

# Continuous Village Survey Study in India

Visva-Bharati University  
(A Central University)  
Santiniketan, West Bengal-731235

## **Best Practice**

**1. Title of the Practice:** Continuous Village Survey Study in India

### **2. Objectives of the Practice**

The overall objective of the study is to create a longitudinal panel dataset, to capture the socio-economic dynamics of the villages. The purpose is to assess the pace, process and pattern of rural change by means of repeated survey in the selected villages, across the country, followed by re-surveys of the same villages at an intervals of 5 years.

The focus is on agricultural change and changing pattern of rural livelihoods and its implication for future development. The study also evaluates the efficacy of government interventions in rural areas and key drivers of changes in village economy. The study will also provide a clear picture about diagonally opposite view regarding success or failures of development schemes, besides providing panel data for policy formulations.

### **3. The Context**

Socio-economic research in India has a long tradition of village surveys. A village is a macro-entity in a miniature form comprising a community of people who have certain degree of cohesion among themselves due to living in a contiguous area. It is interesting to observe how these small macro-entities differ from each other while participating in the same development process. Since villages are terrain where development policies and schemes are tested, continuous village survey is capable of pointing out the efficiencies and efficacies of such

schemes. A continuous village survey will also provide a clear picture about diagonally opposite view regarding success or failures of development schemes, besides providing panel data for policy formulations. It also helps in measuring the changes in villages over time.

### **4. The Practice**

The study will cover all the major states in the country. Each AERCs/AERUs in the country will take up one state and from that particular state, one village during 2019-20. Within a timeframe of 3-4 years, each AERCs/AERUs need to study 3-4 villages covering major agro-ecological zones in the state concerned.

There should be a proper mix of advanced, developing and backward villages in the study coverage and should include villages of different regions, not just limited regions. The focus would be on agricultural change and changing pattern of rural livelihoods and its implication for future development. The study will also evaluate the efficacy of government interventions in rural areas and key drivers of changes in village economy.

Since every village is unique, in various ways, no uniform frame-work is possible for all the villages. There are some specific issues and some generic issues that we can cover under this study. The generic issues/dimensions to be covered are social, economic, agrarian, farming, ecological and policies/governance. More specifically it will cover Demographic profile & social change; Land and agricultural profile across seasons & agrarian change; Rural livelihood pattern & changes therein; Ecological or

sustainability issues like vulnerability, shocks, coping & adaptation; and Perception studies regarding government schemes & policies in terms of their impact & reach.

### **5. Evidence of Success**

Since its inception in 1954, AERC, Visva-Bharati re-surveyed more than 20 villages during last 7 decades. Based on past experiences and expertise, AERC, Visva-Bharati is chosen by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India as National Co-ordinating centre for this study. In fact, AERCs have a long tradition in this particular area of research. More than 200 village surveys were carried out by AERCs during first 3 decades of their establishment i.e from 1950s to 1970s. Continuous village survey used to be one of the priority areas for AERCs till 1980s. Survey and re-survey of several Indian villages (Palanpur village, Slater villages, Sahjapur village, Bijnor village, Kashipur village, Bisipara village, etc) by helped both policy making for agriculture and rural development and in testing existing economic theories on tenancy, credit, and market imperfection. Many re-surveys were also carried out to trace the pace, process and pattern of change that has been taking place in agrarian economy in those villages. For example the "Palanpur" study by AERC, Delhi or resurvey of "Slater villages" by AERC, Chennai; the "Sahjapur" village study by Amartya Sen in collaboration with AERC, Visva-Bharati are worth mentioning. Therefore, AERCs have both expertise and base line information for tracing the rural changes through series of continuous village surveys.

### **6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required**

Since every village is unique, no uniform frame-work is possible for all the villages. There are some village/region specific issues and some generic issues that should be covered under this study. After 1980s, this particular study is revived from 2019-20 with AERC, Visva-Bharati as National Coordinator Centre. However, an important constraints faced is the restriction on social mobility due to Covid-19. Village survey studies require continuous and close interactions with the villagers and related stakeholders. Manpower shortages at AERC, Visva-Bharati are another constraints being faced while conducting the study.

### **7. Notes (Optional)**

Village survey studies are complex and multidisciplinary in nature. It requires clear idea regarding village society, their livelihood, faith and beliefs. Village studies are often influenced by the alien concepts (of the researchers) and in many cases are not representative in nature. Village studies also have a tendency to exaggerate the unity and self-sufficiency of the village. In many instances, the scholars tried to study village community in a biotic frame of reference. They practically ignore a basic reality that Indian village is a synthesized community.