

Access to Basic Amenities: Aspects of Caste, Ethnicity, Religion, Livelihood Categories and Poverty in Rural and Urban India during 1993 – 2008-09

-Arjun Kumar

1. Introduction

Access to basic amenities like drinking water, sanitation, electricity, housing, drainage and others are crucial to the well-being as they contribute to physical and material comfort and quality of life. They also benefits by ensuring better health, environment and providing opportunities for other useful activities. Access to basic amenities also enables the household to save foregone hours spent to arrange when these are not available in day to day life. Its importance has been highlighted in the international arena since it got included in the Millennium Development Goals. The Goals are ambitious but feasible and, together with the comprehensive United Nations development agenda, set the course for the world's efforts to achieve these by 2015. In the recent years, many international agencies like UNDP, UNESCAP, UN-HABITAT, ADB, World Bank and others have advocated and highlighted the importance of basic amenities for well-being and raising the standards of living. They have also laid down initiatives, assistance, norms and standards.

1.1 Policies on Basic Amenities in India

There have been several initiatives, plans and programmes in India to improve the access to basic amenities. Since, rural and urban areas have different set of administrative arrangements and needs, separate plans and programmes are designed for them.

For the development of India's rural areas, the Bharat Nirman (2005) was launched. Under Bharat Nirman, action is proposed in the areas of irrigation, road (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana), rural housing (Indira Awaas Yojana), rural water supply, rural electrification (Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana) and rural telecommunication connectivity. There are also programmes of Ministry of Rural Development, Drinking Water and Sanitation, etc. such as Rajiv Gandhi National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Total Sanitation Campaign (which is renamed as Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in May 2012) and others. Another landmark initiative came in 2004 with the launch of Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA). PURA is a strategy for rural development in India; the primary objectives of the scheme are the provision of livelihood opportunities and urban amenities in rural areas to bridge the rural-urban divide.

In order to usher in an era of urban governance the Eleventh Plan reaffirmed the vitality of the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) that was launched by the Government of India in December 2005. The Mission aims at improving and augmenting the economic and social infrastructure of 65 select cities as well as affordable housing and basic services to the urban poor through planned development of the identified cities, calling for the strict implementation of the Seventy Fourth Amendment Act, Urban Local Bodies.

The JNNURM is expected to cater to the non-mission towns and cities under the two components, namely, the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) and the Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP). The programme is expected to cover all other census towns under the UIDSSMT. The existing programme of Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) and Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP) has been subsumed under UIDSSMT. Like-wise, the existing Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY) and the discontinued National Slum Development Programme (NSDP) have been subsumed in the IHSDP. Another programme dovetailed with the JNNURM is the Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing Urban Poor (ISHUP) aims to provide a stimulus to housing programmes under the public-private partnership mode.

This policy briefing presents evidence from quantitative research findings on access to basic amenities across caste, ethnic, religious and economic groups and also their cross classifications which bring out insightful details in all India levels for rural and urban areas during 1993, 2002 and 2008-09 using NSSO, Household Amenities Surveys unit record data. It also focuses upon the issues of unequal access and disparities persisting in the society. Thus, it dwells into the process of deprivation, denial, exclusion and discrimination in the dimensions of well-being.

2. Objectives

The paper centre around the disparities in the access to basic amenities across the economic groups, caste, ethnic and religious groups and focuses upon the issues of unequal access and thus into the process of exclusion, discrimination and deprivation in the dimensions of well-being. It examined the disparities in the access to basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitation, electricity, housing qualities and drainage arrangement across caste, ethnic, religious and economic groups and also their cross classifications to bring out insightful details in all India levels for rural and urban areas during 1993, 2002 and 2008-09 using NSSO, Household Amenities Surveys unit record data.

3. Database

Data for basic amenities are available by Census (H Series tables), National Family Health Survey and National Sample Survey Rounds. For our analysis we use National Sample Survey unit record data which facilitate us to probe and demonstrate the issues highlighted in the study. Hence, analysis was done for 1993, 2002 and 2008-09 using NSS, Household Amenities Surveys unit record data.

4. Methodology

In the analysis of changes in levels, the disparities and inequalities across social groups and economic groups will be highlighted and explained followed by further disaggregation by investigating each categories of social groups by different economic groups. Compounded annual rate of growth was calculated for overall period (1993 to 2008-09), Period 1 (1993 to 2002) and Period 2 (2002 to 2008-09). This will not only shed light on the varying access in

same economic groups and different social group categories but also give an account of exclusion and discrimination in practise.

In the analysis of levels, more information was used as there is availability of data in 2008-09. Here similar scheme will be followed. Scrutiny here will be done for socio-religious groups and economic groups (household types and MPCE quintile categories). Therefore, the analysis of levels will seek to explain more insights with more indicators taking into the considerations.

5. Findings

5.1 Results for Access to Basic Amenities in Rural Areas

Rural areas experienced improvement in the access to basic amenities (drinking water, sanitation, electricity and drainage facilities) between 1993 to 2008-09 with major acceleration in the second period, 2002 to 2008-09. However, this trend was found a bit different in access to housing qualities (condition of structure of house and roof type), where deterioration was observed for bad condition of structure during 1993 to 2008-09 and deceleration for katcha roof type during 2002 to 2008-09. Rural areas witnessed very high levels of deprivations for households in access to drinking water facilities (56.82%), sanitation facilities (no latrine facility – 66.41% and no bathroom facility – 64.38%) and drainage arrangement (open katcha and no drainage arrangement – 75.39%) during 2008-09. 33.95% of rural households were deprived of electricity use for domestic purposes in 2008-09. Taking the changes of levels into the consideration along with the annual rate of change, it was found that special and immediate attention towards access to drinking water facility, sanitation facilities and drainage arrangement in the house is needed in rural areas. Although levels for housing qualities are found to be in better position than other amenities (bad condition of structure – 18.16% and katcha roof type – 21.51%), analysis suggests focus needs to be given at housing qualities to rejuvenate improvement.

In rural areas, social groups found to be lagging behind were STs (Schedule Tribes) and SCs (Schedule Castes) among all the indicators. The existing levels for all the basic amenities taken for analysis in 2008-09 and annual rate of changes during 1993 to 2008-09 were found to be lower than that of others and OBCs households. In the second period, 2002 to 2008-09, there was acceleration in the annual rate of change for all social groups which led to the improvement, nonetheless, the pattern among social groups remained the same in all the basic amenities. However, proportions of STs households experienced highest levels in no access to drinking water facility, electricity and drainage arrangement in the house whereas proportions of SCs households experienced highest levels in no access to sanitation facilities and housing qualities in comparison to rest during 2008-09. ORMs households witnessed lowest levels in no access to basic amenities among religious groups followed by muslims and hindus households during 2008-09. However, Hindus households experienced highest levels in no access to drinking water facility and sanitation facilities in the house whereas muslims households experienced highest levels in no access to electricity, housing qualities

and drainage arrangement. This pattern among socio-religious groups was found similar for accesses to numbers of few basic amenities of the household in rural areas during 2008-09.

In rural areas, economic groups MPCE (Monthly per capita expenditure) quintiles categories showed linkages of the expenditure class with the access to the basic amenities. It was observed that the no access to the amenities was in concordance with the MPCE quintiles, as we move from top to bottom quintile class the non-availability of the amenities keeps on increasing in rural areas during 1993 to 2008-09. Disparities were found to be high across quintile classes in the levels in 2008-09 and annual rate of change during 2008-09. For eg. No latrine facility in the house for bottom most quintile was 84.64% as compared to 38.38% for top most quintile in 2008-09. In the second period, 2002 to 2008-09, there was acceleration in the annual rate of change contributing to improvement across all quintiles among drinking water and sanitation. Among electricity, housing and drainage, the acceleration in annual rate of changes were contributing to improvement for bottom three quintiles of MPCE in the second period, 2002 to 2008-09, whereas there was a slowdown observed for top two quintiles after high rate of improvement during 1993 to 2002. Across economic groups-household type categories, ALs (Agricultural labourers) and OLs (Other labourers) were found to have high levels for not having access to basic amenities in the house followed by SEinA (Self-employed in agriculture), SEinNA (Self-employed in non-agriculture) and lowest for others during 2008-09. ALs households were found to be most deprived in all the amenities, for eg. 73.15% of ALs households had no access to facility of drinking water in the house. Situations for ALs and OLs were found to be similar than that of bottom two MPCE quintile categories in most of the amenities. Others household types were at par as of top MPCE quintile category in most of the amenities. This pattern among economic groups was found similar for accesses to numbers of few basic amenities of the household in rural areas during 2008-09.

It was also found that STs and SCs households in rural areas lacked behind others categories in every MPCE quintile class categories which indicates that even if same economic condition prevails there is variation in attainment by different social groups. During 1993 to 2008-09, across all the amenities the rate of decline per annum improves for all the categories of social groups as we move from bottom to top MPCE quintile classes but the pattern across social groups remains the same. STs and SCs experienced lower rate of decline than others in every MPCE quintile class categories. Second period, 2002 to 2008-09, showed acceleration in the annual rates of decline in all MPCE quintile categories but the pattern among social groups remained the same among all the amenities except katcha roof type, where deceleration was found for SCs and others. However, top quintile class categories in few amenities like electricity, housing and drainage arrangement witnessed little slowdown but here also the pattern across social groups remained the same. The pattern across the socio-religious categories, as discussed before, remained similar for all the household type and MPCE quintile categories during 2008-09. As we move from bottom to top position of household type and MPCE quintile class categories, the levels for not having access to basic amenities in the house declines across all the socio-religious categories. However, all the categories of economic groups exhibited similar pattern among socio-religious groups. STs

and SCs belonging to ALs, OLs and bottom MPCE quintiles were found most lagging behind in the access to basic amenities. Muslims belonging to ALs, OLs and bottom MPCE quintiles were also found most lagging behind in access to electricity, housing qualities and drainage arrangement.

5.2 Results for Access to Basic Amenities in Urban Areas

Urban areas experienced improvement in the access to basic amenities (drinking water, sanitation, electricity, housing qualities and drainage facilities) between 1993 to 2008-09 with major acceleration in the second period, 2002 to 2008-09. It is also worth noticing that bad condition of structure of the house witnessed deterioration in first period but it got improved and accelerated in the second period. However, levels for no access to drinking water facility (22.90%), sanitation (no latrine facility – 17.74% and no bathroom facility – 21.49%) and drainage arrangement (open, katcha and no drainage arrangement in the house – 20.60%) in 2008-09 were found to be high. Levels for no electricity in the house (3.86%) and housing qualities (bad condition of structure – 8.37%, katcha roof type – 3.43% and slums and squatter settlement area type of the house – 10.82%) were found to be in better position than other amenities.

In urban areas, social groups found to be lagging behind were STs and SCs among all the indicators. The existing levels for all the basic amenities taken for analysis in 2008-09 and annual rate of changes during 1993 to 2008-09 were found to be lower than that of others and OBCs households. The SCs households were found to be worse in all the indicators except electricity use in which STs households were found to be worse as compared to rest of the groups. In the second period, 2002 to 2008-09, there was acceleration in the annual rate of change for all social groups which led to the improvement. Nonetheless, SCs households were found to be lagging behind in second period as well. ORMs households witnessed lowest levels in no access to basic amenities among religious groups followed by hindus and highest for muslims households. This pattern among socio-religious groups was found similar for accesses to numbers of few basic amenities of the household in urban areas during 2008-09.

In urban areas, economic groups MPCE quintiles categories shows linkages of the expenditure class with the access to the basic amenities. Non-availability of basic amenities was found in concordance with the MPCE quintiles, as we move from top to bottom quintile class the non-availability keeps on increasing in urban areas. For eg. No facility of drinking water in the house for bottom most quintile was 45.67% as compared to 5.90% for top most quintile in 2008-09. However, the overall endowment in urban areas is better than rural. Disparities were found to be high across quintile classes in levels for 2008-09 and annual rate of change during 1993 to 2008-09. In the second period there was acceleration in the annual rate of change contributing to improvement for bottom three quintiles of MPCE in all the indicators. However, there was slowdown for top two quintiles in the second period for all the amenities after witnessing high rate of decline in the first period. Across economic groups- household type categories, CLs (Casual labourers) were found to have high levels for not having access to basic amenities in the house followed by SEs (Self-employed), RWSA

(Regular wage and salary earners) and lowest for others in 2008-09. CLs were found to be most deprived in all the amenities. Situations for CLs were found to be similar than that of bottom MPCE quintile category in 2008-09. For eg. 48.19% of CLs households did not have access to drinking water facility in the house, whereas for overall urban areas it was 22.90% and for bottom most quintile categories it was 45.67%. This pattern among economic groups was found similar for accesses to numbers of few basic amenities of the household in urban areas during 2008-09.

It was also found that STs and SCs households in rural areas lacked behind others categories in every MPCE quintile class categories which indicates that even if same economic condition prevails there is variation in attainment by different social groups. During 1993 to 2008-09, across all the amenities the rate of decline per annum improves for all the categories of social groups as we move from bottom to top MPCE quintile classes but the pattern across social groups remains the same. STs and SCs experienced lower rate of decline than others in every MPCE quintile class categories. Second period, 2002 to 2008-09, showed acceleration in the annual rates of decline in bottom three MPCE quintile categories but the pattern among social groups remained the same. However, top quintile class categories witnessed deceleration with similar pattern across social groups. The pattern across the socio-religious categories, as discussed before, remained similar for all the household type and MPCE quintile categories during 2008-09. As we move from bottom to top position of household type and MPCE quintile class categories, the levels for not having access to basic amenities in the house declines across all the socio-religious categories. However, all the categories of economic groups exhibited similar pattern among socio-religious groups. STs and SCs belonging to CLs, SEs and bottom MPCE quintiles were found most lagging behind in access to basic amenities.

6. Policy Implications and Suggestions

With respect to all the indicators of basic amenities, improvement was observed between 1993 to 2008-09 with acceleration during 2002 and 2008-09. However this improvement was not sufficient to reduce the gap among social groups and high levels can be observed for SCs and STs in 2008-09. To reduce the gap, the rate of change should be greater for those who are lagging behind but the opposite picture was found in case of basic amenities. So, policies on basic amenities should also focus on group specific targeted approach to reduce the gap across social groups.

Basic amenities such as drinking water facility, sanitation facilities and drainage arrangement require special attention in both rural and urban areas with more focus towards rural areas. Levels for housing qualities are found to be in better position than other amenities but analysis suggests focus needs to be given at housing qualities to rejuvenate improvement.

Among economic categories, poor households experienced improvement between 1993 to 2008-09 with acceleration during 2002 to 2008-09 which helped to reduce the gap with non-poor. However, the existing levels in 2008-09 suggest pro-poor policy for basic amenities. Farm (ALs) and non-farm (OLs) labourers in rural areas and casual labourers in urban areas

were also found lagging behind during 2008-09. So, policies on basic amenities should incorporate pro-poor strategy with focus on farm, non-farm labourers and casual labourers.

Even for identical economic groups (poor and non-poor), SCs and STs were found lagging behind in reducing the gap with lower rate of improvement than others and also in the existing levels in 2008-09. Similar pattern for social groups was observed among identical household types (occupational or livelihood) categories. It indicates that even if same economic conditions prevail there is variation in attainment by different social groups. Results suggest that there are factors acting as constraints based on social backgrounds leading to denial on access to basic amenities. Therefore, this justifies the targeted focus on SCs and STs and among them on those who are poor and wage labourers.

Thus, the result implies that various policies on basic amenities such drinking water, sanitation, electricity, housing qualities and drainage arrangement needs to be supplemented with pro poor and group specific policies (social, religious and economic groups) for raising the overall standard of life and well-being.