the PMGSY (Pradhan Mamtri Grameen Sadak Yojana) with a wider funding base and extended scope. The programme envisages generation of multiplier effect in the rural economy by linking sites of production to market and services up to March 2012, projects to connect 58,387 habitations were sanctioned. Out of this, 44089 habitations were connected by constructing 141,095 Kms of new roads. To ensure quality in construction of rural roads, vigorous quality control measures were followed, backed by independent quality checks and measurements.

Progress of Rural Road Infrastructure under Bharat Nirman

| | March 2009 | March 2012 |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 63,940 | 31,924 (58%) | 58,387 (69%) |
| 1,89,897 | 85,405 (58%) | 1,41,096 (74%) |
| 1.94,131 | 1,55,019 (80%) | 2,35,903 (122%) |

Sources: Mid-term appraisal for eleventh five year plan 2007-12

www.bharatnirman.gov.in

Twelfth five year plan 2012-17, Planning Commission

Table indicates as many as 69 per cent of the target habitations have been provided connectivity under Bharat Nirman initiative as on March 31, 2012. The table indicates achievement is higher in 2012 than in 2009.

Rural Housing

Indira Awas Yojana (1985-86) is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development to provide houses to the poor in the rural areas on cost sharing basis between central govt. and state govt, in the ratio of 75:25. However in hilly areas of North Eastern States and Sikkim, funding is shared in 90:10 but in case of union territories, the entire fund is provided by central government.

Under phase I of the rural housing component of Bharat Nirman, 60 lacs houses were to be constructed through Indira Awas Yojna during 2005-06 to 2008-09. Against this target, 71.76 lac houses were constructed. During 2009-10 as against the target of construction of 40.52 lakh houses, 33.87 houses were constructed. It was proposed to double the earlier target and to construct 120 lakh houses during the earlier target and to construct 120 lakh houses during the next 5 year period starting from the year 2009-10. Against this, 65.87 lakh houses were completed by 31st March, 2012.

While the physical progress in the provision of rural housing is much more than the Bharat Nirman target, the involvement of beneficiaries in the construction of a house under the scheme Was not found to be satisfactory. For effective implementation of the scheme, the beneficiaries need to actively participate

throughout the construction process i.e. making own arrangements for procurement of construction material, engaging skilled workmen and also contributing family labour.

Irrigation

Bharat Nirman ambitiously targeted the creation of an additional 10 million hectare irrigation potential by 2009-10. The important component to achieve better irrigation facilities is Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP). The main task of AIBP is to provide a better irrigation facility to rural people for the development of agriculture. At the end of March 2010, the country could achieve the creation of an additional irrigation capacity of 73 lakh hectares, thereby leaving a gap of 27 million hectares irrigation potential.

It was during the second phase of Bharat Nirman (i.e 2010-11 and 2011-12) in which the creation of irrigation potential surpassed the original target fixed for this component by 1.16 million hectares. From 2005-06 up to 31st march 2012, irrigation potential of 1.18 million hectares has been created under this initiative. This has been achieved by either completion of various ongoing major and medium irrigation projects, extension, modernization and renovation of major and medium irrigation projects.

While the achievements of targets on creation of additional irrigation potential is praiseworthy, it is desired that the irrigation potential so created over the years should be fully utilized and gap between the potential created and the actual utilization narrowed. The full utilization of irrigation potential requires actions like

1. Timely completion of field channels and drains;
2. Appropriate land levelling and shaping;
3. Involvement of farmers in taking decisions on usability of such created potential.

Rural Electrification

Power Infrastructure plays a vital role in sustained economic development of a country. India has around 805 (Census 2011) of population living in the rural areas with 167.8 million households, out of which only 92,808,181 are electrified and 839,133 households are non-electrified. Remaining 74,179,414 households are using either kerosene or other sources of lighting. Rural electrification is often considered to be backbone of the rural economy. As per the 11th 5 year plan, the rural electrification programme during the first two years, the progress under both the objectives (electrification of villages and households) has registered on achievement of 34% and 6% respectively. There are however major shortfalls in this sector. Under the programme, the govt. had set a target to provide electricity to 1.25 lakh villages and 2.3 crore households living the below poverty line (BPL) during the four year period. Some of rural electrification schemes run by Government of India are:

- . Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) 2005
- . Deendayal Upadhaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) 2014
- . Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY)
- . Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LED'S for All (UJALA)

RGVY was launched in April 2005 to electrify all un-electrified villages/habitations and to provide access to electricity to all rural households in un-electrified and electrified villages in the entire country. DDUGJY was launched in Dec, 2014. This programme is one of the flagship programmes of the Govt. of India and also aims to facilitate 24*7 supply of power to all. To make electricity distribution sector better equipped and efficient, the Govt. of India has initiated UDAY. UDAY is a path-breaking reform and is aimed to restructure the way state-owned Discoms operate, currently reeling under a mountain of debt and mounting operational losses every year. The Govt. of India has also launched the National Programme for LED-based Home and Street Lighting for energy conservation by reducing energy consumption. Along with this programme, Energy Efficiency Services Ltd., (EESL) Govt. of India organisation, has launched the scheme for LED bulbs distribution under the Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP) in March 2015. On March 2016, National led LED bulbs scheme got a new face in 'UJALA'. The main objective is to promote efficient lighting, enhance awareness on using efficient equipment which reduces electricity bills and helps preserve environment. Under this programme, LED bulbs are being distributed in a phased manner. As on June 28, 2016, a total of around 123 million LED bulbs had been distributed that is equivalent to saving of around 43 million KWh/day of energy and avoiding 3205 MW of peak demand.

Rural electrification programme needs to focus on sustainability and bringing in economic development of the rural committees.

Rural Water supply

Rural drinking water is one of the six components of Bharat Nirman. The target for providing access to safe drinking water to identified habitation was achieved well before March 2012. As against 55,067 uncovered habitations to be covered during the phase- I of Bharat Nirman (2005-09) 54,477 habitations were covered by March 2009. The remaining habitation, of which many were in difficult areas lacking sustainable sources of drinking water, was covered by March 2012. The strategy adopted under the National Rural Drinking Water programme to ensure that the rural population gets at least 40 litres per capita per day of safe water from sources lying within the village or nearby. The major challenge before the Govt. is now to ensure (a) safe drinking water in the slipped back habitations through irrigation of defunct bore pumps, carrying out repairs to water supply pipelines, augmentation of supply wherever required and; (b) sustainability of quality water supply to areas covered under Bharat Nirman.

Rural Telephone connectivity

India has witnessed a rapid expansion of the telecommunication sector in the last decade. As in 2005, as many as 66,822 villages were without telephone connection. The Bharat Nirman programme was expected to provide every Indian village with telephone access by end 2007. The successful implementation of this programme has registered increased teledensity in rural areas. The rural teledensity in 2009-10 was 15.11 and rose by 17.88 percentage points to 32.99 as on 28-02-2011.

During phase II of Bharat Nirman, the target was fixed for connecting 2.47 lakh village panchayats with broad band facility. Out of 5.93 lakh inhabited villages in the country, about 5.81 lakh villages have been provided with village public telephone (VPT). Out of 3.5 lakh targeted village panchayats, 1.57 lakh have been connected through broadband as in March 2012. It was expected that the National Optical Fibre Networks (NOFN) project of the government of India would take broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh villages by 2014. As per the Eleventh Plan Document, the only sector where the progress has been good is rural telephony.

IV.CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

Infrastructure provides the basic framework for economic and social progress of a country. Bharat Nirman has become lifeline to new markets, new businesses, new incomes and above all to new opportunities. Reliable infrastructure services as an important consideration in their investment decisions. In an increasingly globalising world, availability of good quality infrastructure is a crucial factor in attracting foreign investments. The investments made under the Bharat Nirman has enriched the rural economy to a greater extent and helped in narrowing down the gap between rural and urban India by spreading growth benefits uniformly.

Though Bharat Nirman as a project has progressed in achieving building social sector infrastructure; yet a lot of gaps need to be filled to help this flagship programme on infrastructure to reach its time ethos. The gap between planning and implementation could be achieved by proper monitoring system. There is need of transparency in the amount of money used, where it is used. The middle men approach (through Panchayats or blocks) should be avoided especially for payment of new method of direct cash transfer (DCT) can be used, so that misallocation and mis utilization in fund delivery is avoided. A proper check on the quality of work needs to be taken into consideration. Use of ICT (Information communication Technology) in rural areas to make people more aware and participate in the programme would help generate employment and reach desired targets. Public Private Partnership should be thrust area in order to meet the targets and ensure the expedition of rural development process.

A comprehensive mechanism ensuring proper implementation of the schemes and timely execution of the programmes would help the programme reach its time bound mission.

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