



Challenges for Rural Infrastructure Development Fund: A Case Study of Karnataka State

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ABSTRACT

Once upon a time man used to live a very primitive life. His wants were very limited and limited only to the basic needs. At different stages of evolution herd living became a way of life for various animals and ultimately human beings converted it to social living. In the process of achieving this social living, people found the necessity of various facilities. Human settlements started at simple places, where people could live with some level of convenience and enjoy some measure of security against outside threats. The current article highlights the challenges for rural infrastructure in Karnataka.

KEYWORDS:

Rural, Infrastructure, Karnataka

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure is required for social and economic growth and for promoting the quality of life both in urban and rural areas. For instance



in urban areas, lack of adequate mass transport facilities has spawned an explosion of personalized transport especially of two wheelers and cars. The proliferating automobiles in cities have hiked pollution and accidents as never before. The clogged arteries of the cityscape have paradoxically slowed down mobility. And the urban-rural divide is manifest in every field of infrastructure development including transport. A large number of villages lack a reliable all weather road connection with near-by markets and towns.

Although hunting, gathering and fishing were the first preoccupations of primitive man, it was soon discovered that some kinds of tools had to be made for even these elementary activities. In addition, they soon found out that provisions should be made to help them face the adversities of the local weather and the hostilities of other tribes and wild animals. These facilities were the first elemental components of an infrastructure that made living, gathering hunting and producing possible.

Passenger Transport service is mainly provided by the KSRTC in the district. However, private sector also plays an important role in providing transport service .A Few Taluks in the district have no bus depots, which comes on the way of efficient discharge of transport service by the K.S.R.T.C.



Konkan Railway provides train service in the coastal taluks of Uttar Kannada District. It connects the district with commercial centers like Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Kerala, Chennai etc. There is no rail connectivity from coastal talukas to commercial center Hubli and the State capital Bangalore.

Except Karwar, no other ports in the district, like Tadadi, Belkere etc are properly developed. In this connection it may be noted that the High Power Committee on Redressal of Regional Imbalance headed by Dr.D.M.Nanjundappa stressed the need for development of small ports like Tadadi, Belekeri, Bhatkal etc. in order to help the people in this region. Though the district consists of 140kms long coastal belt, the maritime infrastructure is not properly developed.

There is a great demand for mobile phones in the district but unfortunately remote areas have no proper coverage as most of the towers are in taluk areas and near taluk centers. There is a competition between various mobile service providers. Private Sector companies pose a tuff competition to BSNL in the district. There is more demand for establishment of mobile towers in remote areas.

The survey revealed that there were no co-operative farming societies in the district. But such farming societies are necessary in this area as the



gap between the demand for agriculture labourers and their supply, is increasing day by day.

There are three Hydel power stations and a nuclear power station in the district generating a total of over 1700 MW of electricity. The irony of Uttara Kannada District power generation is that – it consumes less than 20MW of over 1700MW of electricity produced from hydel and nuclear source in this district. This is a clear indication of how little the district has gained, especially considering the fact that over the decades, 3200 acres of forestland has been submerged for constructing dams. Tens of villages have been displaced due to submergence but very little in terms of rehabilitation has ever been achieved.

Though there are enough facilities in Government Schools, the public interest is levered towards private schools. In fact many people showed their dissatisfaction about the quality of education in government schools. As per the report of the officials of the department of education, school drop- out rate has been significantly reduced in recent years due to the implementation of various plans of the Government.

CHALLENGES FOR RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Due to heavy rain fall and the movement of heavy vehicles the national and state highways get damaged time and again. Therefore, it is better to



make cement roads as far as national highways are concerned. And these roads are to be maintained properly and National Highway Authorities should be made more responsible for proper maintenance of these roads.

There are many villages which do not have road connectivity due to lack of population. Government should take suitable measures to provide road connectivity to such remote places. All villages in the district should be provided with all weather roads.

There are many islands in the district which do not have road connectivity. The life in these islands is horrible particularly during rainy season. So Government should take proper measures for construction of bridges and to provide road connectivity.

The proposed projects providing rail connectivity between Ankola and Hubli and Honnavar and Talguppa are to be implemented at the earliest. Right now, to provide the rail connectivity to the state capital Bangalore, the Bangalore-Mangalore Train should be extended up to Karwar. Frequency of local passenger train from Mangalore to Margoa should be increased.

Banks should provide more assistance to agriculture sector, as agriculture is the main occupation in Uttar Kannada District. Banks should give priority for research and innovation in agriculture sector.



They should provide assistance to research projects in agriculture which are feasible in this area.

Government should give more importance for improving the quality in primary and secondary education. Mere increase in the number of students enrolled is of no use unless they come out with good quality. While implementing various schemes in primary and secondary education, the Government should not concentrate much on the records rather it should develop student centered programme which will develop and enhance the competence of the students. Government should provide computer education facility at higher primary level.

While establishing the Government degree colleges the government should make a detailed analysis of the requirement of the college in a particular area and must give due importance for providing basic infrastructure to these colleges and their viability should also be looked into. Mere establishment of Government colleges without assurance of quality will not serve any purpose. In the era of drastic change the college education is passing through a critical stage and phenomenal change is noticed. Therefore, it is a tough challenge for the Government colleges to provide learner based quality education.



Agricultural infrastructure such as cold storage warehousing, agriculture training institutes, research centers, etc. should be developed in the district, to augment agricultural development.

The present study highlights the infrastructure development in Uttar Kannada District in detail. A detailed analysis of individual sectors and the composite index discussed during the course of the study gives us macro and micro insights into the different aspects of infrastructure development in Uttar Kannada District. Some of the important findings drawn from the analysis related to various components of infrastructure and disparities are presented below:

In Uttar Kannada district, though water transport and rail transport are accessible, road transport is the main means of transport. The district covers about 15055 kms of road length, comprising of National Highways, State Highways, District Roads, Municipality roads and Village Roads. The village roads are mainly mud roads and majority of them are not suitable for transport during rainy season.

It is harsh reality that at the time of interview, public showed their anger on the authorities for the woeful neglect of the National Highways and other roads. Periodical maintenance of roads is a must and this is not usually done regularly. There are roads poorly built on account of alleged lack of funds and corruption. Funds are misused by officials in



connivance with contractors and sub-standard materials are used. Corruption is an integral part of the story of the civil construction in India and the Uttar Kannada District is not an exception.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need to achieve balanced regional development has been one of the key challenges for India's policy planners for quite some time. Imbalances in developmental processes could also be due to the fact that only a few growing sectors dominate the progress of the economy, adding to the continuum of rural-urban differences. In this regard, agricultural sector which assumes primary importance in rural areas, has been performing relatively poorer compared to the other sectors. Its declining contribution to GDP share, despite more than half of rural population being involved in this sector, is a testimony to the relatively poor performance. Agricultural development as a strategy to minimise regional differences continues to assume prominence even today.

The state of Karnataka presents a good case to examine the relationship between agricultural development and rural infrastructure as its production performance has been quite varying (Chand et al, 2009:



Kannan and Shah, 2010). With large dry areas and some districts drought-prone, the development of the regions has been lopsided with most of the Northern parts of Karnataka at lower levels of development. “The vast extent of dry, unirrigated land, located primarily in Northern Karnataka, casts its long shadow on the socio-economic development of the local people in many significant ways” (Planning Commission, 2006, p. 5). The differences in agricultural performance and existence of regional disparities are often attributed to variations in natural resources endowments and socio-economic and institutional factors (Deshpande, 2006). Northern districts of Karnataka are poorer than the rest of the state (Planning Commission, 2007). Given the importance of infrastructure as a strategy for agricultural development, it is imperative to examine the pathways in which targeted infrastructure can help mitigate the regional disparities. Also, the scarce resources need to be mobilised to get the expected output and augment development of this primary sector.

CONCLUSION

Considering the importance that agricultural sector holds for Karnataka economy, the present paper assesses the relationship between agricultural productivity and infrastructure development across the



districts of Karnataka. The foregoing analysis provides insights into understanding the main drivers of agricultural productivity in Karnataka using land productivity as the dependent variable.

Thus, rural infrastructure affects agricultural productivity directly through improvements in infrastructures. Therefore, assessing the importance of utilisation of the infrastructure brings to fore several key points that may be ignored if focus remains only on addition to the stock of infrastructure. Further, strengthening human capital and augmenting information awareness enables better usage of existing structures. Thus, the study throws up evidence in support of greater investment in infrastructures in rural areas while at the same time calling for steps to be taken to maximise the utilisation of existing resources.

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