



Smart Cities to Smart Villages: For Disrupting Rural Migration

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ABSTRACT

The 2011 census shows the inequalities in basic amenities between rural and urban India. India's rural population is 833 million, which is almost 68% of the total population. 55% of rural households have electricity, against 93% of urban households. 35% for rural households have access to piped water connections, versus 71% of urban households. 31% of rural households have access to toilets, against 81% of urban households. As a result, Rural Population is migrating from villages seeking an improved quality of life, good education, healthcare, electricity, etc. As this migration poses several challenges, there is need to create smart villages. As a measure, the government of India launched the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) in February 2016 aimed at making villages smart and growth centres of the nation.

The mission aims to stimulate social, economic and infrastructure development in rural areas by developing a cluster of 300 Smart Villages over the next 3 years across the country in the first phase.

A Smart Village will provide long-term social, economic, and environmental welfare activity for village community which will enable and empower enhanced participation in local governance processes, promote entrepreneurship and build more resilient communities. At the same time, a "Smart Village" will ensure proper sanitation facility, good education, better infrastructure, clean drinking water, health facilities, environment protection, resource use efficiency, waste management, renewable energy etc.

KEYWORDS

Smart village, Inequalities, Social Infrastructure, Economic Infrastructure.

Introduction

The soul of India lives in its villages as mentioned by the Gandhi ji at the beginning of 20th century. There are as many as 638,365 different villages. The size of these villages varies considerably. The rural population in some states like Himachal Pradesh is 90% while some states like Goa is just 10%. However the national average is 70%. The life in Indian villages is simple and isolated; although they are connected now a day with cell phones and digital television transmission, yet they are cut off from the main stream of urban areas due to poor road connectivity and market for their agricultural commodities. The villages do not have enough electricity supply and all those work dependent on electricity, is affected. The health, educational and civil facilities are also either absent or not up to the mark (Thorat, 2016). As a result, it leads to migration towards urban areas in search of a higher quality of living and employment.

Effects of Migration

Rural to urban migration reduces population in rural areas, which decreases farming activities, leading to food insecurity. It is noticed that, rural to urban migration can lead to child labor when many young males leave for cities in search of employment. This causes a drop in school enrolment. Rural to urban migration also causes overcrowding in urban centers, which leads to a strain on social amenities. According to some studies, rural to urban migration provides manpower to industries, which facilitates production and economic growth. The World Bank Group reveals that rural to urban migration benefits rural communities due to the money that relatives in urban centers send home. However, it causes negative effects on the urban environment and increases the risk to illnesses. Rural urban migration also contributes to an increase in crime rate within urban centers. Excessive or rampant rural to urban migration increases the rate of unemployment, which reduces the standards of living among urban communities. In addition, rural to urban migration affects women in rural areas because they are forced to attend to many chores at home and in farms.

Rural to urban migration leads to the concentration of services and facilities, such as education, health and technology in urban centers, which disadvantages rural communities. It also causes

psychological effects, such as the stress that result from traffic, high living costs and taxes (Anonymous, 2016). However, despite all these problems migration of people from small towns and villages to big cities is increasing because most of governments across the world have failed to develop rural parts. If this development gap between cities and villages can be reduced then we can see considerable decrease in migration of people to cities.

Steps to control Migration

To check migration from villages to cities, we should make our villages also smart by providing all these facilities there like- First, we should develop labour-intensive manufacturing units under Make-in-India so that villagers find suitable employment locally. Such units should be established in small-scale and cottage industries. Also, some industries should be reserved for small-scale units to avoid competition from bigger units. For this, skills of village labour through Skill India needs to happen. Second, wherever relevant, rural and semi-urban areas should be well-connected with nearby tourist spots—enabling villagers to sell their products directly to tourists for better prices. Third, we need to provide suitable ICT network in and around villages under Digital India, so that villagers are informed in real time about the prices of produce—both in agricultural sector as well as industrial. Farmers are already sharing and utilising necessary information delivered via TV and mobile phones to their advantage. Fourth, the government must provide good sanitation facilities under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. We also need to provide other necessary infrastructure such as efficient medical centres, potable water supply, housing and electricity for all, and power for industry, preferably from sources such as solar or wind, or even biomass (Sangal, 2016).

Smart Villages

Making villages as 'Smart Villages' is surely a noble program announced by the Government of India. But no one in villages has seen what exactly, in the Indian conditions, smart village means. However, the government seems to have clarity of vision and the initiatives are coming from the Government through the scheme called "Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM)".

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

It has following highlights. The vision statement of SPMRM is "Development of a cluster of villages that preserve and nurture the essence of rural community life with focus on equity and inclusiveness without compromising with the facilities perceived to be essentially urban in nature, thus creating a cluster of "Rurban villages". The Mission would be coined as National Rurban Mission (NRuM). A 'Rurban cluster', would be a cluster of geographically contiguous villages with a population of about 25000 to 50000 in plain and coastal areas and a population of 5000 to 15000 in desert, hilly or tribal areas. As far as practicable, clusters of village would follow administrative convergence units of Gram Panchayats and shall be within a single block/ tehsil for administrative convenience **(Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, 2016)**

The aim of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

The aim of SPMRM is to create 300 rural growth clusters across the country. In the first phase, 100 clusters will be taken up, thereafter more clusters will be identified based on the progress of the scheme.

The Mission Outcomes are, Bridge the rural urban divide-economic, technological and those related to facilities and services, Spreading development in the region, attracting investments in the rural areas, Stimulating local economic development with emphasis on reduction of poverty and unemployment in rural areas.

Large parts of rural areas in the country are not stand-alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, which are relatively proximate to each other. These clusters typically illustrate potential for growth, have economic drivers and derive locational and competitive advantages. Hence, making a case for concerted policy directives for such clusters. These clusters once developed can then be classified as 'Rurban'. Hence taking cognizance of this, the Union Cabinet, has approved the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM), in September 2015, aimed at strengthening rural areas by provisioning of economic, social and physical infrastructure facilities. Taking also into view, the advantages of clusters, both from an economic view point as well as to optimize benefits of infrastructure provision, the Mission aims at development of 300 Rurban clusters, in the next 5 years. Rurban clusters would be developed by provisioning of training linked to economic activities, developing skills & local entrepreneurship and by providing necessary infrastructure amenities **(Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, 2016)**.

Fourteen Desirable Components

The Mission recommends fourteen desirable components for an ideal Rurban cluster. The 14 components are envisaged as desirable components in each cluster:

- (i) Skill development training linked to economic activities
- (ii) Agro Processing, Agri Services, Storage and Warehousing.
- (iii) Fully equipped mobile health unit.
- (iv) Upgrading school/higher education facilities.
- (v) Sanitation
- (vi) Provision of piped water supply.
- (vii) Solid and liquid waste management.
- (viii) Village streets and drains.
- (ix) Street lights
- (x) Intervillage road connectivity.
- (xi) Public transport.
- (xii) LPG Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission ctions
- (xiii) Digital Literacy.
- (xiv) Citizen Service Centres- for electronic delivery of citizen centric services/egram connectivity. Components pertaining to agriculture and allied activities would be required to be given special emphasis while developing these clusters **(Phukan R.S., 2016)**

Funding

The project is envisaged to be funded through convergence of various Centrally Sponsored, Central Sector and State 6 National Rurban Mission. Critical Gap Funding (CGF) is proposed to be

provided through this Mission to the clusters to bridge the gap posed by availability of scheme funds and fulfilling the development aspirations of the 'Rurban Cluster'. The CGF would be capped at 30% of the capital cost or Rs. 30 crores whichever is lesser for plain areas and Rs. 15 crores or 30% of the capital cost for desert, hilly and tribal areas. The operations and maintenance expenses of the project will be recovered through user charges as per the user charges policy in the state with shortfall supported by the state budget. The total funding requirement estimated for the scheme is Rs. 5142.08 crore from 2015-16 to 2019- 20 **(Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, 2016)**.

Types of Clusters

There are two types of clusters in NRuM (i) Non-Tribal Cluster (ii) Tribal Cluster.

For selection of Non-Tribal clusters, the Ministry would provide a list of leading sub districts to each State, within which the clusters could be identified. The selection of these sub districts by the Ministry would be based on parameters such as

- (i) Decadal Growth in Rural Population
- (ii) Decadal Growth in Non-Farm work participation
- (iii) Presence of Economic Clusters
- (iv) Presence of places of Tourism and Religious significance and
- (v) Proximity to Transport Corridors.

Appropriate weightages have been given for each parameter. Thereafter, within these sub districts, so identified by the Ministry, the State Governments could select the clusters and while doing so, could include the following performance parameters: i. Decadal growth in Rural Population. ii. Rise in Land Values. iii. Decadal growth in Non-Farm Work force participation. iv. Percentage Enrollment of girls in secondary schools.v. Percentage Households with Bank accounts under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. vi. Performance in Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen).vii. Good Governance Initiatives by Gram Panchayats. Any other factor which the States may consider relevant may also be included. However, a total weightage of 80% would be given for the first 4 parameters and the States will have the flexibility to choose the last three parameters, subject to a total of 20%. While selecting the Rurban cluster the State may identify a large village/gram panchayat that are growth centers with resources available in the area and could potentially lead the economic transformation of the region. These growth centers could be block headquarter villages/census towns (under the administration of Gram panchayats). The clusters could then be formed by identifying geographically Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission: contiguous villages/gram panchayats within a radius of 5–10 km (or radius appropriate to the population density and geography of the region) around the identified growth centre **(Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, 2016)**.

For identification of the tribal clusters, the Ministry would select the leading sub districts falling within the top 100 tribal districts of the country, based on the Scheduled Tribes population. The State Governments shall prepare an Integrated Cluster Action Plan (ICAP) that would lay down the development aspirations of the cluster in a consultative manner and detail the interventions being envisaged as a part of SPMRM, the schemes being converged, implementation framework, the envisaged Mission outcomes in the cluster expected as a result of implementation of SPMRM. The ICAP will also provide the tentative project cost and the estimated resource plan to meet the project cost through convergence of various Central Sector, Centrally Sponsored, and State Government Schemes **(Thorat, 2016)**.

Conclusion

We have noticed that presently many people are migrating from Villages to Cities in order to earn their livelihood and to enjoy decent life which is absent the rural areas. Governments are somewhere lacking and failed to provide due employments options in the villages. Due to which it becomes inevitable for villagers to leave their native place they are compelled to move

towards cities. The scheme of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is also failed to make a mark to stop this migration. To do something constructive in this regard, a program like Smart Villages for disrupting rural migration has launched by the central government. The purpose of this program is to bridge the rural urban divide, to provide facilities and services, spreading development in the region, attracting investments in the rural areas, stimulating local economic development with emphasis on reduction of poverty and unemployment in rural areas. We are hopeful through such initiatives; we will be able to curtail the movement of rural population towards urban areas.

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