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Unemployment and Poverty in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT: The development of backward regions has been a major concern of planners in India. However, prior to the Tenth Plan, the issue of development of backward areas was approached as primarily one of development of States through the formula for distribution of Central Assistance which was weighted in favour of less developed States and through Special Area Programmes such as Hill Area Development Programme, Border Area Development Programme, Drought Prone Area Programme, Tribal Sub-Plan, and so on. This paper discussed the issue of unemployment and poverty in the Uttarakhand (formerly Uttaranchal), carved out of the Himalayan and adjoin north-western district of Uttar Pradesh on 09th November 2000, becoming the 27th state of the Republic of India. It is one of the most backward and underdeveloped states of India. This paper finds out the reasons for backwardness of the state and suggests solution for lessening unemployment and poverty.

KEYWORDS-unemployment,poverity,Uttarakhand,India,backward,state

I. INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand is in the midst of heavy campaigning for the assembly elections. Addressing unemployment is on most political agendas. It is a real crisis. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey 2019-20, over 7 per cent of labour force is unemployed in Uttarakhand, which is almost double than the national average of 4.8 per cent. The number of unemployed persons in Uttarakhand more than doubled from 1.39 lakh in 2011-12 to 3.23 lakh in 2020-21.

Nearly 70 per cent unemployed are youth and well educated. Joblessness among youth in Uttarakhand is a high 20 per cent as compared to the national average of 15 per cent. As high as 40 per cent of the graduate labour force is unemployed.

Youth in mountain regions suffer from a higher incidence of unemployment (24 per cent) as compared to three plain districts of Hardwar, Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar (16.4 per cent). Gender-wise, nearly 30 per cent of young male labour force in hill areas is unemployed. The corresponding figure is about half in plain areas. The incidence of unemployment is comparatively least among young female labour force in hills (13.6 per cent) as compared to their counterparts in plain areas (24.3 per cent). [1,2,3]

The annual growth in the number of unemployed young men in mountain region has been highest over 16 per cent between 2011-12 and 2019-20. The proportion of unemployed youth is disproportionately high in hill districts accounting for over 54 per cent of total youth unemployed in the state. The latest CMIE data also records a jump of over three-times in unemployment rate.

It merits mention here that the mountain region is confronting huge out-migration and the related situation of depopulation. According to Uttarakhand Human Development Report, every third rural household in the hill districts reported out-migration. Lack of remunerative employment opportunities, access to quality education and health services are forcing many to out-migrate at a rising rate.

As regards the employment scenario, among the workforce of 40.8 million persons in the state in 2019-20, over 47 per cent are employed in agriculture, which contributes less than one-tenth in the GSDP of the state. The next important sectors are manufacturing, construction and trade contributing one-tenth each to total employment in the state. In the plains, however, non-agriculture sector is the dominant source of livelihood, providing employment to over 72 per cent of workforce therein. Surprisingly, dependence on agriculture as a source of employment in hill region tended to increase between 2011-12 and 2019-20, whereas it decreased by almost ten percentage points in plain regions. [4,5,6]



The situation of rising unemployment in general and outmigration from hill region in particular needs serious attention of politicians and development practitioners at the earliest. It requires the implementation of Uttarakhand Vision 2030 prepared by the government of Uttarakhand in 2018, which identified high value agri-business based livelihoods, tourism, green energy, eco- services and forestry as major drivers of employment and economic growth.

This necessitates reorienting government spending for creation of technology support for developing livelihoods and related credit and marketing support on a large scale, particularly focused on mountain-centric development. The Hill Development Policy needs to be prepared for creating balanced regional development. Towards this end, block headquarters need to be developed as growth centres by provisioning quality infrastructure and attracting private investment for micro, small and medium enterprises development in a big way. The Industrial Policy of the state needs to be re-jigged to promote private investment in employment intensive light industries and services in mountain regions.

The Government can create employment opportunities by creating an Eco-Task Force with due social security benefits, which will help in conserving forests and environment and could generate revenues for their sustainability. The expansion of education needs to be strongly supported with the intensive efforts of skill development in local resource-based occupations and also in broader skill sets in emerging occupations to compete outside the region/state.

The Uttarakhand government has to make its development strategy more mountain-centric and act fast to reduce the vulnerability of households to natural disasters, manmade disasters like Covid-19, push-outmigration and unacceptable regional economic inequalities. This would require a visionary political leadership and dedicated bureaucracy to transform the migration-prone hill region into a destination of employment and income opportunities for local youths.[7,8,9]

II. DISCUSSION

Unemployment is the basic problem which has given birth to a number of connected problems, such as poverty, social disorder, insecurity, maintenance of law and order etc in the State of Uttarakhand. At the time of establishment of Uttarakhand State though the government en made and announced many policies to recover the problem of unemployment, yet it is also the big truth that the government remained failure to achieve the target of full employment. Various factors are responsible for this phenomenon which includes a large number of old age people, lack of employment among women, lack in mobility, cold weather, natural problems, illiteracy, geographical conditions etc. Moreover, also largely dependence on government organizations, lack of industries, ignorance about small and cottage industries are the big hurdles in the employment generation in this State. This problem can be removed by raising the level of investment in hill areasâ€™ small villages and towns in Uttarakhand. Accelerating the process of industrialization can also help to reduce the level of unemployment. Government policies and planning should be employment-oriented so that it may prove meaningful for the masses. Also a long-term population policy along with an effective employment policy can rid of Uttarakhand State from the menace of unemployment in the years to come.

In the last two decades, a high number of people - more than 5 lakh - have migrated from their native villages in the Himalayan state, in search of job opportunities outside. In order to counter this pressing problem, the Uttarakhand government had started the process of recruitment of people for over 24,000 government jobs. Out of this, the process is underway or completed for 7,000 posts and the exams for the remaining ones are scheduled for later this year or next year as per officials. The government jobs announced are for various departments, including police, revenue, Public Works Department, education and healthcare. To handle the issue of migration from the hills, the Uttarakhand government had few years back started the CM Swarozgar Yojna. The ambitious project was launched during the Covid period, when people were returning to their native villages, and the aim of the scheme was to boost reverse migration in the hills.[10,11,12]

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As per officials, the applications of 6,107 people have been sanctioned and the amount has been disbursed to 4,015 people. While 4,381 applications have been turned out, another 3,296 are pending at the banks. A total amount of Rs



213 crore has been given to people trying to start their own work. CM Pushkar Singh Dhami said, "Right from the very first day, it has been our effort to provide maximum possible job opportunities to our youth. Besides, the 24,000-plus government jobs, we are encouraging youngsters to turn entrepreneurs in the state. Therefore, from being job seekers, they will become job providers." He added that due to the efforts of the state government, people of the hills were taking up agri- sector works. However, experts say several challenges remain as over 7 lakh registered youth are still unemployed in the state, which means their number is much greater than the job opportunities being created .

Social activist Anoop Nautiyal said, "Several protests and large-scale migration from the hills are enough to highlight the issue of unemployment."

III. RESULTS

The Multidimensional Poverty Index report of NITI Aayog, released in New Delhi, revealed that Uttarakhand's multidimensional poverty has decreased by 8 percent during the 5 years of the National Family Health Survey of 2015-16 and 2019-21.

In this way, according to the population of 2011 census, 815,247 people have come out of the poverty line in Uttarakhand.

It is known that NITI Aayog has prepared this report through a comparative analysis of two National Family Health Surveys (NFHS).

As per the report, the number of people living in multidimensional poverty in Uttarakhand has dropped from 17.67 percent to 9.67 percent between 2015-16 and 2019-21. In this way, a total decline of 8 percent has been registered.

According to the report, the multidimensional poverty of rural areas of Uttarakhand decreased by 11.03 percent. In 2015-16, 21.87 percent were poor, which decreased to 10.84 in 2019-21.

There is less poverty in the urban areas of the state than in the villages. Between 2015-16 and 2019, multidimensional poverty in cities fell from 9.89 percent to 7 percent.

Improving nutrition, schooling, sanitation, access to cooking fuel, electricity, housing, assets, bank accounts, child and maternal mortality, and health services have played a significant role in reducing poverty.[13]

Maximum 16.18 percent of people came out of the poverty line in Almora district. Uttarkashi in second place saw 14.74 percent people come out of poverty. Champawat district with a decline of 12.82 percent stood at the third place, Bageshwar district at the fourth place with a decline of 12.49 percent.

Apart from these, 11.72 percent in Udham Singh Nagar district, 11.60 percent in Tehri Garhwal, 9.96 percent in Chamoli, 8.77 percent in Rudraprayag, 8.41 percent in Haridwar, 7.48 percent in Pithoragarh, 3.86 percent in Dehradun, 3.31 percent in Nainital and 3.01 percent in Pauri Garhwal district poor were decreased.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, carved out of Uttar Pradesh in 2000, has been performing better in terms of growth and development than its parent state since inception.

The state has capitalized on its strengths and growth has been at an average rate of 12% annually since 2004-05, while Uttar Pradesh has seen a much slower momentum at 7% per annum during the same period. Socially, Uttarakhand has always been a more advanced part of Uttar Pradesh; its literacy rate stood at 71.6% in 2001, much above its parent state's 56.3% and higher than the national literacy rate of 64.8%. Census 2011 data show that the literacy rate has increased to 80%, a noteworthy achievement given the fact that most parts of the state are remote and difficult to access.

When it comes to poverty as well, the state has done better than its parent state, with a poverty rate of merely 11% in 2011-12, compared with 29% in Uttar Pradesh.

However, even though Uttarakhand has a huge potential for development—rich natural resources, flourishing forest goods-based industries and increasing revenue from tourism—like the other parts of India, some pockets have benefited much more than the others in the state. Our spatial analysis suggests that the bulk of the economic activities are concentrated in only one quarter of the state. Ninety per cent of Uttarakhand comprises hilly areas and, therefore,



presents daunting challenges for both agriculture and industrial growth. Indicus research on spatial data analysis shows a high concentration of poverty near areas covered with snow and glacier. Difficulties of communication, transportation and the sparseness of population discourage economic activity in these areas.

Poor infrastructure in the hills is naturally an important contributory factor behind the high poverty levels in some of the hilly areas of the state. Spatial data shows fewer educational institutions, hospitals, etc., in the high-poverty concentration zones. Consequently, out-migration from Uttarakhand is one of the highest in the country. It has also been cited by researchers that almost every household in the villages of Garhwal district has at least one family member leaving the state in search of work.

Further, economic growth is not always successful in alleviating poverty. Two districts of Uttarakhand bear this out—Udham Singh Nagar and Hardwar. Udham Singh Nagar is one of the agriculturally rich districts and is known for its synchronized pattern of agriculture and irrigation. Similarly, Hardwar being one of the important pilgrimage destinations, has been generating revenue for years through tourism. However, despite high-earning potential, poverty is very high in this part of the state. The reason for this lies in the state's highly lopsided regional development. It is the dearth of job opportunities in the neighbouring areas that pushes people to settle in the regions with higher economic opportunities.[11,12,13]

Indicus research suggests the average size of land holding also as one of the significant correlates of poverty. The average size of land-holding among the rural households in the hilly districts is low compared with that of the districts in the plains. More than one-tenth of the land holdings in the hill districts are less than 0.25 hectare (ha) size, another half of the land holdings are between 0.25-5 ha sizes. Also, productivity of land is generally low in the hilly areas. This makes the condition of agricultural workers in the hilly areas worse than that in the plains.

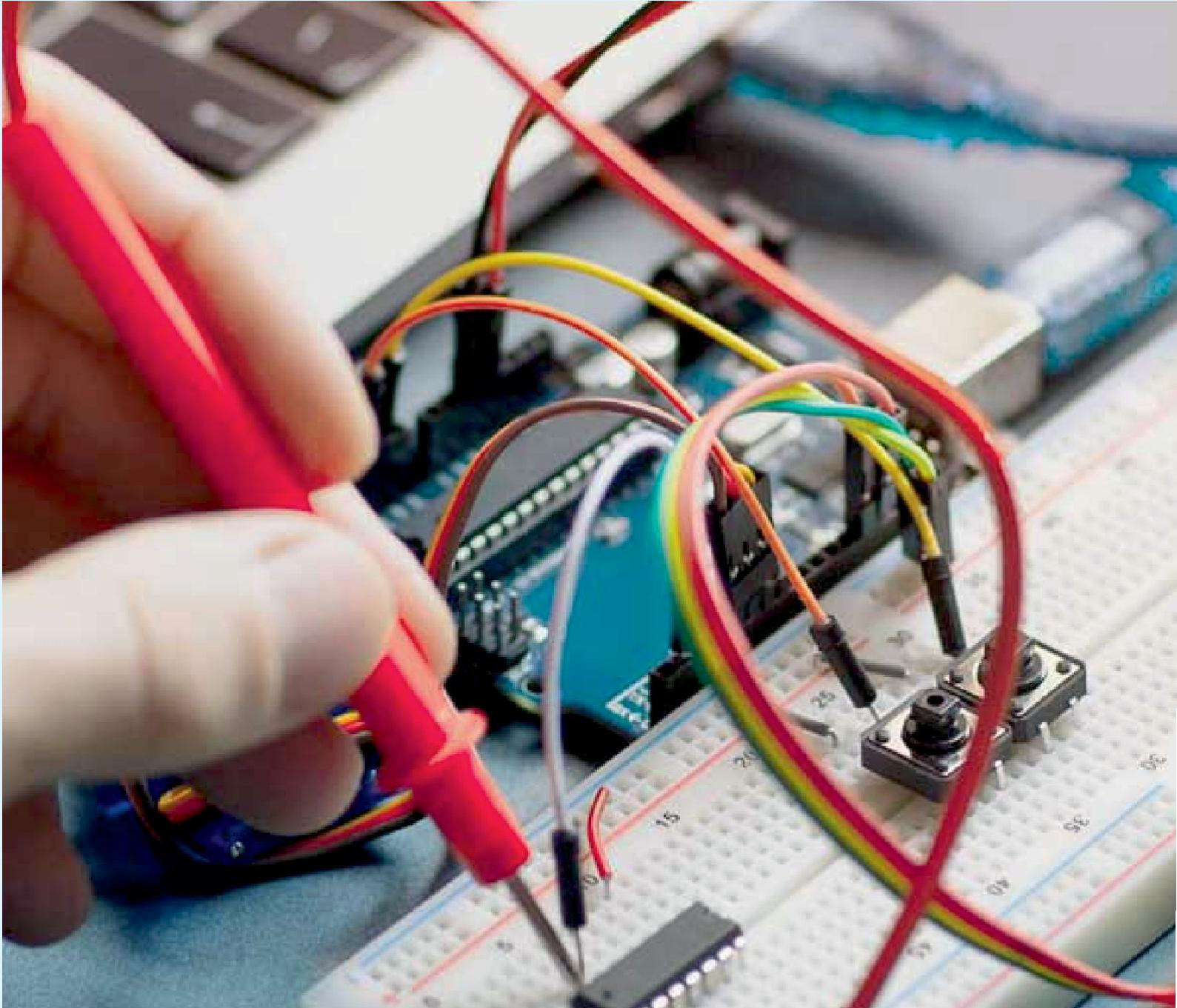
Building a skilled workforce through proper education is known to be one of the key weapons of reducing poverty. In fact, global experience shows that education of women has played a significant role in building a better qualified next generation of youth, and Uttarakhand is no exception.

Another most important correlate of poverty is the absence of proper sanitation facilities, suggesting that the latest policy direction to prioritize areas with low sanitation coverage can also result in greater pro-poor benefits.

The critical problem of Uttarakhand is, however, that of highly spread poverty. The relatively (compared with UP) fewer poor spread across hard-to-reach locations, provides a tough target for the state government. However, there are two districts which account for the bulk of the poor in Uttarakhand. At the north-western end of the state is the mountainous Uttarkashi and towards the southeast is Udham Singh Nagar. A concentrated effort in these two districts could wipe out half the poor in the state, leaving the rest of the state for a more organic sustainable growth approach.[13]

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