

ISSUES RELATED TO KERALA'S DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Social development of Kerala is unique as the State has successfully tackled the problems of illiteracy, high infant mortality rate, high maternal mortality rate, high birth rate vis-à-vis related indicators of under development, while many other Indian states are still grappling with the problems. The Plan expenditure of Kerala on social services constituted about 24% of the total plan expenditure from the First five year plan whereas the all India figure ranges between 17 and 20 percent. The non-plan expenditure on social services constitutes about 36 percent of the total government expenditure of Kerala. With all these positive signs of development the people of the State are also having some serious issues which should be addressed immediately through different means - 64.4 farmers were in indebt against all India average of 48.6 percent with average debt of each farmer was Rs 33907 against all India average of only Rs. 12585. The statistics revealed by the National Crime Records Bureau showed that Kochi is the most dangerous city affected by crime. Drinking among the men and harassing women are also issues in the State.

Social development of Kerala is unique as the State has successfully tackled the problems of illiteracy, high infant mortality rate, high maternal mortality rate, high birth rate vis-à-vis related indicators of under development, while many other Indian states are still grappling with the problems. Even in the rural wage employment programme like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) women participation is highest in the recent years. The social development has been taking place as primarily due to the fact that the State has followed a different development path and rapid strides have been made in extending the two major public services at the grass root levels - education and health. The Plan expenditure of

Kerala on social services constituted about 24% of the total plan expenditure from the First five year plan whereas the all India figure ranges between 17 and 20 percent. The non-plan expenditure on social services constitutes about 36 percent of the total government expenditure of Kerala. The State could achieve high physical quality of life index due to successfully implementation of the programmes in primary education, rural health and sanitation. Kerala is having good models of service delivery and poverty alleviation such as Kudumbashree, *Akshaya*, and the Friends programme. Innovations in health, education and welfare legislations have contributed greatly to the high physical quality of life index. In the rural development programme like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) women participation in Kerala was highest in the recent years. During 2011-12, women participation was highest in Kerala among the states of India- 92.76% against all India average of 47.98. Even in 2012-13, the rate was higher than all India average (Annual Report, 2012-13). The State has also made important strides in the field of e-governance and providing IT infrastructure. In this context International Conference on Network of Asia-Pacific Schools and Institute of Public Administration and Governance (NAPSIPAG) held in Kerala from December 11-13, 2010 may be mentioned. Around 40 delegates from various foreign countries participated in the three-day conference organized by Network of Asia-Pacific Schools and Institute of Public Administration and Governance (NAPSIPAG) and Institute of Management in Government (IMG) in Kerala.

The Conference was attended by the participants from Australia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The Conference looked at issues such as capacity to deliver services to people, innovative and best practices to provide affordable health services, special needs of women, social sector partnerships, e-governance infrastructure, 'Kerala Model' of development and issues of leadership (The Hindu, Dec 2010). The Conference aimed at capacity building of implementers in governance and addressed various aspects of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with delegates from Asia-Pacific region sharing their experience. The then Chief Secretary P Prabhakaran, who presided over the Conference, said "in a vast and populous country like India, well planned and co-ordinate efforts are needed to implement the MDG formulated by the United Nations" (Times of India Dec 2010). However, it is evident from the statistics that the State has been marching ahead in many aspects. In aver of the fact following data are presented in table-1.

Table: 1 Selected Socio-Economic Development Indicators (Mainly rural) – Kerala & All India

S.No.	Indicator	Kerala	All-India
1.	Population (Millions) - Rural – 2001	23.57	741.0
2.	Urbanization (%) – 2001	26.0	27.8
3.	Population Decadal Growth Rate (%) 1991-2001	9.42	21.34
4.	Per Capita NDP (Rs.) - 2004-05	13321	22650
5.	Share of GDP in Agriculture (%) - 2004-05	30.2	16.5
6.	Growth Rate of GDP from Agriculture (%) (1993-94 to 2003-04)	-1.05	9.92
7.	Literacy (%) Rural – 2001	90.05	59.21
8.	Female literacy Rate (%) – Rural -2001	86.79	46.58
9.	Sex Ratio – 2001 (Females per 1000 Males)	1058	933
10.	Infant Mortality Rate – Rural – 2003 (per 1000 births)	12	66
11.	Infant Mortality Rate –total (Rural & Urban)(per thousand births)	14	58
12.	Expectation of Life at birth (Years) - 2001-06 - Male	71.67	63.87
13.	Expectation of Life at birth (Years) - 2001-06 - Female	75.00	66.91
14.	Indebted Farmer Households (%) 2003	64.4	48.6
15.	Average debt per Farmer Household (Rs.) 2002-03	33907	12585
16.	% of Rural Households with (2001)		
16.1	Pucca Houses	64.56	41.10
16.2	Safe Drinking Water	16.9	73.2
16.3	Electricity facility	65.53	43.53
16.4	Toilet facility	81.33	21.92
17.	Human Development Index – Rural- 1991	0.576	0.340
18.	Human Poverty (%) – Rural –1991	21.75	44.81
19.	Income poverty (%) – Rural - 2004-05	13.2	28.3
20.	% of Malnourished Children (2005-06)	24.5	48.0
21.	Yield of Food grains (Kilograms/Hectare) –(2005-06)	2189	1708

Source: Prepared by National Institute of Rural Development (An Organisation of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India), Hyderabad, 2009-10

Although the table is self explanatory but few important points having positive impact as observed from the table are:

- Decadal population growth is much lower in the State than all India average.
- Rural literacy rate both for male and female is much higher than all India level.
- Sex ratio is in favour of female, a unique feature.
- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) both for female and male is abysmally low in the State than all India average.
- Percentage of *pucca* houses in rural areas is more in the State, a sign of positive development.
- Higher percentage of rural toilet heralds a positive development.
- Human development Index in rural Kerala is quite high.

- h) Income poverty in Kerala (rural) is at low ebb indicating development trend.
- i) With less percentage of malnourished children in rural Kerala one can presume that parents have not been neglecting their children.

Progress of the State also may be gauged by looking at Hunger Index prepared for different states in the line of Global Hunger Index.

Table: 2 Hunger Index of Some states of India

State	India State Hunger Index Score	India State Hunger Index Rank
Punjab	13.63	1
Kerala	17.63	2
Andhra Pradesh	19.53	3
Assam	19.83	4
Haryana	20.00	5
Tamil Nadu	20.87	6
Rajasthan	20.97	7
West Bengal	20.97	8
Uttar Pradesh	22.13	9
Maharashtra	22.80	10
Karnataka	23.73	11
Orissa	23.80	12
Gujarat	24.70	13
Chattisgarh	26.63	14
Bihar	27.30	15
Jharkhand	28.67	16
Madhya Pradesh	30.87	17
India	23.30	

Source: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2009.

It is evident that Kerala is well placed and occupies second position in the table indicating hunger is not an issue in the State which also has already been justified in table-1 as malnourished children in the State were very less in 2005-06.

With all these positive signs of development the people of the State are also having some serious issues which should be addressed immediately through different means. One important issue as observed in the above table-1 is that 64.4 farmers were in debt against all India average of 48.6 percent with average debt of each farmer was Rs 33907 against all India average of only Rs. 12585. Reason behind this may be found out by carrying out research studies but different Reports reveal that many persons are endowed with some bad habits. The statistics revealed by the National Crime Records Bureau showed that Kochi is the most dangerous city affected by crime (The Times of India, 24 June 2012). The news paper further mentioned that Kerala was the most crime prone State of India ahead of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. By mentioning other reports it can be stated here that 'women cannot safely move in public transport buses after 7 P.M' (The Hindu 24 June 2012). Drinking after sun set is a common phenomenon and beating of women in rural Kerala is almost a regular issue. Dowry is also a serious issue in the State. The parents from the day of birth of girl child purchase gold for the daughter's marriage and thus it means major chunk of money is invested in unproductive assets. Sordid affairs inter alia are that caste is also an issue as the State is deeply entrenched in the caste system. It is difficult to

understand why in the present era caste issue persists. The great souls like Sree Narayana Garu were born in Kerala and tried to liberate from caste issue but still the State is not free from the same after so many years. Kerala was first State in the country ruled by the communists after independence even then it seems mindset of the people did not change. We all know few years back in a shocking incident; hand of a professor was chopped off by a hard core fundamentalist group which happened in a progressive State like Kerala. West Bengal and Kerala were under the left rule for a long time but issues like dowry, beating of wives, assaulting women in public transport etc., are virtually absent in West Bengal, where as these are common phenomenon in Kerala. However to develop rural economy of Kerala in 2012-13 National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned another installment of Rs 407.84 crore to Kerala Government from its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF- XVIII) for providing infrastructure facilities to agriculture and other related social sector development. The total cost of these 63 projects sanctioned has been estimated at Rs 482.85 crore and financial support provided from RIDF is Rs 407.84 crore. With this, the overall sanctions under RIDF to Kerala have scaled up to Rs 738.36 crore to various projects during the year 2012-13. The amount will benefit different sectors. It is estimated that drinking water supply projects will provide assured drinking water to 8.94 lakh people in 36 villages of 6 districts namely *Kottayam, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram, Malappuram, Wayanad* and *Kasaragod*. The bridges which are part of the RIDF project are expected to benefit 4 villages of 1.5 lakh population. The irrigation and flood protection projects would benefit about 3,370 ha of agricultural land and ensure better water management in adjacent paddy fields. In addition, it would help in smooth navigation/cargo movement along the canal. The road projects are expected to benefit 17 villages of 13,500 people. Moreover, it would help forest officials to monitor the forest area and prevent the encroachment and theft of valuable forest produce. The implementation of the above projects will generate non-recurring employment of about 89.60 lakh man-days (<http://news.webindia123.com>).

Conclusion: In view of this, I suggest academicians, scholars, intellectuals, politicians and others should come forward and awareness programmes should be organized in all the nook and corner of the State. Issues can be resolved only through mass movement. It is also suggested that exposure visits should be organized in rural West Bengal by mobilizing rural people of Kerala in small groups as sequel people of Kerala will be acquainted with how West Bengal is free from dowry, caste issues etc. Such practical orientation is sine qua non for changing the mindset of the people of Kerala.

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