Inter-district Disparities in Socio-economic Development in Kerala

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SUMMARY

The level of socio-economic development of different districts of Kerala was estimated with the help of composite index of development based on forty two socio-economic variables combined in an optimum manner. All the fourteen districts of the State were included in the study. The study utilised data for the year 1991-92 on forty two socio-economic indicators out of which seventeen indicators were directly concerned with agricultural development, five indicators depicted the progress of development in the industrial sector and the rest twenty indicators presented the level of development in infrastructural service sector.

The district of Thrissur was found to rank first and that of Wayanad was the last in the overall socio-economic development. The level of development was examined separately for agricultural, industrial and infrastructural service sectors. The variation in the level of development in industrial sector was observed to be of higher order as compared to the variation in agricultural and infrastructural service sectors. Positive significant association was found between the levels of development in agricultural and industrial sectors indicating that the growth and progress of agriculture and industry had been going hand in hand in the State. The better developed seven districts covered about 43 per cent area and 58 per cent population where as poorly developed five districts covered about 44 per cent area and 29 per cent population. For bringing about uniform regional development in the State, model districts for the poorly developed districts had been identified and the potential targets for various indicators had been estimated. The study revealed that the low developed districts required improvements of various dimensions in almost all the indicators for enhancing their level of overall socio-economic development.

Keywords : Composite index; Development indicators; Model districts; Potential target.

Introduction

Kerala is primarily an agricultural State and it is very rich in the production of cash crops like coconut, cashewnut, pepper, rubber etc. The main food crop

of the State is paddy which occupies about 60 lakh hectares of land producing about 11 to 12 lakh tonnes of the crop. According to 1991 population census, the population of Kerala is about 2.91 crores. The crude Birth and crude Death rates of the State are 18.1 and 6.0 respectively and these rates are lowest in the country. The life expectancy of the people of the State is about 65.9 years for males and 72.2 years for females as against 55.9 years at the all India level. The density of population is 749 persons per square kilometer, which is much higher than the all India average of 267 and the State occupied the second rank among the 25 major states of the country excluding the Union Territories from this angle. The literacy rate among males in the State is 93.62 per cent and among females is 56.13 per cent and the State occupies first position in the country. As per the sample census of land holdings, the average size of operational holding which was 0.41 hectares in 1980-81 has come down to 0.31 hectares in 1990-91. There is a gradual increase in the area operated and in the number of holdings in case of marginal and small categories of farmers. The achievements in agricultural sector through the 'green revolution' and the remarkable progress on industrial front have enhanced the regional variability in the socio-economic development in the State.

The phenomenon of socio-economic development has been appropriately conceptualised as a process which improves the quality of life. It requires a balanced human resource development along with the technology absorption in both agriculture and industry which are the main sectors of the economy. It would be of interest to measure the level of socio-economic development at district level since there has been a growing consensus about the need of level planning at district level. A knowledge of the level of development in various sectors at district level will help in identifying where a given district stands in relation to others.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to estimate the level of development in agricultural, industrial, infrastructural and over all socio-economic sectors by constructing the composite index of development at district level in the State of Kerala. The relationships between the levels of development in different sectors have also been studied. On the basis of distances and composite indices based on various developmental indicators, model districts have been identified for fixing up the potential targets of different indicators for poorly developed districts. The evaluation of over all economic development in relation to poverty reduction has further been made.

2.   *Method of Analysis*

Socio-economic development is multi-dimensional and it is not pre-determined but is a continuous process of improvement of levels of living. Its impact cannot be captured fully by a single indicator. A number of indicators when analysed individually, do not provide an integrated and easily

comprehensible picture of reality. Therefore, it is necessary to build up a composite index of development based on various socio-economic indicators combined in an optimum manner. For this study, districts could be taken as the unit of analysis. All the fourteen districts of Kerala have been included in the analysis. The study utilises data for the year 1991-92 on forty two socio-economic indicators out of which seventeen indicators are directly concerned with agricultural development, five indicators depict the progress of development in the industrial sector and the rest twenty indicators present the level of development in infrastructural and service sectors.

2.1 *Indicators of development*

(a) Agricultural Sector

As already mentioned, the development in the agricultural sector is very important as this sector plays a crucial role in the State economy. It also provides a bulk of employment to the labour force. The development indicators taken from agricultural field are as follows :

1. Average area per holding (ha.)

2. Number of agricultural enterprises (in '00)

3. Percentage of forest area to total geographical area

4. Percentage of net area sown to total geographical area.

5. Percentage of total cropped area to total geographical area.

6. Productivity of Paddy (kg/ha).

7. Productivity of Tapioca (100 kg/ha)

8. Productivity of Banana and other Plantation (100 kg/ha).

9. Productivity of Cashewnut (kg/ha).

10. Productivity of Pepper (kg/ha).

11. Productivity of Coconut (Million nuts/ha).

12. Productivity of Rubber (kg/ha).

13. Number of Cattle (in '000).

14. Number of total livestock (in '000).

15. Number of Poultry (in '000).

16. Number of veterinary hospital.

17. Number of agricultural credit societies per lakh population.

(b)   Industrial Sector

For improving the economy of the state, it is necessary to bring out structural transformation so as to divert heavy dependency on agricultural sector to a proportionate increasing contribution of industrial sector. In order to bring the shift, the State of Kerala had made concerted efforts in promoting industrial growth during different plan periods. The development indicators from the industrial sector included in the analysis are as follows:

1.   Number of non-agricultural enterprises (in '000).

2.   Number of person per lakh population working in non- agricultural enterprises (in '000).

3.   Number of registered working factories (in '00).

4.   Average daily employment in factories (in '00).

5.   Number of registered small scale industrial units (in '00).

(c)   Infrastructural and Service Sector

Rural development depends on agricultural growth, economic and social infrastructural facilities, provision for public health, education, communication and availability of banking facilities etc. According to 1991 census about 74 per cent population of Kerala live in rural areas. The following development indicators from infrastructural and service sector are included in the study.

1.   Percentage of S.C. population.

2.   Percentage of S.T. population.

3.   Density of population per square Km. during 1981.

4.   Density of population per square km. during 1991.

5.   Sex ratio during 1981.

6.   Sex ratio during 1991.

7.   Decadal growth rate from 1971 to 1981.

8.   Decadal growth rate from 1981 to 1991.

9.   Literacy rate (Males).

10.   Literacy rate (Female).

11.   Work participation rate.

12.   Number of banks per lakh population.

13.   Length of road per 100 square km. of area (in km.).

14.   Number of registered vehicle per lakh population.

15.   Number of goods vehicle per lakh population.

16.   Number of post offices per lakh population.

17.   Teacher-student ratio.

18.   Number of medical institutions per lakh population.

19.   Number of medical beds per lakh population.

20.   Per capita income at constant price.

Thus a total of forty two developmental indicators have been included in the analysis. Each district faces situational factors of development unique to it as well as common administrative and financial factors. Factors common to all the districts have been taken as indicators to form composite index of development for different districts.

2.2. *Estimation of composite index of development, developmental distances between different districts, identification of model districts and fixation of potential targets*

Variables in respect of various indicators have been standardised and values are used to construct the composite index of development. The best district for each indicator (with maximum / minimum standardised value depending upon the direction of the indicator) is identified and the deviations of the standardised values from the best value of the indicator are obtained for each district. The statistical techniques presented by Narain, Rai and sarup [1] are used to build up the composite index of development for agricultural, industrial, infrastructural service and over all socio-economic sectors for each district. The value of the composite index thus obtained is non-negative and lies between 0 and 1. A value close to zero, indicates higher level of development whereas the value close to one indicates lower level of development.

Critical distances between different pairs of districts have been worked out from the matrix of developmental distances based on all the indicators. Model districts have been identified on the basis of composite index of

development and critical distances between different districts. Between the two districts A and B, if A is having better level of development compared to B as exhibited by composite index and if its distance, from B is within the limit of critical distance, then A will be identified as model district for district B. The best values of different indicators among the model districts will be fixed as potential for poorly developed districts.

3.   Results and Discussion

3.1. Development indices

The composite indices of development have been worked out for different districts separately for agricultural, industrial, infrastructural and overall socio-economic sectors. The districts have been ranked on the basis of development indices. The composite indices of development along with the district rank are presented in Table 1.

It may be seen from the table that out of 14 districts of the state, the district of Thrissur was ranked first and the district of Wayanad was ranked last in the over all socio-economic development. The values of the composite indices varied from 0.64 to 0.99. For classificatory purposes, a simple ranking of the district indices would do. However, a more meaningful characterisation of the different stages of development would be in terms of suitable fractile classification from an assumed distribution of the mean of composite indices. It appears appropriate to assume that the mean has a Beta distribution in the range (0, 1). It is generally skewed and perhaps relevant to characterise positive-value random variables. Let $(0, Z_1)$, (Z_1, Z_2) and $(Z_2, 1)$ be linear intervals such that each interval has the same probability weight of 0.33. These fractile groups can be used to characterise the various stages of development. For relative comparison, the districts with composite indices upto 0.75 may be put in category I as developed districts. The districts with composite indices between > 0.75 to 0.80 may be taken in category II as developing and with composite indices > 0.80 as poorly developed districts. We observe that according to this classification, in over all socioeconomic development the districts of Thrissur, Kottayam, Eranakulum, Kannur, Kollam, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram fall in category I and these may be taken as developed districts. The districts of Pathanamthitta and Kozhikode are put in category II and may be classified as developing districts. The remaining districts of Palakkad, Idukki, Kasaragod, Malappuram and Wayanad are in category III and these are taken as poorly developed districts.

It will be of interest to examine the level of development separately for agricultural, industrial and infrastructural service sectors. The composite indices of development varied from 0.66 to 0.99 in agricultural sector, from 0.00 to 0.90 in industrial sector and from 0.63 to 0.99 in infrastructural service sector.

Table 1. Composite Index of Development

Districts	Agriculture		Industry		Infrastructure		Over all socio-economic	
	Composite Index	Rank	Composite Index	Rank	Composite Index	Rank	Composite Index	Rank
Thiruvananthapuram	0.76	6	0.44	5	0.76	7	0.74	7
Kollam	0.66	1	0.40	4	0.80	9	0.72	5
Pathanamthitta	0.80	8	0.80	12	0.63	1	0.76	8
Alappuzha	0.84	12	0.46	6	0.69	4	0.74	6
Kottayam	0.70	2	0.48	7	0.65	3	0.67	2
Idukki	0.82	9	0.79	11	0.86	12	0.87	11
Eranakulum	0.73	4	0.00	1	0.72	5	0.67	3
Thrissur	0.73	5	0.33	2	0.63	2	0.64	1
Palakkad	0.84	11	0.51	9	0.82	11	0.81	10
Malappuram	0.79	7	0.69	10	0.98	13	0.90	13
Kozhikode	0.83	10	0.39	3	0.80	8	0.78	9
Wayanad	0.99	14	0.90	14	0.99	14	0.99	14
Kannur	0.70	3	0.48	8	0.75	6	0.71	4
Kasaragod	0.92	13	0.82	13	0.82	10	0.90	12

The district of Kollam was placed on the first rank and wayanad on the last rank in the level of development in agricultural sector. In the case of the level of development in industrial sector, the district of Eranakulum occupied the first position with Wayanad on the last place and in infrastructural service sector the district of Pathanamthitta was ranked first and Wayanad was ranked last. The district of Wayanad is observed to be poorly developed district in all the three sectors of agriculture, industry and infrastructural facilities. Further the districts of Idukki, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Alappuzha, Kasaragod and Wayanad are found to be in category III with poor level of development in agricultural sector. The districts of Kasaragod and Wayanad are poorly developed in industrial sector whereas the districts of Kasargod, Palakkad, Idukki, Malappuram and Wayanad are having poor level of development in infrastructural service sector. The variation in the level of development in industrial sector is observed to be of higher order as compared to the variation in agricultural sector and infrastructural service sector.

3.2. Relative share of area and service population

An important aspect of the study is to find out the relative share of area and population affected under different levels of development. Table 2 describes the percentage area and population covered by the districts falling under different levels of development.

Table 2. Area and Population Under Different Levels of Development

Level of Development	Sector	Number of Districts	Area (%)	Population (%)
High	Agriculture	5	33.70	41.38
	Industry	10	69.67	86.22
	Infrastructure	6	37.73	44.07
	Over all socio-economic	7	42.98	58.39
Medium	Agriculture	3	21.57	42.85
	Industry	2	19.71	7.79
	Infrastructure	3	18.08	27.40
	Over all socio-economic	2	12.83	13.08
Low	Agriculture	6	44.73	33.77
	Industry	2	10.62	5.99
	Infrastructure	5	44.19	28.53
	Over all socio-economic	5	44.19	28.53

From the table, it is evident that about 43 percent area consisting of 58 per cent population of the State fall in the districts which are better developed in the over all socio- economic field. In the industrial sector about 70 percent area and 86 percent population belong to the districts which are better developed. In case of agricultural and infrastructural development 34 per cent and 38 percent area are respectively better developed with about 41 percent and 44 per cent population. The number of districts falling in the middle lavel developed group are very few in all the sectors of economy. The area covered by these districts varied from 13 per cent to 22 percent of the State. The population falling in these districts ranged from 13 percent in the over all socio-economic development to about 27 percent in the infrastructural facilities. There are five districts falling in the category of low level development in the over all socio-economic and infrastructural service groups. These districts cover about 44 per cent area and 29 per cent population of the State. In agricultural sector six districts fall in the category of low development having 45 per cent area and 34 per cent population of the State. Thus it is observed that the districts with poor level of development cover about 44 per cent area having nearly 1/3rd of the population of the State. These districts are not as thickly populated as the districts belonging to the category of better development.

3.3. Inter-relationship among different sectors

For better economic development and improved level of living, it is essential that agriculture and industry must flourish together in the State because industries provide basic inputs for agriculture on the one hand and use agricultrual produce as the principal raw material for processing or preparing finished goods on the other hand. In order to examine the relationships among agriculture, industry, infrastructural service facilities and over all socio-economic developments, pair-wise spearman rank correlations have been worked out and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient

Pair of Sectors	Correlation Coefficient
Agriculture and Industry	0.57 *
Agriculture and Infrastructrure	0.31
Agriculture and Overall Socio-economic development	0.75 **
Industry and Infrastructure	0.48
Industry and Overall Socio-economic development	0.75 **
Infrastructure and Overall socio-economic development	0.81 **

*   Significant at 0.05 level.
**   Significant at 0.01 level.

The correlation coefficients between the rankings of agricultural and over all socio-economic developments as well as the rankings of industrial and the over all socio-economic developments are observed to quite high and these are statistically highly significant. This is expected since agricultural and industrial progress is very much influencing the over all socio-economic development in the State. The correlation coefficient between agricultural and industrial rankings is significant but lower in magnitude than their correlations with over all socio-economic development. The agricultural and industrial developments are positively associated which implies that the districts which are agriculturally developed, are mostly well developed in industrial sector also. The developments in agricultrual and industrial sectors seem, therefore, to go hand in hand in the State.

The correlation coefficients between the rankings of agricultural and infrastructural service sectors as well as between the rankings of industrial and infrastructural service sectors are very low and these are not significantly different from zero. This indicates that development in infrastructural service sector is not being fully used in the development of either agricultrual or industrial sectors. The rankings between the developments in infrastructural service and overall socio-economic sectors are found to be highly correlated which implies that the infrastructural facilities are positively influencing the progress of overall socio-economic development in the State.

3.4. *Level of development and per capita income*

It would be interesting to examine the influence of development on per capita income of the people belonging to different districts of the State because it is directly and very closely associated to the incidence of poverty. The economic status of the people is reflected by the net domestic products and per capita income. For studying the degree of dependence of per capita income on the level of development, a non-parametric regression equation worked from the data is as follows:

$$Y = 2350 - 637X$$

where Y is the per capita income and X is the composite index of development. This indicates that one per cent improvement in the level of development at the medium value will enhance the per capita income by about 0.26 per cent.

3.5. *Potential targets for low developed districts*

An important aspect of study is to suggest the potential target for different indicators in respect of poor developed districts for bringing improvement in the level of development. For this purpose, model districts have been identified for the low developed districts. The identification of model districts has been

made on the basis of composite index of development and developmental distances between different districts. The list of model districts identified for low developed districts is given Table 4.

Table 4. Model Districts

Low developed districts	Model districts
Palakkad	Thrissur, Eranakulum, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram
Idukki	Kottayam, Kollam, Eranakulum, Kannur
Kasaragod	Kottayam, Thrissur, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram
Malappuram	Eranakulum, Kottayam, Alappuzha
Wayanad	Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Kannur.

The districts of Kottayam and Kollam have been identified as model districts for most of the low developed districts. The district of Thrissur has been identified as model district for the districts of Palakkad and Kasaragod whereas Eranakulum has been taken as model district for Palakkad, Idukki and Malappuram. The district of Thiruvananthapuram has been taken as model district for Palakkad and Kasaragod whereas Kannur has been taken as model district for Idukki and Wayanad. The district of Alappuzha is taken as model district for Malappuram and Wayanad. It may be noticed that the values of most of the indicators of the model districts are better than those of the districts for which they have been identified as model districts.

It would be quite interesting and useful to examine the extent of improvement required in different indicators of the low developed districts. It will also provide avenues to bring about uniform regional development in the State. The potential targets of important indicators have been estimated and presented in the Appendix. Such information may help the planners and administrators to re-adjust the resources to reduce inequalities in the level of development among different districts of the State. It may be seen from the Appendix that the low developed districts require improvements of various dimensions in almost all the indicators for enchancing their level of overall socio-economic development. However, actual achievements of some of the low developed districts are found to be better than their potential targets in some of the indicators. For example Palakkad is having better level of productivity of paddy than its potential target. The districts of Idukki and Wayand have achieved better level of productivity of tapioca and banana than the corresponding targets. Kasargod has performed better in the productivity of chashewnut than its target whereas the districts of Idukki and Malappuram are superior in the productivity level of pepper to their fixed targets. The number of poultry is higher than the potential target in the district of Malappuram and the number of post-offices is higher than the potential target in the district of

Idukki. It may be seen that that district of Idukki, Kasaragod and Wayanad have performed better than their corresponding targets in the number of medical Institutions but they are lagging behind in the number of medical beds and require heavy improvements.

4. *Conclusions*

The broad conclusion emerging from the study are as follows:

1. With respect to over all socio-economic development, the districts of Thrissur, Kottayam, Eranakulum, Kannur, Kollam, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram were found to be better developed as compared to the remaining districts of the State. The district of Palakkad, Idukki, Kasaragod, Mallapuram and Wayanad were socio-economically low developed districts.

2. The situation regarding the agricultural development was found to be of similar nature for overall socio-economic development. All the five districts which were better developed in agricultural sector, were also better developed in the over all socio-economic field. Regarding the development in the industrial sector, the variation in the level of development was found to be of higher order as compared to the corresponding variations in agriculture, infrastructure and over all socio- economic fields.

3. The over all socio-economic development was found to be positively associated both with agricultural and industrial developments. The growth and progress in the fields of agriculture and industry are influencing the over all socio- economic development in the positive direction in the State. The developments in agricultural and industrial sectors seem to go hand in hand most of the districts of the State. The infrastructural facilities provided in the State have a greater impact on the over all socio-economic development but these facilities are not fully used in the growth and development of agriculture and industry.

4. The level of development and the per capita income had been observed to be very closely associated with each other. One per cent improvement in the level of development will enhance the per capita income by about 0.26 per cent in the State.

5. Model districts and been identified and potential targets for various indicators had been estimated for different low developed districts. The districts which are low developed, required improvements of various dimensions in different indicators for enhancing their level of developments.

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Appendix : Estimates of Potential Targets and Actual Achievements

Indicators requiring improvements	Low developed districts				
	Palakkad	Idukki	Kasargod	Malappuram	Wayanad
Number of agricultural enterprises (in' 00)	167 (67)	167 (25)	167 (24)	146 (66)	167 (15)
Percentage of total cropped area to total geographical area	105 (77)	105 (38)	110 (72)	128 76)	128 (74)
Productivity of Paddy (kg/ha)	1993 (2230)*	2389 (2157)	2389 (1710)	3289 (1556)	2389 (2063)
Productivity of Tapioca (100 kg/ha)	224 (189)	245 (286)*	245 (102)	245 (163)	245 (280)*
Productivity of Banana and other plantation (100 kg/ha)	91 (74)	88 (102)*	88 (75)	88 (58)	88 (90)*
Productivity of Cashewnut (kg/ha)	892 (394)	1371 (654)	892 (955)*	847 (705)	1371 (286)
Productivity of Pepper (kg/ha)	359 (125)	359 (406)*	359 (274)	183 (186)*	359 (286)
Productivity of Coconut (Million nuts/ha)	5.8 (3.4)	5.2 (4.2)	5.8 (5.3)	5.2 (4.5)	4.7 (1.3)
Productivity of Rubber (kg/ha)	1603 (610)	1067 (708)	1603 (706)	1506 (977)	1506 (549)

Indicators requiring improvements	Low developed districts				
	Palakkad	Idukki	Kasargod	Malappuram	Wayanad
Number of cattle (in '000)	324 (304)	324 (192)	309 (184)	324 (230)	309 (122)
Number of total livestock (in '000)	518 (514)	510 (328)	518 (253)	476 (455)	510 (180)
Number of poultry (in '000)	1857 (1284)	1849 (688)	1857 (626)	1849 (2018) *	1572 (428)
Number of Veterinary Hospital (in '000)	78 (56)	78 (47)	75 (32)	78 (50)	64 (21)
Number of agricultural credit societies per lakh population	5.8 (3.6)	8.1 (6.8)	8.1 (5.7)	9.4 (3.7)	9.4 (3.9)
Number of non-agricultural enterprises (in '000)	122 (84)	122 (33)	115 (44)	122 (89)	99 (21)
Number of persons per lakh population working in non-agricultural enterprises (in '000)	14 (9)	14 (8)	14 (9)	13 (7)	14 (7)
Number of registered working factories (in '00)	21 (14)	21 (3)	18 (2)	10 (7)	13 (1)
Average daily employment in factories (in '000)	81 (29)	81 (13)	47 (3)	28 (14)	30 (3)

Indicators requiring improvements	Low developed districts				
	Palakkad	Idukki	Kasargod	Malappuram	Wayanad
Number of registered small scale industrial units in (in '00)	123 (57)	123 (23)	91 (12)	123 (41)	79 (11)
Number of Banks per lakh population	14.6 (9.3)	14.6 (8.7)	12.7 (9.2)	14.6 (5.8)	12.7 (9.1)
Length of road per 100 square km. of area (in km.)	81 (34)	91 (30)	91 (46)	91 (45)	91 (30)
Number of registered vehicles per lakh population	4129 (1761)	4129 (1256)	3925 (1472)	4119 (1130)	2483 (1297)
Number of goods vehicles per lakh population	541 (128)	541 (199)	293 (135)	541 (158)	293 (157)
Number of post offices per lakh population	18 (18)	23 (27) *	23 (18)	23 (14)	23 (20)
Number of medical institutions per lakh population	7.9 (7.5)	8.0 (10.7) *	8.0 (10.2)	8.0 (6.7)	8.0 (10.7) *
Number of medical beds per lakh population	236 (94)	187 (88)	236 (75)	206 (75)	206 (125)

Note : Figures within brackets indicate actual achievement.
* Actual achievement is better than potential target.