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'82% rural India still lacks basic amenities'

Mahendra Kumar Singh, TNN, Nov 16, 2010, 02:26am IST

NEW DELHI: "Inclusiveness" may be the UPA's winning mantra, but a government survey reveals that just 18% households in rural India have access to basic amenities -- drinking water, sanitation and electricity. Urban areas enjoy these facilities in 68% households.

While the UPA regained power on its "aam aadmi" plank, the NSSO survey highlights that a vast majority in rural India still lack basic civic amenities.

Around 65% of rural households have no sanitation facility, while the corresponding figure for urban areas is 11%, according to the survey.

In rural India, social groups like STs (75%), SCs (76%) and OBCs (69%) don't have sanitation facility in their households.

The NSSO study --- Housing Condition and Amenities in India 2008-09 -- points out that around 64% of rural households don't have a bathroom as compared to 22% in urban areas.

The disconnect of policy-makers is evident as the Planning Commission is pushing hard to levy user charges on water at a time only 30% of rural population have access to safe drinking water and 55% depend on tube well or hand pumps, says the survey.

Plan panel head Montek Singh Ahluwalia on Sunday said rationing of water is required to bring in efficiency in the judicious use of the resource. "By water rationing, I don't mean that less water should be supplied. We can price water so that people can use it as per their requirement," he had said. Despite the government's claims that it has launched many flagship schemes for development and welfare, the survey suggests the benefits have not trickled down and a major course correction is needed.

Hinting at re-looking at policy formulations, minister of statistics and programme implementation Sriprakash Jaiswal said, the findings would go a long way in making inclusive growth strategy more meaningful.

"The data is expected to be useful for academicians and researchers for their studies, which is useful in policy formulations," he said.

As per the report, 15% of rural population are still looking for a dependable source of water. Similar plight plagues 8% urban populace even though 74% have access to safe drinking water.

About 75% households across the country enjoy electric supply as compared to 96% in urban areas.

As far as pucca structure is concerned, the facility is available for 55% and 92% for rural and urban households, respectively.

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