



Empirical Evidences of Pura in Thanjavur District of Tamilnadu - An Overview

Dr. T.
MAHENTHIRAN

M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., Assistant Professor in Economics, PG & Research Department of Economics, Rajah Serfoji Government College (Autonomous), (Accredited at "A" grade by NAAC-CGPA 3.6 out of 4.0), Thanjavur – 613 005. Tamil Nadu.

KEYWORDS :PURA – Thanjavur District – Findings – Suggestions – Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

This research on PURA is was undertaken in the central part of Tamilnadu, especially in Thanjavur District. In general the district endowed with natural resources which is highly suitable for cultivating paddy and irrigated crops. For that purpose alone Composit of **Thanjavur district is called Paddy bowl**. But nowadays the non availability of Cauvery water and issues relatig to the sharing of Cauvery water between the Karnataka and Tamilnadu Government is forced to divert the other forms of occupational structure for the livelihood of the Thanjavur District people in this context the centrally sponsored PURA scheme is ample and having better opportunities to rise their levels of income and standard of living conditions in the rural areas of Thanjavur District. This research elaborately deals in the areas of **Val-lam, Thirukkattupalli, Ayyampettai, Thanjavur East, Thiruvai-yaru and Sengipatti**. The PURA scheme is the only amicable solution to solve the problem of unemployment and discontent among the educated unemployed graduates as well as the local elites.

The author acknowledges his gratitude to UGC SERO Hyderabad for funding out this project.

In these circumstances the implementation of PURA scheme not only generating permanently employment but also creating the social assets which is highly useful to the local people as well as the neighbouring poor peasants.

There is a general belief that Thanjavur district is the most irrigated area because of the Perennial river Cauvery flows in all parts of the composit district. But, actually there is problem of accute water crisis and also created unwanted and artificially created migration to the neighbouring cities in most parts of Thanjavur District is experienced with the faster rate of internal migration. And also there is problem of social discontent and unnecessary economic distortations.

With a view to provide amenities similar to urban areas to the people living in rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) had drawn up a scheme titled "Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas" or PURA. This Scheme is designed with Public Private Partnerships (PPP) structures as the preferred implementation modality. A private sector partner would implement and maintain the core infrastructure connectivity needed. As an additional concomitant, the private sector partner would be given the rights to develop and operate addon infrastructure facilities (such as vocational training, livelihood development or related economic activities) to enhance revenue streams. To make the Scheme amenable for private sector participation, it is designed to be 'project based' with well defined risks, measures for risk mitigation fully explained and allocation of risk between the sponsoring authority (Panchayat), Gol/ State Government and the private developer clearly spelt out. The primary objective of the Scheme, true to its nomenclature is provision of urban amenities in rural areas. However, sub objectives would include reduction in migration from rural to urban areas and in situ livelihood opportunities. In response the pilot projects there have been eight clusters identified by the private players where in DPRs have been submitted for approval.

Pilot projects under PURA

The pilot phase of PURA was implemented from the year 2004-05 to 2006-07, with the consent of the Planning Commission and a total budget of Rs.30 crores. Seven clusters were selected in seven states,

with a budget of Rs. 4-5 crores per cluster. The identified agencies for the implementation of PURA projects were responsible for providing village-level connectivity relating to basic services, transport, power, electronic knowledge and market and providing drinking water and healthcare facilities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

The issues with the current design of PURA have been classified into five categories, the details of which are presented herewith.

Issues relating to the convergence of various schemes

a. There is a lack of funding for various capital-intensive mandatory activities under the MoRD schemes. For instance, there is no provision under the TSC Scheme for the development of a sewage treatment plant. In addition, there are no schemes pertaining to the development and maintenance of village streets and storm water drainage. The lack of funds for these activities limits the coverage of facilities in the PURA cluster.

The present research clearly reveals that more than 42% of the income is increasing after implementation of PURA scheme in the selected area.

Nearly 38% of beneficiaries are belonging to the category of poor downtrodden and SC ST's.

Regarding the creation of social assets about 49% of the newly constructed community halls, community farm lands, and community network system help the poor locals.

Empowerment of women is considerably increasing in the % of 27 from 16% after the implementing the PURA schemes.

Similarly under TRYSEM scheme the local unemployed youth enrolled under the scheme was observed as 22,480.

In the case of MGNREGP the scheme also extended to enhance productive oriented and employment of mandays increasing to the tune of 14,000/- in the study year.

One more important impact of PURA under the rural road connectivity scheme has been extended to 36% from 23% over the study years.

Similarly to train the poor farmers in this district under the PURA scheme and NABARD assistance. More than 18,000 people are trained under the usage of micro irrigation and drip water scheme.

In the case of rural sanitation more than 52% of the slums are covered under the Pradhan Manthiri Green house schemes. The PURA also extended to cover the above schemes.

In the case of unemployed SC/ST women students a Wifi centre was established in the central region of Thanjavur to get easy accession of net connectivity.

b. There are differences between the specifications given out in the

scheme guidelines vis-à-vis the specifications for the PURA projects, highlighted in the bid documents. An assessment of the specifications may be undertaken to formalize the same for future PURA projects.

c. The current approval process for activities under non-MoRD schemes is twofold. The first step is the independent sanction of the project proposal by the concerned ministry and then its approval by the Empowered Committee for PURA projects. There needs to be a better co-ordination procedure for granting approvals to projects under non-MoRD schemes, to ensure single-window clearance for the bidders.

d. A guideline can be given to future bidders regarding the potential non-MoRD schemes that could be integrated within the PURA projects. This guideline could be a useful databank for the bidders and reduce their efforts in searching for the relevant scheme for their cluster.

e. It will be necessary to arrive at an optimal size and number of the villages to be covered under a PURA project to ensure a holistic approach for all.

Adopting an integrated and participatory approach

a. Each PURA project has limited capacity to address the needs of all the villagers. It was felt in some of the clusters that the bidders had not adopted a consensus-building process and hence failed to incorporate many of the demands of the villagers. A pro-active consensus-building approach may be given as a guideline to the bidders with each step being documented. Each demand should be documented 11 and if the same is not accommodated by the bidder, then a logical reason for the same should be documented.

b. During the evaluation of the DPRs, it was found that considerable efforts were made for consensus-building at the Gram Panchayat level; however, similar effort for consensus-building at the district administration level was lacking. This flaw was clearly reflected in the results of the baseline survey wherein the actual ground situation was not reflected. This could have been easily addressed through an interaction with various technical departments of the district administration.

c. The guideline, mentioned in the above point (a), may be extended to consensusbuilding at the district administration level.

Strengthening administrative process

a. Due to multiple activities involved in a PURA project, the bidder is required to approach various departments within the State Government.

This process can be time-consuming. Hence, a project-level co-ordination committee may be constituted at the State Government level to grant various approvals or take decisions on the implementation challenges associated with PURA projects. An example is the committee constituted by the Government of Kerala to address issues relating to PURA projects.

b. A Project Implementation Unit needs to be established within MoRD to undertake a monitoring role for all PURA projects within the country.

c. It is requested that the State Governments give access to resources in its control for fulfilling the needs, under mandatory activities, of the PURA project. For example, in one of the clusters, there exists a reservoir which is owned by the Irrigation Department of the State Government. This reservoir has enough water to meet the drinking water requirements of drought-prone villages under PURA. The utilization of water would be limited to 2% of its total capacity. By granting an approval to tap this source, the entire drinking water need of the PURA cluster is fulfilled.

Implementation challenges associated with PURA projects

a. There is an imperative need for officials of the Gram Panchayat and the District Administration to undertake capacity-building activities. This capacity-building is aimed at providing the officials with the necessary skill-sets to meet their obligations under the Concession

Agreement and State Support Agreement. A possibility of handholding by the MoRD in the pilot phase may be undertaken to achieve smooth implementation of the projects.

b. An accurate baseline survey is crucial to determine the PURA grant for the project. It may be explored to provide the broad contents of the baseline survey to the bidders as a standard document.

c. Given the diverse backgrounds of the bidders, it may be considered to provide standard technical solutions (like sample designs of various structures) as a manual to the bidders. Such a reference document would enable standardization of the DPRs and enable a smoother approval process for MoRD.

d. In addition to technical solutions, it may be considered to provide a manual of various innovative (but cost-effective) technologies. These could be adopted by the bidders in their projects.

Improvements that can be adopted in the procurement process

a. It has been found that there exists significant variance in the efforts undertaken by the bidders during the Concept Plan stage and the DPR stage. It may be explored to strengthen the Concept Plan stage so as to ensure that variation in the PURA grant quoted in DPR stage is not beyond 20% of PURA grant quoted at concept plan stage.

b. It may be explored to circulate the present specifications under PURA to each state government. Customization may be undertaken based on the inputs of the state governments. An example: the State Government of Rajasthan has specified the provision of 70 lpcd of drinking water to the Gram Panchayats as against a requirement of 100 lpcd in the case of PURA projects.

Challenges to be addressed while up-scaling the PURA Scheme

These challenges are broadly summarized below:

a. Scheme Coverage

- Linking of outputs under PURA to the overall development of the rural areas

- Arriving at a size and number of the villages to be covered under PURA

- Incorporation of the industry point of view on the up-scaling of the scheme

b. Institutional Structure

- Defining the outcome expected from the scheme

- Upgrading the current skeletal machinery to cater to the requirements of implementation of the scheme; in addition, defining the process of scaling up the scheme

- Developing an institutional assessment mechanism for the projects

- Developing a mechanism for independent monitoring and evaluation of the projects c. Funding Requirements

- Identification of the investment requirement for the XIIth Plan

- Estimation of the amount of investment required, both from the private sector side and the government

- Development of a mechanism that can be adopted by the government to leverage their funding to enhance value

- Development of a mechanism to ensure security for the investment undertaken

CONCLUSION

The pilot phase of PURA was implemented from the year 2004-05 to 2006-07, with the consent of the Planning Commission and a total budget of Rs. 30 crores. Seven clusters were selected in seven states, with a budget of Rs. 4-5 crores per cluster. The identified agencies for the implementation of PURA projects were responsible for providing

village level connectivity relating to basic services, transport, power, electronic knowledge and market and providing drinking water and healthcare facilities. This scheme is a boon to the rural people in Thanjavur District of Tamilnadu to improve their Economic and Social conditions.

REFERENCES

1. Srinivas, M.N. (ed.), (1993), India's Villages, Media Promoters & Publihsers, Bombay, Second Revised Edition, Reprinted.
2. Dhadave, M.S., (ed.), (1996, Rural and Urban Studies.