Abstract

In view of the crucial role of rural infrastructure in economic development of Chamarajanagar district, priority has been accorded to investments in all sectors of economic and social infrastructure such as road, electricity, banking, irrigation, health, education, drinking water and sanitation etc since the formation of the district in 1997. In recent years Karnataka State Government has taken major policy initiatives in the development of infrastructural facilities in rural areas by implementing various programmes. Along with this renewed policy initiative, there is also a perceptible shift in the government approach towards infrastructure development. So far supply of the infrastructure facilities has been mainly the responsibility of the State. The present study has examined the progress of rural infrastructural facilities in rural areas by using district level secondary data, after the formation of the district. The study also discusses the government policy towards infrastructure and captures its impact on agricultural and other infrastructural facilities development and finally highlighted the emerging issues and concerns pertaining to development of rural infrastructure in the region. The study has covered economic infrastructure such as road, electricity, banking and irrigation, and social infrastructure namely health, education, drinking water and sanitation. The trends in the development of various infrastructural facilities have been examined from 2001-02 to 2012-13.

From the review of road development, it is observed that roads are a vibrant physical infrastructure for mobility and movement of resources, products and service delivery. Efficient and adequate road networking facilities have positive relationship with human development. The higher the road length per sq km, higher will be the accessibility and connectivity. It is observed that the road length in relation to total geographical area ranges differently among the sub regions of the district. It can be observed that there are significant variations in the road length per sq km across the four taluks of the region.

Finance is the lifeblood of all economic activities. There is a close relationship between financial development and economic development in an economy. Therefore banks are vital financial institutions in any economy. Their role in economic development is very crucial. In the district out of the total households, only 34.80 percent of the households are availing banking facilities and the remaining
65.20 percent of the households are excluded from the use of these services. This can be attributed to the poor spread of the banking facilities and lack of awareness and institutional logistics in the region.

Irrigation is one of the important economic infrastructure which determine the economic development of a region. There is close relationship between irrigation development and agricultural development. Chamarajanagar receives annual normal rainfall of 730 mm. Major portion of the cultivable land in Chamarajanagar district even today depends on monsoon. It is one of the backward districts which is generally suffering from partial or total drought in the region.

Electricity is a vital infrastructure for economic development. Efficient supply of electricity for irrigation as well as for the non-farm sector contributes to poverty reduction in rural areas by fueling economic growth and enabling fulfillment of basic human needs. Pump set energization is another major component of rural electrification programme and it has registered a compound annual growth rate of 2.20 percent during the last 12 years (2001-02 to 2012-13) in Chamarajanagar district. The progress of pump sets energization has been uneven across the regions, in some regions there exists vast untapped potential and in others level of energization has led to over exploitation of water resources.

Access to high quality and reliable health care services plays an important role in the health of rural communities and individuals. Resolving the health problems of rural communities requires more than simply increasing the quality and accessibility of health services in the region. Until governments begin to take a perspective of focusing and building healthy communities rather than simply building hospitals to make communities healthy, the disadvantages faced by rural people will continue to be exacerbated. The infant mortality rate is 34 and maternal mortality rate is 184 in Chamarajanagar district. The issue of health disadvantage to the rural areas in the district is far from settled. The public expenditure on health in Chamarajanagar district is far too inadequate.

Education is one of the objectives of the development process in the region and the focus is to expand and intensify the educational effort and to bring every home within its fold. Education has become the focal point of planned development. And the literacy rate is one of the indicators used for measuring educational
development of a region. The total literacy rate of the district as per 2011 census is 61.43 percent. Despite the overall improvement still we can notice regional variations in the literacy rates in the district.

Drinking water is one of the basic requirements for the survival of human beings. Good quality and sufficient quantity of drinking water is one of the indicators to assess the quality of life. But the condition of drinking water facility in the district is pathetic indeed. In the district there are 830 habitations, and there are 553 piped water supply schemes, 1029 mini water supply schemes, 5380 bore wells that are providing drinking water for the households of the region.

This study examines the relationship between infrastructure development and the level of economic development using decentralized approach. The research using district level secondary data has found that rural infrastructure has a significant and positive impact on economic performance. This research seeks to establish whether there is a similar link at disaggregated level of various rural infrastructure facilities like road, electricity, irrigation, banking facility, drinking water, health, education and sanitation etc. The objectives of this research is to develop a model that explains variations in the availability of rural infrastructural facilities and their impact on economic development of the region using the district level data. The nature of the relationship between them is examined with selected indicators in the context of the region. Empirical issues regarding the measurement of variables are explored and simple regression analysis is applied to test the hypothesized relationship among these two in the sub regions of the district.