

Backwardness profile of the Dang District

The developmental profile of the Dangs has to be seen in the context of the total area available for non-forest use, as well as the opportunities for growth through the laying of infrastructures. When we look at the indicators *viz.*

1. the total road length per one lakh population
2. percentage of villages have no bus facilities
3. The percentage of villages having Jyoti Gram
4. The number of post offices per one lakh population and
5. The percentage of villages having one trip bus facilities, this district ranks above the State average.

When we look at the factors like percentage of school without electricity, the percentage of schools without drinking water facility, the percentage of schools with sanitation units, the percentage of schools with playgrounds, the number of secondary high schools per 1 lakh population, the district ranks also at par with the State average or even higher. The matters which are vital for district are 1) electrification of assets (2) installation of power tillers and number of electrical pump sets vis-a-vis the crop area. To achieve this target more of electricity connections need to be released and more of targets have to be set for taking up this programme particularly because now the number of milch animals now per 1000 population has tremendously improved with the introduction of dairy and, therefore, there is a need for making live stock management which will also help them in getting the benefit of Jyoti Gram for 1) self help groups to take economic activities. 2) Skilled people taking up self-employed people programme for income generation. It is here that the linkage of electricity and leveraging of electricity network can work as an important facilitator.

In the district of Dangs, it is not important to zero in on factors like percentage of house hold not availing tap water and also percentage of household without drainage facility because the gamtal concept is rarely present and the habitations are on hill slopes and the gamtal places are now given more or less pipe water supply connection either in individual or under the group scheme and those which are not covered are to be taken up for this programme except those where source is not available due to problem of altitude. Here what is more important is presence of potable water and clean and piped water rather than providing tap water to every one since the focus is on elimination

of water borne diseases. In the recent past several schemes have been taken up under the minor irrigation for increasing the percentage of area under irrigation but schemes require clearance by the forest authority since most of the catchments area is in the forest cover and this can only provide the link to increase gross irrigation areas to a higher degree. The percentage of area under the food crop no doubt is 62 per cent but in the recent past with new crop practices and introduction of scheme through the Wadi Yojana by NGOs the percentage of horticulture crops and non-food crops has grown to more than 30 per cent and with more of power connections and agricultural extension activities backed up by self help group movement, this is going to be more high.

As regards literacy, it is necessary that all the primary schools have to be converted to 5-7 standard wherever there is 1 to 5 uniformly and the number of high schools have to be located within the vicinity of 20 Kms so as to cater to these 7 standard pass outs, followed by introduction of science faculty with laboratory facilities in at least two places of the district other than introducing more short durational courses for self employment through the ITIs and Polytechnic. Even today, the High School at Ahwa does not have a proper laboratory or teachers while the missionary school has of late taken up this in non-grant category and, therefore, lot of efforts are still remaining to be given in the direction of science education in the district.

In the last one year, the dairy has peaked up like any thing and with two chilling centres and the dairy routes becoming more visible, the activities of dairy for self income generation and collection of grass for use and also for sale has almost penetrated the remote villages. But the infrastructure for creating the dairy booths is also being taken up along with animal husbandry and vaccination programme for the milch animals which will prove rewarding and productive. Mega poultry units are also planned to give a push to poultry along with dairy and road connectivity in such areas. This is also going to have an effect of providing easy market access. In the similar manner, hostel building for the polytechnic students and creation of laboratory for the polytechnic school as well as extension of science education in the district and more than two places with the required staff should be able to improve the educational profile and meet the needs of educational hunger and the growth impulses of the district. More of target setting in electrification of wells and more of utilization of power for mechanization in agriculture and save cost and short out the unproductive cattle for purpose of agriculture production.

As of now in every village a motor bike is visible and between every two village one vehicle is sighted. Such vehicles some times fill up the gap of carrying emergency cases to hospitals wherever ambulance are not available and from connectivity point of view, the emergency case in health care have been allowed to be reported through the use of forest wireless to address the issue of mortality during birth or during delivery and in cases of snake bites. Recently, the forest department has been asked to take up at more than 30 places joint forest management activity through JFM society by involving the local Bhagats so that the production of herbs tubers and roots along with horticulture, dairy, bamboo crops and other timber related trees could be grown to fetch them more income and make the district vibrant source for supply of medicinal herbs, commercial bamboo supplies. This will also indirectly address the problem of illegal cultivation leading to clashes with forest department for reasons of ownership. The medium irrigation projects which are under administrative jurisdiction of the Irrigation Department need to get the forest clearance so that this can go a long way in taking up commercial production in agriculture and cash crop in this area and make this district agriculturally and horticulturally a surplus district for cities of Surat and towns of Bular and Bilimora nearby. No SSI other than the Dangs Ayurvedic Pharmacy established in 1981, has ever come in in the district but what is more important is to make the skills upgradation programmes through skill training so that the unemployed can work in the service industry either on own or nearby to provide alternative source of income. Therefore, extraordinary emphasis has been given for introducing skills improvement and new skill training programme both for women and men. Propagation of tribal millets, marketing of Nagalis, marketing food products out of Nagli, making products out of bamboo and expediting the process of Maliki tree payment through the forest department certainly are other measures to help the tribal farmers to generate incomes easily.

The eastern pocket of Dangs is usually water deficient and migration of people takes place from this pocket on account of scarcity of irrigation for the agricultural operations and so emphasis has been made through schemes like land leveling, soil conservation and check dams by joint efforts of forest and panchayat so that agricultural stabilization takes place in this pocket and with that medium and large farmers can employ or deploy the landless category which would provide them sustainable employment and they would not go for migration. The new scheme of the Government of India under National Rural Employment which is being implemented through the village panchayat is also being

used to take care of the assets creation for irrigation and water purposes so that it could give temporary relief by giving employment and also permanent source of employment by giving sustainable agriculture, in the long run.

On the nutritional and health side, the number of children who are mal nourished is no doubt slightly high but this problem could be shortly taken care of through increased emphasis and extension of the anganwadi network (which is yet to take place) and also through the fortification of wheat through the "ghantis" located in the District. What is more appealing is the huge number of vacancies in the district in terms of specialist doctors and senior officers in the health branch who are to discharge this serious mandate which is to be taken with the lot of serious ness. The post of district primary education officer, poultry officer as well as Civil Surgeon cannot be left unmanned even for a moment looking to the needs as well as aspiration of the people. No doubt, roads are good and road connectivity is excellent but one of the reasons why students probably become drop outs is triggered of by absence of bus connectivity due to plying of old worn out buses which need replacement and also there is need for introduction of bus routes in areas now connected with new roads. The schools are poorly attended by children thought parents want them to got but sending them in unreliable and unworthy transport vehicles, which get stuck in midst of forests.

In days to come, SHGs are going to occupy the most pivotal role in terms of generation of savings, taking up self employment activities, providing market linkage to the new type of crops including horticulture ones and also in managing the food catering joints on the Highway and district highways passing through the district other than managing the ration shops for the purpose of food security to people.