

Challenges of Rural Development in Kurung Kumey District of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Arunachal Pradesh, like other states of India is experiencing numerous development challenges. The development challenges are mainly concentrated in the rural areas of the state. The focal objective of this study is to examine the challenges of rural development in Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered to collect data from the residents of the district. Interviews were also conducted with office staff in order to supplement the data from the questionnaire responses. It emerged from the study that development challenges in Kurung Kumey district are multi-layered. These challenges range from poor transport services, poor health facilities, poor educational facilities, limited electricity access, and shortage of markets for rural commodities. Based on the findings, a number of recommendations were suggested to lessen the impact of the challenges.

Keywords: Rural Development; Rural Livelihood; Kurung Kumey; Arunachal Pradesh

Introduction

Rural areas, particularly, in developing states like Arunachal Pradesh face serious development challenges. Development as used in this paper refers to the process of economic, social, and political change which enhances the wellbeing of the inhabitants of a region. Development challenges are multifaceted and result from a combination of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. The development problems are much worse in the rural areas. Numerous researchers (Conyers, 2001; Ramya, 2014c) have confirmed that urban areas have less development problems compared to their rural counterparts. Arunachal Pradesh, a developing state in North-Eastern India, currently faces numerous rural development challenges. Kurung Kumey is a district in the rural area of Arunachal Pradesh. The current paper examines

the nature of rural development experienced in the district.

Study Area

Kurung Kumey district derives its name from the *Kurung* and *Kumey* Rivers, which flows through the district. Kurung Kumey is a district located in the north-central part of Arunachal Pradesh. The district is located about 250 km (248.2 km to be precise) north of Itanagar, the state capital. The average mean maximum and minimum temperature are 33°C and 5°C respectively. Majority of households in district depend on agricultural production and livestock rearing (Ramya, 2014b & 2014c). According to Census of 2011, the population of Kurung Kumey is about 92,076 (Census of India 2011: Arunachal Pradesh; District Census Handbook: Kurung Kumey).

Figure 1 shows the location of Kurung Kumey district in Arunachal Pradesh.

Methodology

To ensure that data collected was representative of the whole of Kurung Kumey district; questionnaires were distributed to all the 10 administrative circles in the district. It was, however, not possible to involve everyone in the circle so a sample of 15 respondents was chosen for each circle. Simple random sampling was used to locate the respondents in each circle. People’s identity numbers available at the deputy commissioner’s office were entered into Microsoft Spread Sheet and simple random sampling applied. Since there are 10 circles in the district, a total of 150 respondents were selected to complete the questionnaires.

To supplement data from questionnaires, interviews were conducted with some district senior officials, agricultural extension officers in the district, and senior official from the deputy commissioner’s office. Some judgmental sampling technique was applied in this regard since the choice of who to interview depended on the researcher. The interviewees with their wealth of knowledge and experience were chosen to respond to the interview questions.

For this study, respondents were chosen from the study area based on convenience sampling with the help of community leaders and aged community members with differing backgrounds and histories including the cultural dynamics of the people. During the selection of the informants, gender and age wise division of population has also been taken into consideration.

Results and Discussion

A number of development challenges were pointed out to be affecting rural development in Kurung Kumey district. From the questionnaire responses, the following development challenges were cited: poor transport services, poor health facilities, poor educational facilities, limited electricity access, and shortage of poor markets for rural commodities. The responses are presented in Figure 2. It is evident that poor health facilities were the leading development challenge in Kurung Kumey district with 43 respondents who indicated this problem. It is not surprising that poor health facilities were mentioned as the leading development challenge in Kurung Kumey district as the people hardly access to healthcare facilities. Even if there is any health centre, unavailability of doctors and nursing staff doubled the deterioration of peoples’ health. It is also depicted in Figure 2 that limited electricity access and poor educational facilities had 28 and 35 respondents respectively. According to the questionnaire responses, although limited electricity access and poor educational facilities are strong development challenges in the district, they pose less challenge to development than poor health facilities. The severity of the problems can, among other factors, be linked to the topography of the district. Topography of Kurung Kumey district consist mostly of deep valley and hilly terrains wherein having modern facilities is problematic. These peculiar geographical settings coupled with torrential rains and a vast number of rivers and rivulets make the development a difficult scheme in the district (Ramya, 2016). The lowest number of respondents with 19 was that indicating poor transport facilities. Although transportation is essential in the development process, it is generally



Fig. 1: Administrative Circles in Kurung Kumey District

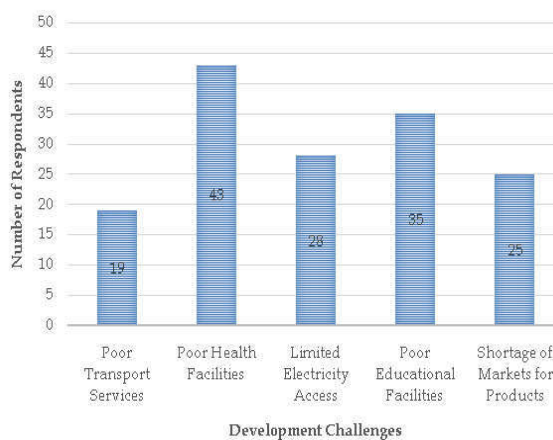


Fig. 2: Development Challenges in Kurung Kumey District

not regarded as a priority in most rural areas in Kurung Kumey district because people used to their traditional mode of transportation i.e. journey by walking between places. The low number of respondents that mentioned the transportation problem was, therefore, not surprising. Like many other rural areas in the state, a large proportion of the rural population in the district depend on subsistence economic activities and this explains why comparatively low number of 25 respondents indicated that shortage of markets is a development challenge for them. Markets mainly affect people who more into selling of commodities but rural dwellers in Kurung Kumey district do little of that, with the exception of the few agricultural products.

Largely, there was consensus among both questionnaire and interview responses on the development challenges in Kurung Kumey district. Interview responses corresponded with questionnaire responses that poor health facilities and poor educational facilities are the leading development challenges in the district. Poor transport facilities, limited electricity access, and shortage of markets for rural commodities were also generally mentioned as development challenges.

Various Development Processes in Kurung Kumey District

Government of India and state of Arunachal Pradesh is implementing a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and state sponsored schemes in the areas of rural development, health and family welfare, education, agriculture, women and child development, sanitation, housing, safe drinking water, irrigation, social welfare throughout the Kurung Kumey district. The main objectives of all these schemes are to generate employment, reduce poverty & economic inequality and improve the quality of life. Besides, some of these schemes aim at creation of basic infrastructure and assets essential for economic development in rural areas. Ramya (2014a) has mentioned the following categories of development programmes that is being implemented in Kurung Kumey district for last few years by various departments:

Development Programmes by Department of Planning:

District Decentralised Planning Fund

The concept of Decentralised Planning had been introduced in the Kurung Kumey district very recently. The District Planning & Development

Boards have full powers to efficiently and cost-effectively implement the district level schemes and also identify the areas and groups of people at the Grassroot level, which need special attention for equitable socio-economic growth. The District Planning & Development Boards are competent to select executing agencies for executing the works with decentralised funds at their own convenience and for works up to Rs. 20 lakhs, administrative approval will be accorded by these Boards. It is clarified that upper limit is applicable to each individual work and not to the total amount approved under a particular scheme/programme. The works up to Rs. 50 lakhs shall be sent to the Department of Planning for administrative approval. In consonance with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, efforts are being made to transfer the fund, function and functionary to the Panchayati Raj Institutions by constituting District Planning Committees.

MLA Local Area Development Scheme (MLALADS)

This scheme enables each Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to undertake small developmental works in his/her constituency through the allocated funds of Rs. 2 crores per year. The works recommended under this scheme are conforming to the general pattern of programmes and projects being implemented by the local bodies. These works are sanctioned and implemented in the same manner as the other works. Wherever require technical and administrative sanctions are given after following the departmental procedures applicable to the local bodies and other government departments. Only that works which can be completed in one or two years and lead to the creation of durable assets should be executed where each individual work should not normally exceed Rs. 70 lakhs. In Kurung Kumey district, some funds provided by present MLAs are utilising in the construction of school buildings and toilets at village.

MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

Under this scheme, funds amounting to Rs. 5 crore per year are placed at the disposal of a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha) of a Parliamentary Constituency. The scheme is implemented on the guidelines received under the scheme from the Government of India. The funds are released for the works recommended by the concerned M.P. and the works are got executed through the Line Departments/Implementing Agencies like Panchayati Raj, BDPOs, etc.

Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR)

In pursuance to the decision of the Government to earmark at least 10% of Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of plan funds for the North-Eastern States including Sikkim, the Ministry of Rural Development has been making allocation of plan funds under various rural development programmes. The decision to earmark 10% of Plan Budget was to guarantee availability of funds to the NE States for implementation of vital pro-poor programmes. Further, it was also made mandatory to transfer the unutilized funds from the earmarked 10% plan budget, each year, to Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) which is administered by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

Development Programmes Department of Relief & Rehabilitation:

For Fire Damage: To meet up all relief cases affected by fire accident and other natural calamities. All the relief cases affected by man-made & natural calamities should immediately report with 24 hours for immediate relief. All relief cases will be entertained in district within preview of deputy commissioner. All relief cases genuinely scrutinised in cadre under the chairmanship of Circle Officer in the circle and submitted at district. In case of fire accident, report in form of WT message should reach in district 24 hrs for immediate relief and central govt. made discussion to grant Rs. 4000/- to Rs. 6000/- for each household.

For Crop damage: In a year only one-time circle level relief committee should held meeting and scrutinised genuinely.

For Flood Damage: All Flood Damage Report (FDR) will be entertained in district through discretionary power of deputy commissioner. It is basically depending on financial position.

Development Programmes by District Rural Development Agency:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is renamed scheme of previously existed National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which was enacted by the Parliament as an Act No. 42 of 2005. The Act provides a guarantee for rural employment to households whose adult members volunteer to do un-skilled

manual work not less than 100 days of such work in a financial year in accordance with the scheme made under the Act.

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is a centrally sponsored scheme funded on cost-sharing basis between the Government of India and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. Under this scheme Rs. 25, 000/- are provided for construction of a House, Kitchen, Smokeless Chulha and Toilet to a family living Below Poverty Line in rural areas in lump sum.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Rural road connectivity is not only a key component of rural development by promoting access to economic and social services and thereby generating increased agricultural incomes and productive employment opportunities in India, it is also as a result, a key ingredient in ensuring sustainable poverty reduction.

The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide Connectivity, by way of an All-weather Road (with necessary culverts and cross-drainage structures, which is operable throughout the year), to the eligible unconnected Habitations in the rural areas, in such a way that all Unconnected Habitations with a population of 1000 persons and above are covered in three years (2000-2003) and all Unconnected Habitations with a population of 500 persons and above by the end of the Tenth Plan Period (2007). In respect of the Hill States (North-East, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttaranchal) and the Desert Areas (as identified in the Desert Development Programme) as well as the Tribal (Schedule V) areas, the objective would be to connect Habitations with a population of 250 persons and above.

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

The families living Below the Poverty Line belonging to rural areas are assisted under this programme- individually as well as in Groups (Self Help Group). Funds to be received under the scheme are shared by Centre and State Government in the ratio of 75:25 ratios. Assistance is provided for income generating activities. After 6 months of the formation of a Self-Help Group Rs. 10,000/- is provided as Revolving Fund and after completion of 2nd grading (one year) subsidy @ 50% subject to a maximum of Rs.125000/- is provided to a Self

Help Group.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)

Two erstwhile schemes namely EAS & JRY were reviewed and re-casted as "Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana" (SGRY) in 2001. This is a centrally sponsored Wage Employment Scheme, Implementation of which will be done through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The scheme has the objectives to:

- i. To provide additional wage employment in rural areas.
- ii. To provide food security.
- iii. To create durable community, social and economic infrastructure in rural areas.
- iv. Special emphasis to provide Wage Employment to:
 - a. Women
 - b. Scheduled caste
 - c. Scheduled Tribes.
 - d. Parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupations.

DDP Watershed Development Projects/Hariyali Scheme

The objective of each watershed development project is to promote the economic development of the village community which is directly or indirectly dependent on the watershed and to encourage restoration of ecological balance in the village. It also includes Development of Agricultural lands, horticulture, grassland, forest land, soil and water conservation measures, creation of water resources etc. It is a 4 to 5 years project and during these period funds amounting to Rs.30 lakhs for one watershed development project are allocated for different components (works, training, community organization, entry point activity, etc.) and an area of 1250 Acres (Approx. 500 Hectare) is covered under this project.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

Implementation of the IRDP provided income generating assets and self-employment opportunities to BPL families in the village since the last few years. Most of the families purchased assets belonging to the primary sector. These included pack animals (mules), cows and mithuns and pigs. Some beneficiaries set up shops. There is not much scope for the secondary sector activities in the area.

Majority of the beneficiaries was, of course, found happy with their new assets that have increased the flow of income to the family. This activity has created not only self-employment for the beneficiary but also wage employment opportunities for a few others.

Integrated Wastelands Management Programme (IWMP)

Having realised the gravity of the problem of natural resource degradation and the urgency of evolving a strategy for management of the land, various Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Watershed Programme has been taken up in village. With the implementation of Watershed Programmes, the vast jhum land which lies barren, are being reclaimed for afforestation, horticulture, cash crop cultivation thereby providing subsistence for the farmers and also various soil and moisture conservation measures are being incorporated in the programme. The programme being community based a sustained community action for operation and maintenance of assets have been created and further development of the potential of the natural resources in the watershed is encouraged. The poorer sections of the society are also benefited by enrolling themselves as part of the Self-Help Group, User group whereby various income generating activities are taken up.

The DRDA, Koloriang with Block Development officers as PIAs under department of Rural Development has been implementing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Wastelands Management Programme (IWMP) under which grant-in-aid is provided from the Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources, for development of wastelands on watershed basis directly to DRDAs. This is one of the major watershed programme implemented in the state.

Public Distribution System (PDS) by Department of Civil Supplies:

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh introduced the subsidised rise scheme in late 90s to improve the consumption levels of the weaker sections of the society. Since then, a poor household is entitled to 15 kgs of rice per person per month at Rs. 3.50 per kg. Besides rice, they are entitled to sugar and kerosene on subsidised rates.

Almost all families have been issued ration cards in the village. It is observed that though the PDS shop is reserved for the people, they are not running the shop. All the people of the village have complained about the increase in the prices

of ration items like kerosene, rice, and sugar. They also complained about the quantity of items, which have reduced drastically over a period of time. It is because of the frequent change of norms by the government as well as problem in weighing machine of the dealer/shopkeeper.

Besides the above, the government has been keen to bring development in the areas of education, health, economy, and political participation and so on through five-year plans implemented through various schemes and programmes. Primary and pre-primary schools in the village were established to bring the educational development among the villagers. Similarly, health sub-centre was also established and health functionaries were to periodically visit the village to extend health facilities. Thus, the approach of government towards development has been comprehensive and holistic in nature.

Recommendations

From the preceding discussion, it is recommended that more improvement is desirable in health and educational facilities. The government, both at the centre and the state, should prioritise health and education expenditure in their budgets. This would then enable the government to acquire enough educational resources such as the textbooks, educational personnel such as appropriately qualified teachers and enough classrooms and equipment. More schools should be established in Kurung Kumey district so that the distance that the children cover to access educational services is reduced. Introduction of mobile clinics would be a blessing for people to improve their accessibility of health services. More health workers should be employed to minimise congestion at health centres.

Transport is not only essential for the movement of the people but also for the delivery of commodities to the markets. It is recommended that because of the significance and centrality of transport in the lives of people, the government should urgently pumped-in financial resources for the improvement of the bad state of gravel roads in Kurung Kumey district. When the transport situation is improved, access to health services by people would improve, access to markets where the agricultural products are marketed also improves.

Conclusion

The study has found that there are numerous development challenges in Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh. The challenges are grounded in social, physical, and economic conditions that exist in the district. The major development challenges that were identified in this study are: poor transport services, poor health facilities, poor educational facilities, limited electricity access, and shortage of poor markets for rural commodities. A critical analysis of the findings of this research suggests that the current development problems in Kurung Kumey district leave much scope for improvement. Numerous recommendations were made for the development of Kurung Kumey district. If the recommendations are taken on board, there should be improvement in the standard of living of people in Kurung Kumey district.

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