

# Rural and Agricultural Perspective of Asia with Special Reference to the Southern Region of the Caspian Sea

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**Abstract** – The paper examines and reviews the relevant literature and theories in order to reflect a perspective of rural development. Appropriate technology package, and provision of adequate financial assets widely play role in poverty alleviation process. The paper argues on how population growth rate plays role in rural development success. The author reflects a comparative perspective of the quality of poverty in India, China, Vietnam and an image of Iran with statistical evidence during the past half century. The paper weighs how rural households in the developing Asia are marginalized, have insufficient income, have no pensions, no social security and the like to depend on. Under such circumstances, vicious circle of poverty continues. Hence, human resource development largely contributes to poverty alleviation with special reference to the developing world.

The aim of the study is to first examine the number of past technology - change projects to identify their primary and secondary effects, and their relation to the technology package; its implementation, and the results. It will also review the literature in an attempt to draw together the factors thought to influence the nature, rate and extent of absorption of new technology and the policy measures that might affect these factors. It is expected that the current advocacy of policies based on "appropriate technology" will be placed in a more useful perspective.

**Keywords** – Rural Development, Caspian Sea, Poverty Alleviation, Dynamics of Growth, Rural Problems.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Change in agricultural technology is widely accepted and fundamental to any strategy for meaningful economic development, and thereby poverty alleviation. But, the problem of effectively harnessing new technological possibilities to meet the needs of rural development, and bringing about prosperity is a highly complex one; involving far more than the provision and financing of an *appropriate* technology package. However, new technology disturbs the equilibrium of the receiving environment, and the chain of a complex technical, economic, social, cultural, and institutional effects that are neither easily predictable nor necessarily consistent with the aims of rural development. Technology change, therefore has to be viewed more widely as the dynamic interaction between new inputs, methods, and systems (the *technology*), and the receiving environment. This suggests the need for handling technological change in developing agricultures within the context of a broadly-defined "technology policy", with the physical technology

as one instrument in a set of policy choices and intervention designed to meet well-defined objectives.

## II. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Globally speaking, currently above 51 per cent of world population live in rural areas (1), and Asia-wise, rural inhabitants in 2007 have been recorded 59 percent of the total population of the region. Such a great number of people in rural areas need its own planning and investment in order to be able to produce its own food and secure its other necessities of life. In the following chapter, various theories regarding rural development in developing world will be discussed.

By rural development it is meant to proceed through such schemes as to alleviate poverty in different sectors in rural areas. But, the fact remains that rural areas as a target group, and centre of activity for employment generation for all families has to be prioritized. In the process of rural development, various income generating and employment oriented schemes must be initiated in the rural areas. In achieving rural development schemes, glamorization and suitable family planning must be reached and achieved with especial reference to the developing societies. In this process, reaching rural industries have to be ensured.

While talking about sustainable rural development, we may also briefly touch upon the concept of privatization (2). This new phenomenon may be carried out, when a multi-disciplinary team takes up a holistic exercise of inducing rationale changes. The process also needs sustainable linkage-building between agriculture, rural development, and rural industrialization.

Rural development is a multi-dimensional process, and much broader than poverty alleviation. It is implemented through socio-economic programmes and transfers. A successful strategy will make it possible. Rural development needs changing environments — enabling poor people to earn more, invest in themselves, and their communities in order to reach their key goals, and maintain the necessary infrastructures.

As a global phenomenon, increasing developing countries are discovering that, if rural communities are properly empowered, they can and may manage their own local development efforts. However, the existence of rural poverty provides major challenges to the governments of, and the developmental agencies in many developing societies. The failure of any rural development project

even negatively affects the urban development and industrial projects.

Rural areas throughout the world tend to have similar characteristics. That is, their populations are spatially dispersed, and under such conditions they cannot have access to many services. In such rural areas, agriculture is often the dominant activity, and often other opportunities for resource mobilization are limited. Such characteristics mean that people living in rural areas face a set of factors that pose challenges to development. However, the geographical dispersion of rural populations often increases the cost and difficulty of providing rural goods and services in a satisfactory manner. That results in fewer opportunities in rural areas than in non-rural locations. Therefore, rural areas are rarely able to mobilize sufficient resources to finance their own development programmes, leaving them dependent on transfers from external resources. Moreover, rural areas in the developing societies are often politically marginalized; leaving little opportunity for the rural poor to influence government policies.

Developing countries are usually characterized by high levels of poverty within their rural areas (3). In some cases such as South Africa, approximately 70% of the country's poor people live in rural areas, and about 70% of the rural residents are poor. In such cases, incomes are constrained since the rural economy is not sufficiently vibrant to provide them with jobs or self-employment opportunities. However, rural areas in majority of developing countries are diverse with concentrations of poverty and relative prosperity. One of the features of the rural areas in such countries is that, rural housing is often substandard or nonexistent, and many people are migrants; working in urban areas. As a result, the rural-urban continuum reflects as a way of life in such societies. That is to say, the population is often mobile in search of better living conditions and jobs.

### **III. RURAL POPULATION AND THEIR PROBLEMS**

High rates of population growth hinder the improvement of living standards in developing countries such as India, especially among the lower-income families. In many of the poorer countries, family-planning programmes have been adopted, but many of these have not yet succeeded in significantly reducing the rates of population increase. This situation requires further research on the determinants of fertility, and the economic costs and benefits of larger families for rural households. Knowledge of this type may be useful in shaping policies other than family planning (e.g. for education, employment, and social security), whose impact on fertility might be considered an explicit benefit.

The level of fertility in any society reflects ingrained and interrelated socioeconomic factors which need to be analyzed in a variety of ways — by the study of fertility differentials at one point in time, by longitudinal assessment of the impact of development projects, and as

in this research, by the detailed study of small communities.

In most of the developing countries, because of the prevalent poverty and vulnerability, rural families almost commonly resort to a variety of different strategies to ensure their survival. Therefore, it has become more appropriate to describe their economic activities as livelihood strategies rather than jobs or employment. The deepest poverty in rural areas belong to women, and many cases, children in such areas live in families/households with income below the minimum subsistence level. Such households usually have low levels of literacy and education, difficult and time-consuming access to water, fuel and other services. This results in high levels of under nutrition or malnutrition, morbidity and mortality of the children etc. Under- such conditions, there is a permanent migration of people from rural to urban areas, and not vice versa. However, internal migration is a demographic process affecting rural poverty negatively. In that, it has converted rural poverty to urban poverty (4).

Though many rural households in the developing world are totally marginalized, and have no income, they do not have pensions either to depend on. Wages in the agricultural sector fall well below the minimum living level, and the seasonal workers have the added disadvantage of earning approximately less than the permanent workers.

Governments in developing countries are required to contribute towards rural development through their programmes in the following broad areas:

- Economic development
- Social investment (i.e. social infrastructure)
- Human resource development
- Natural resource-based programmes.

Such programmes lead to poverty alleviation through investment in infrastructure and provision of social services. However, various such elements of rural development are required to be addressed. As a whole, rural development is understood to be multi-dimensional, encompassing improved provision of services, enhanced opportunities for income generation, improved physical infrastructure, social cohesion and physical security within rural communities. The concept of rural development places emphasis on facilitating change in rural environments to enable poor people to earn more, invest in themselves and their communities, contribute towards maintenance of the infrastructure key to their livelihoods; in short, to identify opportunities, and to act on them. However, a successful strategy will thus make people less poor. Such specific measures assist the vulnerable, and relieve the burdens of poverty.

Social sustainability is an important dimension of a successful strategy towards rural development. However, rural communities hold a wealth of social capital in the form of extended networks of mutual solidarity, shared beliefs and traditions.

## **V. VULNERABILITY OF THE SOUTHERN CASPIAN SEA**

The Southern Caspian Sea region including two Provinces of Guilan and Mazandaran with a population density of more than 120 people per k2 is one of the densiest regions of Iran. The given region, while currently facing increasing challenges in terms of environment, space, population density, migration, socio-ecological instability etc., it is potentially subject to further social, environmental, rural and urban vulnerabilities. The increasing literacy rate of the rural youth and the migration of such young cohorts to urban areas in search of non-agricultural occupations, and the pulling migration factor of the region in general, have contributed to the emergence of new challenges in the region. Different citizenship controversies constantly persuade younger age groups (mainly 20-30 years of age) to migrate (5).

Similarly, expanding and unbalanced tourism in the region, flow of non-indigenous material capital into the region, growth and prosperity of housing construction, unreasonable rise of the price of land in the region, and change of land use from agriculture to housing and industry in the region all reflect an image of the region. In migration of unlocal people with different socio-cultural conditions, speedy and constant change of culture and indigenous values, merging of non-indigenous subcultures with other indigenous cultures are some of the changes and challenges observed in the two southern provinces of the Caspian Sea. Such changes contribute to the emergence of some sort of normlessness, the loss of local and regional norms which reflect a negative perspective of the region.

The above-mentioned conditions while apparently bring about richness and economic prosperity to the region, yet it contributes to increasing social and economic abnormalities in long term in the region. On the other hand, because of mechanization of agriculture, great numbers of the rural youth have migrated to cities which has caused the rural-urban imbalance (6).

On the contrary, socio-environmental stability, stability of population density, and appropriate exploitation of resources are known as social indicators that eventually lead to guarantees, an equilibrium, and sustainable pacificity for the Southern Caspian Sea region. Immediate change of habits and patterns within different groups, especially the youth, will potentially increase the vulnerability of the given population in different dimensions. Sacrificing social and cultural norms, traditions etc. for the sake of material and economic interests in process, will jeopardize the rural and agricultural safety, the relevant activities, and the present potential capacities.

Therefore, the given region needs to adopt effective, advisable and sustainable strategies. Likewise, and from sociological and geo-ecological point of view, the region needs increasing micro and macro studies. Setting appropriate paradigm, and preventing further pressures, and also forming effective alternatives can create further social and environmental safety.

Similarly, balancing the urban and rural population of the region, and appropriate settlement of urban and rural population, will itself act as an infrastructure to bring about development and sustain the agriculture in the region of the Caspian Sea in general. On the contrary, and in case of the cultivation of pseudo, unadvisable and short-term business, social and environmental conditions are endangered. That will act as a large and multi-dimensional threat to the future generations. The debate that the two subject -matters of poverty and social organization have mutual and close relationship with each other, is of prime importance. That is to say, where social organization weakens, poverty will inevitably emerge which is highly discussable (7).

## **VI. POVERTY IN INDIA**

India approximately has more than 1 billion population, about two-thirds of whom is estimated to live in rural areas. India's poverty is affecting almost 170 million of the total population. Though many of these poverty-stricken people attempt to migrate to cities, yet three out of every four continue to live in the rural areas of the country, and that helps poverty to sustain as more a rural phenomenon. Many of these poverty-stricken people are observed in areas such as West Bengal, Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Such regions usually face droughts and extreme water shortages too.

India's elevated amount of poverty is mainly caused and appear due to the inabilities of the residents and communities to maintain essential and constant assets, and also due to shortage of financial capital. Another indicators of India's poverty reflects in illiteracy levels, insufficient health care system, and basically no capability of receiving social services (8).

As of 2005, 85.7% of India's population lives on less than US \$2.50 (PPP)<sup>1</sup> a day down from 92.5% in 1981. This compares with both China and Vietnam making enormous progress against poverty, and the evidence suggests that rural economic growth has played a large role in this success. Using each country's own definition of poverty, with a constant real poverty line over time, China's poverty rate fell from more than 50 percent in 1981 to about 20 percent in 1991, and 5 percent in 2005. In Vietnam also, poverty fell from almost 60 percent to 20 percent during 1993-2004 (9).

However, land is the most important non-labour asset in any developing rural economy. The institutions determining how land is used are thus at the core of efforts to fight poverty. Therefore, India should also follow suit with China and Vietnam in order to lower or eradicate her poverty.

## **VII. DYNAMICS OF GROWTH**

In rural areas, there is a dire need to revive the rural economies, and thereby to advance the engines of economic growth that would contribute towards

1- Purchasing Power Parity.

development at national level in the developing countries. In case the direction is not so, functional and applicable strategies must be adopted. Although the specific processes vary over time and space, the general dynamics are understood in terms of sources of growth, and linkages that spread and multiply the initial impulse. Growth in agriculture, forestry, and other primary activities that bring incremental earnings into rural areas, generally generates additional incomes through linkage in expenditure and employment.

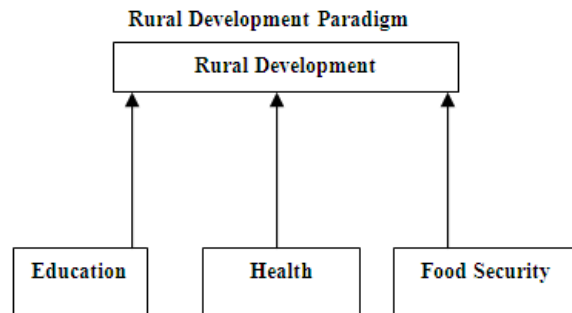
It is expected that rural communities in which agriculture, forestry, tourism and other activities are growing, such a process of growth would in crease incomes, strengthen transport and communications, and thereby the “remoteness” of rural areas is reduced. This vision is realistically attainable for rural areas in which the natural resource base supports growth in agriculture, forestry and other such activities.

Dynamic growth will benefit many of the rural poor in the developing countries, i.e. even those who do not earn the initial incremental incomes. Moreover, as more active rural economies become less cut off, they are less prone to sickness and mortality. That is , with better roads and means of communications, the chance that a sick or injured person will get to the hospital in time increases for the prosperous and the poor, even though the chances may still not remain equal for both.

Although growth benefits many of the poor, it clearly does not benefit all. Safety nets are still needed, and the rural poor are greatly disadvantaged relative to their urban counterparts when it comes to social assistance. However, few developing countries include rural people in social security programmes, and the prevalence of self-employment means that unemployment compensation is largely irrelevant to those without work.

### VIII. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Rural areas in many developing countries generally suffer from capacity constraints linked to a low-skills base. What the developing countries need, is the development of a separate human resource strategy, so that the skills base in rural areas is increased. Through such master plan, rural development may be pursued. To achieve such goals, transfer of personnel to rural areas, to support both hard and soft skills, is quite necessary. Where appropriate, the goodwill of experienced citizens who seek to contribute on a voluntary basis, should also be utilized. However, over the intermediate to longer term, capacity constraints should be addressed through education and training. In such context, the rural development strategy must constitute deliberate and conscious choices and interventions usually through government in all spheres, after and in consultation with different targeted personalities in rural areas.



### IX. RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

One of the main problems of the Third World development is the struggle between the interests of the urban areas and those of the rural areas. The question is always one of either the urban areas must be developed for the best long lasting economic results, or the rural areas must receive more attention, because poverty is more visible there. First and foremost, poverty is severe in the rural areas, though it is also highly observed in urban areas.

Rural poverty is endemic among the poor households in the Third World, and manifests itself in a number of ways; among others malnutrition, hunger and disease. The groups which are affected include the landless, the near-landless, female-headed households and children. Harrison (10) gives a good account of the extent and magnitude of the problem. Identifying a number of causes of the problem of poverty and tackling them with a view to possible solutions, will not eliminate poverty. The situation is extremely complex with many external and internal factors that exercise influences. Moreover, these factors are mutually influencing and strengthening to further complicate the situation.

Acknowledging the complexity of causes of poverty, one can accept that rural poverty is created by a number of closely-linked processes that are mainly policy-induced. In many developing countries, national policies and institutions have built-in biases which exclude the poor from the benefits of development. The most important of these is urban bias which pre-empts resources from rural households (11).

Institutional biases are a lack of access to productive assets such as land and water. Others are families in arrangements such as lack of access to credit and inputs, and lack of grassroots institutions to encourage people’s participation.

### X. LAND ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT

The crisis of poverty and food production has directed attention to the question of land and land tenure issues in some developing countries. Land is the source of livelihood for most people in the Third World where the majority of population live in the rural areas, and yet the land issues have remained unsolved in most of the region (12). In a study on world rural poverty, Jaizairy et al. (13) found that access to land, particularly arable land for the poor, had declined. The path to sustainable growth for the

poor is access to productive assets, the most important of which is land. A crucial determinant of income distribution and wealth is the distribution of land rights for the poorest of the poor in the Third World.

In many developing countries, landlessness has given rise to overcrowding and land degradation as people tried to make a living out of the meager pieces of land on which they live, and this is one of the reasons land reform is about, how land is owned, and how patterns of ownership change. Land reform is said to be the only means of altering inequitable owner structures for effective development of participatory institutions, local and national (14, 15).

## XI. INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural problems are too many and diverse, and need more to be dealt with. That is to say, there are more that should form part of the framework for rural development in the developing world. At the same time, it is also important to identify the actors in rural development. What is often observed in the developing countries is that, the elite actors' actions are more cityward; they are more involved in urban projects which are more rewarding. However, integrated rural development is highly essential in multiple dimensions in these countries.

We can therefore state that rural development is not only to provide relief to the poor, but to eradicate poverty by inter alia, primarily addressing the following issues:

- Equal treatment: This covers the problem of distribution, enrichment of the elite, corruption, and empowerment of the poor.
- Land tenure: That includes rural development, access to land etc.
- Migration and population pressure: That means, rural-urban migration is closely related to both rural and urban development. There is also an integration between migration and rural production capacity.

Shift in development thinking from large-scale economic development and self-sufficient development also requires adjustments in the implementation of rural development. This does not mean that industrialization and economic development are no longer acceptable. The difference lies in the fact of a shift in emphasis in which the knowledge, abilities, needs and interests of the poor are put first by means of a process of empowerment. This means that the people's basic needs as defined by themselves, are satisfied, and that social security is provided. However, in order to ensure sustainable development, and in particular rural development, each person and community must handle its own resources and environment with the necessary care.

## XII. CONCLUSION

While it is acknowledged that eradicating both rural and urban poverty is a phenomenal task, it is important to realize that it is impossible to give preference to one area to the detriment of the other. This approach has led to cityward migration, which has merely transferred rural

poverty to even urban areas. Apart from the fact that certain key issues such as access to land needs specific attention, it is clear that a balanced approach is needed; and more, an all-out strategy is necessary where a clear policy will enumerate agenda items for specific actors to act on. Only in this way, can the problem of rural development be tackled successfully. Luckily, as our study has shown, the poor have shown their perseverance and enterprise. They just need the vehicle of a strategy and programme for them to play a major part in the rural development.

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