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Ageing Population and Rising Inequality: The Role of Panchayats

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Ageing Population and Rising Inequality: The Role of Panchayats

Ms. Ponammal, aged 62, works as a labour in the agricultural field to eke her living. Recently, she lost her husband in an accident and she survived with a major fracture in her right leg. With no one to support and unable to work, she can barely make ends meet. When she came to know about the monthly pension for widows, she managed to walk three kms to visit the Gram Panchayat office to enquire about more details. This is not only the plight of Ms. Ponammal but also the three other aged population, especially those living in rural India. Ageing is considered as a natural process and from demographic perspective, it is an irreversible reality. Increasing longevity and declining fertility rate are uniform across the globe which lead to growing population of aged faster than the general population. Often their economic dependence and the cost towards health and medical care are calculated and considered as a liability. The wisdom of this segment of population dividend is left unutilised and hence, they attain unequal status in the society. This write-up focusses on the inequality faced the by ageing population in India and how the local grassroots governance can solve those problems.

Ageing Population in India

Across the globe 60-plus population constitutes about 11.5 per cent of the total population of seven billion. By 2050, this proportion is projected to increase to about 22 per cent when the elderly will outnumber children (below 15 years of age). The elderly constitute the fastest growing age segment while the children and working age segments reduce gradually. The same situation also prevails in India, and by 2030 the old age dependency ratio will reach 14.1.

> Chronic ailments are more prevalent among elderly women (674 per 1,000) than elderly men (619 per 1,000) Further, due to declining functional abilities, elderly people will not be able to perform Activities of Daily Living (ADL).

Challenges of an Ageing Population

The ageing population faces several challenges and those are presented hereunder in a nutshell:

Feminisation of Ageing: As per the data from Sample Registration System (SRS) across all the states in India, women have higher life expectancies at old age than men. In 1971, the sex ratio of elderly is 938 women to 1,000 men but in 2011, it is 1,033. Also the projections show that

the population of 80- plus will grow 700 per cent by 2050 with more number of widows and elderly women dependents.

The needs of those oldest-old women will gain significant focus. As such women face discrimination in the society and that too with the age and income insecurity, they become so vulnerable and subject to neglect as well. The report on World Population Ageing says, "More than four out of five women have either no personal income at all or very little income; income insecurity increases with advancing age. Only a small percentage of older women reporting no income actually receive a social pension."

Ruralisation of Elderly: According to 2011 Census, 71 per cent of the elderly live in rural India. States like Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have elderly people living at larger percentage in villages. Lack of income, inadequate access to healthcare facility and immobility are keen issues faced by aged population in rural India.

Work Participation: The statistics shows that about one-fifth of the aged population lives alone or with their spouse. So, they have to manage their livelihood needs on their own like Ms. Ponammal. In Meghalaya, nearly 60

(left) An old lady engaged in sale of tender coconut and (right) an old man taking a walk with the help of walking stick (file photo)

per cent of elderly persons take part in labour force, whereas in Assam, Kerala, Haryana and West Bengal, the work participation rates stay close to around 25 per cent.

Health Status of the Elderly: NSSO 71st Round indicates that morbidity is higher among aged population at 30 per cent in the age group 60–69 years and 37 per cent for the 80-plus group. Obviously it should be higher among women than men. Morbidity often requires hospitalisation but the rate of hospitalisation for women is lesser than that of men which specifies gender differences in healthcare.

Apart from these differences, the out of pocket expenses for healthcare and the treatment cost for chronic illness are also quite high in the absence of public health facility for elderly. Chronic ailments are more prevalent among elderly women (674 per 1,000) than elderly men (619 per 1,000) as also higher in rural areas

(658 out of 1,000) than urban (621 out of 1,000). Further, due to declining functional abilities, elderly people will not be able to perform Activities of Daily Living (ADL). It includes the basic tasks of everyday life such as feeding, bathing, dressing, mobility and use of the toilet.

These are considered as care burden and lack of availability of these care services can be considered as a burden to the society. In this context abuse of elders happens and negligent acts by the caregivers are quite common. However, data or information on elder abuse is very limited.

Role of Panchayat

The problems of the elderly are many and they cannot be solved by showing pity or compassion alone. Elderly have a right to live their life with dignity and the Panchayats definitely have a role to play in it. Like gender-friendly and child-friendly Panchayats, age-friendly Panchayat is

also very much required. The Panchayat may consider the following activities to make their local body, an 'Aged-friendly Panchayat.'

Entitlements of Elderly Persons: Every Panchayat has to conduct a survey of old persons living in the villages to take a stock of their health conditions including the socio-economic and emotional problems. Gram Panchayat should create awareness in the village about the different welfare schemes available from government and civil society organisations for enhancing the dignity of the elderly.

The Panchayats should ensure that elderly people get access to government schemes such as old age pensions, benefits under Antyodya, Annapurna and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, etc., on time.
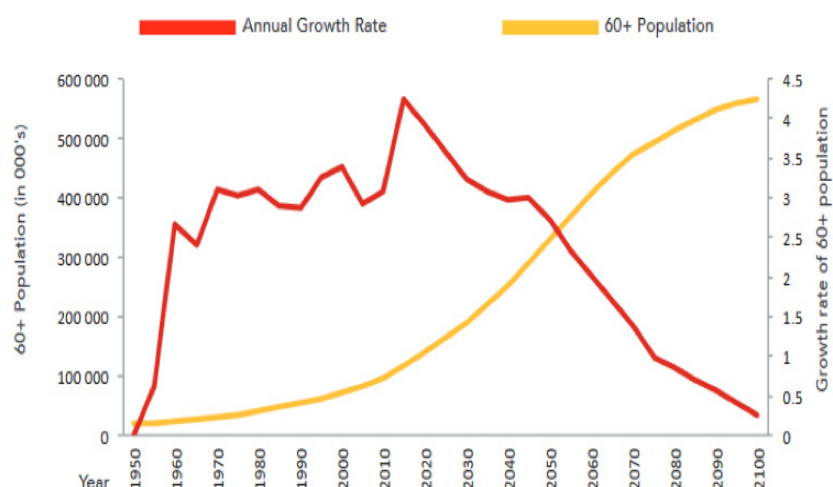
Health: The elders have the 'Right to Health Services'. In the remote areas the health centres may not function regularly or their functionaries are not trained to treat the elderly. The elected representatives need to discuss the problem of elders with doctors and Auxilliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) in the Gram Sabha and find out ways to mobilise the necessary health facilities for them.

The Panchayat may instruct the health workers to compulsorily check the

Table 1: Ageing Population in India

S. No	Ageing Population in India	2019	2030
1	Population aged 65 years or over (thousands)	87,149	1,28,877
2	Percentage aged 65 years or over	6.4	8.6
3	Old-age dependency ratio (65+ /20-64)	11.0	14.1
4	Prospective old-age dependency ratio	11.5	13.5
5	Economic old-age dependency ratio	14.1	17.8

Source: India Ageing Report 2017, UNFPA.

Source: United Nations (2015), World Population Prospects, 2015 Revision, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

Figure.1: Size and Growth Rate of Elderly Population in India, 1950-2100

health status of elderly persons during the home visits. Some ailments cannot be treated at the local health centre and in such cases, the Gram Panchayat can prepare a list of elderly sick persons who have no one to take them to the nearest hospital and arrange for their access to required health care services. Panchayat can obtain information about the health insurance for elderly and get it implemented in their village. Voluntary organisations and Gram Panchayat can together work for arranging blankets and other facilities during winter to the elders.

Family: Family is the most cherished social institution in India and the most vital social security for the old. It is the right of elders that they are cared by family. But some families themselves are helpless and are unable to do anything for the old even if they want to. Under such circumstances the Panchayats must find out availability of old age homes in the locality and provide required assistance to such family.

Working Elders: For the elderly, who can still work, the Panchayats must create work opportunities according to their capacity. Panchayat has to give the information about relevant schemes such as MGNAREGA and work entitlement to the elderly to avoid the inmigration from the Gram Panchayat.

Support to Elderly: While constructing a new Panchayat building, intiatives have to be ensured taken so that the elderly and disabled do not face any problem or risk in reaching there. The existing buildings should be remodeled to make them easily accessible and safe for the old and disabled persons. Misbehaviour with the elderly citizens is a serious offence. Cruelty against the elderly women and the widows in the name of witchcraft is a crime under the law. The Panchayats must take cognisance of all such cases and check such things from happening.

Elderly Self-Help Groups (ESHGs): In 2005 as an emergency response to tsunami, Elderly Self-Help Groups (ESHGs)

were formed. Till now an estimation of 6,710 ESHGs are in existence. They are spread across the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Odisha and Uttarakhand. The number of working ESHGs in Bihar and Tamil Nadu is significantly higher than other states.
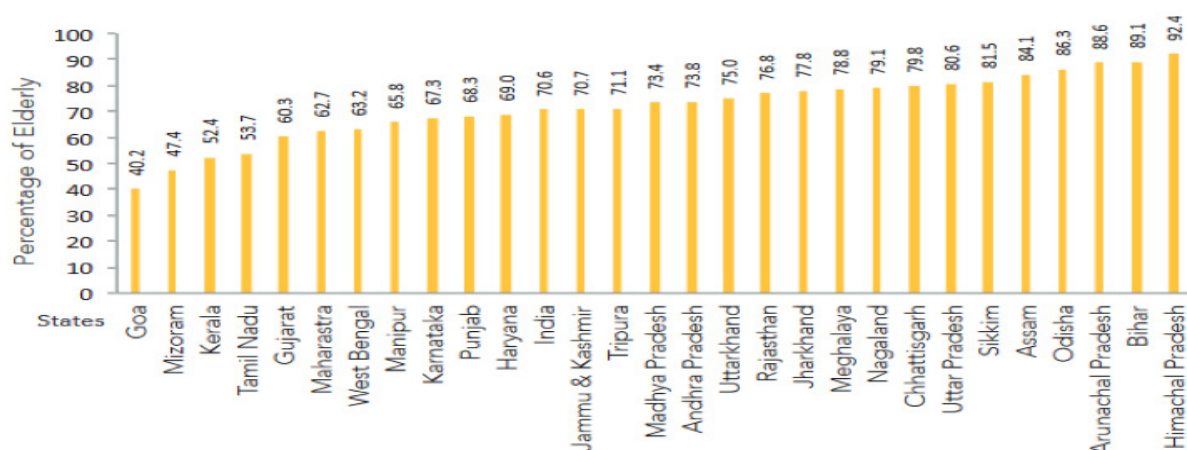
North-eastern Bihar experiences severe annual flooding of the Kosi River, which affects the lives of poor populations at large, including elderly men and women who are then able to fall back upon the ESHGs for sustenance and risk mitigation (India Aging Report, 2017). Although started in a similar manner as SHGs with a thrift and credit arrangement, ESHGs should have broader objectives. The Panchayat must focus on capacity development of their members, resolving their issues on livelihood, health issues, etc., and helping them find community-based solutions.

Involvement in Decision-Making: The Panchayat functionaries shall invite the old people in the Gram Sabha and listen to them. They should find a place in GP planning facilitation team (GPPFT). Their knowledge and wisdom should be used in preparation of GPDP. Their suggestions should be sought for designing new schemes and their participation in implementation of existing schemes.

Table 2: Incidence of Chronic Diseases amongst the Elderly (India, 2011–2050)

Major chronic diseases	Prevalence % (2011)	Incidence in million cases				
		2011	2015	2020	2030	2050
Arthritis	29.3	30.4	34.1	40.8	55.9	96.7
Hypertension	21.0	21.8	24.5	29.3	40.1	69.3
Diabetes	10.1	10.5	11.8	14.1	19.3	33.3
Asthma	7.7	8.0	9.0	10.7	14.7	25.4
Heart disease	5.8	6.0	6.8	8.1	11.1	19.1
Depression	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.1	2.9	5.0
Alzheimer's disease	1.4	1.5	1.6	2.0	2.7	4.6
Cerebral stroke	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.9	3.3
Dementia	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.7	3.0
Cancer	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.3
One or more chronic ailments	64.8	67.3	75.5	90.3	123.6	213.9

Source: India Ageing Report 2017, UNFPA

Figure.2: Percentage of population aged 60 years and above living in rural India, 2011

Kerala Experience

Unlike many other states, Social Justice Department in Kerala has implemented age friendly Panchayat based on the State Old Age Policy, 2013. The main objective of this programme is to ensure good health, participation and assuring quality of life to the senior citizens. Manickal Panchayat in Kerala had taken initiative to make their Gram Panchayat age-friendly since 2014.

It began with survey of 60 plus people and the data collection were done by ICDS staff and ASHA workers. Later, sensitisation programme was conducted for people regarding the issues faced by elders and also about the social security programme available for aged people. Following the sensitisation programme, Vayojana council was formed. This council consists of at least two members from each ward with due representation for women.

The meeting of this Vayojana council is conducted in the premises of Anganwadi and facilitated by Anganwadi teachers. Day care centres for elders has been also operationalised as and when required in the Anganwadi. In addition, the grassroots governance perform the following activities:

- Organise the old in each ward into Vayojana Sabhas and through the sabhas propagate the aims and objectives of the age-friendly Gram Panchayat.

- Call meetings of the different offices/departments.

- Call the implementing officers in the different departments and equip them to carry out the programmes for the elderly.

- Organise students, teachers and PTA members into forums for taking the message of age friendliness to their homes.

- Through the anganwadi teachers, spread the message among the mothers of children coming to Anganwadi.

- Spread the message of respect and protection of the old through leaflets, posters and short skits. Install flex boards carrying this message.

- Observe International Day of Older Persons (1st October) and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15th June) in a suitable manner.

- Organise value-based classes through anganwadis, senior citizens clubs and associations, Kudumbashree workers, ASHA Workers, Residents' Associations and voluntary groups.

Source: Social Justice Department, Government of Kerala.

Let us all join together to help older people enjoy an active and healthy ageing.

An old man doing carpentary

Dr. Vanishree Joseph

Assistant Professor

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NIRDPR

Cover page design: **Shri V. G. Bhat**

Five-day online training programme for FPO stakeholders on Institution Building and Organisation Development in FPOs – Best Practices in Governance and Management

The Centre for Agrarian Studies as Resource Support Agency, has shouldered the responsibility of mentoring and technically supporting the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh supported by National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development AP.

The main objective of the web-based training programme was to maintain the thread of learning and to enable the FPOs to surge forward on Institution Building and Organisation Development. The five-day training programme was organised from 15th to 19th of June, 2020.

The expected output of the programme was to immerse the BOD members, staff and Producer Organization Promoting Institutions (POPI) on FPO development taking them through methodological learning process involving various facets of FPO formation and transformation.

The online programme was designed to make it a most participatory learning experience with pre and post session polling with a break for questions for every 20 minutes. A total of five modules were covered in this programme at the rate of one module, every day. Each module consists of four to five sessions depending on the duration of the
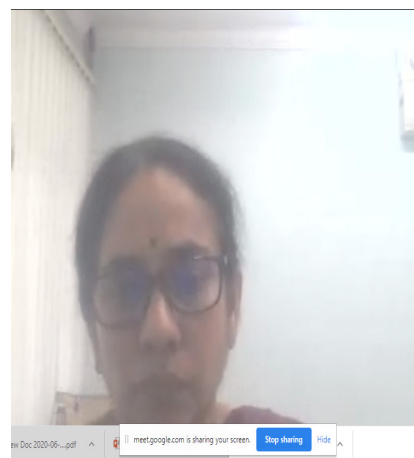
session. The programme was scheduled for two- and - half hours, daily from 11.00 AM to 1.30 PM. Participants have registered to the course through a pre-designed oogle format. Pre-read material pertaining to the module was circulated beforehand to the participants.

The modules covered were – Conceptual understanding and functioning of FPOs – Social Mobilisation, Institution Building and Organisation Development of FPOs – Governance and Management of FPOs – Standard Book keeping in FPOs.

Apart from everyday polling, a simple multiple-choice skill test was conducted on the first day before the commencement of programme and the same questionnaire was canvassed on the last day, at the end of the programme, tracking the learning levels.

The resource material employed was Model Books of FPO developed by NIRDPR funded by NABARD, pre-read material on each chapter, presentations on housekeeping, bookkeeping, Statutory Compliance calendar, Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Articles of Association (AOA) and Critical Rating Tool of FPO. Google Meet was employed for the online training programme as

Dr. Ch. Radhika Rani,
Course Coordinator, handilng a session

it can be accessed even in remote villages through smart phone.

The participants who have successfully participated in all the five days of course will only be allowed to join the following advanced training programme on Value Chain and Business Development Plan of FPOs, which shall be held during July, 2020. Dr. Radhika Rani, Associate Professor and Head, Centre for Agrarian Studies, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Dr. Nithya, Assistant Professor, CAS, NIRDPR, Dr. Divakar, Project Lead, CAS, NIRDPR, Mr. Babu Rao, Research Associate, CAS, NIRDPR have functioned as resource persons.

Google feedback form was circulated online to all the participants for their feedback and suggestions.

The participants have felt that the course was very timely, useful and served to bridge the knowledge gap during the lockdown period. They have agreed to scrupulously follow the points of learning in the implementation and to translate the knowledge gained to the BOD members of FPOs in the field, without transmission loss.

Dr. Ch. Radhika Rani
Course Coordinator and Head,
Centre for Agrarian Studies

Screen grab of a session from the training programme

ToT programme for rural development professionals and faculty of SIRD&PR Sikkim on Good Governance

"Good Governance through Community Participation in Rural Development - Community Score Card (CSC) Approach and Methodology"

Digital poster of the training programme

A webinar ToT programme on 'Good Governance through Community Participation in Rural Development Community Score Card (CSC) Approach and Methodology' was organised to the faculty and field facilitators of SIRD Sikkim by Centre for Good Governance and Policy Analysis (CGG&PA), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad on 19th May, 2020.

Good Governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. It's not about making 'correct' decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions. Good Governance is a combination of characteristics, namely accountable, transparent, follows the rule of law, responsiveness, equitable and inclusive, effective and efficient and participatory.

Social accountability tools enable development practitioners the knowledge to generate demand and ultimately improve governance at the local, regional, and national levels. Social accountability tools are essential for learning, as many of the public policies are increasingly goal oriented, aiming for measureable results and goals, and decision-centric.

The importance of the Good Governance will rely on successful delivery of the service to the public, especially in making all government pro-poor initiatives to reach all rural poor. As a government servant improvement of governance is an everyday affair in fact every minute affair and it is a continuous process. The governance can be improved by using this social accountability tools at micro level on empowerment and accountability by the community themselves. This tool can make tremendous difference for stakeholders, customers and consumers.

The Community Score Card approach is an exciting way to increase participation, accountability and transparency between service users, providers and decision-makers. The main goal of the Community Score Card is to positively influence the quality, efficiency and accountability with which services are provided at different levels. The core implementation strategy to achieve the goal is using dialogue in a participatory forum that engages both service users and service providers.

Prospectus of the Webinar

- This specialisation will give the participants the knowledge and tool that an organisation needs to record and produce professionalism in dispensing public services.

- The participants will learn the technical aspects of assessing public issues, including the involvement of the stakeholders by adopting Community Score Card approach at micro level.

- The application of the tool stimulates achievement of goals, fulfilment of duties and responsibilities and promotes public faith and trust in public office.

The webinar ToT programme on 'Good Governance through Community Participation in Rural Development Community Score Card (CSC) Approach and Methodology' aimed at addressing the following objectives:

- To introduce participants to the concept of Governance and Good Governance

- To identify governance deficits and gaps in existing policies

- To enable participants to learn 'Community Score Card' (CSC) approach and methodologies

- To apply CSC tool for analysing existing flagship programmes of rural development at micro level

- To make the participants equipped with knowledge and skills for Community Score Card (CSC)-social

accountability tool for better service delivery.

The webinar mainly focused to cover the following three modules:

- Concept, Approaches and Elements of Good Governance

- Concepts, Approaches, Rational and Tools of Social Accountability

- Application of Social Accountability Tool and Technique Community Score Card (CSC)

The webinar started with the welcome address by Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor and Head, CGG&PA, NIRDPR. She highlighted the importance of community empowerment through CSC technique and noted that it may bring more transparency and accountability in service delivery to the poor. She also highlighted that this CSC technique may empower the community about their rights and entitlements. During the inaugural address, Shri Bishal Mukhia, Director, SIRDPR, Sikkim appreciated the efforts of CGG&PA, NIRDPR for the webinar. He concluded that these learning would definitely enrich the SIRD faculty to empower the community at Gram Panchayat/Village level on better service delivery of all government programmes.

This programme covered the use of Community Score Card (CSC) tool for Good Governance through Community Participation in Rural Development by covering scope and need of Social Accountability Tools for better service delivery, Good Governance; social accountability tools, Community Score Card- Describing the CSC tool & Six key steps: Preparatory Groundwork; Input-Tracking Scorecard; Performance Score Card by the Community; Self-Evaluation Score Card by Service Providers; Interface Meeting and Action Planning; Institutionalisation; Also shared one of the best case example of 'Improved Service Delivery' an outcome of NIRDPR ToTs - an evidence of Community Score Card (CSC) Social Accountability tool approach with participants. At the end, a Question and Answer session was conducted. Dr. K. Prabhakar, Assistant Professor, Centre for Good Governance and Policy analysis (CGG&PA), NIRDPR and Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor and Head, CGG&PA organised the webinar.

Modes of Village Adoption

Officials in conversation with villagers during an interaction programme in Maharastra (file photo)

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Programme Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) including engineering colleges and management schools in India are mostly involved in teaching (or training); occasionally in research; and rarely in community engagement. Perhaps, it does not occur to us that an academic institution's active engagement in development practice reinforces teaching; and prods research by providing researchable issues. 'Village Adoption' can be one of the ways for HEIs to a have regular development engagement with the rural community.

The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Programme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has moved into UBA 2.0. The programme aims at connecting institutions of higher education with local communities to address the development challenges through appropriate technologies.

The participating institutions of UBA may necessarily have to put in place a mechanism to give space for village adoption. This article clarifies the concept of village adoption and a range of approaches and strategies that the universities and higher educational institutions specialising in Science & Technology and Management may find appropriate for the application.

The HEIs should recognise that application of concepts, theories, technologies and models into practice is as important as learning them in a classroom or laboratory is, which otherwise might be viewed as rote learning, i.e. memorisation technique based on repetition. Active learning and associative learning kindle the critical faculty of the learner to become energetic.

Simply, its impact on the learner lasts longer – often for a lifetime. Learning must become an involvement – an 'empathised involvement'. Learning without involvement ends up in placement prospects and pay packs.

The Concept of Village Adoption

The concept of village adoption entails development practice that is reflexive, and socially useful. It involves moving from ideation to action. During the action, there is critical monitoring of the self and the other taking place – in terms of development principles, development ethics and prevailing development policy. We may call it Action – Response – Action Continuum. It's sort of reflexive practice, a contrast to blind-folded execution of protocol or guidelines.

It must result in improvement in the local situations, refinement of local practice, and betterment in the conditions of living of the people we are working with. Such learning is more delightful and gratifying to the learners as well as to the academic guide who is involved.

Village adoption is a development engagement undertaken by an academic/researcher or a development professional who aspires to learn from 'practice' and from the unintended mistakes during the course.

It demands research-minded practice on the part of the professional in question, which is called 'reflexive-practice'. It demands peer-review of 'what's going on' to be able to figure out and explain.

It should result in useful social action for the community we are working with. Village adoption should help the faculty in question to learn things practically – the least one can learn is that it's not as easy as it is said in the classroom or done in the laboratory.

Twin Objectives of Village Adoption

Village adoption aims at:

(1) Instituting socially useful action; and

(2) Sharpening the professional competence and development facilitating skills of the faculty members as well as the students involved in this exercise.

The Fair Scale Measurement

In any village development endeavour, village development as well as learning should concurrently take place. If village development has taken place, but no new learning has been gained – that is being imperceptive, uncritical and uninformed. If learning has taken place, but hardly any development took place – that is being unethical, unprincipled and two-faced. This should serve as a reference point for an academic to get himself/herself engaged in village adoption.

What Works to Take Up?

All we, as HEIs, can lay hand in is at the low-hanging fruits. For instance, problems that can be solved by:

(a) Connecting the dots

(b) Providing the guidance required for solving a problem in its entirety

(c) Taking things to the finish-line perhaps by providing the last mile footing

(d) Activities that put to use our expertise by application of technology or management model, etc.

The Government of India aims at putting to use, saturation approach to achieving model villages in the country. Saturation simply means reaching 100 per cent in every aspect of development. Zero omission. For example, the Jal Jeevan Mission of the Ministry of Jal Sakthi aims at providing functional house tap connection for drinking water supply to every rural household by the year 2024. If you identify 30 per cent of the households do not have access to piped water supply in a village. Make plans and officially move to ensure that you reach 100 per cent by providing them piped water supply. Use the Rural Water Supply Scheme. Talk to the Panchayat, make a plan, and connect to the RWS Department.

This way, you ensure, 100 per cent of households have access to piped water supply; 100 per cent of the households have and use toilets; 100 per cent of school-going children are in school; 100 per cent of children of less than 4 years of age are enrolled in Anganwadi; 100 per cent immunisation against seven vaccine-preventable diseases; 100 per cent institutional delivery and so on.

Modes of Operationalising Village Adoption

1. Village Adoption in Conventional Mode
2. Village Adoption in Naturalised Mode
3. Village Adoption in Demonstration Mode
4. Village Adoption like in Adarsh Gram Mode
5. Village Adoption in Action Research Mode

Let us try to expand each one of this mode – what each one of this means to us .

1. Conventional Mode

The conventional mode is an established and predominant usage in village adoption. It means you adopt a village and go about planning and carrying out things for it's overall development, or holistic development. It's aiming at comprehensive development that is generally aimed at under conventional mode. You work in almost all sectors - rope in as many government programmes as possible, and mobile possible community contribution/participation and so on. This is going along in development journey with the villagers, wherever that journey takes you to. It does not work with a blueprint. Plans evolve as we progress in the development journey.

This idea is as old as Mahatma's 'Gram Swaraj'. Every village is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is necessary. It goes with the principles of grow your own food crops, and develop your own groundwater bank, etc. This approach is appropriate for Gandhian institutions engaged in rural development and some NGOs that generally aim at holistic development. Because of the enormity or massiveness of the work involved, generally many educational institutions that adopt villages do not opt for this approach. To become successful this approach requires undivided attention, which is practically not possible for HEIs because of the academic priorities on the campus.

2. Naturalised (Canonical) Mode

This is a sector-specific intervention. It means work in a specific sector, for instance, (i) drinking water and sanitation (ii) seed production technologies; (iii) water conservation and rainwater harvesting, (iv) addressing quality problems in drinking water; (v) help establish e-governance system etc. The naturalised mode gives the liberty of working within one's professional competence and specific sector you/ your institution specialises in. This is taking up not more than what one can professionally handle. Taking up only what you are specialising in, and what you feel confident about; or what field of expertise your institution is known for.

3. Demonstration Mode

In Demonstration mode, you have a specific proven model of development or prototype of a technology that you would like to implement, and demonstrate to the world that it works in your village – the village you adopted. The point is it should work in similar contexts elsewhere as well. For example, rural development through an innovative group lending model/water-saving technology/energy-saving technology, etc. You have a thorough understanding of how your model/technology works. You implement it and demonstrate that it works in the adopted village. It contributes to village development.

There are several others such as Watershed Models; Mobile-based Marketing Information System; Technology-enabled Drinking Water Service Delivery; Placement-assured Skill Training Model; Household Toilet model constructed within the subsidy amount given by the government; waste management technologies; wastewater management technologies, etc. You develop a model/design a technology. Take your model to the village. Demonstrate that it works. Let your adopted village benefit by it.

4. Adarsh Gram Mode

This approach aims at triggering processes which lead to the holistic development (personal, human, economic, and social) of the identified Gram Panchayat. You need to plan for every dimension of rural development. This is not merely about personal development or social development or about socio-economic development. This is an assemblage of all these. Thus, it demands mainly converging different government programmes, private and voluntary initiatives. This usually goes with a blueprint or plan. This can be officially connected to the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) of whichever village you are working in. For the villagers, it pays if they build partnerships with academic and research institutions and voluntary organisations. This is an opportunity to nurture the identified Adarsh Gram as 'School of Practice' to train other Gram Panchayats.

This holistic/comprehensive plan inter alia includes elements such as diversified agriculture, education for all,

Officials in conversation with villagers during a training programme (file photo)

piped water supply for all the households, ODF village, hygienic behaviour and practices – clean village; reducing risk behaviour – no alcoholism, no substance abuse, green cover development, health and nutrition –mother and child care, micro and small business management, financial inclusion and e-governance, etc.

5. Action Research Mode

'Action research' is about two things: 'action' (what you do) and 'research' (how you learn about and explain what you do). The 'action aspect' of action research is about improving practice. The 'research aspect' is about creating knowledge about practice. It is about critical self-reflection of your own practice and learning to progressively improve practice. You might take up a project, which we call 'action'. What action – project – you initiate? What is the idea behind this initiative or concept? Does it aim at addressing the water scarcity problem/water quality problem/or you aim at providing solar power in a village that is not connected to any grid. You set up solar power connections for agricultural pumps or household electricity connection,and gather evidences/data/cases that support your claim to knowledge 'that your practice is yielding the desired results'.

This is also about how do I modify my practice in the light of my learning?

Possibly, not that everything went on as you expected. You need to analyse certain things did not work; In what contexts it works; where it does not; explain where it seems to work, where it does not, & why so; and what you think should be improved, the next time you do it. It is a spiral of progressive learning and refinement in practice. The idea of self-reflection is central to action research. It is also a scientific way of looking at your practice in order to check whether it is as you feel it should be.

You may have actually improved the situation. If so, you need to tell the story and share your findings: telling others what you have done and how you have done it, and why it is important.

You make a claim to knowledge that you have done or learned something that has influenced the processes of improvement (in electrification or agriculture or handholding a few farmers to register a Producers' Organisation. Your descriptions show the situation as it is, and as it unfolds. Explanations contain the reasons and purposes for actions, why you did what you did and what you hoped to achieve and your awareness of the significance of what you have done. This is emergent learning.

Learn as things emerge. Make mistakes and learn from the mistakes to correct, and redo it. Such learning also contains

a claim to knowledge, that you have found something out that was not known before. People benefit by the outcome, and you benefit in the process in terms of knowledge generation/technology designing or model development. This is action research mode, which is very appropriate to test a technology customised to certain circumstances or model developed for a given context.
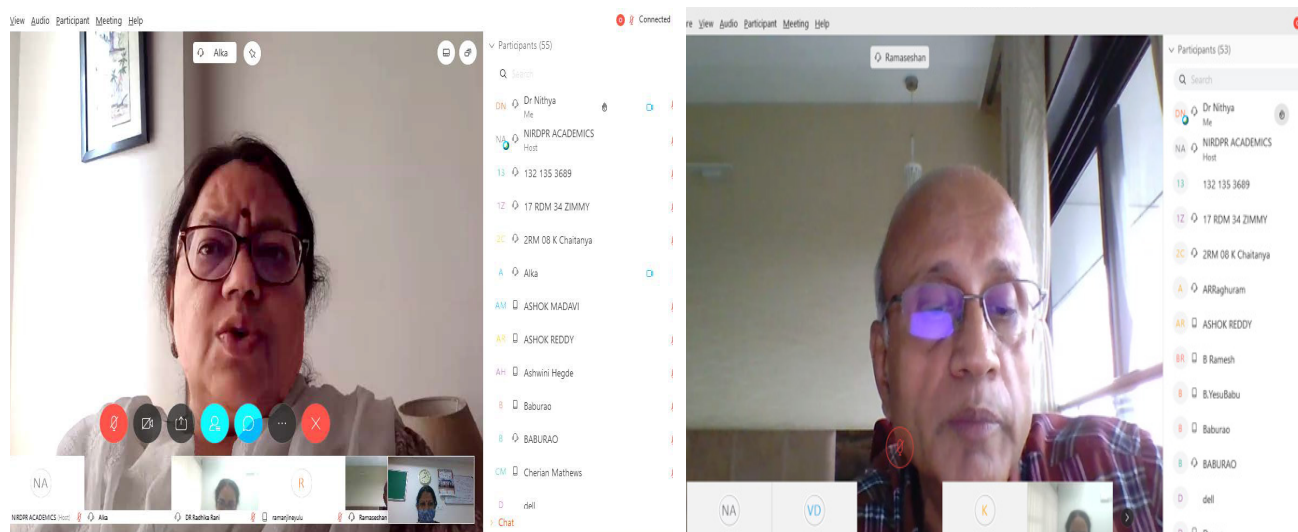
How to Select One?

How to select one of these modes/approaches depends on factors such as (i) the pressing need of the community you are deciding to work with; and (ii) what you feel confident about, as your professional competence, and so on. It can be holistic (like the Adarsh model). It can be sector-specific (going by your professional competence). It can be a demonstration of a model that you fabricated taking cues from some laboratory based research or an inspiring research paper you read/International experience reported as case. You can also think of peer-reviewed ideas (as trials) for action research. It is completely in the ingenuity of the faculty members, and the place of village adoption in the scheme of things of an institution.

Dr. R. Ramesh
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Webinar on Initiatives in Agriculture Marketing - Implications for FPOs

(left) Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, IAS, Additional Secretary, MoRD and DG (i/c), NIRDPR and (right) Shri Ramaseshan, IAS (Retd) attending the webinar

India is witnessing revolutionary policy reformations that would redefine the entire agribusiness landscape of the country in near future. Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are third generation farmer-based organisations that have been actively getting into value chain development activities of their respective prime commodities and crops. With an objective to equip the stakeholders of the FPOs with the latest policy initiatives by Government of India in agriculture marketing a webinar was arranged by the Centre for Agrarian Studies, NIRDPR on 12th June, 2020. Shri Ramaseshan, IAS (Retd) who was till recently at the helm of affairs in MoA and FW, GoI, the person behind the structural development of e-platforms for agriculture commodities like E-Nam, was the lead resource person who guided the proceedings of the technical session for two hours. There were more than 80 participants with divergent stakes in building and sustaining FPO growth model in the country.

Welcoming the participants Dr. Ch. Radhika Rani, Associate Professor and Head of Centre for Agrarian Studies, NIRDPR explained the purpose of the webinar. She explained how the FPOs stood up against supply chain related roadblocks and could win the faith and confidence of their shareholder farmers in the period of lockdown under COVID-19. She reiterated that National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) groups in the country have also played a significant role in procurement and marketing of agriculture commodities. The sporadic and isolated cases of exemplary support interventions by FPOs and NRLM groups must be institutionalised into a scalable and replicable value chain intervention models. Dr. Radhika Rani felt that the recent policy reforms announced by GoI would come in handy if the FPOs and NRLM groups keep abreast of the regulations and the web seminar would be very much useful for the FPOs if their doubts are cleared and the real intentions of the policymakers are understood.

Delivering the keynote address Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, IAS, Additional Secretary, MoRD and DG (i/c) NIRDPR thanked Shri Ramaseshan for being with NIRDPR in this nation building cause and felt that this webinar could not have been timed better because of the major happening across the country currently: the one being agricultural reforms on marketing and livestock Act which has come into force in 2017. She felt that the government has taken this COVID-19 situation as an opportunity to put these reforms into practice. She informed that as many as 15 to 18 states have already adapted all the major reforms as proposed under the APLM Act.

Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, emphasised the two critical points to be factored into our agriculture growth strategy i)the customised plans specific to agroclimatic zones and ii)integrated farming with blend of agriculture with livestock and fisheries to ensure consistent cash flows from small parcel of land. Ms. Alka informed that under the Atman Nirbhar Yojana GoI has earmarked Rs.1.00 lakh crore for development of infrastructure coupled with credit support from banks that should go a long way in building strong agribusiness ecosystem in the country. The second vital growth model she emphasised is about the DAY-NRLM. With lot of support given to MKSP and well-trained social infrastructure in place in the form of women collectives, there should be an integrated approach coming from these groups in agri processing. She concluded that there is a favourable macroeconomic policy and already Farmer Producer Groups are delivering even during the testing times like COVID-19. She concluded with the prediction that next two years are going to bring a sea change with strong convergence of line departments, Women Collectives and Producer Collectives.

The main technical session was led by Shri Ramaseshan dealing with critical thematic areas like current market structure in India, electronic platforms, recent ordinances, and likely impact on FPO business and opportunities. He explained about how spot and future markets operate and key amendments brought to APMC Act. He critically analysed how NCDEX operates to help FPOs and the formation of NEML, the spot market arm of NCDEX.

Shri Ramaseshan moved on to the next thematic area of E–Market platforms and elaborated how they have made the location of farmer and his produce irrelevant to markets. The virtual market platform connects the whole system of stakeholders with simultaneity of primary and secondary markets. He brought into focus on three ordinances promulgated by

Govt. of India, viz. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020-06-20; The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020-06-20; The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020-06-20 for discussions. He explained how these three ordinances can change agri marketing substantially.

Shri Ramaseshan explained the significance of FPTC ordinance, the choice given to farmer to sell produce for remunerative prices with barrier free trade through the facilitation of e-trading platforms. He informed that the jurisdiction of regulated market committees is restricted to notified markets and yards as per the new ordinance and that any trader can transact in agricultural commodities anywhere if he/she has a PAN. There is also regulation that payment for the produce to be made within three days. He has also explained how the Essential Commodities Act unshackles all range of value chain players from restrictions in stocking the commodities.
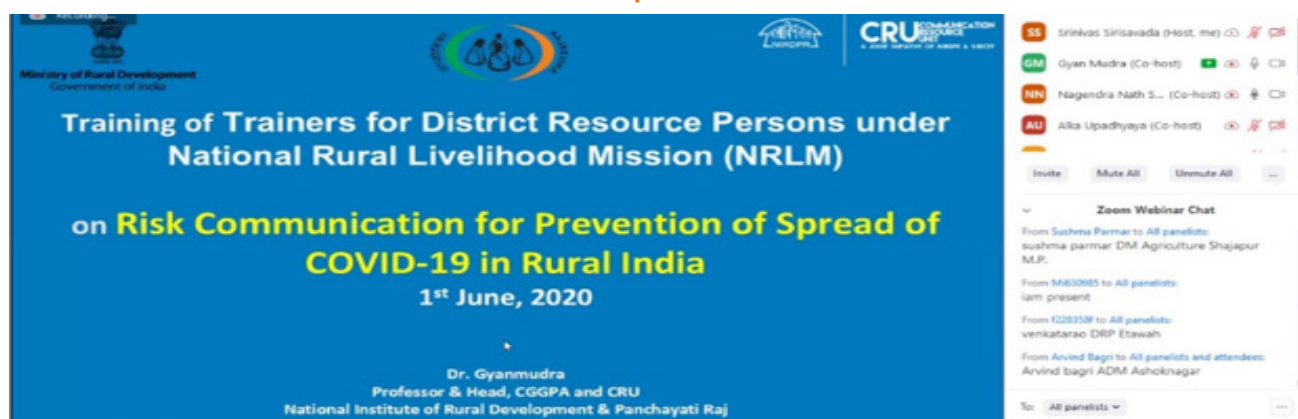
Finally, Dr. Ramaseshan advised the FPOs that they were business entities and should seize the opportunity of favourable policy environment.

The final session was devoted to questions and answers from participants who have got their technical doubts clarified from Shri Ramaseshan.

The session was concluded with vote of thanks by Dr. Nithya V. G. who lauded Shri Ramaseshan for his very informative and timely discourse on the most important development in agriculture marketing front in India.

The participants felt that the entire session was very productive, purposeful and helped them in guiding the farmers with remunerative agriculture marketing practices.

ToT for state nodal teams, resource persons working under NRLM on Risk Communication for Prevention of Spread of COVID-19 in Rural India

Digital poster of the ToT

Government of India is taking all necessary steps to ensure that we are prepared well to face the challenges and threats posed by the growing pandemic of COVID-19. With proactive steps of the government and the support of the people, India succeeded in containing the spread of virus rapidly. But due to reverse migration from urban cities to rural areas, the virus is slowly moving to the rural areas.

Increasing number of cases are being reported from districts that were until recently untouched by COVID-19. In many states, it has resulted in more districts coming under the grip of the virus.

The most important factor in preventing the spread of the virus locally is to empower the citizens with the right information and taking precautions as per the advisories being issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other international organisations.

In this context, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission with the support of Communication Research Unit- National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad developed a strategy to reach out to the rural communities with COVID-19 prevention messages.

A detailed strategy was worked out to engage communities with much needed innovative SBCC material to promote COVID-19 preventive behaviour among people. Together, two hours training curriculum was developed to train Block, District, Village level trainers through webinar on anxiety management, key facts about COVID-19, key behaviours to be practiced by all to protect oneself form COVID-19, preventing COVID-19 related stigma, role of key stakeholders in promoting preventive behaviours, cascading the training to next level, working out action plan to reach the most vulnerable communities and reporting on cascade trainings.

NRLM has its presence in 678 districts across 34 states and UTs. Over 7.05 crore of households from 2.58 lakh villages have been mobilised into Self-Help Groups (SHGs). With its presence at every corner of the country, NRLM can play a crucial role in creating awareness among rural communities to combat with this pandemic.

SHG leaders and members can easily reach rural communities with the information on COVID-19 and promote preventive behaviour among the members as they are well connected with the members and are considered to be reliable source of information to follow. If an SHG can actively promote specific health behaviour, it can have an impact in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate panic among people. These groups can also help on expanding social networks and the communication within them—facilitating the flow of useful information.

In this context, on the request of Ministry of Rural Development, under the leadership of Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor & Head, Centre for Good Governance & Policy Analysis, the CRU-NIRDPR and NRLM cell of NIRDPR organised online trainings to state nodal teams, district and block resource persons from 12 states of the country, i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Kerala. A total of 2,950 Master Resource Persons were trained in nine batches during the first half of June 2020.

Shri Nagendranath Sinha, IAS, Secretary of Department of Rural Development, Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, IAS, Additional Secretary of Rural Development, DG (i/c), NIRDPR and Smt. Nita Kejriwal, IAS, Joint Secretary of Rural Development inaugurated the first training programme and motivated the participants with their opening remarks. Secretary, Rural Development specified on the role that SHG members can play in controlling the spread of virus and emphasised on the need to reach all CRPs and SHG members by end of June with the COVID-19 prevention messages. Additional Secretary, Rural Development congratulated CRU-NIRDPR and NRLM cell for taking up these trainings and emphasised on the role that SHG members can play in coordinating with migrant population coming back to villages and measures to be taken at each village level to control the spread of virus through migrants by following the COVID-19 preventive behaviour.

Smt. Nita Kejriwal reinforced on the completion of these training programmes on a mission mode and guide the team to complete all batches of training at the earliest.

Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor and Head, CGG&PA and Director, Communication Resource Unit facilitated the technical sessions to all the batches and role of the trainers, reporting and monitoring of field level trainings were facilitated by Ms. Usha Rani and Ms. Seema Bhaskaran, the representatives of NRLM at ministry and NIRDPR respectively.

Participants found the training sessions and the training material to be very useful and assured to take forward the desired message on COVID-19 to control the spread of disease among the rural communities.

What makes a Good Trainer, Great?

A training session in progress (file photo)

1. Do your homework enough: Never enter a training hall without sufficient preparation. When you deliver it might sound to the participants as if things flow effortlessly. But only you know, that it flows effortlessly – not because you are blessed, but because of your homework (in private). A duck seems to sail on water effortlessly when you see it moving on the water. No one notices the amount of rowing that gets done beneath the water with its two legs.

2. Practice: There is a story of the great artist Pablo Picasso. A lady happened to run into Picasso in a marketplace. She said: *Oh, Picasso, great to have met you. I am one of your ardent fans. Could you do a little drawing of me, please? I shall preserve it for the rest of my life* – and handed a pencil and a piece of paper. In about 30 seconds, Picasso drew her face as pencil lines, and handed it over to that lady. She said: *Wow! Amazing. Wonderful. You took just 30 seconds to do this drawing – unbelievable!* Picasso smiled and replied: *My dear lady, I took 30 years and 30 seconds* (meaning, I have been doing it for 30 years to be able to do it today in 30 seconds). PRACTICE – whether it is painting, voice modulation or delivering a joke to make the classroom explode with laughter, everything comes from practice only. For instance, if you missed the right timing to release the punchline in a joke, your joke would fall flat. Practice.

3. Walk the Talk: This is about keeping your video in alignment with your audio. This is very much required especially when the expected outcome of your training is 'behaviour change of the participants'. For instance, you are preparing your participants as Swachh Bharat Mission volunteers. They should see cleanliness manifested in your behaviour. If they happen to see you littering during a tea break, then they tend to think that you are 'singing Swachata song' because you are paid for doing it. This will have an adverse impact on the result of your training. Cultivate that habit much before you start your training.

4. Variety: Understand how fast human mind can travel from one continent to another – it's quite incredible and unpredictable. So, in your session as a trainer, keep a variety of training methods, tools and techniques (appropriately though!), which can break the monotone. Involve the participants wherever possible. A sure way to kill any subject is to prepare a presentation slideshow, and repeat it like a parrot batch after batch, programme after programme. The

amount of research and new knowledge generation that takes place today almost on a daily basis is mindboggling. You need to be updated so as to play world-class in your game. Unless your participants found you a step ahead of them, they tend to play with their mobile phone, while the class is on. What can be more insulting to a trainer than this one?

5. Understand the Culture: This is essential because every culture has certain language, social norms, and values. Understanding this is required so as to put your point across, and more so when you think you need to mix male and female participants in training exercises and games. Jokes sometimes fall flat not just because of wrong delivery, but because it may be culturally irrelevant, or perplexing.

6. Training Games: Use games to energise and enliven sessions. A session that digressed to dullness can get back on track after an energiser. But, be wary of overuse of games and plays at the cost of content. Participants might finally conclude (in private of course!) that perhaps this man does not know the subject, so he is very liberal with his games and plays in order to ENTERTAIN.

7. Not every problem can be solved through training: Training is proposed sometimes on anything and everything. You must see if the problem (such as poor performance of a staff) is really to do with a 'training gap'. If it is to do with knowledge, skills, attitude or lack of exposure, training can be arranged. But, if the problem is entirely of a different nature, e.g. a Gram Panchayat office may have an 'antique-piece computer' with no internet connection. Therefore, this Panchayat is unable to update physical and financial progress of work status in a designated web portal or through excel formats through e-mail. In order to correct this problem the district office arranges training to expose the web portal and how to send e-mails, when the fact is the Computer Operator in question is well aware of using a computer. The problem here is one of non-functional computer or absence of internet facility, and not the skills required to work with a computer.

8. Being Friendly: It's always good to be friendly and smiling with participants. But, there is a tendency among trainers, in order to get into the heart of participants going too friendly and being too liberal to the extent of allowing participants to tweak the training schedule - in the pretext of making it participatory - leading to a complete digression that might defeat the purpose of the training. Our being friendly should not happen at the cost of the content to be delivered.

9. Answering Questions: Be honest. See if the question raised is relevant. Do not try to answer every question asked – irrespective of relevance/irrelevance. So much so, do not answer a practical question with a philosophical answer. If you don't know the answer, you can refer him/her to the correct source. Alternatively, you can tell them that you can get back to them the next day or through e-mail. Be sure, you get back really. For all such occasions, it is good to have a mentor/mentors, to call up and discuss.

10. Dealing with that tough participant: In every training programme, it happens you get one or two participants difficult to deal with. They could be a know-all character or constantly attempting to examine your knowledge through some teaser-questions, etc. Dealing with such participants is part of the training game. Have patience. If you are doing a Trainers Training Programme, how skilfully you handle or deal with this 'tough guy' itself will be a lesson for other trainees to learn from. Never challenge or antagonise. You need to treat him also as one of your guests, like you treat your other participants. Remember: 'you are a trainer'. You are not a psychiatric doctor to treat mental illness. So, maintain that 'smile'; s/he will be gone after five days of training.

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NIRDPR webinar on Re-imagining the Rural Labour Market from a Gender Lens in the Post-COVID Period

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent prolonged lockdown have created many new developmental challenges across the globe. The labour market crisis is one such developmental challenge that requires a thorough grassroots level understanding and futuristic planning and coping strategies. There is growing consensus among academicians, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society that the COVID-19 pandemic has strong gendered effects and hence a gender-responsive policy framework is an urgent need of the hour. With millions of migrants returning to rural areas, rural labour market will throw more challenges, especially for women. To deliberate upon the questions such as: what are the emerging challenges in rural labour market due to COVID-19, what are their gender implications from the perspective of a developing country and how to address those challenges with the existing rural development institutions, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad held a webinar titled 'Re-imagining the Rural Labour Market from a Gender Lens in the Post-COVID Period', on the 16th June, 2020. Three eminent speakers, namely, Prof. Madhura Swaminathan, Indian Statistical Institute, Bengaluru, Prof. Sayema Haque Bidisha, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and Dr. Dipa Sinha, Ambedkar University Delhi, New Delhi shared their thoughts on the said topic.

The speakers pointed out that the outbreak of COVID-19 and prolonged lockdown have deepened the already existing livelihood crisis in rural India. The sources of seasonal work have dried up with the lockdown juxtaposing with lean season, and the access to regular employment opportunities, which was already low, has further worsened with Anganwadis and schools being closed. As the independent sources of income of women have lowered, nutrition, health, education status of rural households will also witness varying degrees of setbacks, resulting in emergence of new poor in the rural areas. There is already an evidence of

Webinar
on
Re-imagining the Rural Labour Market from a Gender Lens in the Post-COVID Period

Prof. Madhura Swaminathan　　**Prof. Sayema Haque Bidisha**　　**Dr. Dipa Sinha**

Digital poster of the webinar

decline in household food consumption and dietary diversity especially for women and girl child in the rural households.

The speakers reiterated that to address the gender implications of these crises, we need a multi-pronged strategy, which goes beyond palliative cures such as cash transfer and creates strong social safety-net such as more work-days in perspective Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), universal Public Distribution System (PDS), pension-scheme, open and functioning Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM), institutions and agencies to deal with psychological issues and domestic violence and so on. It is also time to strengthen the rural development institutions such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), recognise and fairly remunerate the works of frontline workers such as anganwadi volunteers, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, mid-day meal cooks and para teachers, etc.

The universalisation of public services could be central to the strategy for reimaging rural development in multiple pathways and be a template for what women's employment in future should look like. The webinar was attended by academician, faculty from SIRDs, ETCs, students, representatives from NGOs and CSR organisations.

The webinar was jointly co-ordinated by Dr. Partha Pratim Sahu, Centre for Entrepreneurship Development & Financial Inclusion (CEDFI) and Dr. Ruchira Bhattacharya, Centre for Gender Studies and Development (CGSD), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR).