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Rural-Urban Disparity: An Obstacle to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals in India.

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Abstract

At the inception on 25th September 2015, India has strongly committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. It has achieved a rapid economic growth since 1991, but the growth has not accompanied by structural changes or regional equality. The nation has succeeded on the platform of achieving most of the targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as elimination of poverty, reduction in gender inequality in primary and secondary education, access to clean drinking water etc. However, it has failed on the platform of bridging the gap between rural-urban disparities. Rural-urban inequality is the on the important obstacle for many countries for achieving the SDGs. This study attempts to highlight the rural-urban disparities in many basic needs and services such as poverty reduction, employment opportunities, health and education which are essential for SDGs.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Rural-urban disparity, Sustainable Development Goals, poverty reduction, Inclusive Growth, Safe drinking water.

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 achieved successfully by most of countries in the world. To continue the success of MDGS 2000 the general assembly of United Nations (UN) signed the document called 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' It has announced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 associated targets to be achieved by 2030 in all countries of the world. Balanced social development, economic development and environmental development are three main pillars of SDGs. The all 17 Sustainable Development Goals are interconnected and invisible so that they require the cooperation and participation of all developed, under developed and least developed countries to achieve it successfully. The SDGs are underscored the improvement in quality of life and ensuring that 'No One is left behind'. India is strongly committed to implement the SDGs as per the national priorities and needs. To achieve the SDGs in India, the NITI Ayog has planned national level central government sponsored policies and programs concerned with the different ministries and department. On the other hand, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has introduced a National Indicator Framework (NIF) with 306 national indicators along with identified data sources and periodicity. The NIF is Monitoring the SDGs at national level and gives important directions to the policy makers of various schemes. The same system is developed at state and district levels in the country. In the journey of SDGs India has achieved dismal success in many goals. As per the Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework (NIF) Progress Report 2020 the government has taken many initiatives towards eradication of poverty in different forms as a result the deprivation of people from many opportunities has reduced. The ratio of people getting safe and adequate drinking water within premises through Pipe Water Supply (PWS) in rural area has increased from 35.76 per cent to 42.49 per cent during 2015 to 2019-20. Bank credit linkage was provided to 18.32 lakh Self-Help Groups in 2015-16 that increased to 26.98 lakhs in 2018-19. The agricultural productivity for wheat has increased from 3034 kgs to 3421 kgs per hectare and the productivity of rice increased 2400 kgs to 2703 kgs per hectare during 2015-16 to 2019-20.

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The maternal mortality rate and under five mortality rate has reduced from 130 and 43 to 122 and 37 respectively during 2015 to 2017. With this kind of dismal performance India lagged behind than many developed and developing countries in terms of achievements of SDGs. The rural-urban disparity is one of the major obstacle in India to meet the United Nation's SDGs. In India, the process of rapid urbanization started since 1991, however more than 70% population still dwell in villages. The inequalities of infrastructural facilities lead to increase the disparities in living standard between people dwells rural and urban area. Therefore, in paper made an attempt to highlight the rural-urban disparities in achievements of SDGs, many basic needs and services such as poverty reduction, employment opportunities, health and education which are essential for SDGs.

Database

In this study, the secondary data is used as per the requirement of the study. The data has been used from various institutions and government publications. Among them, major sources are NSSO Report 78th round, Human Development Report 2022, National Health Profile 2022, annual reports of the Ministry of Human Resource Development of India, Government of India and economic surveys of India.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Multidimensional Poverty

India with the home of one sixth population it is the largest populous and youngest country in the world. India plays a crucial role in SDGs agenda 2030. Eradication of poverty in all its forms and ensuring that 'no one is left behind' is the core development goal of India. The NITI Ayog constructed the Multidimensional Poverty Index based on Alkire-Foster (AF) methodology for India and published national MPI report in November 2021. The second edition of the report is titled Progress Review 2023, provides state and union territory wise estimated data of Multidimensional Poverty of India. According to Progress Review 2023 India has achieved a remarkable success in reducing MPI value. The poverty ratio has declined from 24.85% to 14.96% during the 2015-16 to 2019-21, around 135 million people escaped from multidimensional poverty during the same period. However, it is observed that the disparity in multidimensional poverty is still exist in rural and urban areas. Proportion of multidimensional poverty in rural area is 19.28% greater than urban area 5.27%. It indicates that the multidimensional poverty is declined faster in rural area compare to urban area.

Table 1: Disparities across Rural and Urban Areas in India.

Year	Rural			Urban		
	MPI	Headcount Ratio (H)	Intensity of Poverty A)	MPI	Headcount Ratio (H)	Intensity of Poverty A)
2015-16	0.154	32.59%	47.38%	0.039	8.65%	45.27%
2015-16	0.086	19.28%	44.55%	0.023	5.27%	43.10%

Source: National Multidimensional Poverty Index, A Progress Review 2023, NITI Ayog.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Health Indicators:

Good health is essential for freedom from illness and it enables to realize potential of people in the country. The health care is not confined with just medical care but beyond that it comprises well-being, access of quality health care services and cost of care along with current bio-medical understanding about health and illness. The health dimensions are comprehensive it encompasses many

indicators such as nutrition, child mortality and maternal health. In the sustainable development goal (SDG) 3 of the agenda 2030 recognizes all main dimensions related to health. The infant mortality rate is an important indicator of social, economic and environmental conditions of the society, it also reflects the current health problems. The following table shows the infant mortality disparity in rural-urban area in India.

Table 2: Rural-Urban Disparity in Infant Mortality.

Year	Rural			Urban		
	Tatal	Male	Female	Tatal	Male	Female
2017	37	36	37	23	22	25
2018	36	36	36	23	22	23
2020	31	31	32	19	19	18

Source: National Health Profile 2022, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

The above table shows that the infant mortality rate is higher in both male and female of rural area than urban area. The total infant mortality rate in rural area was 37 in the year 2017, reduced to 31 in 2020. While it was 23 in urban area reduced to 19 during the same period.

increased intensity of need of water at international level. This study finds rural-urban disparities in availability and access to clean drinking water and sanitation.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Clean Drinking Water.

The availability of adequate clean drinking water is very important in the human life. Clean water and sanitation help the people to protect from different communicable diseases and enable them to be more economically productive. The SDG 6 ensures the availability of sanitation and sustainable water for all people that indicates

Table 3: Rural-Urban Disparities in Clean Drinking Water.

Items		Rural	Urban	India
Piped Clean drinking Water		24.8	61.5	35.5
Access to the principal source of drinking water	Exclusive use of the household	49.4	65.2	54.5
	Common use of households in the building	8.5	10.8	9.2
	Community use	33.2	11.8	26.3
Distance to the principal source of drinking water	Within dwelling	29.0	60.5	39.1
	Outside dwelling but within premises	30.0	21.2	27.1
	Outside Premises	41.1	18.4	33.7

Source: NSSO 78th round.

The above table indicates a very high rural-urban disparity about clean drinking water, in the rural areas only 24.8% people has the access of piped drinking water whereas the in urban areas this ratio is 61.5% and all over India it is just 35.5%. The rural area's ratio is less and urban area's ratio is more than average ratio of the country which indicates that rural people are more deprived from the access of piped drinking water than the people in urban area. The rural-urban disparity is found in terms of access to the principal source of drinking water. In the rural areas, only 49.4% and in the urban area 65.2% people has the access of exclusive household source of water. Around 33.2% people in rural area and 11.8% people in the urban area have to depend on community source of drinking water. The same difference is also observed about distance to the principal source of drinking water. Mere 29.0% people in rural area and about 60.5% people in urban area are getting drinking water within their dwelling. However, 41.1% people in

rural area had to fetch water from outside of premises and 18.4% people in urban area had to fetch water from outside. The above table clearly indicates that access of clean drinking water is very dismal in India. Moreover, the situation in rural area is worst compare to urban area.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Sanitation facilities

There is no doubt that the sanitation facilities are very essential for human wellbeing and to set the public health conditions such as clean air, access to clean drinking water, and a disease-free environment. (<https://www.nestin.co.in/nest-in-blog/importance-of-hygienic-sanitation-facilities-for-general-public>) The government has built public toilets and provided sanitation facilities under different schemes, still the open defecation is continuing in India. The following table shows the rural-urban disparities in sanitation facilities.

Table 4: Rural-Urban Disparities in Sanitation Facilities (Access to Latrine).

Access to latrine	Rural	Urban	India
Exclusive use of the household	68.8	80.8	72.6
Common use of households in the building	8.7	13.0	10.1
No access to latrine	21.3	2.9	15.4

Source: NSSO 78th round.

The above table indicates that about 68.8% person in rural area and 80.8% person in urban area are using exclusive household latrines. However, about 21.3% people in rural area has not availability of any kind of latrine facility. In other words, 21.3% people in the rural area still facing open defecation problems.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Unemployment

The SDG 8 emphasize on the sustainable economic growth and policies that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation. The goal is focusing on full and productive employment, decent work, reduce informal employment and the gender pay gap.

Table 5: Rural-Urban Disparities in Unemployment.

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Rural										
Male	2.4	3.3	2.7	2.9	3.1	5.7	5.5	4.5	3.8	3.8
Female	4.1	4.2	3.4	4.7	4.7	3.8	3.5	2.6	2.1	2.1
Total	2.9	3.5	2.9	3.4	3.5	5.3	5	3.9	3.3	3.2
Urban										
Male	3.1	3.9	3.5	3	3.8	6.9	7	6.4	6.1	5.8
Female	11.2	11.7	10.8	10.9	11.2	10.8	9.8	8.9	8.6	7.9
Total	4.7	5.3	4.9	4.4	5.3	7.7	7.6	6.9	6.7	6.3
Rural +Urban										
Male	2.6	3.5	2.9	3	3.3	6.1	6	5	4.5	4.4
Female	5.3	5.6	4.9	5.8	6.1	5.6	5.1	4.2	3.5	3.3
Total	3.3	4	3.4	3.7	3.9	6	5.8	4.8	4.2	4.1

Source: (i) Labour Bureau Survey Reports for 2011-12 to 2016-17, and (ii) Annual PLFS Survey reports for 2017-18 to 2021-22

The above table indicates that unemployment rate is more in urban area (6.3%) than the rural area (3.2%). It can be observed that the unemployment rate is increased in both

urban and rural areas during the period of 2011-12 to 2021-22 from 2.9% to 3.2% and 4.7% to 6.3% in rural and urban areas respectively.

Rural-Urban Disparities in Literacy Rates

The education is a fundamental aspect of quality of human life. Education and trainings enhance the person's skills, efficiency and productivity and helps to build a capable workforce that contributes to faster economic growth. The

SDG 4 focuses to provide the primary and secondary education to all boys and girls, and ensure the access to quality education for everyone. India's performance is dismal in educational achievements. Furthermore, the performance of rural area is very dismal than the urban areas.

Table 6: Rural-Urban Disparities in Literacy Rates.

Age	Literacy Rate (%)								
	Rural			Urban			Total Rural & Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Age 5 & above	80.3	62.4	71.4	91	80.9	86.1	83.6	68.1	76
Age 7 & above	79.8	61.3	70.8	91.1	80.8	85.9	83.2	67.1	75.4
Age 15 & above	75	53.1	64.1	89.7	77.9	84	79.8	60.8	70.5
All age (age 0 & above)	72.3	56.8	64.7	83.7	74.8	79.5	75.7	62	69.1

Source: Educational Statistics Report 2018, MHRD, Govt of India, New Dehli.

The above table shows that the performance of rural area in literacy rates in all age groups is lower than the urban area. Moreover, there is huge disparities between urban female literacy rates and rural female literacy rates in all age groups.

Conclusion

Form the above analysis it is observed that the rural area is lagged behind than the urban area on the platform of different development aspects. However, the sustainable development needs to ensure equality in development of rural and urban areas. Rural area's people are deprived from many basic facilities such as health, education, clean drinking water etc. There is need to implement proper policy measures at different level to reduce the rural-urban disparities and achieve the sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

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