

## Local Government Quarterly

April - June 2023

A Journal of the All India Institute of Local Self-Government

- India-Bhutan Geo-Political and Economic Relations: Challenges and Prospects
- ★ Legal Provisions Concerning Child Protection Workforce in Local Levels in Nepal:An Overview
- ★ Urban Health Systems: The Need & Significance of Digital Enabled Solution
- ★ Rural Development Programs in Karnataka – An Analysis

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#### **Editorial**

#### Climate action; engaging citizens is vital

'The state government of Jharkhand has decided to shut down all the schools till June 16 to prevent any mishaps or heat strokes among the students', ran a news report in June this year. This was in view of an Orange alert issued by the India Meteorological department cautioning citizens and administrations about the very high temperatures expected in various states this summer. Indeed this summer saw day temperatures in many states and cities reaching record highs, highs that had not been seen in several decades. Administrations in various parts of the country came out with advisories for citizens on how to protect themselves from these extreme heat conditions – staying indoors to the extent possible, remaining hydrated, and so on. Quite obviously, a climate emergency is upon us. And indeed, India was not alone in combating the grim heat waves. Several countries, provinces and cities in other parts of the world, notably in Europe, were experiencing scorching heat and never-seen-before temperatures.

The world observed *World Environment Day* amidst this climate mayhem on June 5. It is observed on this day each year under the auspices of the UNEP. This year, the host country was Cote d'Ivoire and the theme was #BeatPlasticPollution.

The recent heat wave conditions in so many parts of the world, including the otherwise cooler and serene climes of the European continent is a grim reminder of the urgency of climate action and to engage each and every citizen of the world in bringing about transformational changes to our lifestyles in order to heal the planet in a lasting and sustainable manner.

#### Impacts of climate change

The above situation is one of the outcomes of the grim phenomenon of climate change being experienced all over the world. Among other serious effects is the likely impact on agriculture. Large rain-fed acreage is becoming vulnerable due to very high temperatures and uncertain rainfall. This signals challenges for food security, farmers' incomes and the rural economy as a whole.

Uncertain, unpredictable and inadequate rainfall is also having deep impacts on water security across the globe. Both quantity and quality of water in our natural sources like rivers and lakes has become adverse with grave implications for public health arising from unmet sanitation needs in the absence of adequate clean water. Alongside, the groundwater table has been receding rapidly over the years and has reached alarming levels in many cities like Bengaluru. Many coastal cities, Chennai for example, have resorted to desalination as a means to augment water supply sources; the city now meets nearly 50 percent of its clean water needs from this source. This option is however available only to coastal cities and that too at high costs.

Alongside is the other extreme of flash floods, cloudbursts, landslides, and extreme precipitation in many parts of the world. These incidents too are growing in frequency and intensity.

There are several other impacts including on forests, vegetation, natural habitats, flora and fauna, and wildlife; marine life is often quoted as one experiencing severe impacts including the extinction of many species.

#### The way forward

Obviously, there is need for urgent, all-round, concerted action to heal the planet. The Paris Climate Agreement adopted in 2015, is the guiding light for international action to limit emissions and global warming. However, since then voices have expressed that the targets/limits set out therein are the bare minimum that will be necessary in light of the degradation in the environment since 2015. Some of these voices have conveyed fears that the target of the Agreement is not going to be easy to achieve. That said, national governments across the globe are working to cut emissions in a big way through sharp increases in the share of renewables in the energy basket with the rapid scaling down of thermal, mainly coal-fired power plants. Wind and solar are playing big roles in this energy transition. Here, India has assumed a leadership role by achieving big capacity ramp up. Similar is the rapid transition across the world to electric mobility. Here too, India is experiencing good traction due to policy support, among others. These must be continued and greater thrust be laid to achieve even greater momentum. The power generation sector and the mobility sector both offer significant potential not only to cut emissions in pursuance of the Climate Accord but also to enable cleaner cities and thereby improve public health metrics.

#### Citizen action

These government driven initiatives are indeed now mandatory for a better future. In addition, there is also need for broader participation by citizens to reduce

emissions and build a greener future. There are various planks. Mobility is an important one. In addition to the promotion of e-mobility by governments, citizens by themselves can adopt some behavioural measures. Greater use of non-motorised options like walking and cycling, and use of public transport can bring about big reduction in emissions and road congestion while easing parking woes and improving road safety. Waste management is another important plank. Indian ethos embraces the culture of 'use, reuse, recycle, repurpose' as compared to the western culture of 'use and throw'. Take for example, our habit of using cotton handkerchiefs in place of paper tissues as in the western world. It has been reported that each day thousands of trees need to be cut down just for raw material for paper tissue manufacture. Imagine the huge environmental protection we enable by simply using reusable handkerchiefs in place of disposable tissue paper. Same is the case with kitchen towels. Or take the global branded fast-food restaurants. They serve even dine-in customers in cardboard boxes and then simply throw away the boxes in garbage (since cardboard stained with greasy food is not amenable to recycling). Compare this with our home-grown eateries which serve in stainless steel thalis which are washed and reused. In addition to protection of forests, we ensure lower waste, lower landfill volume and its related hazards like fires and toxic gas emissions. We must campaign for the rest of the world to adopt our environment friendly practices rather than we ape the western world mindlessly.

World Environment Day, World Oceans Day and other such occasions will encourage citizens to rededicate themselves to building a greener future and leaving behind a safer planet for future generations. For as they say, *there is no Planet B*.

## Indo-Bhutan Geo-Political and Economic Relations: Challenges and Prospects\*

#### M. V. Vaithilingam, Usha Sukumar

#### **Abstract**

The basic framework of India-Bhutan bilateral relations is the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1949 between the two countries, which was updated and signed during the visit to India of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck in February 2007. The seeds of free trade between India and Bhutan were sown in this treaty. The governments of Bhutan and Indian governments agreed to grant Bhutan transit facility, both by land and water. Subsequently, an agreement on trade and commerce between Bhutan and India was signed in 1972 by the Ministry of External Affairs. It established a free trade regime between the two countries and allowed dutyfree transit of Bhutanese exports to the third world countries. Since then, the treaty has been renewed regularly. This paper examines the Indo-Bhutan geopolitical and economic relations and their relevant challenges and prospectus. The results reveal that the trade between India and Bhutan has increased significantly during the past decade. The India - Bhutan trade in terms of exports to and imports from Bhutan has been sustained and constantly increased during the recent years. India's trade relationship and economic co-operation with Bhutan has been smooth and fruitful with the help of various agreements on economic development. It may be suggested that the trade potential between receiving and source countries, in terms of imports and exports equilibrium based on demand and supply, need to be assessed and updated periodically to sustain the trade relationship and economic cooperation in the long term. There are several prospects and some challenges that the two countries face in realizing the full benefits of economic cooperation, especially in the key areas of trade and transit, investment, connectivity, and power cooperation.

Note: This paper was presented at the Fourth Indo-Bhutan Friendship Meet - 2023, Thimphu, Bhutan for Individual Achievement and Leadership Development Services in Asiatic Region, Institute for Management Studies Ltd., Thimphu, Bhutan, 23rd June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Local Government Quarterly April - June 2023

#### **Key Words**

Indo-Bhutan economic relations, Trade, Exports, Economic growth

#### 1.0 Introduction

The updated India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty not only reflects the contemporary nature of our relationship but also laid the foundation for their future development in the 21st Century. The treaty provides, amongst other things, for perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and commerce, and equal justice to each other's citizens. Our bilateral political relations with Bhutan have matured over the vears and are characterised by close trust and understanding and extensive cooperation in the field of economic development, particularly in the mutually beneficial sector of hydroelectric power. Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed between India and Bhutan leading to important economic and commercial conferences, trade fairs, exhibitions, and important events in the field of arts and culture. Keeping these facts in view, this paper attempts to examine the Indo-Bhutan geo-political and economic relations and their prospects and challenges.

#### 2.0 Literature Review

India-Bhutan relations have been strengthened by regular high-level visits and significant aid, especially during the pandemic, with ties developing in areas beyond traditional cooperation such as STEM-based initiatives, digital infrastructure, elearning, financial integration, and satellite cooperation. India is Bhutan's top trading partner and source of investment, as well as for providing clean energy through hydro-power cooperation. The two countries share a unique relationship sustained by cultural and people-to-people ties, with initiatives such as scholarships supporting youth-centric cooperation. (Chaudhury, 2023).

The terms such as trade potential and transit goods are frequently used while studying about trade relations and economic co-operation between and among countries. Trade potential is defined as the trade that could be achieved at an "optimum trade frontier" in the case of open and frictionless trade possible given the current level of trade, transport and institutional technologies or practices (Drysdale et al., 2000; Kalirajan, 2000; Armstrong, 2007). Transit goods arriving in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai airports and destined for Bhutan also have to follow the import procedure mentioned in the Protocol. The import procedure described here also applies mutatis mutandis for Bhutan's exports to third countries (Ministry of Commerce, 2016).

There have been many legal arrangements and agreements between India and Bhutan to strengthen the trade relationship and economic cooperation. The BIMSTEC as a regional framework was conceptualized on the doctrine of open regionalism bringing together countries from South Asia and Southeast Asia. Under the ambit of BIMSTEC, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal signed a landmark Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) for the Regulation of Passenger, Personnel and Cargo Vehicular Traffic by the transport ministers of the four BBIN countries in Thimpu, Bhutan on 15th June 2015. The MVA is expected to pave the way for a seamless movement of people and goods across their borders for the benefit and integration of the region and its economic development. Trial runs for cargo vehicles under the MVA were conducted along the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka routes in the past. The trials were successful in establishing the Agreement's economic benefits (Press Information Bureau, 2018). Based on these basic observations, this paper makes an attempt to understand the trade trends and economic cooperation between India and Bhutan.

#### 3.0 Objectives

This paper has the following 2 major objectives such as (1) to understand the friendly economic

relations between India and Bhutan; and (2) to study the trade trends between India and Bhutan.

#### 4.0 Research Methodology

This study uses the secondary data from relevant International and Government of India publications. The variables such as India's exports to Bhutan and India's imports from Bhutan, trade trends between India and Bhutan, Bhutan's major trading partners, the composition of trade between India and Bhutan, the Economic growth of India and Bhutan have been used in the study through the data collected from publications on International Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Government of India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, International Monetary Fund- Direction of Trade Statistics. Bi-variate analysis was carried out to realise the objectives of the study.

#### 5.0 Discussion

#### 5.1 Trade trends

Total trade between India and Bhutan has increased by nearly 50 times during 2000-01 and 2018-19. Growth in bilateral trade has been driven largely by the rapid economic growth and greater commercial integration between the two countries. The trade balance has been in favour of India and the divergence between

India's exports to Bhutan and imports from Bhutan has increased over time. The trade balance between India and Bhutan increased from 483.8 million US\$ in 2014-15 to 1026.8 million US\$ in 2018-19. Table 1 shows an increase in our exports to Bhutan that is reflected in the total trade and trade balance figures.

#### 5.2 Bhutan's major Trading Partners

The bulk of Bhutan's trade is with India i.e., 91.7% of the total exports and 87.9% of the total imports, ranking the first in the top 10 trading partners. Table 2 reveals the relative importance of India among Bhutan's global trading partners.

In case of export partners of Bhutan, the second-highest share in Bhutan's total exports to the world is close to 4% for Bangladesh. In the case of Bhutan's import partners, Singapore has the second-highest share with 1.5% of Bhutan's total imports from the world.

On the other hand, Bhutan as a trading partner for India makes up a small part of the total value of trade India conducts with the world. Bhutan's share in India's total exports to the world has not been steady and has been fluctuating. It has however gone up over time from almost zero to under 0.2% of India's total exports. Bhutan's share in India's total imports from the world has also been low and has varied

from 0.03% to 0.08% of total global imports in the last two decades.

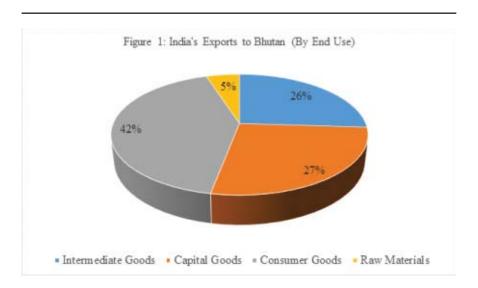
#### 5.3 Composition of Trade:

An analysis by Taneja, et. al. (2019) using the WTO classification in the publication by ICRER reveals the major trade products by Bhutan exported and imported from India which is shown in the following diagram.

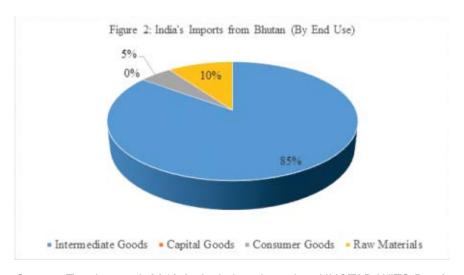
The diagram reveals that consumer goods constituted a major component of India's exports to Bhutan (42%) followed by capital goods (27%) and intermediate goods (26%) with raw material comprising of only 5% of the total exports o in the year 2018. In case of India's imports from Bhutan, intermediate goods accounted for majority of the imports (share of 85% of total imports) in 2018 (Table 3 & Figures 1 & 2).

#### 5.4 India-Bhutan agreement on foreign trade

The trade between India and Bhutan is governed by Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit, which prescribes free trade between the two countries. No basic customs duty is levied on import of any product from Bhutan or export to Bhutan. Further, the trade is carried out in Indian Rupees and Bhutanese currency (Ngultrum). The Agreement also provides transit facilities to landlocked Bhutan to



Source: Taneja, et. al. 2019 (calculations based on UNCTAD WITS Data)



Source: Taneja, et. al. 2019 (calculations based on UNCTAD WITS Data)

facilitate its trade with third countries and movement of goods from one part of Bhutan to another through Indian territory (Government of India, 2023).

The objective of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is to further strengthen the age-old ties and enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation for mutual benefit and development of the two countries. The most important features of the Free Trade Agreement are the provision for free trade between the two countries and transit rights for Bhutan's trade with third world countries. The rapid growth of trade between the two countries is attributed to the free trade arrangement which allows free flow of goods into each other's territory without any import duty.

The transit right granted through the FTA enables Bhutan to trade with the rest of the world. Bhutan has been able to improve upon these provisions through the successive renewal of the Agreement with addition of new entry and exit points in India for Bhutan's external trade. The progressive changes made in the scope of the Agreement is reflective of the economic and political progress that Bhutan has achieved over the past decades. The FTA has been very instrumental not just in expanding trade with India but also in facilitating Bhutan's trade diversification with other trading partners. India has been the largest and the most important trading partner for Bhutan since the start of the development plans. In 2020, overall trade with India was recorded at Nu. 94.89 billion (including electricity), which accounted for 82% of Bhutan's total external trade and the figure without including electricity was recorded at Nu. 67.18 billion, which accounted for 77% of Bhutan's total trade.

The overall import from India accounted for 87% of the total import value with or without considering trade in electricity. Exports to India accounts for 90% of total exports including electricity and 77% without electricity.

#### 5.5 Additional Trade Potential

Trade potential is an estimate of the maximum possible trade that would be in the hypothetical case of most frictionless free trade possible under current conditions prevailing between the two countries. There exists a gap between potential and actual trade, which is associated with various sociopolitical and institutional factors that may be hindering the actual trade to grow to the upper limit of the estimated possibility. The commodity-wise trade potential also reflects the need for countries to undertake domestic trade policy reforms to increase the efficiency and competitiveness in the partner countries (Taneja, et al., 2019).

Following the methodology used in Taneja, et. al. (2013), we estimate additional trade potential. using the "trade possibilities approach". Trade potential is estimated by the trade possibilities approach that is determined by the exporting country's supply capabilities and importing country's demand possibilities. We define trade possibilities to exist in items that the two countries can import from each other instead of from elsewhere in the world. To identify items having trade potential and assess the magnitude of trade possibilities (referred to as trade potential) between the two countries, products having trade potential are identified as those with (a) adequate demand in the receiving country and (b) adequate supply capabilities in the source country.

Of this total trade potential, India's export potential to Bhutan accounted for US\$ 54.6 million and its import potential from Bhutan accounted for US\$ 54 million (Table 5). The trade potential exercise reflects that there is limited scope for expanding trade between India and Bhutan. India is already Bhutan's largest trading partner with shares in Bhutan's total global export and import close to 88% and 92% respectively. Hence, additional untapped trade potential between the two countries yet to be tapped is not very large (Table 4).

### 5.6 Challenges in Trade and Transit Infrastructure

The Land Customs Station (LCS) at Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border is India's most important trading point with Bhutan. Almost 90% of bilateral trade takes place through this border point. The corridor linking Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border to Kolkata seaport is an important transit corridor for Bhutan's trade with rest of the world.

There are issues at the Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border which is addressed effectively could improve bilateral trade and decrease the time spent in transit through the Kolkata-Phuentsholing corridor.

- 1) The LCS located on the main highway connecting Jaigaon and Pheuntsholing is on a narrow and congested 2-lane road sometimes causing traffic jams. Infrastructure is inadequate and the approach road to LCS is too narrow.
- 2) The LCS has no dedicated parking lot for the trucks to be parked for inspection by Customs officials. The trucks are parked on the outskirts of Jaigaon for Bhutan's imports. The truck operators must pay parking charges to the owner of the land, and this adds to the Bhutanese importers' transaction cost. Bhutan's exports also have to pass through the LCS at Jaigaon.

- 3) India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) requires electronic submission and processing of documents. Often the central servers of the Indian Customs take more time for data transfer between the LCS at Jaigaon due to limited internet connectivity at Jaigaon. Requirement of detailed documentation adds to the delay in clearance of goods.
- 4) There is inadequate coordination between customs and other border agencies with respect to inspection and clearance of goods that adds to the time taken for clearance.
- 5) Bhutanese truck drivers passing through Indian territories of Assam or North Bengal report instances of arguments with locals; some instances of attempted extortion are reported.

#### 5.7 Economic Cooperation

Mutually beneficial economic inter-linkages between India and Bhutan have been an important element in our bilateral relations. India continues to be the largest trade and development partner of Bhutan. Planned development efforts in Bhutan began in the early 1960s. The First Five Year Plan of Bhutan was launched in 1961. Since then, India has been extending financial assistance to Bhutan's Five-year plans.

The year 2018 was a milestone year for India-Bhutan relationship as the countries celebrated the accomplishments of the last fifty years of time-tested and special ties. The mutually beneficial economic ties have been the centrepiece of India-Bhutan relationship. India is Bhutan's largest export market, the biggest source of its imports and one of the top foreign investors in the country. India also provides Bhutan transit facility through its territory to access seaports for trading with rest of the world. Cooperation in hydropower projects is one of the most significant examples of win-win cooperation between India and Bhutan. These projects are a reliable source of inexpensive and clean electricity to India, a major contributor towards Bhutanese GDP and strengthening India-Bhutan economic integration.

Bhutan has been pivotal to two of India's major foreign policies - the 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and the 'Act-East Policy'. After coming into power in 2014, the Narendra Modi-led BJP government has laid special emphasis on India's neighbourhood as well as its relations with Bhutan, which have mostly been tension free. (Taneja, et. al., 2019).

India is not only Bhutan's main development partner, but also its leading trade partner. The first formal Agreement on Trade and Commerce between GoI and Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) was signed in 1972 which has undergone five revisions till date (1983, 1990, 1995, 2006 and 2016). The current Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India is valid till 2026.

#### **5.8 Future prospects**

With the most liberal trading arrangement accorded by the FTA, India is certain to remain as the most important trading partner for Bhutan. The government, therefore, remains steadfast to maintain continued bilateral trade talks to build upon the existing trade relations. The annual bilateral meeting on Trade, Commerce and Transit between GoI and RGoB at Commerce Secretary level (CSLM) has not only been effective in finding appropriate solutions to trade and transit issues hindering bilateral trade, but it has also provided a dedicated forum to explore new avenues for expanding trade and commerce between the two countries. In view of the close ties of friendship between the two Governments and its people, bilateral trade with India is envisaged to be very instrumental in elevating socio-economic relations to new heights (Royal Bhutanese Embassy.)

#### 6.0 Conclusions

The trade between India and Bhutan has increased significantly

during the past decade, which has enhanced rapid economic growth and great commercial integration between these two countries. The trade balance of India in terms of exports to and imports from Bhutan has been sustained and constantly increased during the recent years. India has exported and imported more of consumer goods and intermediate goods to and from Bhutan respectively. India's trade relationship and economic co-operation with Bhutan has been smooth and fruitful with the help of various agreements on economic development. It may be suggested that the trade potentials between receiving and source countries, in terms of imports and exports equilibrium based on demand and supply, need to be assessed and updated periodically to sustain the trade relationship and economic co-operation for a very long

#### 6.1 Policy recommendations

Several challenges that the two countries face in realizing the full benefits of economic cooperation, especially in the key areas of trade and transit, investment, connectivity, and power cooperation need to be addressed. In order to strengthen the economic cooperation between India and Bhutan, the following are some policy recommendations:

(1) Regulatory trade procedures to be fulfilled have to be shared by India and Bhutan and at the time of

- exporting/importing to avoid delays and promote bilateral trade.
- (2) Infrastructure improvement will play a key role in facilitating trade and transit. Efficient hard and soft infrastructure elements be enhanced to create a good business and regulatory environment, increasing transparency, and improving customs procedures.
- (3) The physical infrastructure at the LCS in Jaigaon could be reviewed and upgraded. The alternative road route from India to Bhutan bypassing the Jaigaon town which is presently under construction should be expedited and completely early.
- (4) There should be a proper office space for customs officials and a parking area for trucks to facilitate trade. The main highway going from Jaigaon into Pheuntsholing should also be widened to overcome the severe congestion.
- (5) The soft infrastructure at Jaigaon has to be improved through better internet connectivity to ensure that the EDI system works in an uninterrupted manner. It is necessary to augment the internet service there, possibly by having multiple service providers.
- (6) Both countries should streamline trade procedures in order to

- facilitate trade. This could be done through implementation of automated customs systems, electronic exchange of data, automated risk management, automated border procedures, electronic single windows and other related digital customs and trade facilitation initiatives.
- (7) A dedicated help-line system for distressed Bhutanese people moving within Indian territory could be set up for the redressal of grievances of Bhutanese transport operators to deal with locals while crossing through the Indian Territory.
- (8) A mechanism for regular consultations between border officials of India and Bhutan should be established, for better coordination of issues related to trade and transit facilitating cross border trade.

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Table 1 Trade (US \$ in million) Trends between India and Bhutan, 2014-2019

Year	India's Exports	India's imports	Trade	Total trade
	to Bhutan	from Bhutan	Balance	
2018-19	657.3	369.5	287.8	1026.8
2017-18	546.1	377.9	168.2	924.1
2016-17	509.3	307.8	201.5	817.1
2015-16	469.0	281.3	187.7	750.2
2014-15	333.9	149.9	184.1	483.8

Source: Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, and Industry, Government of India.

Table 2
Bhutan's Major Trading Partners during 2014 to 2018

	Bhutan's Export Partners	Share of Bhutan's Total	Bhutan's Import Partners	Share of Bhutan's
Rank	(Percentage)	Export	(Percentage)	Total Import
1	India	91.7	India	87.9
2	Bangladesh	3.9	Singapore	1.5
3	Germany	1.2	Japan	1.2
4	Netherlands	1.2	Korea	1.1
5	Italy	0.7	Thailand	1.1
6	Nepal	0.4	United States	1.1
7	Japan	0.2	Germany	0.9
8	United States	0.1	Nepal	0.9
9	Singapore	0.1	China	0.9
10	Malaysia	0.1	Area not specified	0.7

**Source:** IMF DOTS Database

Table 3. Composition of India's exports to Bhutan and India's imports from Bhutan

Items of exports/ imports	India's Exports to Bhutan (By End Use)	India's Imports from Bhutan (By End Use)	
Intermediate Goods	26%	85%	
Capital Goods	27%	0%	
Consumer Goods	42%	5%	
Raw Materials	5%	10%	

Source: IMF DOTS Database

Table 4. Additional Trade Potential between India and Bhutan (US\$ million)

	Actual Trade	Additional Trade Potential
India's Exports to Bhutan	652	51.1
India's Imports from Bhutan	306	54.6

Source: Author's calculations based on UNCTAD-WITS data

Note: All above figures based on 2018 data

Table 5. India and Bhutan Economic Growth, 2016-2021

		India		Bhutan		
Year	GDP (in US \$)	Per Capita (in US \$)	Growth Rate (%)	GDP (US \$ in billions)	Per Capita (in US \$)	Growth Rate (%)
2021	3,176.30B	2,257	8.68	2.54	3,266	4.09
2020	2,667.69B	1,910	-6.60	2.33	3,010	-10.01
2019	2,831.55B	2,047	3.74	2.54	3,304	5.76
2018	2,702.93B	1,974	6.45	2.45	3,211	3.06
2017	2,651.47B	1,958	6.80	2.45	3,241	4.65
2016	2,294.80B	1,714	8.26	2.16	2,880	8.13

Source: World Bank.

## Legal Provisions Concerning Child Protection Workforce in Local Levels in Nepal: An Overview

Nina Maharjan, Chandrika Khatiwada

#### 1. The Context

Childhood is entitled to special care and assistance due to physical and mental immaturity. Children need special safeguards and care, including legal protection, before as well as after birth. They need to grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding for their full and harmonious development as proclaimed in the preamble of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (CRC). As a State party to this Convention, Nepal is bound to respect, protect and fulfil the rights set forth in the Convention to all children in the country, so as to bring about positive changes in the lives of children. In other words, the Convention has created obligations to the State parties to implement the rights of the child stated in the CRC to the fullest.

In national context, the Constitution of Nepal (2015) (hereafter referred as 'the Constitution') has

envisioned to establish Nepal as a welfare state by building an egalitarian society founded on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles. Accordingly, the Directive Principles of the Constitution (Article 50(1)) has emphasized on establishing a just system in all aspects of the national life through realization of the rule of law, values and norms of fundamental rights and human rights, gender equality, proportional inclusion, participation and social justice as guiding principles. Several policies and legislations have been implemented to attain the above mentioned constitutional objectives. The special rights of the children recognized as one of the fundamental rights (Article 39) itself is the main indicators of the concern of the nation regarding welfare and protection of children.

Child protection/ welfare workforce is an inevitable aspect for effective realization of the rights of child in general and the rights of children in need of special protection in particular as envisioned by the Constitution. In this context, this article attempts to explore- i) the provisions of policies and legislations, ii) institutional mechanisms, iii) sorts of human resources envisioned with their roles, and iv) a mapping of existing child protection/ welfare workforce in Nepal with particular emphasis in the local levels.

### 2. Child Protection/Welfare Workforce: Operational Definition

Care and protection of children is everyone's business. The Government, non-Government sector, communities, parents and families as well as children themselves have their part to play in care and protection of children. But, in many instances things that are considered as everyone's business become nobody's business and most particularly, responsibility towards those children who are in vulnerable situations are more likely to be pushed back. Thus, categorizing the 'everyone' on the basis of nature and capacity of the stakeholders and ascertaining their accountability is very important. Among others, child protection/ welfare workforce is a designated and specialized workforce serving victimized children and their families as well as those belonging to the most vulnerable sections of the society.

Child protection/ welfare is a term most often used in a general sense to

encompass the broad scope of involvement by the state and the authorized professionals in assisting children and their families - both in cases of abuse and neglect and when families and children are found to be in need. In this sense, child protection/ welfare is concerned with protecting children through general prevention services including health, education, recreation, family support, and treatment services<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, according to Child Welfare Information Gateway, Child protection/ welfare is a continuum of services designed to ensure that children are safe and that families have the necessary support to care for their children successfully. Furthermore, the main functions of child protection/ welfare are prescribed as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- Support or coordinate services to prevent child abuse and neglect;
- Provide services to families that need help protecting and caring for their children;
- Receive and investigate reports of possible child abuse and neglect; assess child and family needs, strengths, and resources;
- Arrange for children to live with kin (i.e., extended family members or relatives) or with foster families or any other forms of alternative care arrangements when safety cannot be ensured at home;

- Support the well-being of children living with extended family members or relatives or foster families, including ensuring that their educational needs are addressed;
- Work with the children, youth, and families to achieve family reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children and youth living in alternative care settings;

UNICEF Nepal recognizes child protection/ welfare workforce under the umbrella term of 'social welfare workforce' and states that such '[w]orkforce is the backbone of a functional national child protection system in prevention, early intervention, response services and case management for any child facing child protection concerns, be it unaccompanied and separated children, children requiring foster care placements, or requiring support when suffering violence.'<sup>3</sup>

Considering the spirit of literatures published on the concept of child protection/welfare, it is to be concluded that 'Child Protection/ Welfare Workforce' in Nepal for the purpose of this document is a cadre of persons working under social welfare as a whole, particularly for welfare of children who are in need of special protection<sup>4</sup> as stated in Section 48 of

Children's Act, 2018 who perform prevention, early intervention, response services and case management services. Though, child protection/ welfare workforce includes both working in Government and non-Government sector, this document particularly focuses on child protection/ welfare workforce deployed (or to be deployed) in Government sector.

### 3. Child Welfare Workforce in Policy and Legal Provisions

Existing legislations of Nepal have incorporated provisions for ensuring rights of children in general as well as special provisions for the children in need of special protection. The children in need of special protection include children without parental care, children working as labour, victimized children of discrimination, abuse, exploitation, domestic violence, child trafficking and so on. Along with ensuring special rights, the legislations also established institutional mechanisms as well as human resources for delivering services as per their mandated roles. The Constitution, in general, has envisioned the local levels (also referred as local governments) to partake the responsibility of service delivery. It is a fact that local levels are closest to the people. There are elected representatives at the local level after the election held in 2017 for the first time following the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015. As such, all 753

<sup>22</sup> Local Government Quarterly April - June 2023

³https://www.unicef.org/nepal/child-protection

<sup>\*</sup>Section 48 of Children's Act, 2018 defined children in need of special protection having 13 category of children which includes-orphan; separated or abandoned and found unattended; deprived of appropriate care; under alternative care for diversion process; living in prison as a dependent; born out of rape or incest; separated by competent authority for their best interest; engaged in hazardous labour, substance abuse; having serious physical or mental health problem, disability or infected with HIV; victims of at risk of offense against children; affected by armed conflict or disaster; and belonging to Dalit communities.

local levels are actively delivering service to people living in their respective jurisdictions. As regard to child welfare services, local levels have been delegated authority to deliver services related to education, health, social welfare and protection of children.

This section describes the provisions of policy and legislations regarding child protection/ welfare workforce related to children (and/or child protection).

#### 3.1 Children's Act, 2018

Children's Act, 2018 has been enforced as an umbrella (or sectoral) Act concerning the rights of the child. This aims to promote, respect, protect and fulfil rights of the children including the fundamental rights of children guaranteed by the Constitution (including the rights stated in Article 39). The Act has provisioned for various institutional mechanisms and human resources in various cadres in all three tiers of the Government. The Act has created several institutions, including- i) National Child Rights Council (NCRC) (Sec. 59), ii) Provincial and local level Child Rights Committee (PCRC and LCRC) (Sec. 60), iii) Central Juvenile Justice Committee (CJJC) (Sec. 46) and District Juvenile Justice Committee (DJJC) (Sec. 47), iv) Children's Home (Sec. 52), v) Child Fund (Sec. 63), vi) Temporary Protection Services (or Centre) (Sec. 69), and Rehabilitation Centre (Sec. 71). Moreover, the Judicial Committee in the local level has given the authority for enforcement of the rights of the child and fulfil liabilities towards children (refer Sec. 64). The provisions of having- i) Child Welfare Authority (in all 753 local levels), ii) Social Service Provider and Child Psychologist (in all 753 local levels as well as in Juvenile Courts/ Benches in all 77 districts), and iii) Probation Authority (in all 77 districts) are main child protection/ welfare workforce envisioned by the Act, among others.

#### Child Welfare Authority

The Section 61 of Children's Act, 2018 has provisioned for a Child Welfare Authority in every Local Level in order to respect, protect and promote the rights of the child as well as ensure child protection. Though the detailed functions, duties and powers are to be prescribed in the Regulations (in process of drafting) to this Act, several roles and mandates are already mentioned in the Act itself: some of them are:

• Keeping record about the names and surnames of children given by the designated guardians of children of unidentified parents (Sec. 4(10));

- Making arrangements for alternative care of children determining best interest of the child (Sec. 16(3));
- Looking after the children in conflict with the laws who have been decided for diversion under supervision and direction of the Child Welfare Authority (Sec. 29(1)(f));
- Recommending the Juvenile Court to reduce or remit the period of reform of the children kept in the Child Reform Home or under the protection or supervision of any institution or person in case of satisfactory improvement in their behaviour (Sec. 38(1));
- Taking overall charge for the protection and rehabilitation of the children in need of special protection recognized by the Act as per the provision of Section 48;
- Taking an account of the information about children in need of special protection received (Sec. 50(1));
- Rescuing the child (who are in need of special protection) if deemed necessary, and make arrangements for temporary protection service (Sec. 50(2);
- Entrusting a Social Service Provider and make necessary arrangements

- for providing necessary services, upon conducting detailed inquiry of the child (Sec. 50(3) and (4));
- Handing over the custody of children if father, mother, other family member or guardian of children are found and arrange for sponsorship or family support if needed, by coordination with the concerned agencies or organizations (Sec. 50(5) and (6));
- Making arrangements for alternative care for the children in according to the priority order prescribed by the Act (Sec. 49(2) and 50(7));
- Separating children who are victimized by their parents or family and keep him or her in a temporary protection service for a certain period of time, if deemed necessary and the child so desires (Sec. 50(8));

#### **Social Service Provider**

Section 62 of Children's Act, 2018 has provisions to have Social Service Providers at local levels as well as to work in Juvenile Bench in the district. The same section outlines the process of appointing them. Any persons willing to work as Social Service Provider requires to enlist his/her name with the LCRC. Social Service Providers may be appointed in required number by the local level, from among

those enlisted with them for carrying out child protection related tasks and delivering services to children at the local level. Such Social Service Providers shall function under the direct guidance and supervision of the Child Welfare Authority. The detailed process of their appointment, qualifications, functions, duties, powers, terms of service, and other arrangements of Social Service Provider shall be prescribed in the regulation which is being drafted. However, some roles and functions of Social Service Provider are already mentioned in the Act itself, which includes:

- Prepare report on study and analysis of economic, cultural condition and circumstances of the child and provide the same to investigating authority or Government attorney while taking decision for diversion of the child in conflict with law (Sec. 29(4));
- Work as a member in Juvenile Bench formed in each district court for the proceeding, hearing and settlement of the offence to be dealt with the Juvenile Court/ Bench (Sec. 30(4)(b));
- Prepare psychosocial study report of individual child for the purpose of investigation, prosecution, proceeding, hearing or adjudication of the charge made against the child (Sec. 45(1));

• Make necessary arrangements for providing required services, upon conducting detailed inquiry of the child/ren who are in special need as entrusted by Child Welfare Authority (Sec. 50(3) and (4));

#### Social Service Providers in Juvenile Court/Bench

As stated earlier, there will be Social Service Providers for the functions of Juvenile Court/ Bench and the concerned District Court shall appoint required number of Social Service Providers from among the enlisted in the local level (Sec. 62(4)). The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has determined the qualification, appointment procedures, roles and functions of Social Service Providers to be in Juvenile Court/Bench in every district.

According to Rule No. 13 of the Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019, any person who has obtained Bachelors' degree in Social Work, Child Development or Child Rights from a recognized university or who has obtained Bachelors degree in any subject from recognized university and received at least one month training on Child Rights or Social Work is eligible for the post. Also, they must not have been proved guilty of any criminal offense. However, in case of districts in the Himalayan region, in absence of person having Bachelors' degree, anybody who have at

least Certificate level educational qualification may be considered.

The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has set the following roles and functions of Social Service Providers in Juvenile Court/Bench as follows:

- Prepare Social Inquiry Report of the child who is accused of an offence to provide support to the Investigation Authority to carryout the functions (Rule No. 7(g);
- Assist the Investigation Authority (if needed) during the time of conducting enquiry with the child accused of an offence (Rule No. 8(I));
- Work with the Judge and Child Psychologist and attend in the Court proceedings (the exception is that the Social Service Provider preparing Social Inquiry Report of the child are not eligible to be part of hearing in the same case) as member Juvenile Court/ Bench (Rule No. 18(1), (5);
- Providing opinion to the Judge while determining punishment to the convicted child in accordance with the Criminal Offenses (Determination and Implementation of Punishment) Act, 2017 (Rule No. 18(4)); and
- Represent in District Juvenile Justice Committee as a member, if

appointed as member as per Rule No. 34(1)(I).

#### Child Psychologist or Child Specialist

According to the provision of Section 62 of Children's Act, 2018, the LCRC shall enlist any persons willing to work as Child Psychologist or Child Specialist following the defined process. These Child Psychologists or Child Specialists would carry child protection related functions at the local levels as well as provide a roster for appointment of Child psychologists or Child Specialist to the Juvenile Court/ Bench. The details of the process of appointment, qualifications, functions, duties, powers, terms of service and other arrangements of Child Psychologists or Child Specialist shall be prescribed in the regulation of the Act which is being drafted. The Act itself has provided some roles and functions of Child Psychologists or Child Specialist as follows:

- Provide psychological counselling to- I) child/ren taken under control and kept in Observation Chamber for being accused of an offence as referred by the Investigating Authority (Sec. 21(5) and 22(3)), and ii) children who are victims of crime (Sec. 25(e));
- Prepare report on study and analysis of physical and mental condition of the child to assist in the function of Investigating Authority

or Government attorney while taking decision regarding diversion a child who is accused or convicted of an offence (Sec. 29(4));

 Work as a member in Juvenile Bench formed in each District Court for the proceeding, hearing and settlement of the offence to be dealt with the Juvenile Court/ Bench (Sec. 30(4)©);

### Child Psychologist or Child Specialist in Juvenile Court/Bench

As stated earlier, the Child Psychologists or Child Specialists required for the Juvenile Court/Bench shall be appointed from among the Child Psychologists or Child Specialist enlisted in the local level. The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has determined the qualification, appointment procedures, roles and functions of Child Psychologists or Child Specialists to be in Juvenile Court/ Bench in every districts.

According to Rule No. 14 of the Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019, any person who has obtained Bachelors' degree in Psychology from a recognized university or equivalent course or who has obtained Bachelors degree in any subject from recognized university and received at least two-month training on Child Rights or Psychology is eligible for the post. Also, they must not have

been proved guilty of any criminal offense. However, in case of districts in Himalayan region, in absence of person having Bachelors' degree, anybody who have at least Certificate level educational qualification may be considered.

The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has set the roles and functions of Child Psychologist or Child Specialist; Some are:

- Provide counselling service to the child/ren who is accused of an offence as referred by the Investigating Authority (Rule No. 7(f);
- Assist the Investigating Authority (if needed) during the time of conducting enquiry with the child accused of an offence (Rule No. 8(I));
- Work with the Judge and Social Work Provider and attend in the Court proceedings (the exception would be that the Child Psychologist or Child Specialist preparing psychological study report of the child is not eligible to be part of hearing in the same case) in Juvenile Court/ Bench (Rule No. 18(1) and 18(5));
- Provide opinion to the Judge while determining punishment to the convicted child in accordance with

the Criminal Offenses (Determination and Implementation of Punishment) Act, 2017 (Rule No. 18(4));

#### **Probation Authority**

There will be Probation Authority in each district to carry out investigation into the concerned case, inspection of the Observation Chamber, Diversion and preparation of reports on the status of implementation of the orders issued by the Juvenile Court, as well as work in close contact with the children accused of offense (Sec. 70 of the Children's Act, 2018). The major functions of Probation Authority is to monitor, whether the child sent under diversion has been continuously participating in the given task assigned by the investigating authority, Government Attorney or Juvenile Court as per Section 29(7)) of the Act.

The Juvenile Justice (Administration) Procedural Rules, 2019 has detailed out the roles and functions of the Probation Authority (Rule No. 43), who is a member of the District Juvenile Justice Committee (Rule No. 34(1)(k)). Some are as follows:

- Observe the investigation process of the case of children accused of an offence and submit the report to the Juvenile Court;
- Study the status of children residing in Observation Chamber, Child

Reform Home or any other institutions and submit the report to Juvenile Court;

- Study about whether the decision regarding diversion made by Investigating Authority, Government Attorney or Juvenile Court have been followed and submit the report to the concerned authority;
- Study about whether the orders of Juvenile Court have been implemented and submit the report to Juvenile Court as required;

#### Children's Home

The GoN, Provincial Government and the Local Level shall establish Children's Homes, as required, for the purpose of protection of the children in need of special protection (Sec. 52 of the Children's Act, 2018)<sup>5</sup>. Children are kept in such homes until they have been properly rehabilitated or until they have attained the age of 18 years. The Child Welfare Authority is responsible for rehabilitation and social reintegration of the children staying at that Children's Home for which concerned Children's Home is required to assist the authority. As per the provisions of the Act, the chief of the organization is entrusted with the guardianship of a child and he or she is holds ultimate responsibility for the care, protection and maintenance of the child.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>the MoWCSC has drafted a guideline for Operation of a Children's Home in 2018 with the objectives of providing a reference for provincial government and local levels for formulating their own guidelines. This guideline also provided similar staff structures as in the Standard for Operation and Management of Residential Child Care Homes, 2012.

#### **Child Reform Home**

Section 43 of the Children's Act, 2018 has incorporated the provision for establishment and functioning of Child Reform Home. The Government of Nepal (GoN) shall establish the Child Reform Home as required for keeping the children in conflict with law until their reform and rehabilitation. As per the provision, any institution may also establish a Child Reform Home with the approval of the GoN. The Juvenile Court may monitor and inspect the Child Reform Homes established within its territorial jurisdiction, issue necessary directives to such Homes and order them to submit reports about the condition of reform of the children residing there.

The Central Child Justice Committee (CCJC), established as per Section 46 of the Act particularly to coordinate among the agencies working in child justice, is drafting Standards for Operation and Management of Child Reform Home in collaboration with Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC). As such, there are no guidelines for staffing in such Homes. However, the GoN has deployed a set of staff in all eight Child Reform Homes. It is to be noted that, the four Child Reform Homes being operated directly by Government of Nepal has practice of deploying Social Mobilizer and Psychosocial Counsellor, whereas there is a practice of having Social Worker, Psychosocial counsellor and Legal Officer on board in the Child Reform Homes being operated under the management contract by Underprivileged Children Education Programme (UCEP) Nepal.

#### **Rehabilitation Centre**

Section 71 of the Children's Act, 2018 has provision of establishment of Rehabilitation Centre by the GoN for physical or mental treatment or social rehabilitation of the victimized child/ren. In addition, any organization may establish a rehabilitation centre by obtaining permission from the GoN.

By the nature of the centre, there is a need of highly skilled multidisciplinary child protection/welfare workforce to work for treatment and social rehabilitation of children who have been victims of crime.

#### **Temporary Protection Service**

Section 69 of the Children's Act, 2018 has incorporated that the GoN shall make arrangements for temporary protection service for safe accommodation of the children who are in need of immediate rescue and protection.

By the nature of the centre, there is a need of highly skilled multidisciplinary child protection/welfare workforce to work in case management of children in temporary protection service for their permanent rehabilitation and protection.

### 3.2 Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000 is enforced with the aim of prohibition of engaging children in factories, mines or similar risky activities as labour and to regulate their engagement as labour in terms of their health, security, services and facilities in the sectors which is permitted by the Act. The Act defines that children who have not completed 14 years are not allowed to work as labour and prohibits children who is not 18 to work in hazardous business or work sectors. The Act defines terms and conditions as well as remunerations and benefits in case children are employed as labour in the sectors or business permitted by the law.

#### **Labour Offices**

The overall responsibility of inspection, rescue, investigation, prosecution and deciding the offenses under this Act has been given to Labour Offices. Though, the Act does not provide for any particular workforce, the workforce such as Labour Inspectors, Factory Inspectors are accountable to carry out the roles and functions including monitoring, rescue and investigation of the cases of children employed against the

provisions of the Act. The roles and functions of offices, agencies and officials regarding prohibition and regulation of child labour are as follows:

- Receive information about the details of enterprise, entrepreneur, nature of business or activities from the entrepreneur that are running risky business or activities within fifteen days of operation (Sec. 5);
- Provide approval in case any enterprise has to engage a child as labour upon the application from entrepreneur along with consent of the father, mother or guardian of the child imposing appropriate conditions with the objective of developing skills and qualifications or providing education to the child (Sec. 6);
- Receive and review application for issuing qualification certificate prior to engaging a child as labour submitted by an enterprise (Sec. 7(1) and (2));
- Arrange for conducting medical test of the child by a medical practitioner to determine whether the child is fit for the work and issue qualification certificate be valid for one year (which is to be renewed every year by the enterprise on its own cost) (Sec. 7(3), (4), (5), (6) and (7));

- Keep record of the enterprises employing children as labour as per the particular submitted by each enterprise in prescribed format (Sec. 8);
- Demand and review registration book in which the details of children employed as labour has been maintained by the concerned enterprise (Sec. 13);
- Inspect enterprises employing children as labour from time to time (Sec. 15);
- Provide instructions to the enterprise to remove child/ren from work in case of not meeting the terms and conditions and hand them over to their mother, father, guardian or make arrangements for stay in Children's Homes or any organization providing care for children in case the parents/guardians are not traced out (Sec. 16);
- Prepare inspection report about whether any enterprise is employing children against the law as well as the condition of health and safety of the child employed as labour within fifteen days from the date of completion of the inspection (Sec. 17(1));
- May conduct inquiry to cross check the inspection report and validate whether the report submitted to the

- office is realistic and may take action according to law if it is found otherwise (Sec. 17(1));
- Order enterprise to make necessary arrangements for children employed in labour to meet the provisions of the legislation giving deadline to follow them (Sec. 17(2));
- Refer to the concerned agency, in writing to suspend the facilities to be given to the enterprise in case the enterprise does not implement the instructions given by the Labour Office (Sec. 18(1));
- Receive complaints of the offences punishable under this Act (Sec. 20);
- Impose punishment to the persons or enterprise in case found guilty of the offence under this Act and Rules (Sec. 21(1)); and
- Refer the case to the Labour Court if it is required imprisonment and support the Court by providing necessary documents to decide the case (Sec. 21(2)).

### 3.3 Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009

The Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009 has been enacted to respect the right of every person to live a secure and dignified life, to prevent and control violence

occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto making such violence punishable, and for providing protection to the victims of violence. As children are more vulnerable, not only as a victim of domestic violence but also as a witness and are forced to face the aftermath of consequences of domestic violence within the families, there is even more urgency to protect children from domestic violence. For that, many actors need to be accountable and designated workforces need to be deployed.

#### **Protection Officers**

Section 12(a) of the Act has provision for the Protection Officer to be deployed in each local level for controlling domestic violence through coordination. The Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Rules, 2010 provides roles and functions of Protection Officer (Rule no. 12), as follows:

- Work as a focal person in controlling domestic violence;
- Coordinate in between complaint hearing agency and Service centre;
- Provide legal aid to the victims of domestic violence;
- Avail psychosocial counselling and other psychological services to both victim and perpetrator;

- Update the database related to domestic violence; and
- Fulfil other duties prescribed by MoWCSC.

#### 3.4 Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007

The Human trafficking and transportation (Control) Act, 2007 has been enacted to control human trafficking and transportation, and to protect and rehabilitate the victims. There are various forms and purposes of human trafficking. Children being vulnerable and become prey of human trafficking and hence it is very important to work against human trafficking. The Act provides the extensive definition of human trafficking and transportation, criminal procedures, rights of victims as well as provisions concerning rehabilitation of victims.

#### **Rehabilitation Centre**

Though the Act does not provide any designated workforce to work against human trafficking; the workforce involved in social rehabilitation and family reintegration of women and children as well as the staff of rehabilitation centre could be considered as the child protection/welfare workforce. Such rehabilitation centre, established as per Section 13 of the Act, is responsible for physical and mental treatment, social rehabilitation

and family reconciliation of the victim. Further elaborating the provision, Rule no. 16 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Rules, 2008 provides for following functions of rehabilitation centre:

- Trace for the family of the individual, and arrange a family reunion;
- Take necessary measures for advising the family members or the victim,
- Facilitate while organizing a family reunion; and
- Transfer the children survivors into Children's Homes (in the situation family could not be traced).

The National Committee for Control of Human Trafficking (NCCHT) established as per Rule no. 4(1)(I) of Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Rules, 2008 has adopted Rehabilitation Centre Operation Procedures, 2010. As regard to the services to be offered by the rehabilitation centre, the operation procedure has categorized them as per the nature of services. The roles and functions of the child protection/welfare workforce among the services offered through the rehabilitation centre are set out. Some of them are:

 Mapping of the available resources and services that may be required to victims and update it annually;

- Arrange for referral services related to health, psychosocial, legal aid in case of unavailability of such services within the centre;
- Provide orientation to the victims about the centre, its functions and services offered as well as rules to be followed;
- Fill up intake form of the victim by collecting their personal information;
- Determining whether the person is victim of human trafficking and provide psychosocial support, if required;
- Prepare case documentation and form a case management team within the centre:
- Conduct detailed assessment of the beneficiaries including their health, psychosocial, legal, financial, and educational needs;
- Provide psychosocial counselling to families of the victims separately or together with victims as per need;
- Family tracing of the victims at the earliest and facilitate to reunite them with family after assessing the family situation and safety of victim along with arrangements of necessary psychosocial services to respect the maximum length of stay

(six-months) in rehabilitation centre;

- Explore and arrange for other alternatives of protection if victims in case they could not be reunited to their family within the stipulated time period or provide service through the concept of half way home (an arrangement by rehabilitation centre for night stay in a group home by paying maintenance through own earning);
- Provide necessary support for social rehabilitation of victimsprovide skills development training, financial assistance, official documents, seed-money, and link them with other supporting organizations;

As regard to human resources; Rule no. 27 of the Operation Procedures has made provision of, among others, Psychosocial Counsellor and Social Worker in each rehabilitation centre. According to the procedures, Psychosocial Counsellor is any person who has received training on psychosocial counselling for at least 720 hours or authenticated by any university or council recognized by GoN and has other educational qualification defined by the rehabilitation centre. The main role of Psychosocial Counsellor is to manage the cases. Similarly, Social Worker (Case Manager) is the person who has knowledge of research and assessment and has capacity to work as per morale of people with educational qualification as required by the rehabilitation centre. The main roles of the Social Worker (Case Manager) include management and coordination in regards to management of cases. Furthermore, carrying out the welfare related functions (as detailed out above) are to be fulfilled by the child protection/ welfare workforce in rehabilitation centre.

# 4. Institutional Mechanisms that have Provisions of Child Protection/Welfare Workforce

The MoWCSC is the focal ministry for all matters related to child welfare of women, children, person/children with disability, senior citizens in federal level. In the same manner, whereas the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) in each province is accountable for the matters of child welfare in provincial Governments. As regard to local levels, there is an arrangement of a separate desk or section within a department of division of social welfare that is solely responsible for the matters of child welfare and protection. The child protection/ welfare workforces envisioned by several Acts mentioned above are to be assigned in the respective local levels except for a few, who are to be assigned in district level. Apart from them, there are also statutory bodies created under several social legislations who are responsible for child welfare and protection in their respective jurisdictions.

In this regard, the following sections describe the statutory bodies as well as their roles and functions related to child protection/welfare:

#### **National Child Rights Council**

Section 59 of Children's Act, 2018 has made a provision of National Child Rights Council (NCRC) under the chairpersonship of the MoWCSC, in order to protect and promote the rights and interests of the child.

### Provincial and Local Level Child **Rights Committee**

The provision of Provincial Child Rights Committee (PCRC) is formed in each Province in accordance with the provision of Section 60 of Children's Act, 2018, which is chaired by the Minister of the Province overseeing the matters relating to children.

#### **Local Child Rights Committee**

Section 60 of Children's Act, 2018 incorporates provisions for Local Child Rights Committee (LCRC) in each local level under the chairpersonship of a member of the Rural Municipality or Municipality designated by the Vice-Chairperson or Deputy-Mayor of such Rural Municipal Executive or Municipal Executive respectively.

#### **Child Labour Prohibition Committee**

According to Section 23 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000, the GoN shall form Child Labour Prohibition Committee to- i) provide for health, safety, education, vocational training to children engaged in an enterprise; ii) provide for appropriate employment for children; iii) discourage to have children involved in works, and iv) get necessary suggestions and opinions for prohibiting child labour. There is a provision of appropriate representation of Governmental and non-Governmental organizations and experts engaged in child labour sector in such committee.

#### **Central Child Justice Committee**

Central Child Justice Committee (CCJC) is formed at central level as per the provision of Section 46 of Children's Act, 2018 to carry out the functions, including coordination between the various institutions working in the field of child justice. The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has defined the roles and functions of the committee.

#### **District Child Justice Committee**

Section 47 of the Children's Act, 2018 has incorporated provision of establishment of District Child Justice Committee (DCJC) in every district. The Juvenile Justice Administration (Procedural) Rules, 2019 has defined the roles and functions of the committee

# National Committee to Control Human Trafficking (NCCHT)

The Section 23 of Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 has provisioned for National Committee to coordinate the activities of Government bodies and NGOs working to rehabilitate victims and control the offences of human trafficking. The 12-member committee<sup>6</sup> has functions, power and duties, to-

- formulate and submit necessary policies, plans and programs against human trafficking to the Ministry,
- ii) implement or cause to be implemented the approved policies, plans and programmes and to monitor the implementation thereto.
- iii) assist those stranded in foreign countries and to return them to Nepal on their consent,

- iv) monitor and provide necessary directives to the works done by the Rehabilitation Center,
- v) monitor and coordinate the activities of the District Committees,
- vi) update the list and records relating to human trafficking,
- vii) monitor the implementation of obligation under international as well as regional treaties relating to human trafficking of which Nepal is a party, and
- viii) make and implement the standards for distribution of seed money among the persons who have received skillful training; and ix) make and implement central operative directives.

# District Committee to Control Human Trafficking (DCCHT)

Section 23 of Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 has provisioned for District Committee to coordinate the activities of Government bodies and NGOs working to rehabilitate victims and control the offences of human trafficking and transportation. The 8-member committee<sup>7</sup> functions, power and duties, to-

i) recommend to make such documents for concerned bodies

<sup>36</sup> Local Government Quarterly April - June 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Refer Rule No. 3 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Rules, 2008. <sup>7</sup>Refer Rule No. 6 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Rules, 2008.

- in case the relived person have not authentic identity pursuant to this Act or Rule.
- form and mobilize committees formed to control human trafficking and transportation in the local level.
- iii) monitor the Rehabilitation center in the district in accordance with the direction given by the National Committee,
- iv) raise awareness against human trafficking and transportation,
- implement programs remaining under the policies and plans has been formulated by the National Committee,
- vi) relieve the persons who are in the danger of human trafficking and transportation in the district,
- vii) coordinate with the district level organizations working against human trafficking and transportation; and
- viii) update the records and list relating to human trafficking and transportation and such report shall be sent to the National Committee once in every three months.

#### National Centre for Children at Risk

National Centre for Children at Risk is in operation with a helpline tollfree number '104' since 2006 for searching children reported missing and rescue, assist, and enable protection and rehabilitation of children who have been found abandoned, victims of human trafficking, and abducted as well as for prevention of such incidents. The centre is jointly operated by Nepal Police and NCRC in Kathmandu valley, whereas in the district level WCSCs, police offices have been operating the helpline in the districts outside Kathmandu valley. The MoWCSC has approved Operation Guidelines, 2076 for the centre.

#### Child Helpline '1098'

Child Helpline 1098 has been operating to protect children at risk by providing emergency rescue and relief through a nationwide toll-free helpline number '1098'. It has been coordinated by NCRC and various NGOs are operating the helpline in various districts. At present, 7 organizations have been running child helpline covering all the 77 districts. The helpline also provides psychosocial counselling, short-term care, health services, family assistance, legal aid and counselling, family reunification, and rehabilitation. The MoWCSC has approved Operation Guidelines, 2076 for its operation.

# **Urban Health Systems: The Need & Significance of Digital Enabled Solution**

#### Hyun Hee Ban, Debolina Kundu, Soumen Bagchi

"I think the biggest innovations of the twenty-first century will be the intersection of biology and technology" – Steve Jobs, as told to Walter Isaacson.

#### **Background**

With the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world has resolved to leave no one behind by ending extreme poverty and preventable child deaths and calling for integrated action across sectors to tackle complex development challenges. UNICEF has recently launched both its new Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the Strategy for Health, 2016–2030. The Strategy for Health has two overarching goals: 1) end preventable, maternal, newborn and child deaths; and 2) promote the health and development of all children.

Health infrastructure and service delivery were significantly challenged during and immediately after COVID 19, especially in the urban areas across all the low and low- middle income countries. It was observed that many people, especially children miss out on potentially life-saving vaccinations, treatment, and health monitoring

simply because health systems fail to keep track of them<sup>3</sup>. The severity was much more pronounced during COVID 19.

The widespread availability and use of information and communications technology tools offer the potential of transforming health promotion and health care. Many development experts hold the view that e-health might bring benefits for low and low middle-income countries as they struggle with more limited resources and larger disease burdens as compared to high-income countries. Information and Communication Technologies offer the potential to support the provision of preventive and primary health services, and chronic care services<sup>4</sup>.

#### Urban Health in India- The Magnitude of the Challenge

Urban health issues are multidimensional. Some efforts have been made to identify their

<sup>38</sup> Local Government Quarterly April - June 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021', UNICEF, New York, January 2018, , accessed 17 August 2018

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021', UNICEF, New York, January 2018, , accessed 17 August 2018

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Digital Health Initiatives | UNICEF Office of Innovation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Use of e-health programmes to deliver urban primary health-care services for noncommunicable diseases in middle-income countries (who.int)

complexities. Health providers working with inner-city populations must consider an array of social, health, and environmental factors in their assessment of health problems. Many of the societal issues which negatively impact health, such as poverty, lack of a universal health programme, unemployment, violence, drugs, and other factors, can be corrected in our society only if the political will to do so is present<sup>5</sup>. Things get complicated during health shocks like COVID 19 and/ or economic shocks that result in severe loss of livelihood resulting in pulling people down the poverty line.

With urbanization moving on an upward trajectory, urban health has emerged as one of the most significant themes in India. The increasing proportion of urban poor and vulnerable, with health indicators worse than their rural counterparts, faces various social and financial barriers to accessing healthcare. While urban health has been emphasized over the years by various committees and fiveyear plans (described in detail in the article), there has been little concerted effort at the national level for providing comprehensive healthcare to the urban population, up until the launch of the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) in 2013.

As urban health infrastructure, developed under various schemes and projects in different states, is quite inconsistent across the country, covering the entire urban population with standardized services is a challenge for NUHM. Other challenges include crowding out of the urban poor from available urban facilities, multiple burden of diseases and vulnerability in urban areas and fostering coordination and convergence between various urban stakeholders including the private sector<sup>6</sup>.

Another important challenge of urban primary health care service delivery is the inability to address the lack of coordination between the municipal corporation and State Health Departments. This is despite the fact that NUHM has placed the ULBs as the primary agency for managing the service delivery, transformation and upscaling of the urban health system, especially at the U-PHC level to improve the overall health status in urban areas, especially those of urban poor.

Due, to its sheer size, quality of human capital in India in the coming decades will have far reaching national as well as global repercussions. The extent to which India's health system can provide for the already large and rapidly growing urban population will determine the country's success in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This consists of both long-term and short-term targets to improve national health indices and

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Urban health: challenges and opportunities - PubMed (nih.gov)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Urban Health in India: Policies, Practices and Current Challenges - Satish Kumar Aastha Sharma, Akanksha Sood, Sanjiv Kumar, 2016 (sagepub.com)

consequently creating a healthier human capital.

Urban Primary Health centres (U-PHCs) are vital in providing direct healthcare as well as related services like cost-effective treatment, disease surveillance, monitoring, and implementation of the preventive mechanism at the grass root level in urban areas. With the launch of the NUHM, the importance of U-PHCs in the delivery of primary health care has increased. The outbreak of COVID 19 has further stressed the importance of U-PHCs in health care delivery. Also, the e-health initiatives have revolutionised the healthcare scenario and helped in accelerating the country's pace towards achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the health-related SDGs. Importantly, the significance of e-health was never felt as strongly as it was during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Intersection of Biology & Technology - the recent initiatives in India

75 per cent of the country's healthcare infrastructure is concentrated in urban areas while about 70 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. Telemedicine, which is the use of telecommunications technology to provide healthcare, could effectively bridge the gap between the patient and the doctor<sup>7</sup>.

Information asymmetry is one of the biggest challenges in healthcare. Patients are not privy to information which is essential in aiding with their choice of doctors, and at times doctors are not able to reach out to many patients due to a lack of visibility.

India is home to the 3rd largest smartphone market in the world, which makes m-Health a very lucrative option8. Providing access to such applications on smartphones would also not be a big hurdle, with the country expecting to cross 900 million mobile internet users by 2023. Government of India had initiated the eHealth initiatives much before the COVID 19 pandemic broke out which proved to be a boon during the COVID 19 pandemic. The eHealth initiative has a vision to deliver better health outcomes in terms of access, quality, affordability, lowering of disease burden and efficient monitoring of health entitlements to citizens9.

Another interesting concept that is emerging worldwide is online pharmacies or e-Pharmacies. There are various models that have been adopted such as online-only pharmacies and physical pharmacies with an online presence. Online pharmacies allow pharmacists to cater to a larger group of patients as the inherent geographical restrictions on physical pharmacies are removed in the online model.

<sup>40</sup> Local Government Quarterly April - June 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>e-Health-in-India-PRINT-4.pdf (nishithdesai.com)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Mobile health, or m-Health, is the provision of e-Health services on a mobile platform.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>e-Health India | National Health Portal Of India (nhp.gov.in)

#### Digi Medical Services & Tele-Medicine - The Saviour

During the lockdown, telemedicine services or e-consulting was commenced by various health service providers including large private hospitals as well as individual practitioners. E Sanjeevani was one of the major telemedicine service that was launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, which had two variants 'eSanjeevani AB-HWC', doctor-to-doctor telemedicine platform and 'eSanjeevani OPD - Stay Home OPD', a doctor to patient telemedicine system. Other examples of e-initiatives during COVID include the introduction of the government's CoWIN and the Arogya Setu applications.

E-initiatives in healthcare is not a new phenomenon in India. The integral role of e-health in the healthcare service delivery in India was already envisaged by the National Health Policy of 2017. In fact, the idea of introducing e-initiatives in healthcare dates back to 1983, when the first National Health Policy (NHP) was formulated. The NHP was later updated in 2002 and again in 2017. The NHP 2017 stressed the importance of leveraging the potential of e-health initiatives to strengthen linkages between the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of public health system. Importantly, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), commonly known as National Digital Health Mission of 2020, has renewed the impetus on the e-health initiatives. It aims to develop a "National Digital Health Ecosystem by creating an online platform enabling interoperability of health data within the health ecosystem to create longitudinal electronic health record of citizens & facilitate delivery of health services". However, to achieve a robust digital health eco-system as envisioned by the ABDM, it is critical that existing e-health tools and initiatives be reviewed to locate gaps and take lessons for new developments.

Primary Health Care (PHC) centres are vital in providing direct healthcare as well as related services such as costeffective treatment, disease surveillance, monitoring, and implementation of the preventive mechanism at the grass root level. Apart from these, U-PHCs are also responsible for functions such as conducting outreach sessions, special camps, home visits, overseeing community mobilization through Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)/ Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) and coordinating referrals. This has been tested in the current COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, adequate allocation of finances for primary health care system could lessen the burden of out of pocket expenses (OOPE) at the primary health care level which is currently estimated at around 72% of total OOPE in India (Ayushman Bharat Operational Guidelines, 2019). Better health service coverage and outcomes at this level will also depend on the accessibility and availability of trained health personnel in order to deliver quality and people-centred integrated care.

#### Initiatives towards eHealth

There are several e-initiatives introduced in the different areas of healthcare, viz., health information dissemination, process automation, service delivery and tracking, surveillance and monitoring, regulations and standards, capacity building, and online and mobile services. This article overviews some of these initiatives implemented at the UPHC level. To begin with, the National Identification Number (NIN) Portal has been put in place for the generation of the National Identification Number for all Health Facilities of India (NIN-2-HFI). Alongside, to maintain data standards and interoperability among various e-health applications, Metadata & Data Standards (MDDS) have been developed.

Identification details and other attributes of healthcare facilities are attached to their NIN based on these MDDS. Further, to manage the health system, Health Management

Information System (HMIS) was launched in 2008, as a primary webbased Monitoring Information System which records, stores, retrieves and processes health data for decisionmaking. The health data captured by HMIS are mainly the service delivery data on Maternal Health, Child-health & Immunization, Family Planning, Vector Borne Disease, Tuberculosis, Morbidity and Mortality, OPD, IPD Services, Surgeries etc. and infrastructure data. Maintaining a quality HMIS is thus essential for management and planning of a robust health system. Importantly, HMIS can be a comprehensive tool for monitoring progress of various health programmes.

Moreover, there are several other portals and applications dedicated to specific health programmes and goals. The Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS), Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Portal and ANM Online (ANMOL) are all focused on achieving the reproductive, maternal and child health goals of the UN SDGs. These aid the field staff as comprehensive portals that facilitates in ensuring timely delivery of reproductive health care including immunization services to pregnant women and children up to 5 years of age.

These portals record critical pregnancy and delivery related data of the healthcare beneficiaries.

Additionally, Labour Room & Quality Improvement Initiative (LaQshya) Portal and Safe Delivery App are available too. Child immunization is also targeted by the NHP Indradhanush: Vaccine Tracker, a mobile application that helps parents register and track immunization of their children under 16 years of age. The CPHC NCD Solution portal meant for digitizing screening reports on five non-communicable diseases (hypertension, diabetes, oral, breast and cervical cancers) under the Ayushman Bharat Comprehensive Primary Healthcare (CPHC) programme is important for achieving the goal of reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases. Similarly, NIKSHAY is a dedicated portal for tracking TB patients and monitoring the National TB Elimination Programme.

In terms of process automation, supply chain and logistics management, apart from HMIS, there are systems like Drug and Vaccine Distribution Management System (DVDMS) and e Aushadhi, which helps in automation of purchase, inventory management and supply of drugs, surgical items and sutures to warehouses of DH, CHC, and PHC. E-Aushadhi, as drug supply chain management was initiated by Rajasthan government but is now taken up by 17 states, owing to its success. Similarly, the Family PlanningLogistics management information system (FP-LMIS) is dedicated to streamline the Logistics and Supply Chain Management of family planning commodities. Such systems help in reducing supply disparities and improving the flow of the items from national level to the PHC level. eRakt Kosh has been developed for connecting and streamlining the workflow of licensed blood banks across the country.

#### State Government Initiatives on eHealth

Different state governments have also undertaken a series of initiatives. A few examples are e Upkaran – a biomedical equipment tracker in Rajasthan, Gujarat Hospital Management Information System, eVaidya – a telemedicine (pilot) project in urban health centers of Andhra Pradesh, Sachet - Infectious disease reporting system of Chhattisgarh, and Sangini Supportive Supervision for ASHA workers of Uttar Pradesh.

Research on uptake and use of these applications by Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) highlighted those multiple applications have instead of easing the data recording task, have increased the burden, as ANMs now have to enter the same data multiple times into multiple mHealth applications. Additionally, ANMs found it quite difficult to keep up with

the repeated change and shift from one application to another in a short span of time. It is suggested that multiple programmes and e-initiatives be mapped and linked removing duplicate and redundant tools and portals in a way to create a comprehensive system or the eco-system as detailed by the National Digital Health Blueprint.

It is also imperative that the healthcare personnel be trained for their roles and responsibilities so that their efficiency and programme success can be enhanced. Capacity building on data entry and processing on various portals can further bring improvements. Such efforts will improve digital literacy of the healthcare providers and will fill the last mile gaps in healthcare delivery. Further, research has observed that Health Management Information System and Electronic Medical Record (EMR) implementation are cost intensive. Similar issues were faced in implementation and management of other healthcare initiatives as well. Apart from increasing budgetary allocations, mapping and discontinuing duplicate systems is recommended. Also, use of machine learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can revolutionize the healthcare scenario.

Accelerating efforts under the Digital India Programme can help

bridge the digital gaps and ensure inclusivity. Potentials of tele-medicine network like the National Telemedicine Network (NTN) can be explored to penetrate the remote areas. Community awareness drives for e-health initiatives can be instrumental in increasing community acceptance. Expansion of beneficiary or patient feedback systems like MeraAspatal are important in building accountability mechanism for healthcare reforms. These reforms can strengthen the e-platforms.

#### Conclusion

Technology is not a panacea. Often efficacy and efficiency of use of technology is questioned due to multiplicity of platforms for multiple sets of services. A holistic approach to urban primary health care service delivery must go much beyond just the delivery of services. There must be an end-to-end solution bringing all the aspects of health service delivery within a single delivery e-platform, especially with a focus on identification of the beneficiaries. Beneficiary database with all beneficiaries registered into it is a pre-requisite and a necessary condition for the successful use of technology for health service delivery. However, this is certainly not a sufficient condition and this has to be adequately supported by integrating it to the service delivery portal.

Starting from identifying the beneficiaries and eligibility criteria of benefits under various programmes, developing a comprehensive database of all beneficiaries, access to various health care services including general consultation, specialist consultation, information on services, information on medicine availability, disease insurance access and coverage, delivery of insurance services, registering and addressing complaints etc. would be useful components of the e-platform and help in meeting the SDG targets in a time bound manner leaving behind no one in the process of development.

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Articles could normally be between 3000 and 4000 words, though we do not wish to limit the size. As we print in black and white, tables, charts, graphs, images, etc. need to be compatible. We reserve the right to edit for sense, style, space, etc.

Contributors may e-mail their articles to: aiilsgguarterlyjournal@aiilsg.org or info.algg@aiilsg.org

The Chief Editor

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# Rural Development Programs in Karnataka: An Analysis

Sowmyashree K. l

#### **Abstract**

Rural development is a pivotal aspect of socioeconomic progress, particularly in regions like Karnataka, a state in southwestern India, characterized by diverse landscapes and communities. This research paper offers an analysis of rural development programs in Karnataka, focusing on both central and state government initiatives. The study explores the roles, policies, and implementation strategies of these governments, along with detailing specific rural development schemes. By examining the interplay between policies and on-ground execution, the paper aims to shed light on the effectiveness, challenges, and impact of rural development efforts in Karnataka.

#### 1.0 Introduction:

Rural development is integral to Karnataka's growth, considering its varying geographical terrain and socioeconomic diversity. This paper delves into rural development programs in the state, examining the roles of both central and state governments, and scrutinizing the implementation of key initiatives. From agriculture to education, healthcare to infrastructure, this analysis offers insights into the multifaceted approach undertaken to uplift rural communities.

#### 2.0 Central Government's Role:

The central government of a country, such as India, plays a significant role in formulating and implementing policies and programs for rural development on a national scale. It sets overarching goals and strategies while providing financial support, guidance, and coordination to the state governments.

This section emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts between the central and state governments.

- a. National Level Policies: The central government formulates national-level policies that guide rural development across the entire country. These policies address key areas such as agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, and poverty alleviation.
- b. Funding Allocation: The central government allocates funds from the national budget to support rural development programs. These funds are distributed to the states based on various criteria like population, development indicators, and special needs.
- c. Program Implementation: The central government implements flagship rural development programs that have a national scope. For instance, in India, programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (housing scheme) are centrally sponsored and managed programs.
- d. Technical Expertise: The central government often provides technical expertise and resources to assist state governments in designing and implementing effective rural development strategies. This can include research, data collection, and policy analysis.

#### 3.0 State Government's Role:

Karnataka's state government, aware of local nuances and challenges, is entrusted with tailoring rural development initiatives to meet specific needs. By adapting national policies, crafting state-specific programs, and engaging communities, state governments ensure the successful execution of policies that resonate with local aspirations.

- a. State-Specific Policies: State governments create policies that align with the central government's national policies but take into consideration the unique socioeconomic and geographical characteristics of their states.
- b. Program Customization: State governments have the flexibility to modify centrally sponsored programs to suit local requirements. They can also create state-specific programs that address specific issues within their territories.
- c. Resource Allocation: State governments receive funds from the central government for rural development activities. They allocate these funds to different programs and projects based on their understanding of local priorities.
- d. Implementation Oversight: State governments are responsible for

the on-ground implementation of rural development programs within their jurisdictions. They oversee the execution, monitoring, and evaluation of projects to ensure their effectiveness.

e. Community Engagement: State governments are better positioned to engage with local communities, understand their needs, and involve them in the planning and execution of rural development initiatives.

In essence, while the central government provides a broad framework, funding, and national-level programs for rural development, state governments have the autonomy to adapt and implement these initiatives according to the specific requirements of their regions. This collaborative approach between the central and state governments allows for a more comprehensive and effective approach to rural development that takes into account both national priorities and local nuances.

## 4.0 Rural Development Schemes in Karnataka:

The heart of this paper lies in detailing specific rural development schemes implemented in Karnataka. These schemes, ranging from agricultural innovation to infrastructure enhancement, from social welfare to skill development, represent a tapestry

of efforts woven to uplift rural life. From Krishi Bhagya to Namma Toilet Scheme, the paper shines a spotlight on initiatives that have left tangible impacts on communities.

Some notable rural development schemes implemented in Karnataka, are as follows,

#### 1. Krishi Bhagya Scheme:

Objective: Enhance agricultural productivity and soil health management.

Implementation: Farmers are provided with financial incentives, subsidies for soil testing, and training in modern farming practices.

Components: Promotion of organic farming, distribution of soil health cards, introduction of modern irrigation techniques.

Impact: Improved crop yield, reduced input costs, sustainable farming practices.

# 2. Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP):

Objective: Empower local governance and prioritize infrastructure projects.

Implementation: Gram Panchayats identify development projects

based on community needs and receive funds for execution.

Components: Construction of roads, schools, community centers, water supply systems, sanitation facilities.

Impact: Enhanced local infrastructure, increased community participation, improved living conditions.

### 3. MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act):

Objective: Provide employment and ensure livelihood security in rural areas.

Implementation: Guarantees 100 days of wage employment to rural households through public works projects.

Components: Construction of roads, water conservation projects, afforestation, rural infrastructure development.

Impact: Reduced unemployment, enhanced rural infrastructure, increased income for rural households.

#### 4. Saubhagya Scheme:

Objective: Achieve universal household electrification in rural areas.

Implementation: Providing electricity connections to households without access to electricity.

Components: Wiring, installation of meters, provision of LED bulbs, solar home systems for remote areas.

Impact: Improved quality of life, enhanced access to education and health services, increased productivity.

#### 5. Namma Toilet Scheme:

Objective: Promote sanitation and open defecation-free villages.

Implementation: Construction of individual and community toilets, solid waste management.

Components: Building toilets, awareness campaigns on hygiene and sanitation.

Impact: Improved sanitation and hygiene practices, reduced health risks, enhanced dignity for women.

#### 6. Indira Canteen Scheme:

Objective: Provide affordable and nutritious meals to urban and rural populations.

Implementation: Establishment of canteens offering subsidized meals.

Components: Nutritious meals at low prices, special provisions for economically weaker sections.

Impact: Improved access to affordable food, reduced malnutrition, enhanced food security.

#### 7. Jaladhare Scheme:

Objective: Focuses on water resource management and rainwater harvesting to address water scarcity in rural areas.

Implementation: Involves the construction of check dams, ponds, and other water conservation structures.

Key Components: Promotes rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and efficient water use.

Impact: Increased availability of water for irrigation, improved groundwater levels, reduced drought vulnerability.

#### 8. Annapurna Scheme:

Objective: Enhance food security among senior citizens in rural areas.

Implementation: Provides free meals to senior citizens in community centers known as "Annapurna Centres." Key Components: Nutritious meals, socialization opportunities, improved health and well-being for the elderly.

Impact: Reduced malnutrition among senior citizens, increased social interaction, improved quality of life.

#### 9. Rural Housing Schemes:

Objective: Provide safe and affordable housing to rural families.

Implementation: Various schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY) focus on constructing houses for economically weaker sections.

Key Components: Financial assistance, construction of houses, sanitation facilities.

Impact: Improved living conditions, enhanced dignity, reduction in homelessness.

# 10. Karnataka Horticulture Development Project (KHDP):

Objective: Promote horticulturebased livelihoods and increase farmers' income.

Implementation: Supports cultivation of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and spices.

Key Components: Training, technical assistance, market linkages, modern farming practices.

Impact: Increased horticultural production, enhanced income for farmers, employment generation.

#### 11. Karnataka Rural Livelihoods **Promotion Programme (KRLP):**

Objective: Alleviate poverty and empower rural communities through self-help groups and livelihood activities.

Implementation: Formation of selfhelp groups, skill development, financial inclusion.

Key Components: Capacity building, access to credit, entrepreneurship development.

Impact: Improved livelihoods, women's empowerment, reduction in poverty.

#### 12. Karnataka State Bioenergy **Development Board (KSBDB):**

Objective: Promote renewable energy and biofuel production in rural areas.

Implementation: Encourages the establishment of bioenergy projects like biogas plants, biomass-based power generation.

Key Components: Technical support, financial incentives, awareness campaigns.

Impact: Reduction in dependence on fossil fuels, enhanced rural energy access, environmental sustainability.

#### 5.0 Conclusion:

The intricate tapestry of rural development initiatives in Karnataka reflects a conscientious effort to elevate the lives of its rural populace. Through a synchronized interplay of central and state government roles, policies have been formulated and executed, cascading tangible benefits to communities. The synergy between the two levels of governance, while providing a comprehensive framework, also respects the nuances of local contexts.

The detailed exploration of specific rural development schemes highlights their varied successes and challenges. From Krishi Bhagya's cultivation revolution to the empowerment brought about by Gram Panchayat Development Plans, each initiative has etched a unique mark on the landscape of rural Karnataka. However, these schemes are not without their obstacles - resource constraints, administrative intricacies, and timely execution hurdles persistently test the efficacy of these programs.

The paper underscores that successful rural development hinges on a multi-pronged approach - one that combines policy vision with community involvement and responsive governance. While these schemes showcase remarkable progress, they require constant vigilance, innovative problem-solving, and a continuous feedback loop to sustain their impact over time.

As Karnataka's rural landscape continues to evolve, this analysis illuminates the significance of dynamic policy adaptation and effective implementation. By understanding the complexities and celebrating the achievements, policymakers can chart a course toward a more inclusive, prosperous, and resilient rural future. The journey of rural development is ongoing, and its success ultimately lies in the commitment to overcome challenges and embrace opportunities for transformative change.

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### **Report Review**

## **Global Gender Gap Report 2023**

Read the full report here: https://www.weforum.org/reports/glo bal-gender-gap-report-2023/

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance", said former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The subject of gender equality has been engaging policymakers across the world for many years. The World Economic Forum (WEF) is actively working on the subject too. It recently released the seventeenth edition of the Global Gender Gap Report 2023. This annual report attempts to measure the progress on gender parity in several countries across each of four dimensions, namely Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. This Report has served as a key input for policy makers and others around the world to put in place appropriate interventions to close the gaps in these dimensions and the composite whole.

The preface penned by Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director of WEF opens on a grim note stating that recent years have been marked by major setbacks for gender parity globally. It notes that previous progress has been disrupted first by the impact of the COVID pandemic on women and girls, and later by economic and geopolitical crises. Further, it sounds a word of caution with respect to the immediate future stating that while some regions of the world are now seeing some recovery, others are experiencing deterioration as new crises unfold. There is a call for renewed and concerted action to accelerate progress towards gender parity. This, the author argues, will not only improve outcomes for women and girls, but also benefit economies and societies more widely.

#### **Key Findings**

The preface is followed by Key Findings Section. This 17th edition of the Global Gender Gap Index tracks gender parity across 146 countries. Of these, 102 countries have been included in every edition of the Index since its commencement in 2006. In this 2023 Index, the score for all 146 countries is 68.4, meaning 68.4% of the gender gap has been closed. For the 145 countries that were part of both, the

previous index and the current one, the score has improved from 68.1% to 68.4%. If one considers the 102 countries that have been measured right from 2006 continuously, then the gap is 68.6% closed in 2023 up by a 'modest 4.1 percentage points since the first edition of the report in 2006'. Progressing at the current rate, it would take 131 years to close the gender gap fully.

Some other key findings are as follows:

- ✓ No country has as yet been able to close the gender gap fully
- ✓ The top 9 countries Iceland, Norway, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Germany, Nicaragua, Namibia and Lithuania have closed atleast 80% of the gap. Iceland secures the top place 14th year running (closed over 90% gap)
- ✓ 2 countries have dropped out of the top 10 Ireland (11th in 2023 from 9th in 2022) and Rwanda (12th in 2023 from 6th in 2022). Lithuania (9th) and Belgium (10th) enter the top 10
- For the countries surveyed in 2023, the Health and Survival gender gap has closed by 96%, the Educational Attainment gap by 95.2%, Economic Participation and Opportunity gap by 60.1%, and Political Empowerment gap by 22.1%

✓ In terms of regional performance, Europe (76.3%) and North America (75%) lead the rankings while Southern Asia (63.4%) and Middle East and North Africa (62.6%) have the biggest distance to cover in order to achieve full gender parity

Among the key findings, the authors express concern at the labour participation rate of women. They observe that while this important indicator has slipped globally in recent years, 'other markers of economic opportunity have been showing substantive disparities between women and men'. Some observations here:

- ✓ Although women have re-entered the workplace at a slightly better rate than men in 2023, the gap remains too wide
- ✓ The score (64%) is well below the 2009 peak of 69%; and just one step away from the lowest since 2006
- ✓ Women continue to face higher global unemployment rate (4.5%) than men (4.3%)
- ✓ Women account for a larger share of informal sector employment (4 out of 5) compared to men (2 out of
   3)
- ✓ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sector jobs are well-paying. Here the

representation of women is below par. While women account for nearly half (49.3%) of non-STEM jobs, their representation in STEM jobs is only 29.2%. Similarly the under-representation of women in leadership roles is also a matter of concern

✓ The digital divide precludes women from equal opportunities and access to online platforms. This affects learning and skilling. This is particularly so in enrollment to technological learning, AI and Big Data skills programmes.

When it comes to Political Empowerment there has been an increase in the number of women in political decision-making roles. However, there exist significant regional disparities and therefore achieving gender parity in this dimension seems to remain a distant goal.

- ✓ 2.12 billion people (27.9% of global population) live in countries with a woman head of state. This indicator has grown in 2022
- ✓ In 2013, only 18.7% of parliamentarians in the world were women. In 2022, this figure increased to 22.9%
- ✓ As regards local governments, 18 countries (out of 117 with available data) including Bolivia (50.4%),

India (44.4%) and France (42.3%), have achieved representation of women of over 40%

DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) programmes are being undertaken to close gender gaps.

The World Economic Forum's 2023 Future of Jobs Survey indicates that more than two-thirds of the organizations surveyed have implemented a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programme and majority (79%) of them are implementing the programmes with a focus on women.

Thereafter Table 1.1 is an important one where all the 146 participating countries are ranked in chronological order by rank. Also given are their scores and ranks movement with respect to the previous index on 2022. India is ranked at 127 with a rank improvement of 8 places. In other words the rank improved from 135 to 126. The absolute score has also improved.

Thereafter are discussed the rankings (for all countries) on each of the four sub-indices, namely Economic participation and opportunity, Educational attainment, Health and survival, and Political empowerment. The Indexes (extent to which gap closed; therefore higher the better) are as follows:

Overall	68.4%
Economic participation and opportunity sub-index	60.1%
Educational attainment sub-index	95.2%
Health and survival sub-index	96%%
Political empowerment sub-index	22.1%

This section discusses the details highlighting the rankings of some countries, their movement, etc. This makes for interesting reading. More than two-thirds (69.2%) of countries score above the 2023 population-weighted average Gender Gap Index score (68.4%). The performance of some countries on each of the 4 sub-indices is discussed.

Table 1.2 is very informative. For each of the surveyed countries, it provides the rank and score on each of the 4 dimensions:

In the case of India,

On Economic participation and opportunity, the rank is 142

On Educational attainment, the rank is 26 (It may be noted that on this dimension has scored full 1.000 which is the same as all the 25 higher ranked countries)

On Health & survival, it is ranked 142

On Political empowerment, the rank is 59

The performance of each of the 8 global regions (Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eurasia and Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Southern Asia, Middle East and North Africa) are discussed and depicted by charts and graphs. As stated earlier, Europe (76.3%) and North America (75%) occupy the top 2 overall positions; MENA (62.6%) and Southern Asia (63.4%) have the largest gaps yet to be covered.

Thereafter are discussed the individual performances of the top 10 ranking countries and the 15 most populous countries. India is included in the second cohort.

The next Section titled Gender Gaps in the Workforce is very insightful indeed and covers various topics while examining the situation with respect to gender parity. Some of these topics are: labour force participation, unemployment, working conditions, women in senior leadership roles (this is represented by a chart segregated by industry).

Under this section, a separate subsection deals with gender gaps in labour markets of the future. Here the report discusses gender parity with respect to STEM, and AI occupation. An important observation made is that it is 'no longer sufficient to frontload skills through training in the initial phase of the career for a single qualification throughout a lifetime. In the changing job market, demand for skills is rapidly shifting. Creative thinking, analytical thinking, technological literacy, curiosity and lifelong learning and resilience, flexibility and agility are increasing in demand'. The role of online learning in acquiring knowledge and skills is highlighted. The report notes that men and women do not have equal opportunity and access to online learning platforms given the persistent digital divide.

Thereafter, among the indices to the Report are the Country profiles for each of the 146 countries surveyed. These are listed in alphabetical order of country name. Two pages are devoted to each country giving details of all performance markers.

All in all, this Global Gender Gap Report 2023 is a very valuable document for scholars, policymakers, academicians and students of the subject. It indicates the current state of affairs with respect to this crucial subject, plots the trend over previous years, and points out the areas requiring greater effort in order to close the gender gap sooner. It is of much value since the report has been produced continuously every year since 2006, enabling researchers to plot trends. It will certainly help in crafting policy interventions in such a way that they lead to achievement of one of the important Sustainable Development Goals for a more just, fair, and inclusive world for all.

V Vijaykumar

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### **OBJECTIVES**

The main emphasis of the Institute's work is to see that the local bodies can contribute more effectively to the development process and provide the citizens with better living conditions by meeting their aspirations in terms of required amenities, infrastructure and better environmental conditions, thus contributing to social and economic development of the society as a whole by better management of the human settlements. While these are the long-term objectives, the immediate ones are:

- To advance knowledge of the principles and practices of Local Government by conducting research and by organising training courses and programmes at various centres in India for officials and elected representatives in the local bodies.
- To strengthen and improve Local Government Institutions by improving their performance through education, orientation and bringing them together for common endeavor by organising specialised conferences, conventions and seminars.
- To make available a platform for members of local bodies and officials for exchange of views and ideas related to urban development and administration.
- To represent the views of local authorities supported by research work to the concerned higher authorities from time to time.
- To publish bibliographies, articles, books and other literature on matters of interest to local bodies.
- To publish journals, bulletins and other literature on different aspects of Local Government and on the working of Local bodies in different states.
- To undertake research studies in public administration, problems of local bodies and also in related topics of urban and environmental factors and arrange for their publication etc.
- To establish and maintain an information-cum-documentation service for local bodies.
- To undertake consultancy assignments in various areas of urban development and problems of local bodies with a view to improve and develop organisational, managerial and operational efficiency.

In view of the above, the Institute has been collaborating with the relevant government departments, Central and State, Universities, Organisations and Research Institutions. The work of the Institute covers several aspects involving a multi-disciplinary teamwork.

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