



Tool for the assessment of sustainable development of rural areas in India

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Abstract: *Despite the rapid and continuous spread of cities, The Indian geography is still predominantly rural. As per census 2011, about 68.7% population live in rural area of India and more than 40% of the population depend on the rural activities for their livelihood. Hence rural development acts as a backbone, leading to the over all development of the country. The term Rural development refers to improving quality of life and financial well being of people living in populated and remote areas. Due to the rapid urbanisation in the recent days, much emphasis has been given to urban development neglecting the rural areas, because of which, there is increase in disparities between the urban-rural areas. This has increased pressure on the socio-economic development of the country (Santanu Panda and Arup Majumder,2013 (1)). Rural areas suffer from many problems such as lack of basic amenities, bad health, illiteracy, etc. In order to tackle these problem, the government has implemented many schemes and programmes to provide opportunities to raise the standard of living of people in the rural area (Maurya, A. S.and Prerana Kaushal,2017) (2). But due to the limited success of these schemes, there has not been any major development in the rural area. On the other hand the importance and success achieved by the urban area has surpassed the rural development, as rightly told, the urban area have been made the hotspot of development .The economic development and the rural society have a kind of relationship which is generally interlocked because the issues of the external environment impact the values of economic development. It is necessary for the government to move in the direction and rhythm with the society because their sustainability is dependent on the long term benefits derived from the economic, social and environmental issues connected to rural basics (Yakanna,2017)(3). Hence there is a need for strong tool to bring about sustainable development of Rural area which inturn leads to the development of the country.Hence the question, Can Human Development Index (HDI) improve the quality of life of people and bring about sustainable development of the rural area, which intern leads to the overall development of the country? The research paper will answer the above question by discussing the problem faced by the people in the rural area with special attention to sustainable environment parameter.*

Key Words: Rural, Grassroots level, Sustainable, Human Development.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The term rural development refers to improving quality of life and financial well being of people living in populated and remote areas. Due to the rapid urbanisation in the recent days, much emphasis has been given to urban development neglecting the rural areas, because of which, there are increase in disparities between the urban-rural areas. This has increased pressure on the socio-economic development of the country (Santanu Panda and Arup Majumder, 2013)(1). Rural areas suffer from many problems such as lack of basic amenities, bad health, illiteracy, etc. In order to tackle these problems, the government has implemented many schemes and programmes to provide opportunities to raise the standard of living of people in the rural area (Maurya, A. S.and Prerana Kaushal, 2017)(2). But due to the limited success of these schemes, there has not been any major development in the rural area. Hence there is a need of strong tool to bring about development of rural area which inturn leads to the development of the country.

Usually the development of the country depends on the flow of economy. But many of the sociologist, economist and environmentalist are of opinion that there are many other parameters such as gender, poverty etc which are not considered for evaluation of the countries development. True development of country goes beyond GDP calculation. Human beings form the major part of country's development. Hence it is very important to bring about human centric development. One of the attempts which have been made to assess human centric development is Human Development Index. Human development Index Report which is released by UNDP every year, evaluates the development of the country (global level). Many policies and schemes are also introduced to bring about development of the rural area.



Ministry of Rural development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulation and acts pertaining to the development of rural sector. Due to lack of concern, the people in the rural area are deprived of basic facilities. Hence providing basic facilities through physical, social and economic infrastructure should be the prime focus of rural development.

Mahatma Gandhiji, emphasized the importance of rural area to bring about effect development of India. Following Bottom-Up approach is one of the effective measures. In this people themselves prioritize their needs and problems and make plans for the development of the block and the village. To take this forward, Niti Aayog in 2015 as emphasized on Bottom-Up’ approach to envisage the vision of Maximum Governance, Minimum Government, echoing the spirit of ‘Cooperative Federalism, etc to bring about overall development of the country. Indian population living in the rural area contribute maximum to the Indian economy and hence growth of rural economy is very important to make overall economy of India stronger.

1.1 NEED OF THE STUDY:

To analyse the importance of Human Development Index for the rural area with special focus on environmental parameters, so as to improve quality of life of people in rural areas, which inturn leads to development of country as a whole

2. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES:

Government organizations play a very important role in bringing about development in the rural areas. Schemes and policies are the major tools which help in rural upliftment. Ministry of Rural development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulation and acts pertaining to the development of rural sector. Rural areas are deprived of basic facilities and providing basic facilities through physical, social and economic infrastructure should be the prime focus for rural development. One of the major scheme that was implemented to bring about rural development by providing social, economic and physical infrastructure is the Adarsha Gram Yojana (Model Village) (Fig 1).This scheme was implemented in 2009-10 in 1000 villages of Bihar, Rajasthan, HP, TN, Assam. This was revamped in 2014 as Sansad Adrash Gram yojana (Fig 1) which aimed to stop migration of people from rural to urban, attract resources, create urban market, social empowerment, etc. The major change that was bought about was the involvement of the ministers in selection and development of villages. The funding for the scheme is provided by MPLAD, CSR, Gram Panchayats, etc. Two committees were set up to monitor the implementation of the scheme, one at national level headed by rural development ministry and secretary, rural development and the other at state level headed by secretary, state rural development department. Finally, the main aim of the scheme is to prepare village development Plan which helps to improve the quality of living of people in the rural areas.

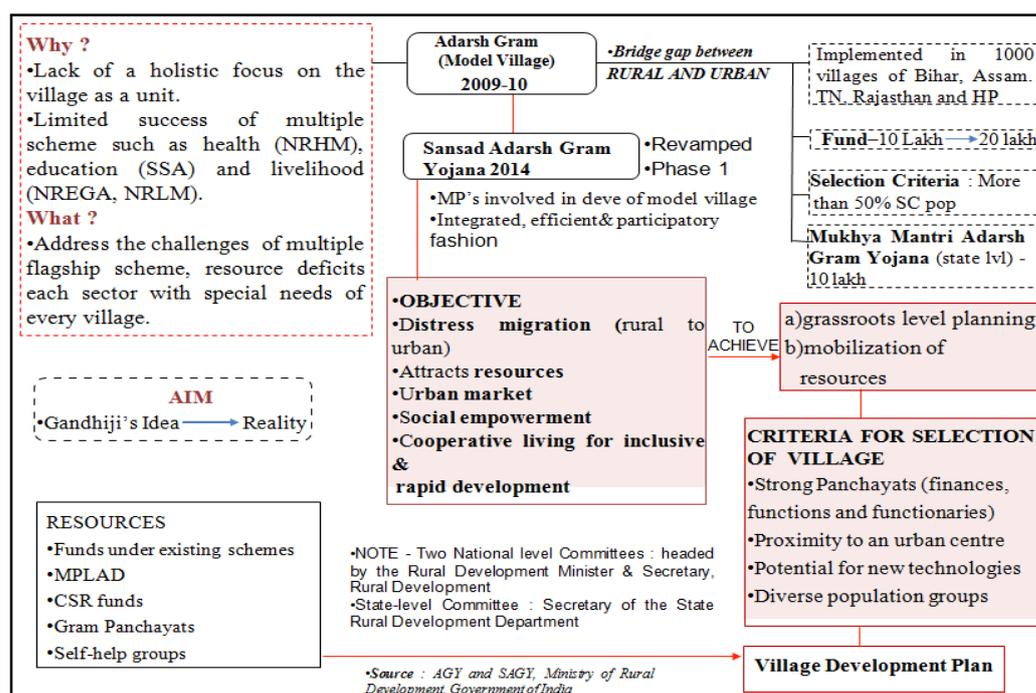


Fig 1: Sansad Adrash Gram Yojana Source: AGY and SAGY, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India



The other schemes introduced by the government to bring about development in the rural area are as follows,

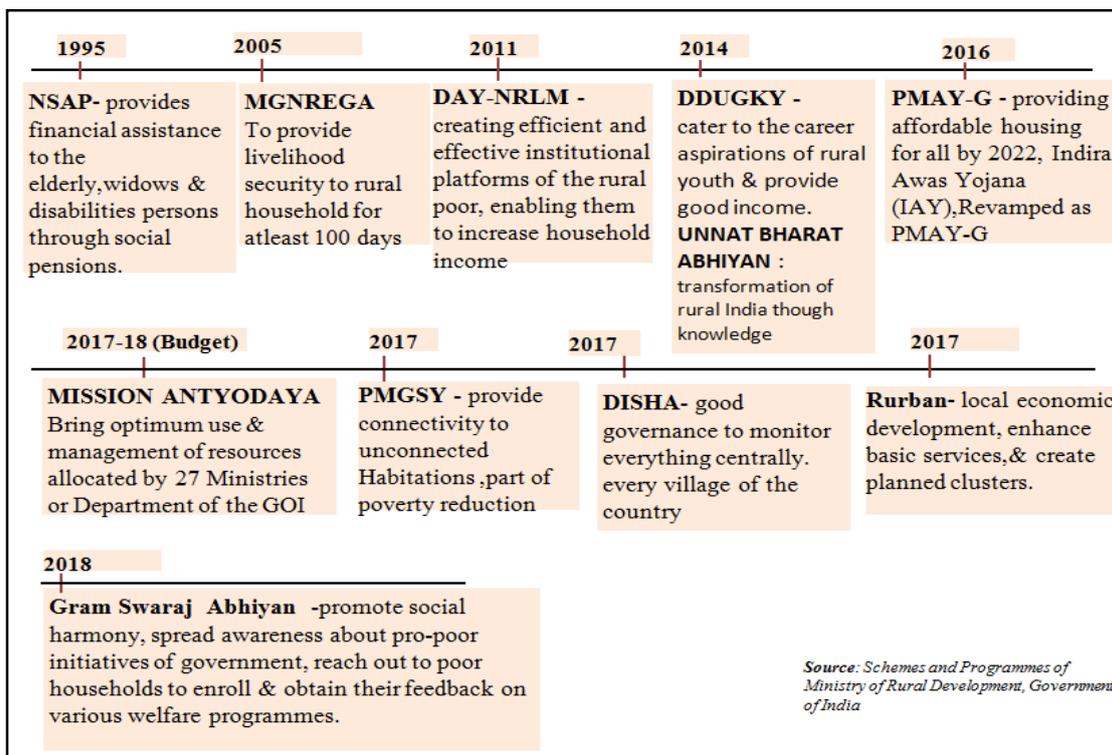


Fig 2: Other Schemes by GOI,
 Source: Schemes and programme of Ministry of Rural Development, GOI

- National Social Assistance Program-introduced in 1995, it provides financial assistance to the elderly, widow and disabled person through pension.
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – introduced in 2005, to provide livelihood security to rural household for at least 100 days income.
- Deendayal antyodaya yojana – NRLM- introduced in 2011, to create efficient and effective institutional platform to the rural poor enabling the, to increase their household.

Even though a large number of schemes are introduced by the government, most of them haven't reached the people and are unsuccessful. Cities have grown immensely but the rural area has not seen that kind of development. With all the above initiatives by the government there is considerable improvement in the rural areas. As per census data there is urban-rural disparities (fig 3) which still existing education (8.4 in urban areas and 4.7 rural area), health (68 in urban area and 62 in rural area), standard of life, etc. Hence there is a need of strong tool to assess and improve the quality of life of people in the rural area.

Sector	Parameter	Urban	Rural
Expenditure poverty	% people below poverty line (2011-12) (Tendulkar estimates)	14%	26%
	% people below poverty line (2011-12) (Rangarajan estimates)	27.2%	31.3%
Education	Literacy Rate - 2011#	85%	68.9%
	Average years of school education of working population*	8.42	4.72
Health	Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) – 2011##	28	46
	Life Expectancy at birth - 2002-06 **	68.8	62.1

! Source: Census 2011, *Source: NSS 2009-10, Rural-Urban Divide in India, Hnatkovska and Lahiri, 2012, ** Source: Family Welfare Statistics in India, 2011, ## Source: National Health Profile, CBHI

	Urban (2018-2019)	Rural (2018-2019)
Literacy	87.7%	73.5%
Health	72.4%	66.4%
Poverty	13.7% (2020)	25.7% (2020)

Fig 3: Census 2011, NSS 2009-10, Rural-Urban divide in India, Hantkovska and Lahiri, 2012, Family welfare statistics in India 2011, National health Profile, CBHI



3. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX:

There are many definitions on HDI, According to Mahbub ul Haq, HDI is defined as the process of enlarging people’s freedom and opportunities and improving their well being. Human development is the real freedom ordinary people have to decide, who to be, what to do and how to live.

Amartya Sen defined HDI as an approach to understand the human well being, which emphasizes the importance of ends like decent standard of living over means like income per capita.

Human Development Index is one the most widely used measure of well being. As the country was opening up its economy, the central position of HDI was sufficient for the policy planners to focus on people who may be excluded from market oriented growth. Further HDI is also required to empower the people of the country to hold government account. It is also important to incorporate Human Development in the planning process (UNDP, 1999)(4).

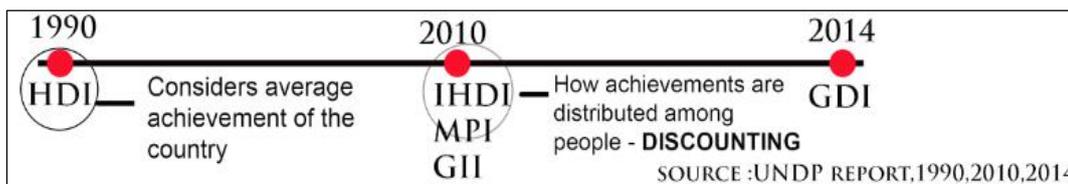


Fig 4: Human development Index Report

Human Development Index was found by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and used by UNDP to evaluate the level of development of the countries. UNDP releases the report every year. It was on 1990 that the first Human Development Report was released. The problem faced during evaluation of HDI was that, it conceals all the disparities in human development across the country. Two countries with different distribution of achievement can still have the same HDI score. Hence to solve this problem, Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) was introduced in 2010. IHDI considers not only the average achievement of the country in health, education and income but the pattern of distribution of these achievement among the population by discounting each dimension according to its level of inequality. Another major change brought about by UNDP was the introduction of Multi Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) in the same year (2010) and Gender Development Index in 2014 which were all part of 2019 Human development Index report. These indexes were introduced to fill the gap in the Human Development Index Report (Fig 4).

Three dimensions are considered for the calculation of points for various countries in Human development Index, the dimensions are Health (Long and Healthy Life) under which the life expectancy at birth is calculated. The second one is the education under which expected year of schooling and mean years of schooling is assessed. The third one is the standard living under which the GNI of the country is calculated. The construction of HDI which has been explained in Human Development Report (1999) of UNDP (4) is that the value from 0 to 1 is considered, where 0 means no development and 1 means full development. No country in the world can score 0 or 1. The scores of the countries lie between 0 and 1. As per HDI report of 2020 (12), Norway ranks first and Denmark ranks 11th and India ranks 129.

4. HIERARCHY IN LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT OF HDI:

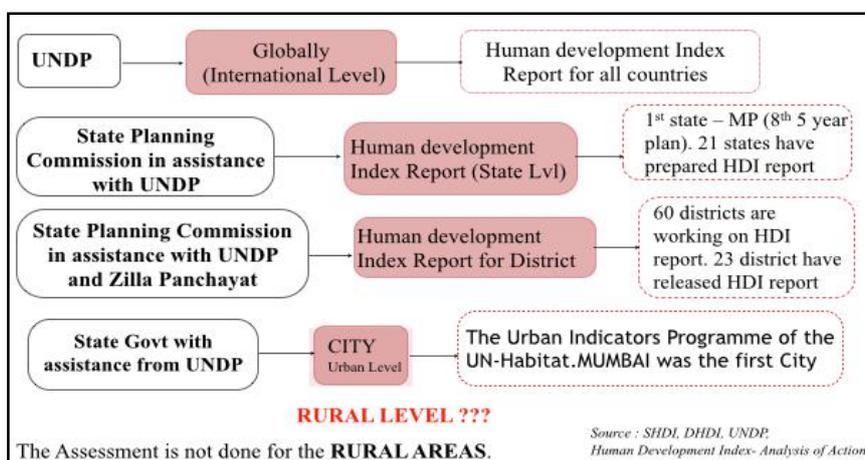


FIG 5: Assessment of Human Development Index,

Source: Shdi, Dhdi, Undp, Hdi-Analysis of Action



To improve the quality of life of people and to bring about over all development of the country like India, grassroots level development is necessary. The assessment of Human development is done globally by UNDP. To increase the pace of development at the state level, assessment of Human development was done by state planning commission with assistance from UNDP. Madhya Pradesh was the 1st state to publish the HDI report. Currently 21 states have prepared the HDI report in India. Further the evaluation of HDI is done at district level by State planning commission along with the assistance of UNDP and zilla panchayat. 60 districts are working on HDI report and 23 districts have released the HDI report (fig 5). Recently the HDI assessment was done for cities. Mumbai was the first city to publish the HDI report. To bring about faster growth and development of the country, it is very important to focus on bottom-up approach and, special attention should be provided for its development. Assessment of Human Development Index for rural areas (Block level) has not been done which is very necessary to bridge the gap of development of rural and urban areas in India.

5. PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE IN THE RURAL AREA:

Many communities are facing serious problem with respect to climate variability, while climate change in putting many life at risk and is negatively impacting the ground water table (WHO,2009, Howard et al., 2016)(5) This has led to sanitation problems directly or indirectly which has further led to damage of health and environment of the country. There was strong emphasis by the government to make India open defecation free by 2019. Despite, the country suffers from open defecation and other sanitation problem, which is predominant in the rural India.

India is rural in nature. The rural areas are deprived of many facilities which have deteriorated the standard of living of people. There are large numbers of challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, lack infrastructure, etc faced by people in the rural area, the prime being the improper sanitation facility and shortage of drinking water. For the effective development of the country overcoming these problems faced by the people in rural area should be the prime objective. Neglecting the development of the rural area has created a void in the development of the country. Hence the need of the hour is to overcome these problems and protect the environment for the effective development of the rural area. Overcoming these problems by catering to the requirement of the people in the rural area will create a healthy environment, thus paving way to the development of the country has a whole.

6. IMPORTANCE OF RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

More 40% of people in India depend on rural areas and activities for their livelihood. The development of the country directly depends on the development of the rural communities. Development of rural area doesn't mean only improving the life of people in the rural area but also aims to increase the economy of the country as a whole. Hence special priority should be given for rural development. The term 'rural development' is of major concern, particularly for promoting effective growth and development of the country (Agarwal, n.d.)(6). Rural development can be bought about by fulfilling the requirement of the people in the rural area and improving their quality of life. It is not just considering the development of rural infrastructure, individuals and their overall living conditions, but it focuses upon the development of social, economic, political, cultural, technical and religious aspects as well (Agarwal, n.d.)(6). The quality of life of people in cities is much better than that of villages (Santanu Panda & Arup Majumder, 2013 (1)). Hence attention to should be paid to bring about rural development. The rural area should be provided with all the required facilities such as sanitation, drinking water supply, education, skill development etc. This has a strong impact on the health of the people, which will further lead to improving the environment.

There are many drawbacks of failure of rural development such as lack of bottom -up approach, lack of responsibility, corruption, etc (Agarwal, n.d.)(6). To sum up it can be said that vision and target of developed India without rural development will not be completed. India may grow on Economic indicators but overall development will be paralyzed if development of rural India is slow (Agarwal, n.d.)(6).

7. SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT :

People around the world depend on natural environment for their health and livelihood, especially people of the developing countries. A healthy environment provides all necessity facilities such as good quality and quantity of water, air, food. Most importantly it provides natural resources and ability to fight the natural hazards. The well being of the developing countries are mostly linked to the state of natural environment and the opportunities that it offers. But globally there are many aspects such as climate change, global warming, acidification, ozone depletion, melting of ice cover which has been worsening recently. All these environmental challenges are making the relationship between environment and growth of the country much stronger. Hence there is need to pay attention to environmental aspect.



The situation regarding the environment protection and durable development is one of great actuality and importance (Comélian, 1994). Environmental protection and Durable living has 2 objectives (Comélian, 1994)(7) - the first one is Protection capacity of the planet and second one is individual well being (Closed system). It has to be made in such a way so as to reduce the negative outcomes of the artificial structures, simultaneously satisfying some of the needs of the people, and guaranteeing the liveliness of future generations as well (D.Mazilu, 2006) (11). This will lead to the sustainable development of the country causing great impacts on Environment and helps in growth and development of the country — (UNEP, 2015)

Sustainable development is a combination of two elements of major importance. The first term "durable" represents durability and sustainability, while the word "development" aimed at expanding or construction the potentialities to bring gradually to a fuller, greater, or better state (Duran,2015)(8). The word sustainable is complex and needs special tool to analyze it. It mainly deals with environmental problem, so as to protect the environment. Sustainable approach got impetus for the first time in 1992, during Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and reiterated at the World Summit Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. European Union also emphasized on the need of new approach to deal with the environmental issue which is associated with environmental effects and pressure of socio-economic consequence. From the beginning the human society has been affected by the environmental issue. Hence there is a need to bring about sustainable development and thus improving the social-economic condition of the society.

8. ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX:

An environment is everything that surrounds us. It consists of both living and non living which will adapt to the surrounding and helps in nourishing life on earth. Making the environment sustainable is very important, as it helps the future generation to enjoy the resources which is available in the country. World Resources Institute (WRI) has shown that environmental damage can have particular significance for the population. The study conducted in 14 developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, reveal a common perception that the quality of the environment is a crucial factor in determinant of their health, earning capacity, security, energy supplies, housing quality, poverty, moral aspects. (Jeetesh Rai, 2019) (9). Hence environmental aspects play a significant role in bringing positive development of the country

HDI lacks indicators in many areas of social policy such as political participation, social security, technology and environmental issues. It also does not monitor moral development in anyway, which is one of the elements of human development (Basu, 2005)(10). It ignores the environmental dimensions of development to maximum extent, especially the relationships between the performance of countries on the environment and human development dimensions (Basu, 2005(10)).Especially the relationships between the performance of countries on the environment and human development dimensions (Basu, 2005(10)). With this study, it is very evident that the environmental aspects are excluded and it's very important to consider it for country's development.

9. CRITICISM OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (Basu, 2005)(10) :

PARAMETERS	CRITICISM
IMPROPER INDICATOR	HDI depicts an oversimplified view of human development by relying on only a few indicators often derived from data of low quality (Murray, 1993, Srinivasan, 1994). Many of the indicators are not considered especially, environmental aspects are neglected which is the most important for over all development of the country.
WEIGHTAGE	Several critiques point out that the distinction between indicators which represent and measure inputs, outputs, outcomes & impacts is important and their weightage should be given carefully so that they measure in combination, what is supposed to be measured (Booyesen 2002).
POLICY	Due to a lag in the impact of policy changes in education and health, literacy and life expectancy, the index has been criticized for measuring the outcomes of past efforts rather than the effects of present or recent policy changes (Booyesen 2002).

TABLE 1: Criticism of HDI



10. OTHER ISSUES OF HDI:

- The most important issue of HDI is giving equal weightage to all the 3 dimension
- 1/3rd of the weight comes from enrolment in schools
- Lack of ambition
- Improper Assessment - Developed countries have very less scope to improve their ranking in the HDI
- Small number of indicators
- Ignores Gender inequality
- Ignores Environment, ecology aspects and sustainable development parameters.

11. CONCLUSION:

As discussed earlier, rural areas suffer primarily from improper sanitation and drinking water which is the indirect consequences of climate change, as climate change has strong impact on weather. Good sanitation and drinking water facility along with other facilities such as education, capacity building, job opportunities, etc. will provide good health and pollution free environment. Environment is one of the basic and prime aspects that have to be taken care to bring about quality development of the country.

Human development index is used to assess the development of the district, state and country. Recently HDI has also been assessed for the cities (Fig 5) leaving behind the rural area which has created a void, leading to under development of the country. Rural development is very important for overall development of the country.

Yes, Human Development Index (HDI) can be used as a tool to improve the quality of life of people in the rural area, which has not been done till present. Hence Assessment of Human Development Index at the rural level including the environmental aspect is very necessary. This will help us to cater to the requirement of the rural area and prevent the damages to the environment, further leading to sustainable rural development and inturn the development of the country as a whole.

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