

5.3 Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA)

Providing Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA) is a framework which was envisioned by the then President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam in order to provide livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to the rural population in order to improve their quality of life and bridge the urban-rural divide. The PURA framework has been devised as an empowerment-based model to achieve sustainability by providing the villages with the necessary Physical, Electronic, Knowledge and Economic Connectivity (Kalam and Singh 2011). These entail the setup of proper infrastructure such as roads, railways lines, educational and medical institutions, and communication networks such as wireless networks and broadband connectivity in order to provide the villages with improved access, technical knowledge for improving productivity of village farm and non-farm activities, and creating opportunities for economic growth and development through setup of factories, industries and other institutions. The PURA framework as proposed by Kalam et. al. (Kalam and Singh 2011) is inspired from the several regional community development projects for the social and economic development of villagers that have been setup in India during the early post-Independence period by several social reform workers.

Two of the PURAs and its activities are presented below (Kalam 11 November 2005, Batra, Singh et al. 2011, Kalam and Singh 2011, Dwivedi and Jha 2012, Awasthy and Agarwal 2013):

1. Warana PURA - The Warana initiative began during the 1950s out of the necessity to support the small and marginal sugar cane farmers from fluctuating prices and insufficient demand. Under the leadership of Tatyasaheb Kore, the sugar cooperative movement began when he founded the Warana Sugar Cooperative and set up a factory. (Kalam and Singh 2011) The funds for this factory was raised on an equity basis from the farmers of the region along with investments from other sources. The farmers of the region are stakeholders in the cooperative factory and now it has around 20,000 famers, across 69 villages as its cooperative members. The factory has gone on to diversify its activities with forward and backward integration of the production chain by:

1. Extending subsidies to farmers on pesticides, herbicides, micronutrients etc.;
2. Three-tier nursery programme to provide quality seeds to the farmers;
3. Introduction of a seedling scheme run and managed by women;
4. Agricultural research centre which provides soil testing and informs the farmers about agricultural techniques for optimal production;
5. Several irrigation schemes;
6. Export of sugarcane after processing through various products such as packaged flavoured sugar cane juice etc.

After the cooperative movement it has been noticed that the production and efficiency of cultivation of sugarcane has been significantly higher in Warana than in other parts of the country. Also the sugar factory has been giving high returns to its investors. The cooperative movement has also made an attempt to create a sustainable model for the villages by creating income opportunities in other core competencies such as dairy and poultry farming. Warana has established a dairy brand with several collection centres in different villages which collect milk from thousands of producers and process it. Warana cooperative supermarket is an entrepreneurial attempt to provide the consumers with better access to consumer goods which is run and managed by women. The Warana Bazaars have rural stores in several villages with 16,000 villagers as members who receive discounts on products.

In order to remove illiteracy, educational institutions have been set up which includes schools and colleges of engineering, medical, arts and sciences etc. Efforts have also been taken to provide health care facilities to the villagers by setting up hospitals such as the Mahatma Gandhi Hospital. The Warana Cooperative Bank has 18,000 members and extends credit facilities to its members in order to promote entrepreneurship activities with the goal of creating income opportunities for the landless and marginal farmers. Through such novel fundamental initiatives, Warana has achieved significant socio-economic development for its society.

2. Chitrakoot PURA - Chitrakoot is a district in central India which lies in the state of Uttar Pradesh and on the border to Madhya Pradesh. The Chitrakoot PURA was borne out of a social movement in the late 1960s for the welfare of the majority farming population in the Chitrakoot district by Nanaji Deshmukh. Deshmukh was a social activist from the state of Maharashtra who was inspired by Lokmanya Tilak and the nationalist ideology. He set up the Deendayal Research Institute in Chitrakoot in 1968 with the goal of promoting research in social science and establishing rural development and training centres for research and promotion of new technologies in sustainable agriculture, water conservation, alternative industrialization, self-employment generation etc.

The primary focus of the Deendayal Research Institute is to provide innovative methods for the economic development of the farmers. Almost all of the projects undertaken by DRI are with the goal of bridging the social and economic disparity. One such method is to provide practical, hands-on training to the farmers and also operate demonstration farms which provides live demos of optimal intensive cultivation patterns on farms of sizes similar to the common land holding size of farmers of the area (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres). This optimal cultivation pattern, through crop diversification, is based on calculated nutritional requirements of an average household to meet internal demands of the farmer's family along with incorporation of commercial crops for increasing the incomes. It also specifies the area allotment for cultivation, the layout and planning of the field, crop calendar, selection of crop varieties and crop production technologies.

DRI also strives to overcome problems of illiteracy, unemployment, healthcare, internal village disputes, and aims to create a self-reliant village. Most of their efforts centre around empowering people to create

income generating opportunities for themselves. Vertically Integrated Self Help Groups have been formed so that employment opportunities can be created at all levels of the production chain. One such example is the formation of seed clubs and seed villages to address the inability of small and marginal farmers to procure quality seeds. In order to resolve this problem, seeds are produced by farmers under the guidance and supervision of DRI and are also guaranteed returns on their produce at a pre-specified rate.

Several activities such as Bal Jagat and Udyameeta Videyapeeth have been initiated for the social development of the population which include vocational training centres for the youth to find sources of employment. It also trains the villagers in the core competencies and in the utilisation of the local resources of the region. Udyameeta Videyapeeth also extends zero interest micro-finance loans to the youth following a strict methodology which ensures repayment. This is ensured with the help of Samaj Shilpi Dampati. Gramodaya Darshan is an initiative to promote innovations in which all innovations and interventions for self-reliance are exhibited. Along with this several educational institutions have been setup in order to create a literate community. These include several primary, middle and high schools aimed at removing illiteracy and an educational research centre for providing new and innovative learning aids for schools and adult literacy.

The most innovative initiative introduced in Chitrakoot is the Samaj Shilpi Dampati, a couple which is intended to perform the role of local leaders in the village and whom the villagers can look upto for guidance in social matters and can also help promote education among children , health, women's awareness, family planning etc. This is an interesting method to tackle the problem of social awareness in rural areas and also may help in ensuring conflict resolution. DRI and Chitrakoot have, through such initiatives, attempted to create a sustainable and self-reliant model for villages to successfully operate.

Thus, PURA helps to overcome the challenges of sustainable development of rural areas of the country by:

- Wealth generation for a large number people by realising the core competencies of the area
- Diversification in the use of resources
- Entrepreneurship and self-reliance opportunities
- Development of technical knowledge and skill through access to education and healthcare
- Vertical and horizontal integration of economic activities to create a self-reliant economic model for a group of villages

Thus from the above discussion, we can conclude that PURA hosts features of capability approach and distributed economy in its framework for attaining sustainable rural development.

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