

Chapter 5

Sustainable Rural Livelihood: A Case of Hiware Bazaar, Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

In the present day, when human beings have excessively exploited the natural resources, sustainable development has become a catchword for countries around the world. With respect to the rural scenario, diversion of watercourses and settled agriculture are deemed as tactical imperatives for sustainable livelihood. The present study focuses on a village, Hiware Bazar, situated in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, India. The village is known for its livelihood status, which can be distinctly categorized into two phases, the period before 1991 and the period after 1991. In the first phase (before 1991), the village was marked by severe livelihood crisis owing to acute water scarcity. The second phase (after 1991) is known for livelihood improvement realized through community engagement and planned investment initiatives for watershed development and organic farming.

INTRODUCTION

The principle of 'sustainable development' has been assuming significance in recent years, ever since its conception in the Brundtland Report titled "Our Common Future" released in 1987 by the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) (Vezzoli & Manzini, 2008). Sustainable development appreciates growth that is all-encompassing and environmentally nourishing to inhibit poverty and foster collective prosperity for the present-day population as well as future generations (Spring, 2015; Rigg, 2016). Correspondingly, countries across the globe are directing their efforts towards the end of

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judiciously managing resources for meeting the needs of the present by preserving the interests of posterity. For instance, water has a critical role in sustainable development and is allied to umpteen essential global problems, over and above a vastly diverse range of economic and human activities. Therefore, water security—access to sufficient quantities of water of suitable quality for sustaining human and ecosystem salubrity over a longer time horizon—is a sought-after goal for nations today.

Sustainable development can be followed only if demographic advancements are in conformity with the uneven productive potential of the ecosystem. Such endeavors are attempted in urban as well as rural settings. In fact, ‘sustainable rural livelihood’ is gradually gaining center place in the discussions about rural development and environmental management on account of its implications for the socioeconomic and ecological viability of nations (Scoones, 1998). Such a livelihood can adapt to and recoup from stresses and shocks, uphold or augment its capacities and resources, without depleting the natural reserves (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998).

The following are the major objectives of the present chapter:

1. To examine and explore the concept of sustainable rural livelihood;
2. To substantiate the linkages between water conservation and environmental sustainability in rural settings;
3. To expound the potential and promise of organic farming systems for attaining ecologically sustainable pay-off;
4. To consider the case of a rural commune—Hiware Bazar, situated in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, India—a model village known for its custom-built development program and sustainable livelihood that is committed to environmental conscientiousness and social cohesion through community participation and engagement;
5. To assess how the village under consideration, once drought-prone and poverty-stricken with high unemployment rates, transformed itself to be recognized as a miracle village, through progressive initiatives such as adopting watershed development program for water conservation, and shifting to organic practices for retention and preservation of soil fertility;
6. To evaluate the outcomes of sustainability initiatives in connection with the case considered and identify future pathways for further development.

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Rural Livelihood

Rural poverty persists and continues to remain a concern for numerous developing countries notwithstanding the remarkable progress and innovations in agricultural technology. Several structural factors may be attributed to rural distress and deprivation. Some of these include inequitable allocation of land ownership, urban orientation of development policies, worldwide recurring fluctuations in prices of essential commodities, external shocks such as natural disasters and the ongoing climate change (Potter, Conway, Evans & Lloyd-Evans, 2012). Heightened priority to production of export crops over those meant for domestic production has worsened the agrarian crisis thus exacerbating rural poverty. For instance, noted Indian journalist P. Sainath reports how the state of Kerala in India, deemed to be the most globalized one in the country post-neo-liberal reforms, primarily produces cash crops much of which

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