

## AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND URBAN POVERTY IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyzes the impact of agricultural research on urban poverty reduction in Uttar Pradesh. State level data from 2000 to 2016 were used in the empirical analysis. It is found that in addition to its large impact on rural poverty reduction, agricultural research investments have also played a major role in the reduction of urban poverty. Agricultural research investments increase agricultural production, and increased production in turn lowers food prices. The urban poor often benefit proportionately more than the non-poor since they spend 50-80% of their income on food. Among all the rural investments considered in this study, agricultural research has the largest impact on urban poverty reduction per additional unit of investment.*

*Government investments in R&D can have long lead times in affecting agricultural production, as well as long-term effects once they kick in. One of the thornier problems to resolve when including agricultural research investments in a production function concerns the choice of an appropriate lag structure. Most past studies use stock variables which are usually weighted averages of current and past government expenditures on R&D.*

*Today, urban poverty still accounts for one quarter of total poverty of our country also, and this share is expected to rise in the future. Policymakers cannot afford to be complacent about this trend and continued investments are still needed to keep food prices low. Among our present state and central government policy instruments, increased agricultural research is still the most effective way to achieve this objective.*

**Key Words:** *Research & Development, Agricultural Research, Urban Poverty, Food Price.*

The most important indicator of success of an economic regime is employment generation. There are no reliable statistics regarding unemployment in India, so we do not know how far the fear of the ordinary people about the reform process as a job des-troyer reform justified. The only statistics the government produces on employment is on the organised sector of the economy, which is a very small part of the economy. Increase in employment in the public sector was much higher during the "planned" regime of the 80's. This is true for both

the manufacturing and the construction sector. In the private sector, although the total generation of employment is higher during the "reformed" regime. The data obtained from the 55th round of the NSS, it is obvious that the usual status unemployment rose by 2.3 per cent in the liberalisation period. Unemployment increased far more, that is, 5.7 per cent in terms of daily status over this period. The main factors which have contributed to this are drastic reduction in development expenditure, indirect lay-off in public sector undertakings,

massive retrenchment in the private manufacturing sector and

## EMPLOYMENT POLICY IN INDIA

The approach to labour and employment problems followed in India after achievement of independence can be viewed as resting on three phases, which were erected at different points of time. The first two of these essentially address those persons who are not in employment while the third one is primarily concerned with qualitative dimensions of those who are already employed. It is important to distinguish between policies falling in these three categories since the criteria in terms of which one can judge them and yardsticks for assessing their impact are different.

While the special programmes of employment and poverty alleviation and the process of growth go to enhance the quantitative magnitude of gainful employment in the economy, another set of measures has been evolved by the government over the years whose objective has essentially been to enhance the quality of employment provided. The quality of employment is a function of many attributes, for example, work environment, the magnitude of reward for effort put in by workers, stability of employment, etc. Measures which have been taken to influence these variables have been based mostly on legislative Acts. Some of these go back to the days of the British rule but their coverage has been considerably widened after achievement of independence.

The generation of productive and gainful employment, with decent working conditions, on a sufficient scale to critically absorb our growing labour force must form a growth element in the strategy for achieving inclusive growth. Past record in this respect is definitely inadequate and the problem is heightened by the fact that the relatively higher rate of growth achieved during the last decade or so is not seen to generate a sufficient volume of good quality employment. The Eleventh Plan provides an opportunity to focus on and diagnose the reasons for past failings observed in the employment

situation and to reverse at least some of the adverse employment outcomes-associated recent past with the pattern of economic growth. Since unemployment situation is many dimensional, the government policy has been multifaceted. In general way the policy expects employment generation to take a place as a consequence of growth to help weaker sections of population who are the worst sufferers from the evil of unemployment. The plan has accorded a high priority to the objective of employment generation. Employment is a thrust area of the various five year plans. The Eleventh plan document accords priority to the objective of generation of adequate employment to achieve near full employment level by the turn of the century. The envisaged GDP growth rate of 5.06 percent during the plan would result in an employment growth of around 2.6 to 2.8 percent per annum or an average of about 8 to 9 million additional Employment opportunities per year. The economy growth is treated as the end and the people means. The objectives of five year plan are summed up in the aphorism "Growth and equity". The plan approach paper spelt out following objectives about the employment:-

- ✚ *Priority to agriculture and normal development with a view to generating adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty.*
- ✚ *Employment of women and socially disadvantaged groups such as scheduled cast (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward classes (OBC) and minorities as agent of social economic change and development.*

In India the organized sector contributes only about 9 percent to the total employment. Under-employment in various segments of the labour force is quite high. For instance, though open unemployment was only 2 percent in 1993-94, the incidence of under employment and unemployment taken together was as much as 10 percent that year. This in spite of fact that

the incidence of under-employment was reduced substantially in the decade ending 1993-94. Success or failure of any economic programme is measured by the welfare it generates for the people. If an economic policy creates increasing hopelessness and unemployment, it is time to think again and reverse the course of action. Reforms should be aimed at reduction of corruption, increased efficiency, increased employment and reduction of inequality and poverty. Instead in India, economic reforms are trying to hit those who are the weakest in the society by giving maximum benefits to the richer sections.

An overwhelming majority of India's population depend on their own labour as the dominant source of livelihood, through its productive use, either in self-employment or in work for others. Labour and issues such as employment, productivity, and wages have been at the centre of attention in pre and post-independence plans for national development.

From the employee or worker side, complexities arise from the fact that individuals (particularly females) frequently move in and out of the workforce within a year, and even those who participate in the workforce and are employed throughout the year could move from, self-employment on their own farms in one season to wage employment in another season within the same year. Self-employment continues to be the single largest source of employment in the economy. Although the proportion of population living in households whose major source of income is self-employment declined from 55.6 per cent in 1987-88 to 50.9 per cent in 1999-2000 in rural areas, it increased slightly from 38.9 per cent to 39.2 per cent during the same period in urban areas. Also an individual could be engaged in more than one economic activity at the same time or at different times in a year. From the employer side, the situation is just as complex. A farmer employs workers not only from his/her own household but also hires agricultural labourers during peak agricultural season. The same farmer could be

employed in casual work (or looking for such work) outside the farm during slack agricultural season. Outside of crop production activities, as the data from the latest economic census show, 98.6 per cent of the number of enterprises in existence in 2005 in the economy employed less than 10 workers. In the earlier census of 1998, this proportion was similar at 98.1 per cent, accounting for 76.5 per cent of the number of US and current weekly (CWS) status and the person day rate of current daily status (CDS), seems to have been ignored in the discussion of the employment issue in some of the official publications (Planning Commission 2001, 2002, 2005; MOF 2004).

The total number of person-days of employment is not the same as the total number of employed persons. The reason is that a given total number of person-days of employment could be distributed among the same number of persons in many ways so as to lead to different numbers of persons employed. For example; consider a four person economy in which all four participate in the workforce and together they were employed for ten person-days in the week. This yields a person-day rate of employment of 10 out of 28 or 36 per cent. In India self-employment is the dominant mode of employment accounting for more than 50 per cent of usually employed males and females in rural areas even in the 61st round (July 2004-June 2005), and is an important (though not the dominant) mode in urban areas, accounting for 45 per cent of usually employed males and 48 per cent of usually employed females. There is a significant increase in the status of employment as casual labour for rural males and significant decreases in the status of employment in regular wage/salaried work for urban males. For rural and urban females as casual labour. There is a downward though insignificant trend in self-employment for rural males and a significant upward trend for rural females urban females experience a significant increase in employment as wage/salaried workers. Clearly the picture emerging from these trends is complex. It is conceivable, though there is no way of judging this from the trends alone, that casual labour is a transitional

status for those who move from self employment in low productive activities in rural areas to more productive wage. Before turning to policy questions, a few remarks are in order on the vast literature on employment in India. First, the literature based on NSSO data almost always focuses on the quinquennial rounds, virtually ignoring the annual rounds. Second, the distinction between person-rates of employment and unemployment, US and CWS and the person-day-rates of CWS is very often ignored and all three are treated as if they refer to persons. Third, the literature also usually discusses trends in absolute numbers of employed and less often the trends in employment rates. Fourth, in many of the scholarly articles as well as in some official publications the concept of employment elasticity and estimates of its trends play a crucial role. The Planning Commission (2005) generates its estimates of employment generated during the Tenth Plan using observed employment elasticity's and actual GDP growth.

Unfortunately, such projections and policy pronouncements based on the same have no analytical foundation. Elementary economics would suggest that the observed employment in any period represents equilibrium between labour supply and labour demand. In principle, both supply and demand functions could shift over time. For example; GDP growth *ceteris paribus*, would shift the labour demand function outward. Similarly, growth of the number of individuals in the prime working ages due to population growth, *ceteris paribus*, would shift the supply curve outward. Depending on the relative strengths of these shifts, almost any trend (up, down, or no change) in equilibrium employment is possible. In other words, the so-called employment elasticity is not a deep behavioural parameter and can take on any value. I conclude that the pronouncements on the slowdown in employment growth since 1993-94 are based on inappropriate measurement and invalid employment elasticity analysis and that the long term trends in US and CWS employment rates do not support such pessimistic pronouncements. However, there is no denying the fact that during the six

decades since independence, with the state playing a dominant role in the economy, and a conscious attempt at industrialization, the industrial structure of employment in the economy has changed extremely slowly, although the structure of value added (GDP) has changed much more. The shares of agriculture and services in GDP, which respectively were 50 per cent and 30 per cent in 1960, changed significantly to 21 per cent and 52 percent in 2004 (World Bank 2006). The share of industry increased only modestly from 20 per cent in 1960 to 27 per cent in 2004. Primary activity (mostly agriculture) is still the dominant source of employment (around 66 per cent in the first half of 2004 as compared to 78 per cent in 1977-78) for rural males, the largest single group among the usually employed persons. Additionally, the industrialization strategy that emphasized investment in capital intensive, heavy industry on the one hand and promoted small-scale industry (SSI) labour laws is in the hands of the governments of the states which they happen to be located.

Among the four the highest fall in unemployment rate was in the CDS measures with the numbers showing a fall from 8.2% in 2004-05 to 6.6% in 2009-10. In contrast, the slowest fall in unemployment rate was in the case of the UPSS measure where the rate fell from 2.3% in 2004-2005 to 2% in 2009-10. In case of the PS measure the numbers show that the unemployment rate fell a little more sharply from 3.15 to 2.5% while in the case of the CWS also the fall was a little higher with the rate moving from 4.4% to 3.6%. The unemployment rate in 1993-94 was however even lower with the rates being 6% (CDS), 3.6% (CWS), 1.9% (UPSS) and 2.6% (PS) respectively. The 66th round of the survey also shows that 51% of the workers were self-employed with the ratio at a higher 54.2% in rural areas and a lower 41.1% in urban areas. This is a decline since the past survey, but still shows that industry and the services sector has not been able to absorb half of the potential labourers available. Among those employed, the share of casual workers was lower at 33.5% while that of regular wage/salaried employment was only

15.6%. The share of casual workers was 38.6% in rural areas and 17.3% in urban areas. In contrast, share of regular wage/salaried employment was a higher 41.4% in urban areas and a lower 7.3% in rural areas in Indian economy.

## SCENARIO OF GROWTH

Some analysts have viewed the 1999-2000 survey as an 'outlier' because of the relatively depressed employment situation in that year and have

commented that 1999-2000 was a case of low statistical base, which shows up as high growth of employment in the next period 2000-05. On this view, a better assessment of trends emerges if we compare developments over two relatively longer periods, that is, 1983 to 1993-94 (period I-10.5 years) and 1993-94 to 2004-05 (period II-11 Years). This employment situation is explained in table no.1

**Table No.1**

**Past and Present Scenario on Employment situation in India**

(Current daily status basis)

	1983	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	1993-94 to 1999-00	1999-00 to 2004-05	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 2004-05
	('000 person years)				(% per annum)			
All India Population	718101	893676	1005046	1092830	1.98	1.69	2.11	1.85
Labour Force	263824	334197	364878	419647	1.47	2.84	2:28	2.09
Workforce	239489	313931	338194	384909	1.25	2.62	2.61	1.87
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.22	6.06	7.31	8.28				
No. of Unemployed-	24335	20266	26684	34738	4.69	5.42	1.73	5.02
Rural Population	546642	658771	728069	779821	1.68	1.38	1.79	1.55
Labour Force	206152	252955	270606	30.3172	1.13	2.3	1.97	1.66
Workforce	187899	238752	251222	278076	0.85	2.05	2.31	1.40
Unemployment Rate (%)	8.85	5.61	7.16	8.28				
No. of Unemployed	18253	14203	19383	25097	5.32	5.3	2.36	5.31
Urban Population	171459	234905	276977	313009	2.78	2.48	3.04	2.64
Labour Force	57672	81242	94272	116474	2:51	4.32	3.32	3.33
Workforce	51590	75179	86972	106833	2:46	4.2	3.65	3.25
Unemployment Rate (%)	10.55	7.46	7.74	8:28				
No. of Unemployed	6082	6063	7300	9641	3.14	5.72	-0.03	4.31

Source: Eleventh five year plan (2007-12) Vol. I Planning Commission (GOI), p.65.

Table no. 1 presents a comparison of the trends in employment and labour force over a longer period. It is evident that population growth decelerated in Period II as compared with Period I and this led to a deceleration in labour force growth also. However, the growth of the workforce, that is, total employment, also decelerated in Period II. Employment grew more slowly than the labour force in Period II which raised the unemployment rate from 6.06% in 1993-94 to 8.28% in 2004-05. Measured in absolute terms, the average annual increase in employment opportunities during Period II was 6.45 million, which is lower than the annual

increase in Period I. The inadequate increase in aggregate employment in Period II is associated with a sharp drop in the pace of creation of work opportunities in agriculture. Agriculture should not be expected to create additional employment but, rather to reduce the extent of underemployment and thereby increase incomes and wages of those employed in agriculture while surplus labour shifts to the non-agriculture sector. However, the increase in employment in the non-agricultural sectors was disappointing. Sector wise share of employment in India is given in table no.2-

**Table NO.2**

**Sector-wise Share of Employment by Current Daily Status**

(CDS Basis) (%)

Industry	1983	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2006-07
Agriculture	65.42	61.03	56.64	52.06	50.19
Mining and Quarrying	0.66	0.78	0.67	0.63	0.61
Manufacturing	11.27	11.10	12.13	12.90	13.33
Electricity, water, etc.	0.34	0.41	0.34	0.35	0.33
Construction	2.56	3.63	- 4.44	5.57	6.10
Trade, hotel, and restaurant	6.98	8.26	11.20	12.62	13.18
Transport, storage, and comm.	2.88	3.22	4.06	4.61	5.06
-Financial;-insurance; real estate; and business	0.78	1.08	1.36	2.00	2.22
Community, social, and personal services	9.10	10.50	9.16	9.24	8.97
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

**Source: Eleventh five year plan (2007-12) Vol. I Planning Commission (GOI), p.66.**

In Table no. 2, the dependence of the workforce on agriculture and allied sectors declined from 61.03% in 1993-94 to 52.06% in 2004-05, that is, a decline of 9 percentage points as compared with a decline of only 4 percentage points in the period 1983 to 1993-94. Thus, work opportunities diversified away from agriculture at a faster pace during the latter period 1993-94 to 2004-05. Table no. 3 details the slopes of the trends in the proportion of self-employed, employed in regular wage/salaried jobs, and employed as casual labour, among those usually employed (principal and secondary status). The relevant data are in Table 3 show that self-employment is the dominant mode of employment accounting for more than 50 per cent of usually

employed males and females in rural areas even in the 61st round (July 2004-June 2005), and is an important (though not the dominant) mode in urban areas, accounting for 45 per cent of usually employed males and 48 per cent of usually employed females. Since the shares of the three categories self-employment, wage/salary employment and employment as casual labour. Table 3 shows the annual increase in the work-force by category of employment in Period I compared with Period II. There has been a sustained increase in employment opportunities since 1993-94, although at a slower rate than in the earlier period. A notable feature is the sharp increase in the number of jobs created at regular salaried wage from 0.98 million per

year in Period I to 1.68 million per year in Period II. This is a direct consequence of the step-up in the expansion of the manufacturing and services sectors, as already discussed. However, the pace of opening up of employment opportunities for casual wage labour getting released from the agriculture sector

has slowed down sharply in Period II. The annual increase in this category was 2.40 million in Period-I but which declined to 0.54 million in Period II, mainly reflecting the lower absorption in agriculture which was not offset by an expansion in other sectors.

**Table No.3**  
**Annual Increase in Workforce by Category of Employment**  
(CDS Basis) (Million)

Category of Employment	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 2004-05
Self-employed	3.71 (52.39)	4.23 (65.57)
Salaried wage	0.98 (13.83)	1.68 (26.02)
Casual wage	<b>2.40</b> (33.78)	<b>0.54</b> (8.41)
Workforce	7.09 (100.00)	6.45 (100.00)

Source: Computed on the basis of 61<sup>st</sup> round of NSS data.

In India the aggregate employment generation of 47 million work opportunities in the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05 was fairly close to the target of 50 million employment opportunities for the Tenth plan, the performance across sectors has varied. The achievement with respect to employment creation was short of the Tenth Plan target in the agriculture sector by 0.6 million persons (8.84 million increase against a target of 9.47 million). The increase in the manufacturing sector was short by 3 million persons (8.64 million increase against a target of 11.67 million) in trade, hotel, and restaurants by 0.53

million (10.70 million against a target of 11.23 million); and in transport and communication by 1.47 million (4.04 million, against a target of 5.51 million). In contrast, the construction, financial services, and community, social and personal services sectors exceeded the Tenth plan target of employment. In proportional terms, the largest shortfall in employment generation has been in manufacturing. Sector-Wise Performance and Targets Regarding Employment in Indian Economy Is Given In Table No.4

**Table No.4**

**Sector wise Performance and Targets of Employment(CDS Basis)**

Sector	Incremental Employment (million)			
	Target (2002-07) (5 years)	Achievement (2000-05) (5 years)	Achievement (1994-2005) (11 years)	projected (2007-12) (5 years)
Agriculture	<b>9.47</b>	8.84	8.82	0.00
Mining and Quarrying	2.0	0.17	0.00	0.00
Manufacturing	11.62	8.64	14.84	11.94
Electricity, water, etc.	-0.21	0.18	0.00	0.02
Construction	6.3	6.44	10.05	11.92
Trade, hotel, and restaurant	11.23	10.70	2.67	17.40
Transport, storage, and comm.	5.51	4.04	7.64	9.02
Financial. insurance, real estate, and business services	1.93	3.12	4.31	3.43
Community, social, and personal services	0.49	4.59	2.62	4.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.00</b>	<b>46.72</b>	<b>70.98</b>	<b>58.07</b>

Source: Eleventh five year plan (2007-12) Vol. I Planning Commission (GOI),

This decline is shown to occur primarily on account of a decline in employment in public sector units. Employment growth in the private sector units has accelerated in the second period but the acceleration is clearly insufficient to offset the decline in public sector employment. This issue can be explored further on the basis of data from the NSS employment surveys in 1999-2000 and 2004-05 which distinguish individuals according to type of establishment and also type of labour conditions. The Tenth Plan was framed against the backdrop of concerns that were posed by the employment and unemployment survey in 1999-2000, which showed very low growth of employment compared with 1993-94. Jobless growth therefore became a key concern and the Plan set a target of creating 50 million new employment opportunities on a current daily status basis. (NSS 61<sup>ST</sup> Round.) The results of the 61st Round of NSS for 2004-05 reveal a somewhat better picture of employment growth in the Tenth Plan period than in the previous period. During 1999-2000 to 2004-05, about 47 million work opportunities were created as compared to only 24 million in the previous period 1993-94 to 1999-2000. Further, employment growth accelerated from

1.25% per annum during the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000 to 2.62% per annum during the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05. The annual increase in work opportunities increased from 4.0 million-per year in the first period to 9.3 million per annum in the second period.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The basic weakness in our employment performance is the failure of the Indian economy to create a sufficient volume of additional high quality employment to absorb the new entrants into the labour force while also facilitating the absorption of surplus labour that currently exists in the agricultural sector, into higher wage, non-agricultural employment. A successful transition to inclusive growth requires migration of such surplus workers to other areas for productive and gainful employment in the organized or unorganized sector. Women agricultural workers in families where the male head has migrated, also require „special attention given the need for credit and other inputs if they are self-employed in agriculture or for wage employment if they do not have land. The approach to the Eleventh



Plan had, identified the following specific weaknesses on the employment front which illustrate the general failing just discussed.

- ✚ The rate of unemployment has increased from 6.1% in 1993-94 to 7.3% in 1999-2000, and further to 8.3% in 2004-05.
- ✚ Unemployment among agricultural labour households has risen from 9.5% in 1993-94 to 15.3% in 2004-05.
- ✚ Under-employment appears to be on the rise, as evident from a widening of the gap between the usual status (us) and the current daily status measures of creation of incremental employment opportunities between the periods 1994 to 2000 and 2000 to 2005. While non-agricultural employment expanded at a robust annual rate of 4.7% during the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05, this growth was largely in the unorganized sector.
- ✚ Despite fairly healthy GDP growth, employment in the organized sector actually declined leading to frustration among the educated youth who have rising expectations.
- ✚ Although real wages of casual labour in agriculture continue to rise during 2000-2005, growth has decelerated strongly, as compared to the previous year.

A critical issue in assessing employment behaviour of the economy is the growth of employment in the organized sector vis-a-vis the unorganized sector. Public debate on this issue is usually conducted on the basis that unorganized sector employment is generally of low quality while organized sector employment is of high quality, and the focus of attention is on whether employment has increased in the organized sector. The inadequacy of growth in the organized sector has traditionally been illustrated using data on employment by units

registered with the Directorate General of Employment and Training, which are typically large units in the organized sector. Employment growth in the private sector units has accelerated in the second period but the acceleration is clearly insufficient to offset the decline in public sector employment. This issue can be explored further on the basis of data from the NSS employment surveys in 1999-2000 and 2004-05 which distinguish individuals according to type of establishment and also type of labour conditions. The Tenth Plan was framed against the backdrop of concerns that were posed by the employment and unemployment survey in 1999-2000, which showed very low growth of employment compared with 1993-94. Jobless growth therefore became a key concern and the Plan set a target of creating 50 million new employment opportunities on a current daily status basis. The results of the most recent 61st Round of NSS for 2004-05 reveal a somewhat better picture of employment growth in the Tenth Plan period than in the previous period. During 1999-2000 to 2004-05, about 47 million work opportunities were created as compared to only 24 million in the previous period 1993-94 to 1999-2000. Further, employment growth accelerated from 1.25% per annum during the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000 to 2.62% per annum during the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05. The annual increase in work opportunities increased from 4.0 million-per year in the first period to 9.3 million per annum in the second period. Now that the NSSO has made available the rich household level data from the quinquennial and annual rounds of EUS, it should be possible to analyse the determinants of household labour supply, including occupational choice decisions and of labour demand decisions of producers such as farmers and owners of household enterprises.

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