

Abstract

Rural development is a multifaceted concept which implies the improvement in the quality of lives of the rural people. The objectives of rural development are multi-directional which includes the raise in the per capita income of the rural masses, improvement in agriculture and allied activities, development in the provision of basic amenities and progress in all aspects of human resources. It is a process which enhances the social and economic well-being of the rural people. For the success of sustainable development in the rural areas, Government of India has formulated plans and implemented programmes for the overall development of the rural people especially the rural poor. Fundamentally, the rural development plans and policies have been designed to increase the equity in the production and distribution system along with the enhancement in generating job opportunities for the rural masses both in agricultural and in non-agricultural sectors. However, despite the significant efforts the rural poor continues to live in poverty along with inadequate provisions of basic amenities, infrastructure and poor communication system.

Hence, rural development is essential in an agrarian economic structure in India and Jalpaiguri district is no exception where the rural areas are confronted with the multiple problems in different aspects. Therefore the present research work attempts to find out the level of rural development in the study area highlighting the strategies of development in terms of infrastructural provisions, level of the literacy rate, housing structure, health care facilities, the economic structure and the impact of the rural development policies and programmes implemented in the rural areas of Jalpaiguri district. The present study aims to evaluate the disparities in the level of rural development amongst the blocks in terms of social, economic and infrastructural parameters. The research work has been done more precisely for the purpose of identifying the problems of the study area and accordingly suggests some remedial measures in order to ensure better socio-economic life of the rural masses. Furthermore, the study aims to evaluate the income generated rural development programmes implemented in the study area and assess the level of rural development.

The study pertains to Jalpaiguri district which extends between 26°15'47" to 26°59'34" N latitude and 88°23'2" to 89°7'30"E longitude comprising an area of 3044 km². According to Census, 2011, the total population of the district is 2,381,596 in 7 C.D. Blocks, 80 Gram Panchayats and 391 inhabited villages. Jalpaiguri district is situated in the northern part of West Bengal and is bordered by Bhutan in the north, Darjeeling district in the west and north-west, Koch Bihar and Bangladesh in the south and Alipurduar district in the east.

The present research work is based on four major hypothesis- i) Infrastructural facilities are inadequate to meet the requirement of the large scale rural population concentration. ii) The higher the level of literacy rate among the females the better is the economic growth in the rural households. iii) There is a significant rise in the level of family income and the per capita income from the pre-assistance period to post-assistance period. iv) Enhancement in generating alternative sources of employment varies in the remote villages and the villages adjoining to municipal areas.

In order to validate the first hypothesis the availability of infrastructural facilities has been observed in proportion to population. The government norms and regulations have been identified in order to validate this hypothesis that the infrastructural facilities are inadequate to meet the requirement of the large scale rural population concentration. The second hypothesis has been tested by Chi-square test for independence of attributes taking attribute A as forms of literacy and attribute B as monthly household income. The Chi-squared statistic values along with their degrees of freedom and p-value has been observed to draw the inferences of the hypothesis. For the third hypothesis Paired t- test has been used for each range of income where the difference in average family income has been considered for each block for the pre-assistance and post-assistance period. The corresponding t-statistic values, degree of freedom along with the p-value and 95% confidence interval have been observed for each range of income (in Rs.) in order to infer the hypothesis from the paired t test. For testing the fourth hypothesis Welch Two Sample t- test has been applied. In order to classify the inhabited villages into the villages adjoining municipal areas and the remote villages, the distance from the nearest town has been taken into consideration. The corresponding values of t-statistic, degree of freedom, p-value along with the 95% confidence interval has been observed to arrive at a conclusion of the hypothesis from the Welch Two Sample t- test.

To evaluate the level of development amongst the blocks Z score and composite score technique has been applied taking the 35 indices of demographic, social, economic and infrastructural indicators and accordingly the Community Development Blocks has been categorized into three groups namely high, moderate and low level of development. The result of the present research work reveals that the high level of development is confined in four blocks namely Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri, Dhupguri and Matiali blocks of Jalpaiguri district. These blocks display development in terms of the adequate number of primary schools with respect to total population, middle schools, primary health sub-centres, pucca housing, sanitation facilities, adequate drinking water facilities, postal facilities, banking and credit facilities, transportation facilities and recreational provisions with respect to total population.

Besides, the blocks are developed in terms of literacy rate and sex ratio. The blocks also display development with respect to economy; in terms of the proportion of households with commercial farming activities, crop cultivation and the proportion of earning population.

Rajganj and Mal blocks fall in the moderate category of development. Nagrakata block falls in the lowest category in terms of composite rural development. This block lack in the social and the infrastructural provisions in terms of educational institutions, health care facilities, water supply, housing standards, literacy rate, transportation and communication facilities and the recreational facilities. Hence, the analysis of the level of rural development exhibits great spatial variations. The infrastructural provisions are unevenly distributed in rural areas of Jalpaiguri district as per the recommended guidelines of the government sources. On the basis of the aggregate score it has been observed that the blocks located in the southern and eastern part of Jalpaiguri district are progressed and developed in terms of demographic, social, economic and infrastructural sectors. Thus, for the less developed blocks greater attention is needed in order to reduce the disparities in the level of rural development.