

# Rural Development in Nepal: Some Thoughts in its Approach<sup>@</sup>

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## 1. RURAL - URBAN ECONOMICS

When the entire nation is on the brink of economic stagnancy, differentiation of the rural and urban sectors in terms of magnitude of poverty is insignificant. The urbanite stinky garbages, precarious position of public utilities, inadequate or non-existent drainage system, inundational situation during rains, muddy or dusty roads, delinquent traffic such terrorised terraces, with decreasing acreage for kitchengardens, all may be termed as a marked differentiation with the rural black waters. The third world is the *poorest in the world* atlas in a way as the rural parts of this third world meet the same fate. The third world is making a *desperate attempt* to increase production in the home front as to have a favoured seat in the row of the trading nations in a way as the rural complex is trying to have economic accomodation for output and sale. Despite donor countries' almost like 50% worth assistance for every plan of Nepal, should not be self-reliant as the rural fate despite numerous development agencies for change could not have improvements. Third world is important for supply of raw materials and other primary products for developed parts of the world in a way as the vast tract of the rural

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Nepal is supporting urbanite luxurious sophistications. Even if rural development will be of success, it will be a place for exploitation by urban dwellers in a way as developing nations have been by developed ones for raw materials and host of other primary products.

Similarly, braindrain from developing countries is not much dissimilar to rural-urban migration within the country, the urban patronization by supplying agricultural inputs every time reminds us of the foreign assistance adhered to waive the periodic difficulties than developing a sound system by itself in the rural front. We talk of Joint Ventures, foreign collaborations multinationals' interests in boosting economy of the third world with no progress of emergence of the same principle of direct investment, production, agreements between urban-rural people's meaningful dialogue with firm determination of the Nepalese urbanites. Unequal partnership abroad has caused difficulty towards new international order as unequal exchange has caused difficulty towards creating new economic order at home. Whereas not asking for charity to begin at home we ask rich nations for their liberal attitudes towards the third world. Millions of rupees matter least in the case of a single building complex intown, but million worth expense will matter much for building a model village, which is unknown for planners with 2½ decades, experience.

We have not lessened but increased the rural dependency for technologies, constructional materials, manpowers, consultancy, agricultural imports and for other host of other things.

### 1. NOSTALGIC FEELING TOWARD RURAL POOR BECAUSE OF INEQUALITIES

Political nostalgia has not served the purpose of fooding, clothing, housing facilities of our teeming millions. Their standard is notoriously different with that of urbanities. Largest populace with lowest but almost like inhuman economic standard has compelled us to keep it under intensive care of the economic hospital. Almost incessant planning in Nepal, long for a quarter of a century, has developed only trickle downs in generating fruits of planning in rural areas. Traditional thinking of planning in terms of growth could not make any headway towards social justice. Growth has not taken care of distribution although there was an axiom of automatic relationship of growth to distribution as if necessitating a specific treatment for specific results with rural complex. The top 10% of households are able to claim as much as 46.64 of the total income whereas the bottom 13.84% get no more than 1.17%. Nearly two-thirds of the families receive 20.59% of aggregate net income. The growing inequality between top and bottom levels, as outlined in N.P.C's Survey Report of 1978, is simply a picture of contrast. The minimum

average subsistence level of expenditure for Nepal was estimated, under the same Report, at Rs. 2 per day as per 1976/77 prices with a proviso of required calorific amount of 2256 (which requires consumption of 605 grams of cereals and 60 grams of pulses daily); this average minimum is not so accessible for the large bulk of population. Even it has been accessible, more so it may be due to borrowing or begging. Data collected under the Survey indicated that out of 3969 households reporting consumption expenditure, 1410 households have less than minimum subsistence expenditure of Rs. 45.60 per month (Rs. 1.52 per day) with a short of Rs. 14.44 per month (Rs. 0.48 per day) to that of so-called established national minimum of two rupees daily.

In case of housing, at national level, 61.50% households reported sufficiency. People to the extent of 7.97% under survey by HMG's N.P.C. reported availability of pipe water in their own houses, 5.6% with toilet facilities, 0.96% with electricity. The amenities of toilet, pipe water and tubewells are reported to be concentrated in large farm categories.

Estimate of households and population below poverty line is also a matter of shock, because, in terms of households, that under poverty line in rural areas was 34.34%, in urban, it was 19.86% against 33.65% national level; and in terms of population, it was 32.14% in rural areas, 20.01% in urban areas against 31.34% at national level. Both in terms of households and population, the discrepancy in the percentage of people below poverty line is not an ignorable one since they may make bigger issues for rural planners not only in comparison to rural-urban but also to national level. If out of total population of 12.45 million in 1977, 4.5 million people fall below poverty line, 4.40 million out of 11.18 million in rural areas fall below poverty line revealing here also above the national level.

Unemployment and under-employment figures (work for a villager, on an average, virtually standing only at 6 months a year) are also eye-opening problems.

Poor performances in the economy throughout Asia have had a calling attention to Rural Development. Asiatic countries do have divergent trends between population growth and food production. India, Indonesia, Thailand do have a kind of rough parity between the two; whereas production increases less than population growth in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, although the third group of countries (Malaysia, Philippines) do enjoy production increase more than population growth.

It is not less notable that countries having a reportedly increase in production to the tune of population growth also do suffer from quality food. So malnutrition is not uncommon to all categories with surplus or deficit production of food in most parts of Asia. •

## 6. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Growth in the economy, equity in distribution of resources, minimum needs approach to planning, effective but positive impacts of planning and development on the receiving agencies (targeted groups) are some of the important constituents of rural development, but not less important constituent is the people's meaningful participation. Urbanite elitists, formulation, projection, implementation, control supervision, guidance of planning for village development are self-defeatist and contradictory policy. There are many instances where projects, initiated at local level, have been frustrated because of inadequacy in timely supply of experts. As described above, the different kinds of rural development projects do not have regular and timely supply of trained manpower. Elitists, approach is like a command but with no respect. Involvement of government people has given an impression among rural people that the rural development programme is a Government programme, and has least to be contributed by concerned people.

Elitists' agony for elitist atmosphere in villages causes disappearance of them from their field works even for a travel pretence, despite good dozes of dearness allowances and travelling allowances. There are several causes whether we quote farm plans under Sajha or under co-operatives where the personnels engaged in extension services were reported mission long for many days.

Rural development in upliftment of villagers in abject poverty whom we may term those below poverty line, are where they were twenty five years ago, as we in urban areas could not be better off even because of plan period of twenty five years. We have been aided by numerous countries, agencies, but we have not been termed as self-sufficient in matters of agricultural inputs, industrial infrastructures. Our liberal trade policy has given a death blow to our home industries and same is the case with our agricultural status. Despite plans for self-reliance, the rural people have developed dependency in all, including developing leadership for R.D. programmes (R.D.P.) And in the context of plan below, we should make our mass capable to identify their needs and translate them to practice, but there has been big gap between plan and performances, more so due to gap between delivery and receiving mechanisms. Even if somewhere receiving mechanism is found to be strong and efficient, its mechanism is comprised not by rural poor but by rural rich. Due share is not there from the due party. Even if there has been mobilization of and participation by mass, it has been done so in a wasteful manner. Exploitationless society that Nepal envisages because of the Directive Principle of the Constitution creates exploitation by mobilizing "Shramdan" for wastage.

*But what is the meaningful participation?* It is an interest based people's organization, having an involvement in decision-making (having an effect on life and living), planning, implementation and evaluating businesses, as to increase income or satisfaction of the participants like producers and consumers. As the servants of the society, or as delivery agent participation means to make use of services. Receiving mechanism may be in the form of beneficiaries in terms of basic needs. Meaningful participation in RDP is both, ends and means. Rural people work for desired end. Meaningful participation should necessarily mean the employment of surplus labour to generate income and to satisfy basic needs thereof. Of all, the most unutilized resource is labour to the extent of 50% of the total labour force either due to landlessness or due to holding of fragmented piece of it.<sup>1</sup>

Participation by local people is weak, wasteful and it is very much inefficient. And it is all due to mass illiteracy, which has defeated your development efforts in favour of the mass. This biggest section is reluctant to take risks for the right cause of economic undertaking by inviting new development strategies. They ask the government elders to instal tubewells by the side of rural rich, because they can not maintain themselves. They put thumb impressions on manipulated accounts. Worsening situation will simply be aggravated by having more and more offices and increase in bureaucracies. Educational and administrative approaches will along create conducive development strategy in rural area.

Meaningful participation is distorted because of irrigation of big estates of the rural rich. If we quote an example of road, wheeled vehicles specially belonging to the village rich will move on. Mass beneficiaries are frustrated, and it is all due to a long road still to be traversed by the planners, Our fashion to talk of RPP in terms of target group, the rural poor is thus defeated.

External agencies have lent helping hands, but they are not the real change agents. Our government's steps to keep our local leaders at the top are political approaches; but as described above, politicisation alone cannot have solution of economic ills. As it has been realised by I.L.O., the present socio-economic malady is due to our past-intentions. to exclude rural commoners from development planning and processes, to avoid institutional and structural reforms. We have prepared elitist cadres for villagers; but we have yet to prepare village cadres

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1. Ninety percent in hills own less than 0.6 hectare and seventy eight percent of families in Terai have less than 1.7 hectares of land; but we have yet to know about the improvement brought about RDP in this context.

for their own-homesides. So we could not have stability our development leaders have become irregular costly and quite incompetent, ultimately. It has to be realized that the RDP should be participatory. We don't want the Camilla Organizations (as those in Bangladesh) to be taken over by rich. What is most important is interest based people's organization at the local level.

Never than during post-1960 era that Nepal continued to form administrative leaders at the base in the form of the panchayat organizations (ward, district, zone, etc.) which could have been used for decentralization both in terms of resource use and resource mobilization.

Over and above those, non-government organisation should be developed to enthuse absorption of the resources, cash, kind and manual. Both government and non-government agencies should develop their respective strategies as to mave diognstic efforts towards multifarious works: (a) Motivate local people to organize in small groups; (b) Action research works to find ways and means to absorb landless people with local talents; (c) Documentation section as to disseminate and exchange informations for planners, etc., on planning experiences at local levels, case studies and also procedures followed, results achieved and obstacles faced by people within or without; (d) conduct study tours work-shops or seminars. These offices may also develop ideas about plan formulation, implementation, sales, accounting, returns etc, So they have great role to educating local people. So full-fledged participation of local people may comprise both, becoming ends and means of production. Participation may constitute a composite whole socio-economic system under RDP. Liberal attitude of the government bureaucrate, intake capacity of the local socio-economic system, institutional developments at local will have pave for meaningful participation.

Accountability will keep beneficieries alert against all kinds of delinquencies.

*Few more suggestions* as to increase participation: If employment level may be pushed up at local level, RD with its emphasis on "work is virtue" may make steady headway. Unemployment or underemployment may be embed by these; (a) Intensive cultivation by means of availing both adequate, timely inputs and adaptable technologies; (b) Supplementary agricultural works like cattle breeding including poultry and pigury, Fisheries, horticulture, etc.; (c) Developing cottage industries with supports in the form of raw materials, minor technologies, capital goods and sales, (d) Introduction of social services, sanitation, water, family planning, schooling, etc.

Employment strategy will remain very much incomplete provided half of the population of human race will be devoid of active participation of female labour. So, special training provision and strict reservation of jobs for this labour force are to be maintained.

Leadership is not automatic and should not be based on appointment. Political workers should not necessarily be leader on their ex-officio status, but better be elevated on the basis of one's own competence, commitment sacrifice, social service.

Meaningful participation may mean these important constituents: development of beneficiaries for analysis of workings around their premises of RDP, education, employment and building up of leadership with the sense of participatory organizations.

## 7. BOONS OF EDUCATION

Traditional economic approach is much exposed as to have no conducive effect on RDP. Similarly, the attitudinal variance, because of traditional socio-economic system, has developed resistance power against the injection of new ideas of development. Education and demonstrations may do a lot in matters of changing attitude of the villagers. Behaviour of small farmers with respect to adoption of new methods is a complex matter involving economic as well as socio-personality factors. New method adoption is conclusively a costly affair for which institutional credit is of immense importance. More productivity means conglomerative efforts of adoption if new methods and credit; but credit and input availability are not the lone factors. Small farmers suffer from complexity of various variables, including sense of fear towards adoption of new methods by the help of institutional credit. They take it a matter of risk.

As revealed by the case study of C.M. Rokaya in his seminar paper of April, 1980, on the adoption of New Methods, with special reference to Nepal's two Panchayats, Tupche and Kakriwana-Kamana in Nuwakot, new findings are very interesting, with reference to effects of wealth and education on adoption of new methods in agricultural productivity. Wealthier or more educated small farmers more frequently adopt new methods and are more knowledgeable. Educational achievements were also related to farmers' attitudes towards institutional credit. More educated farmers are found to have more favourable attitudes towards progressive outlook in matters of having institutional credit and adoption of new methods. But it is queer that even if credit was available to the farmers to Tupche, their emotion was to status quo farming than yielding to new high yielding varieties. Almost like 70% of the farmers did have negative attitude towards new methods. They were risk-averse. They had distrust against outside influence.

Attitude towards credit was related to educational level.

Change from cereal-oriented crop to cereal cash oriented crop would increase the incomes of the farmers, but this new venture is not much resorted to.

Few people heed for extension training and diffusion is not effective, either, because diffusion from outsider is not much believable. Communication has also a big problem since people from urban areas do have queer slangs and dialect. Urbanites' sophistications are not welcome to rural people. In these contexts, local training would inject confidence. There may be no necessity to have third member to serve as translator in-between technicians and villagers. Collection of basic data, dissemination of numerous others matters, obviously, invite for threshold training, training at local levels—Government's travelling and dearness allowances, imposition of order on outsiders works, with frequent vacancies, may be reduced if we plan for education (three R's and rural crafts), Our immense capital is manpower and output is its productive use. It is capital because it can be used for RDP in the forms of canal, tubewells roads erosions control, afforestation at mass scale or plantation trees at selected places, drinking water, small-scale industries, rural electrification, co-operative farming, soon and so forth. The labour, because of its unproductive use for about half of the year, has itself been liability, but the liability can be converted to production assets provided we enthuse sense of thought through educational programme, both 3R's/2R's and other threshold training. Education at local level may be both formal and non-formal.

## 8. PRE-CONDITIONS FOR VILLAGE TAKE-OFF

Much development water seems to have flown towards RDP with meagre success towards raising village economy as to make it self-sustained in terms of physical resources, manpower. Without going into details, few points may be touched upon as to prepare pre-conditions for launching massive economic programmes at local levels:

- Land reform instead of limiting itself to institutional frame-works of security of tenure, ceiling on land and rent, should be extended to making farmers responsible for raising farm production;

- Mass organizations in the form of organisations of beneficiaries as to have strong resistance against injustice and to muster strong for taking up pretty good number of village projects;



- Enlightened leadership, with sincerity of purpose, to have enlightened, committed followers in village reconstruction programmes;

- Though we are alert against embezzlements, we have not combated them with success; accountability, but not in a way as villagers were held for compulsory savings, is to be developed;

- Designs after sound feasibilities (alongwith basic data on rainfall, forests, mines, human resources) may be made ready;

- Growth, Equity, Participatory, Basic Minimum Needs of conclusively identified Target Groups, Productive Employment, Transportation, are the norms for each rural undertaking either purely at government level or at any level. This should be termed as pre-determined facts for RDP.

- Plan not only for exploitation but also for conservation. because man should not be an ecological disaster; bleak and cheerless ecology will pervade man's life with the same. Poor society is very much associated with natural kingdom, including silvicultural kingdom. If we further make an allowance for encroachment in nature, we will simply aggravate the precarious position of the Nepalese world. It is better to have green garden than to have oil from the desert. If we continue to add fertility in the Indo-Gangetic Plain by our environmental disruptions in the Himalayas, it will be like decorating others' face by cutting ones' own nose.

In short, every project should justify objectives of rural development, viz., (a) increase in productivity, (b) employment (c) social services, (d) conservation of economic balance. Mr. Bihari Krishna Shrestha, in his *Survey Analysis and General Guidelines of local-Level Planning in Nepal*,<sup>2</sup> was perfectly right when, while discussing five basic attributes of development, he notes: (a) A function of an integrated totality of inputs from different nation-building agencies; (b) Rural Development needs directly addressed to their specificities; (c) Rural Development is a consultative process between change agents and people at local-levels; (d) Ensuring people's participation at different stages of decision-making in mobilization-allocation of resources and implementation of programmes, sharing of benefits, etc; (e) Function of constant monitoring.

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2. Bihari Krishna Shrestha ; *Local-Level Planning In Nepal : Survey Analysis And General Guidelines: January, 1981.*

## 9. ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS THEREON

1. Now the time is ripe enough to have a broad based evaluation of the entire rural development programmes operating in the country with a view to developing a unifying force in matters of propounding one and the single name for all the projects spread over the country under different agencies, both national and international. The specific names for specific projects have created confusion to many. We have now realized that RDP should not be a trial project.
2. Since we are having RDP for the last 3 decades, although in different names; we are no longer in the trial period of knowing about the likes and dislikes of the local people, capability and lapses of them. The stages of knowing all these is complete. The moment primary works are complete, the areas with should be brought under the purview of RDP. Delay to have national coverage will be injustice; but caution is needed regarding the speedier coverage with no generation of qualify life in the rural areas. Community Development programme in India is fast spreading up inviting comments for not dedicating qualitatively. Here there is no exception of this sort of lapse.
3. Right from inception of the advent of the Panchayat System in Nepal, in 1960, the administrative hold is extended from centre to zone, district and village (Ward). There is what is called "institutional penetration", as stated by ESCAP in its Local-Level Planning For IRD. It has been a national attempt to decentralize developmental powers and functions of the HMG, as if it were making a system by itself for massive IRD Planning. Despite this golden opportunity, confusion prevails. There is lack of conceptual maturity regarding objectives<sup>3</sup> of RDP, operational aspects like methods and processes. This is also lack of understanding of concept of integration and its dynamics. No single problem can be encountered in isolation. There is need for commomitant change which is lacking with us. More so it is due to lack of integration within integration-inter-departmental co-ordination. Simultaneous changes are necessary to turn over the reins of control.
4. Concept of people's participation is not to be wholly related with the voluntary, labour shramdan.

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3. Local-Level Planning For IRD: 1980.

5. Self-reliant measures, because of no more good use of compulsory savings and suspension of PDLT, to mobilize resources are found to be absent at the local level, which is not a good auqury to launch programme at local levels.
6. Government authorities as embodied in CDO or District Panchayat are not well interpreted, because time and again central authorities are referred to. Unity of purpose is to be developed in the centre.
7. Despite having scope for additional credit points and project allowances, civil servants working under RDP are yet to generate feelings of dedication within themselves.
8. Demonstration shocks, because of the coming of the international agencies, at local levels, should be curbed. We need an emergence of an indigenous institutional set up to generate authority to develop and implement plans, generate resources, evaluate the post project works, which will help establish a system of regularity to give a continuin<sub>g</sub> force to RDP on a self-sustained basis.
9. Policy towards working personnels should be backed by motivation through attractions (pay, etc.) and accountability.
10. Since availing of exports to village level has ever become a problem, we should stengthen local manpower. We should upgrade local technologies by research and training. IRD is obviously multi-disciplinary approach; so should education be.
11. We should evaluate project works both interms of their completion and impact on the concerned radius.
12. Rural leaders are to be assigned with RD works, on the basis of their merit or political status is to be thoroughly judged against the out-put we require of them in the interest of socio-economy. We should not mind even to make allowance for non-politicians and voluntary organisation to take over leadership of the RDP. In this context, government agencies may create congenial atmosphere through initiatives like planning, training, financing, issuing guideliries, etc.

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