

Planning in Nepal to be Revisited in the Context of the Basic Needs Approach

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Because of national awareness we have launched five plans for 23 years. All plans were launched in the name of people, but the more meaningful will it be if we launch new plan with definite promises for the mass in terms not of butter and bread, nor in terms of affluences and artful living, but only in terms of bread and bed, of wrapper and water, of independent and industrious life and living.

1. Mid-term Evaluation of the Fifth Plan

I. GNP has made a steady progress :

HMG's Planning Commission authorities, these days, have kept themselves busy in calculation, evaluation (of achievements, failures, lapses) of the performances made during the period of two and half years of the current plan (1975/66-1979/80) of Nepal. More of the three quarters of the final year of the captioned

plan are still left and by July/August, 1980, when H.M.G.'s Fiscal Year begins, the Sixth Plan (of five years from 1980/81 to 1985/86) will be launched. H.M.G. is aware of the fact that timely evaluation of and confession towards project performances would help pave way for better plan-programmes in future. The mid-term evaluation report on the current plan has come to us, but only creating mixed feeling about the willy-nilly progress. Declining progress in the food front is more than compensated with by the progress in other sectors as to step up G.D.P. to the extent of 7.7%*, as envisaged by the plan authorities. When the greatest sector of the national economy, viz., agriculture, fails***, there can be no convenient reason why the damage done in this sector could be overpowered by the progress in numerous most titular sectors***.

Whatever is the cheerful picture of the G. N. P., H. M. G.'s evaluation report, published a year ago, frankly reveals that the Plan's long-term objectives and development targets will fall behind schedule.

* Increase in G. D. P. was worth 4.4% in the first year and 3.2% in the second year, totalling to Rs. 17,85 arab worth. They amply harbinges the possibility to achieve 4% growth average.

H. M. G. 's Evaluation Report, 1978/79, Chapter-2.

● ● Paddy production : 2452268 metric tons during 1974/75
 " " : 2282486 " " " 1976/77 : less by 2.74%.

Production of all food grains in 1978/79 has further declined by 3.46% over 1977/78 despite further reclamation of the virgin land. Per hecter productivity too of the paddy crop is having a precipitate fall : It was 1.95 metric tons during 1974/75, whereas it was 1.89 and 1.81 metric tons during 1977/78 and 1978/79 respectively, causing 8.58% fall during the period of 3 years,—Economic Survey Report, H. M. G., 1977/78.

● ● ● Contribution of agricultural sector to G. N. P. = Rs. 11.47 arab worth.

" " other sectors to G. N. P. = Rs. 6.39 " ".

II. Few Figurative Progress:

Few figurative progress of important headings made during two and half years of the current Fifth Plan may be grouped as: Average food crop production increased at the rate of 0.94 percent per annum, average cash crop production of 7.9 percent per annum, resettlement of 2225 families (9.89%) against the target of 22500 families within five years, both distribution and consumption of various kinds of fertilizers worth 23%, horticulture and vegetables (except cumin and botling of tomato soup) worth 60%, livestock (except poultry, fisheries and dairy products) worth 41.6%, forest development (in which protective measures have seriously lagged behind) worth 32.90%, medical researches 74.45%, power generation 4.31% worth, drinking water 16.48%, constructional materials (like cement, bricks, timber etc.) 19% worth.

The progress reports as indicated above will clearly indicate that the important sectors could not make any concrete headway, Pitfalls, like over-estimation of the national intake capacity, underestimation of the national requirements or because of least judicious strategic for dealing with specific areas or problems or because no introduction of hope of reward and fear of punishment principle in administration, must have aggravated the detrimental situation.

III. Attitudinal Stagnancy:

Our stagnant attitude caused retardation. Our stagnant attitude, arm-chair approach, in concomitant with our limited ability to foresee the changes in demand and supply, have kept us almost at the same place wherefrom we wanted two and half decades ago to start the ball of development.

Planning should mean welfare of those who have been addressed by politicians, for decades, say, for centuries. The expansion of planning (right from transport to communication, agriculture.....) by itself does not guarantee that poverty will be reduced, nor is there any guarantee that the depletion of natural resources is checked for their accelerated growth to fit in the upgraded national ecology. But, despite our efforts, our forest areas have been reduced from 33% to

11% of the total land during last two decades, food production has not lagged behind the plan schedules but there has been the precipitate fall for the last few years possibly converting Nepal to deficit one—from net exporter to net importer; trade diversification has passed through but ever a fermenting stage, with some pointed fingers by outside quarters regarding our traders deviation from the present trade routes.

How to reverse the trend of retardation? Of many other things, attitudinal change is the most important for its solution.

Basic Principles VS. Basic Needs

I. Plan Objectives:

When we had had the evaluations report on the Fifth Plan a year ago, our heavy heart had the hasty steps in formulating the Sixth Plan (of 5 years: 1979/80–1985/86) with an emphasis on basic principles*, sometimes confused with basic needs, as the fundamental objectives of it. Sixth Plan, besides few other objectives, is to aim at providing (a) Drinking water, (b) Minimum health care, (c) Primary and skill-oriented economy, (d) Family planning, (e) Maternity Child Health Care Services, (f) Irrigation, (g) Suspension and Wooden Bridges, (h) Mule tracks, feeder roads, (i) Extension services and inputs, like, credit, seed, fertilizer, (j) Technology, (k) Housing and other physical facilities.

II. Need for National Consensus:

We should agree with that those objectives have got rural fervour, no doubt, since they are related with the primary needs of the rural people, but, we can not confirm that they seek for fulfilling the day to day needs of those people. Not only that they were accomodated in every plan, but they could not get sound place in them (plans). Even if some of them could, they were not seriously implemented. Solution of the problems, arising out of no fulfillment of the basic needs should not

* Basic principles of the Sixth Plan (1980–85), National Planning Commission Secretariat, H. M. G. April 1979. (English Edition).

be made through lip service policy based on the most miniature scale. There should be national consensus regarding the stage-wise determination of the actual basic needs of the commoner. Planning should constitute greatest good to greatest number, which may but long after 21/2 decades of planning, not only that we should assert our changing basic needs because of the passage of time, but also that we should frame plan, then projects to meet the growing challenge of the people. Barefoot, under-naked, under-fed, illiterate mass can not welcome white collar planning for affluence. They will welcome only those which really may mean to themselves. Altruism and dedication are not possible for such a community. To make them altruists and dedicated, we should generate capability in them. High hopes of compulsory savings scheme, National Campaign, minor irrigation projects, and Integrated Development Projects are yet to bear fruit. It is doubtful whether these rural-based projects do enjoy any stability. Their ceremonial enunciations and their silent departure from the national scene have no harmonizing effect on the people. Projects of national importance should have retained their recognitions.

III. Basic Needs Approach For Broadest Participation:

Not that we should deduce basic needs approach to development from the Basic Principles of the Sixth Plan, but that H.M.G.'s planning authorities in consonance with the national figures of merit should reverse the trend. They should spell out what the basic needs are for the present, what they will be after a course of few years.

The Constitution of Nepal*, Article 19, gives stress on participation of the people in the process of economic development. Formulation of basic needs orien-

* 1. People's Participation in Rural Development in Nepal : Agricultural Projects Services Centre, Kathmandu 1978. pp 34.

2. A Survey of Employment, Income Distribution and Consumption Patterns in Nepal, Vol. IV, Chapter XII, H. M. G., National Planning Commission Secretariat, Sept 1, 1978.

ted strategy implies the participation of the people, as viewed by the International Labour Organisation *. The I.L.O. deputed the working plan members who initiated the conceptual thinking and gave details regarding the blueprints of basic needs. It is memorable what those plan members of the I.L.O. tabled their approach papers in World Employment Conferences, held in June, 1976. Nepalese Research Organizations, like the CEDA (Centre for Economic Development and Administration) too have drawn some undisclosed pilot like working papers on the basic needs of the people belonging to hills, mid-belt and the terai.

IV. Who should determine basic needs?

Better those be determined at local levels to be followed by discussion at national levels. Where direct participation is not possible, representative institutions can perform this function. Representation may be made by political parties, village and town councils (Panchayats), co-operatives, etc. Grass root approach, as envisaged in the ensuing Sixth Plan, should have paramount role to lead us to our economic destiny, which is in contrast with our typical plan formulation, in which there is highly centralized and technocratic exercise with minimal grass root participation. Fundamental human needs are not the same as we find in the case of fundamental human rights, because former would try to enhance due economic needs, latter would try to control both press and platform, the greatest constituents of the political party system. But the I.L.O.'s Basic Needs Approach to development tries to embrace both economic and political freedoms with two of its arms. As stated in one of the papers of the I.L.O., Basic Needs may be defined on the basis of life sustaining needs, life supporting needs, life enriching needs, or deficiency needs, sufficiency needs, growth needs, or development of those community services in the form of health, education, sanitation or the private consumption of food, clothing, shelter.

*Basic Needs Approach to Development, I. L. O. 1977.

Regarding **Food**, as revealed by the I.L.O.'s Approach to Development, man whose age may fall within a range of 20 to 39 with 8 hours' work volume worth 65 K.G. weight should have 3000 Calories and 17 grammes of protein per day. It tries to consider sex, age, activity, weight, while thinking of the edibles. This may fall short of climatic factors, national traits, etc. This pitfall or redundancy, if any, can be recouped by having household mapping through consumption surveys.

Similarly about **clothing**, physical protection and cultural needs, which mean climatic conditions, wear and tear in a certain working condition of a factory or of a farm, local customs, can be good criteria for judgement.

Then we Come to **Shelter**: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development uses three indicators measuring adequacy of housing facilities: (a) Quality of the house (b) Density of occupation (number of persons per room), (c) Independence of the user. As revealed by U.N. World Housing Survey of 1974, in developing countries, the household shortage is not quantitative, but qualitative. The household in these regions were found unfit for habitation on ground of water supply, toilet, lighting, cooking and bathing facilities. It is too difficult to specify requirements in terms of climate, construction materials, design, etc. The only specification one can make is to say that the house should give adequate protection against rains, storm, varying climates and also that it should provide householders with access to reasonable toilet facilities, exit points to road.

From all these angles of visions, we conclude that the Sixth Plan is to be revisited !