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Grass Root Poverty Alleviation in Jharkhand: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract

Decentralization evolved after the failure of centralized governance of India. To achieve good governance there is a need for the distribution of powers from central to local level. It also requires rule of law, transparency, and accountability and participatory decision-making. The initiatives of decentralization will reinforce poverty reduction policies. Kerala is the best example where the state government has given power to the local government in the decision-making. Jharkhand in spite of being a rich source of minerals, there is an unequal distribution of wealth, which leads the majority of the population into a vicious circle of poverty. *Objectives:* The aim of the study is to examine the role of local governance of Jharkhand in the term of economic performance and policy formulation in poverty reduction. *Methodology:* Empirical study consists of Hisri-Chauli village of Ranchi districts. Sources of data are both primary and secondary including field finding, government reports, international institution gazettes, article, journal, books, etc. *Analysis:* This study seeks to analyze the poverty reduction strategies in local governance simultaneously concentrating on the anti-poverty programs in rural areas. *Conclusion:* This study will find out the issues, challenges and required action to be taken by the Jharkhand government for the holistic approach of development would eliminate the scope for regional and sub-regional bias.

Keywords: Decentralization; Jharkhand; Poverty; Local Governance.

"India is poor because the villages of India are poor. India will be rich if the villages of India are rich. Panchayat must be given power, that's why the villages to have a greater measure of real swaraj in their own villages"

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru,
First prime minister of India.

Introduction

After the failure of the traditional approach of centralized planning of central government from the top down approach of economic development (Mohapatra, 2016) and socio-economic crisis of the country, decentralized local governance has played a crucial role in the implementation of policy, programmes, and scheme (Bardhan & Mukherjee,

2004). Decentralization of service delivery, the distribution of assets, literacy and social status is highly unequal in Jharkhand, a tradition of widespread political participation does not exist. As per the World Bank report 2015, 836 million peoples still live in extreme poverty all over the world. About one in five persons in developing regions live on less than \$ 1.25 day.

The main focus of the study to justify decentralization can play a crucial role in poverty reduction of Jharkhand. Health and education (Mahal & Rajaraman, 2010) are most commonly devolved function of central government to local government which can reduce the poverty condition. Gandhian model of development always advocated for strong and vibrant local communities which have

a common design of self-sustained development (Pandey, 2016). He always desired to provide full powers to the village communities (Dhal, Democratic Decentralization, 2016) so they can take appropriate decision for socio-economic development according to the required condition, which could serve as a link between gram sabha to Loksabha. After independence, the central government launched numbers of programmes for poverty reduction, community development and service delivery (Mccarten & Vyasulu, 2004).

A study based on Kalipur villages of Dharmkhali block in Hugli of west Bengal conclude that Decentralized village education committee, including local peoples and socially disadvantaged group, can directly participate in the improvement of elementary education of West Bengal (Roy & Banerjee, 2012). Kerala's experience with decentralized planning is a unique pattern of devolution of powers from the state government to the local self-government (Thomus, 2009). Sen and Basu (2006) argued about the Kautilya's Arthshastra system of taxation payments from the rich in order to enable transfer payments to the poor including not only financial assistance during calamities but welfare payments to the chronically indigent and those unable to earn their own livelihood (Ghosh, 2011). Cash transfer scheme direct to beneficiaries bank account can provide the leakage. Recent and emerging literature focuses on decentralization for poverty reduction a specific for implementation of decentralized governance (Bhagat, Ghosh, & Ranjan, 2016). Direct attack strategy on poverty is required to deal with Naxalism, Unemployment, Displacement, Land alienation. Generally, low caste/tribes suffer backwardness and isolation along with economic constraints (Hirway, 2003).

A Brief Profile of State

Jharkhand is the 28th states of India which was founded in 2000 after the bifurcation of Bihar. It has long history and movements for bifurcation. As per the 2011 census, the total population of Jharkhand is 3.29 Crore peoples live in the area of 79,732 sq. km. There are approx. 27% tribal out of the total population. The Jharkhand movement is deep-rooted in the poor socio-economic condition of the region and draws its identity as tribal culture and tradition (Prakash, 2001). Jharkhand is the rich sources of minerals, but their people are living with terrible problems like poverty, Naxalism, Land alienation, Displacement, Unemployment, etc. Generally, these problems are most in that area and amongst the people, rich natural resources exist.

Land Alienation

Land occupies an important role in livelihood and food security. If the people are alienated from the land of the community, it affects more than cultivation, as socio-religious practices. (Kapoor, 2003). In Jharkhand, tribal are the main victims of land alienation. Tribals are the trustee of the land, they hold it as a common property shared among the community. They work as a socially cohesive unit associated within a territory (Prasad, 2008). Self-sufficient tribal families are forced to depend on whims and wishes of the administration. They are termed as illegal occupants and forced to evacuate their land (Kapoor, 2003). Inadequate compensation and forced migration deprive their identity, their culture, values (Sarthak Jan Vikas Sansthan). The procedure of rehabilitation is not satisfactory.

Naxalism

According to the 2013 statistics of red terror compiled by union home minister Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar together account for over 80% of left-wing extremist violence across the country (Jain, 2013). Poverty is directly attached to the high incidence of Naxal violence in Jharkhand, this is due to the absence of proper guidance for the youth regarding the career path and people-centric vision of Naxalites group has fully misguided the youth of Jharkhand (Benerjee, 2017). The Rehabilitation policy in Jharkhand has not been implemented properly as there exists fear among the youth, about how they would be treated post rehabilitation.

Displacement

Exploitation of natural resources with the ulterior motives leads to displacement. Displacement is dislocation of people from their native place and region. In the name of national interest, Jharkhand area is witnessing a gigantic industrialization that leads displacement in Jharkhand in the form of coal mining in Dhanbad, Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, Iron and Steel Company in Bokaro and Jamshedpur, Uranium mines in Jadugoda, etc. (Areeparampil, 1996). Adivasi villagers protested the construction of massive dams, for the hydroelectric project on South Koel and Karo rivers of Jharkhand (Ghosh, 2006). It often alienates and results in the loss of economic livelihood. Loss of economic livelihood and due improper implementation of rehabilitation lead the socio-economic crisis of the victims. The immediate evacuation does not give ample time for the native people to search for a alternatives sets forced to settle down in an alien environment without the basic

amenities.

There have been several categorisations of people displaced as persons displaced by land acquisition or the project affected family (PAF). While taking the land, the government promises to pay compensation, either in the form of cash, or through providing housing facility in a chosen area of government, or to give land. One needs to be aware that the market value of the compensatory land may not be same as paid by the government (Fernandes, 2004). The worst sufferers of the economic exploitation by landlords, traders, forest contractors etc are the poor peasants who are dependent on the external factors for irrigation are forced to work as labourers in other fields (Saldanha, 1989).

Methodology

An empirical study was done in Hisri-Chauli village of Ratu Block of Ranchi District in Jharkhand. During the data collection, simple sampling method was applied. Other methods which were applied in field area are survey, observation, and schedule.

Hisri-Chauli is a twin village, which comes under Bazpur panchayat as Panchayati raj system. According to Parha system of Oraon, there is panchParha system. In panchParha, there are five villages- Hisri-Chauli, Tigra, Gudu, Baazpur. Parha system is the old Panchayati system of Oraon tribes. In the past, it worked as an administrative system, but due to the implementation of Panchayat extension Scheduled area, the coexistence of Parha system become a serious concern. According to members of Parha Oraon youth and their guardian

are not taking interest in parha system due impact of Globalisation and modernisation. Village Hisri-Chauli comes under Ratu block of Ranchi districts. The geographical boundary of the village is covered by East in Baazpur, West in Rani Khatanga, North in Palipandra, and South in Ladda. There is 24-hour electricity facility for irrigation of crops.

There is a sacred place for Oraon called as Sarna. Generally, ladies of Oraon community who follow Sarna, getting fasting every Thursday and Worship SarnaMaa. It lies at the end of the village, adjacent to a village pond. From there, could be seen a vast stretch of paddy fields, and greenery spread across the fields, with vegetable and mustard plants. At this point, we were in the outer periphery of the village. There is the common playground for both the village. Tributary of South Koel River is the main source of water for daily life practices. Due to this tributary village farmers practicing agriculture whole year. A check dam constructed by Government on the tributary of South Koel, this is used for irrigation during the offseason, especially in summers, for the different kinds of crops.

During the field study in Hisri Chauli village, 96 households of Hisri Chauli. Following Sarna as their religion were large in number and comprises to almost 60.9 percent. Whereas Hindus were in the second largest population of the village comprising 16.9 percent. There was a good population of Muslims in the village which comprises to 12.5 percent. However, Christians were least in numbers having 9.6 percent of the total population. In this table, we can clearly see that the sex ratio among tribal people is very much satisfactory which can also be seen as an inspiration for other people who are fighting for the sex ratio.

Table 1: Demographic composition of village Hisri Chauli

| Religion | Male | Female | Total | Percentage |
|-----------|------|--------|-------|------------|
| Christian | 25 | 25 | 50 | 9.6 |
| Sarna | 135 | 182 | 317 | 60.9 |
| Muslim | 34 | 31 | 65 | 12.5 |
| Hindu | 47 | 41 | 88 | 16.9 |

Age Composition

The age and the sex structure of the population are the most important demographic characteristics that are captured by a census of a population. Age and sex are the two variables which largely influence an individual's role in society. The age structure of a population denotes the distribution of the population in different age groups. This is an important subject of demographic analysis and development planning. Age structural dynamics includes fertility and mortality which are related changes in family

planning and social arrangements. The use of age structure goes beyond demographic analysis to other important areas. Generally, Public policies implemented to improve the welfare of a population, which determined and shaped by the needs of present and future population. Population needs and its potential are strongly shaped by its demographic composition- i.e. by the age-structural transition.

In the concerned village when data was tabulated in handbooks it was clearly seen that the sex ratio was maintained in a decent manner measuring

0 to 14 year age group were 29.4 percent. This shows that the new generation is about to gloom which will shape the future of their village and country. The population in the age group of 15 to 59 contributed in agriculture which shows the amount of labour that is implied in agriculture without having much of the facilities.

Dependency Ratio

A measure portion of the population which is composed of dependents (people who are too young or too old to work). The dependency ratio can be calculated by the number of individuals aged below 15 or above 64 divided by the number of individuals aged 15 to 64, expressed as a percentage. A rising

dependency ratio is a major concern for any country that is facing an aging population. Since it becomes difficult for pension and social security systems to provide for a significantly older, non-working population.

Dependency Ratio = (No. of persons in the age group 0-14 years + No. of persons in the age group 60 years or more) ÷ No. of persons in the age group 15-59 years.

Dependency Ratio gives the proportion of persons whom the persons in economically active age group need to support. Reduction in Dependency Ratio indicates a phase of population transition where a higher percentage of persons in the working age group may translate into higher per capita income for the economy.

Table 2: Dependency ratio

| Population Group | Young Age Dependency Ratio | Old Age Dependency Ratio | Total Dependency Ratio | Index of Ageing |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| | 45.5 | 3.8 | 21.36 | 20.26 |

Fig.1: Dependency ratio

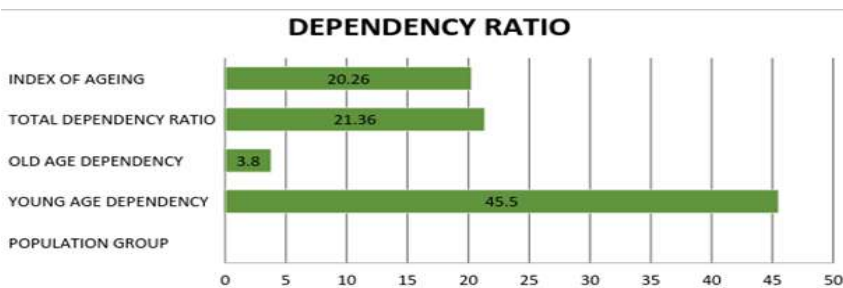


Table 3: Sex composition

| Population Group | Sex Ratio | Masculinity Proportion |
|------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| | 1131 | 46.9 |

Occupational Level of Total Population

The current estimated percentage of each sector in

GDP is 59% of services, 27% of industry, 14% agriculture as per 2015-16 economic survey.

Table 4: Occupational level of total population

| Economic Characteristics/ Occupation | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Economically Inactive | 104 | 220 | 324 |
| Economically Active | 140 | 56 | 196 |
| Cultivators | 73 | 39 | 112 |
| Labours | 42 | 6 | 48 |
| Bussiness | 9 | 6 | 15 |
| Private Service | - | 1 | 1 |
| Service | 16 | 4 | 20 |

As per the data collected from the field 45% of the total sample (520) were economically inactive these peoples did not have share in the occupation

of the village. 27.37% are economically active, which have main share of economic upliftment of the village.

Table 5: Income

| Income Groups | Less Than 25000 | 25001-50000 | Up to 100000 |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 3 | 39 | 54 |

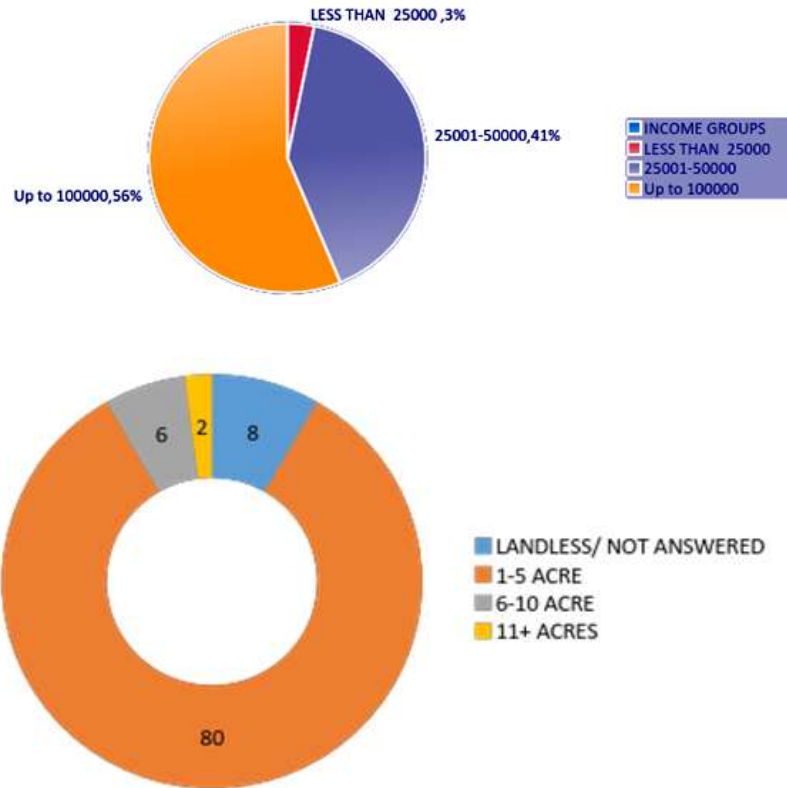


Fig. 2: Income

Levels of Educational Attainment of Total Study Population

There are seven levels of Education, which are following:-

- a. People with no literacy skills (those who had no schooling);
- b. People with literacy skills but below primary level (this could be achieved through adult education programmes as well);
- c. Primary level of schooling;
- d. Middle level of schooling;
- e. Secondary level of schooling (normal attainment of matriculation);

- f. Higher secondary education including diploma and vocational training; and
- g. Graduation and above.

This classification is useful for our analysis since it shows how many years of investment in the human capital formation may have been made for different levels of education. Table 6 provides this information for all seven levels. Census of India and National Sample Survey collects this information on a regular basis, which could be brought into this framework. Persons in the age group of 15-34 are considered young persons, whose educational levels are analysed in this section. Wherever appropriate, comparison of this age group with general population has been made.

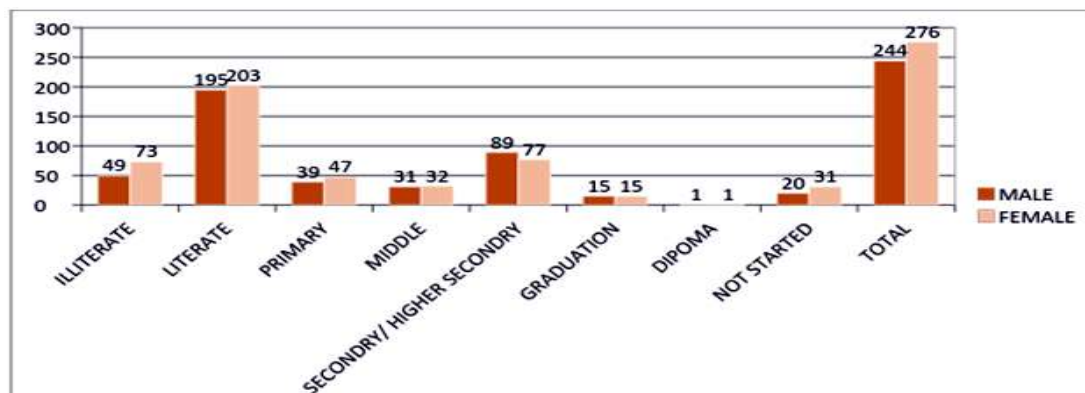


Fig. 3: levels of educational attainment of total study population

Table 6: Levels of educational attainment of total study population

| Educational Attainment | Male | Female |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Illiterate | 49 | 73 |
| Literate | 195 | 203 |
| Primary | 39 | 47 |
| Middle | 31 | 32 |
| Secondary/ Higher Sec | 89 | 77 |
| Graduation | 15 | 15 |
| Diploma | 1 | 1 |
| Not Started | 20 | 31 |

Challenges

The functioning of NGOs is assumed to develop the primitive tribe groups but no improvement has been seen in that front (Murthy, 2016). The government has recently notified that Rs 5 crore was disbursed across the state through the Integrated Tribal Development Authority, but there was hardly any improvement in remote areas with no members or volunteers on the ground and poorly managed records which do not track expenditure. The report also states that these NGOs are run by prominent politicians and public figures. Funds which allocated for alleviation, the most strata need to be protected from misappropriation.

While planning of developmental activities and basic issue of gram sabha for next three years, there are problems of implementation of these plans in grass root level that is a vast challenge for the state government. There is also a lack of awareness among the peoples of the programmes and schemes (Ministry of panchayat raj, 2012). A Large proportion of agrarian family engage in tradition occupation comes under the below poverty line. There is also a problem of money lending which increases the poverty proportion. Most of the non-governmental agencies do not interested in working with Adivasis take up a right based approach for Poverty alleviation because they fear losing government funds (Deswal, 2016). Involvement of gram sabha in approving BPL lists, it will reduce the inclusion and exclusion errors to a considerable extent. Gram sabha, which basically reflects the village power structure, like to favour the poor at the bottom. But, Gram sabha does not meet or meet without the proper pre-information of meetings.

Participation of various stakeholders involved in gram sabha. But there is the most common and serious issue that, there is a lack of awareness among the poor people of the participation in gram sabha (Dhal, 2016). Elected official did not have proper training and knowledge about the programmes and schemes. During an informal talk with the elected representatives of Dighiya panchayat, told that we didn't attend any capacity building programmes. Participation of the poor in the planning and

implementation of the anti-poverty programme is required to reduce the chain of intermediaries between the government and actual beneficiaries and to improve their bargaining power (Galab & Chandrasekhra, 2003). Generally, low caste tribes below poverty line suffered from isolation along with economic constraints.

State Government

Jharkhand government has taken initiatives to poverty alleviation through decentralized governance. The government initiative of *Yojana Banao Abhiyaan* programme, a three-day planning exercise facilitated by the planning team for every 100 households of the gram panchayat, it culminated in a community meeting at gram sabha level for priority and; approval of schemes for poverty alleviation (raj, 2016). After the *Yojana Banao Abhiyan*, the state government has initiated *Hamari Yojna, Hamara Vikas* programme for poverty alleviation and development of gram sabha. In this programme, gram sabha has the power to make the developmental plan for the gram sabha as a much required initiative. During the field visit of Bazpur gram panchayat, the researcher observed the meeting of gram sabha in Hisri & Chauli gram sabha. Members of gram sabha were writing the planning for development of gram sabha. At first, they discussed the issues of the gram sabha and planning for the development of gram sabha.

The Way Forward

Gram sabha is more likely to effectively implement these programmes as opposed to politician or bureaucrats sitting far away from the local level and make the policy formulation for the gram sabha. At the village level, the gram sabha should be empowered to check on all expenditure made by the panchayat and to haul them up for leakages. The process of decentralization must be taken to its devolution of lot more powers, both functional and financial to panchayats, lack of transparency and accountability has hampered our economic

development at all levels (Nayyar, 2000). Employment assurance scheme attempted to evolve the poor in the decision-making process by charging the panchayats with the process by charging the panchayats with implementation with mixed results. Effects on the environment of market-driven consumption of fertilizers and pesticides over-exploitation of land and water may be expected to adversely impact overall productivity of agriculture in the near future unless preventive measures are undertaken (Krishnaraj, Pandey, & Kanchi, 2004).

Role of PESA

In Jharkhand, most districts come under fifth scheduled area because there are approx. 27% people belong to scheduled tribes. Out of the 24 district, 15 districts come under fifth scheduled area. Out of 15 Districts, 12 are fully covered scheduled area, where a proportion of scheduled tribes is more as compared to non-scheduled tribes. The problems of Naxalism, Land alienation, Displacement, Poverty, Malnutrition etc, are more in these districts of the state. There is some special provision of the constitutional act like-Panchayat extension of scheduled area (PESA), Forest right Act(FRA), Scheduled tribes atrocities act directly enforced in Jharkhand. According to PESA 1996, Gram sabha shall be the supreme authority to make the decision on the natural resources, including non-timber forest produce (NTFP) (Deswal, 2016). Gram sabha and panchayats intend to assume total responsibilities (Prasad & Annamalai, 2013) for planning and implementation of plans for socio-economic development and social justice. PESA and FRA also gave power to gram sabha manage the ownership of minor forest produce for livelihood. Gram sabha has the power to manage village markets, exercise control over money lending to scheduled tribes, exercise controls over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors, control local plans and resources. If these Acts implemented at the grass root level decentralized level governance especially at gram sabha, there is a possibility for socio-economic upliftment.

Conclusion

During a recent field visit which consisted of talks with participants, beneficiaries, and farmers, it is found out that there are leakages of the benefits from the government to main beneficiaries. The impact of agricultural performance on absolute poverty arises not only from its current ramification in farm employment, income etc. it may also be because large

farm generates more employment opportunities for hired labour and thereby purchasing power of the poor (Desai & Namboodari, 1998).

Gram sabha ensures that the panchayat themselves stay accountable to all especially socio-economically backward peoples. Empowering women is crucial in poverty alleviation. Jharkhand Government has given 50% reservation of women representatives in the panchayat. Giving reservation in the representation will become power booster when they will have to give training like- capacity building programme of the state government. The state government must take initiative for *Adivasis* on a priority basis which needs of hour for them and implements all the schemes of poverty alleviation with their active participation of tribal people in the development.

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