

## Urban Centers Trend, Pattern and Key Challenges for Sustainability: Case of West Bengal, India

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on number of aspects of urban centers of West Bengal. It shows that small and intermediate towns are negatively growing and big and large city are positively growing. Population share of small, intermediate and Million plus city is decreasing while it's increasing in case of big and large city. Therefore people are staying more in large city compare to million cities. It may be due to higher cost of living in million city while poor service and infrastructure in case of small and intermediate towns. Urban area both in percent and share has very high correlation with level of urbanization. Dispersion of urban population is also a remarkable and it is highly correlated with number of small scale industry units which helps to transform the small towns and surrounding rural areas economy. But lack of infrastructure in small and intermediate town is major problem and there is no major programme or strategy to develop small and intermediate town more attractive.

**Keywords:** Urban centre, trend, pattern, challenges, sustainability, West Bengal

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The process of urbanization in India is characterized by increasing absorption of population in larger cities. In 2001 Class I cities holding 68.7% of the total urban population (defined as cities having a population of over 100,000). On the other hand 21.9% and 9.4% of total urban population was living in medium and small towns respectively. Though, in 2011 the figure slightly reduces to 60.79% of the total urban population living in the class I cities. What is remarkable is that the rate of population growth in these Class I cities has been consistently increasing over the past five decades, from 45% in 1961-71 to 62% in 1991-2001 (Chattopadhyay, Basudha 2008). Similarly there is a decrease in population growth in smaller urban centres. Therefore it is obvious that these metro and big cities are facing challenges to their civic infrastructure and service delivery capabilities (Sahasranaman 2012). It is to be noted that in the 1980s, research on small

towns and their role in economic development, as an interface between agriculture and urban market and their position in ensuring rural-urban linkages and economic development was important (Raman and Alemma, *et al.*, 2015). By the middle of the 1980s, Hardoy and Sattertherwaite (1984) noted that "most of the literature on urban issues in the Third World is about capital cities or large cities. Most of the concern expressed about urban problems is about problems in large cities. Yet only a small proportion of the Third World's population lives in large cities." Therefore attention on small town was limited and selective. What is worthwhile to mention is that identification of small town and medium is very contentious subject. Researchers' uses different population size parameter to identify small towns Kundu (2007) consider town below 50000 populations is a small town while Dupont (2002) believes towns below 20,000 people as

“small” towns. In fact in India Number of institution prepares their own criteria to identify urban area as well as their size. These institutions include Census of India, each state government and central ministry of urban development. State government identification of urban area is based on their municipal act while central urban development ministry introduces size classification of urban area for disbursement of fund to central urban development project which includes JNNURM, AMRUT. The need to focus on small and medium towns as the towns of tomorrow is because of the unsustainability of current migration patterns and the need for more balanced, equitable regional growth (Sahasranaman, 2012). The development of small and medium cities will be of paramount importance in ensuring sustainable urbanization for India. Appropriate planning supported by suitable financing mechanisms can help turn today’s moribund small and medium cities into the vibrant cities of tomorrow’s India. Sustained development of small and medium cities is possibly the most potent strategy to counter the current trend of lopsided development (Sahasranaman, 2012). Therefore, paper will try to explore the West Bengal’s cities and towns current trend, pattern and key challenges for Sustainability.

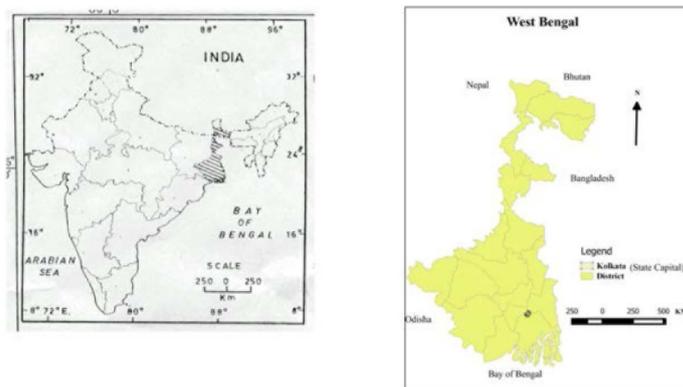
**Objectives**

The paper tries to find out the trend and pattern of urban Centres (municipality, Municipal Corporation etc.) of West Bengal. To know how the districts are consistent in terms of level of urbanization and with other aspect of urbanization. Lastly assess the policy of small and medium towns over the year regarding the balance regional economic development. The paper has three sections the first sections explores the West Bengal’s towns and cities growth, trend and pattern. Second part deals with the critical aspect of urban policy making and its effects on urban centers. Third section illustrates the strategies for sustainable growth of small and medium towns.

**Database and Methodology**

For the study, Census data of 1951 to 2011 has been collected from Census of India and various published

policy paper regarding large to small towns are collected from ministry of Urban Development India.



**Fig. 1: Study Area**

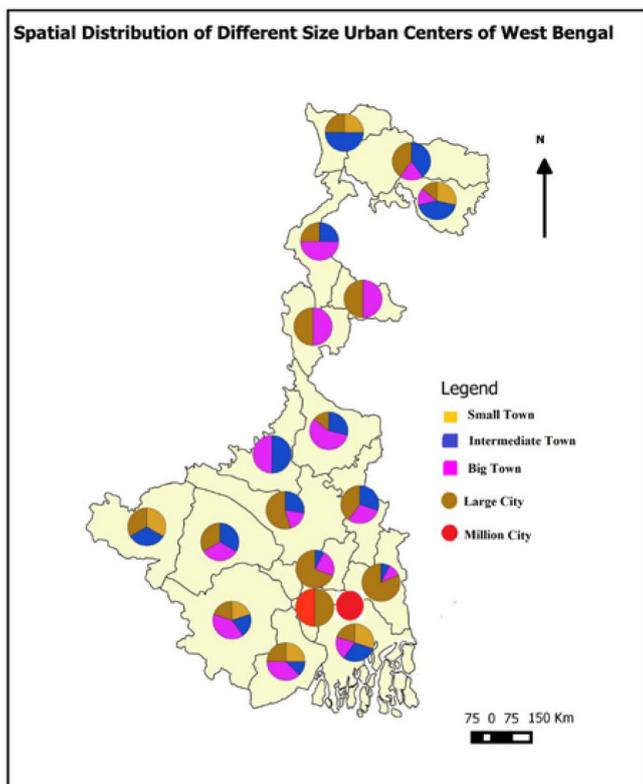
To analyze the trend and pattern of urban Centres of West Bengal, census data for a period of 1951-2011 has been taken. Urban centers have been classified into four types on the basis of their population sizes. This classification is made with slight modification from the document of Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns published by ministry of urban affairs and employment.

- i. Small town population size less than 20,000
- ii. Intermediate town population size is between 20,000-50,000
- iii. Big town population size is between 50,000-100,000
- iv. Large town population size is between 100,000-less than 1 million
- v. Million plus City population size is more than 1 million

This scheme of classification is taken in keeping view that the central government various urban development programme follows this classification for funding disbursement and that is crucial for sustainability for small and medium towns. Following map shows the spatial distribution of town and city size of West Bengal as per above mentioned scheme.

A consistency test of level of urbanization along with other aspect of urbanization has been analyzed across the district. In order to know whether these (Urban Population Density (UPD), Share of Urban Population

(SUP), and Percentage of Urban Area (PUA) Share of Urban Area (SUA)) aspects vary consistently with LU, we examined the extent of deviation of all these aspects through their ranks with respect to the corresponding rank in LU for individually all the 18 districts.



**Fig. 2:** Distribution of Different Size Urban Centers of West Bengal 2011

This was accomplished by comparing the rank of a particular district in LU with the ranks of that district on the basis of the above mentioned aspects. By these comparisons the districts have been grouped into three categories.

**Category A** no deviation or coincidence of the ranks

**Category B** deviation by 1 or 2-ranks

**Category C** deviation by 3-ranks

If a district falls into the category-A, it will be termed as perfectly consistent; if it falls into the category-B then moderately consistent and finally, if it falls into the category-C, it will be considered as marginally consistent.

**Symbolically,**

if  $R_{LU} - R_{UPD} = 0$  perfectly consistent

if  $R_{LU} - R_{UPD} = \pm 1$  or  $\pm 2$  moderately consistent

if  $R_{LU} - R_{UPD} = \pm 3$  marginally consistent

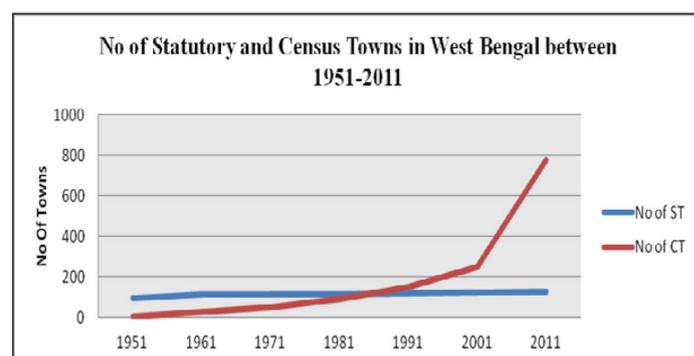
Where,  $R_{LU}$  = Rank of Level of urbanization,  $R_{UPD}$  = Rank of Urban Population Density

On the basis of the above discussion the comparison between level of urbanization and various aspects was carried out for the census years of 2001 and 2011. Lastly a multiple correlation is tested between level of urbanization and various other factors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Growth, Trend and Pattern of Towns and Cities in West Bengal

Broadly towns and cities can be categorized into statutory and non statutory. It should be noted that paper concern only about the statutory town's growth, its trend and pattern. Non statutory towns are called census town (It is a rural area but have potentialities to become urban area) which identifies by the census of India using three fold criteria includes population size, density and male work participation.



**Fig. 4:** Absolute Growth of Statutory and Census Towns of West Bengal

It's apparent from the figure 3 that number of census towns is much higher than statutory towns. From mid 1980s there is a sharp growth of census town in the state. While it indicates that municipalization of the state is very sluggish.

**Table 1:** Population Growth of Different Towns and Cities of West Bengal 1951-2011

	Small Town	Intermediary Town	Big city	Large city	Million city
1951-61	-0.77	23.67	4.14	13.52	1.35
1961-71	-2.30	-6.48	5.48	7.82	1.23
1971-81	-6.96	-7.75	-4.35	6.24	1.10
1981-91	7.81	29.80	6.07	8.76	0.66
1991-01	-4.61	-0.79	-1.08	5.17	2.70
2001-11	0.64	-0.25	2.79	0.80	-0.02

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011

Lopsided urbanization and migration pattern of state is very clear from Table 1. It shows that in small town population growth is negative since 1951 to 1981 and 1991 to 2001. Positive growth of population only exists in two decades which include 1981 to 1991 and 2001-2011. In case of intermediary towns the positive growth of population occurs only in two decades i.e. 1951-1961 and 1981-1991. While in case of big cities negative population growth occur only in two decades i.e. 1971-1981, and 1991-2001. The scenario is completely reverse both in large and million cities, where population growth is positive since 1951 to 2011. Negative population growth occurs only in million cities in 2001-2011. The negative population growth of small town is the result of selective destinations i.e. linked with availability of employment and other opportunities, leading to regionally unbalanced urbanization as also distortions in urban hierarchy (Kundu, 2008).

**Table 2:** Population Share of Different Towns and Cities of West Bengal 1951-2011

	Small Town	Intermediary Town	Big city	Large city	Million city
1951	9.06	17.31	16.26	9.37	47.99
1961	5.02	35.07	13.83	13.26	32.80
1971	3.94	12.56	21.82	24.09	37.55
1981	1.23	2.90	12.66	40.26	42.90
1991	1.41	7.43	13.11	48.61	29.42
2001	0.58	5.25	8.96	56.55	28.64
2011	0.58	4.78	10.73	57.17	26.72

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011

Population share of small, intermediate and big cities declined over the six decade. Large and million cities population share increases over six decades. Higher population share in large and million cities indicates the higher levels of poverty and greater deprivation in small, intermediary towns and big cities leads to the migration of large and million cities (Kundu 2008). It is significant that post 1990 million cities (Kolkata and Howrah) population share is sharply decreasing.

It is to note that population share of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (municipality and municipal corporation and cantonment areas population are included and rural areas population within KMA are excluded) also declined at 1.13%. Decline population share indicate shrinking economic base of the state. The state saw industrial projects worth ₹ 312 crore being implemented in 2012, which was a fall of nearly 85% over the previous year, and 97% over 2010, according to data from the West Bengal Economic Review 2012-13 (Acharya 2013). Decentralization of urban population can also be a cause for decline of population share. Number of studies shows that West Bengal urbanization pattern is changing (Chatterjee 2013).

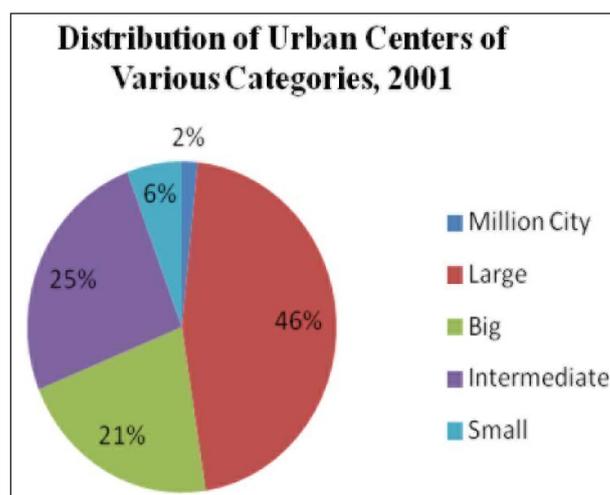


Fig. 5. Types of Urban Centres in 2001

Urban population is spread across the fertile alluvial plain (Districts which have substantial proportion of Alluvial Plain include Both N and S Dinajpur, Malda,

Murshidabad, Hooghly, Nadia, Burdwan and both N and S 24 pgs) of West Bengal (Karmakar, 2015) and earlier this was confined only in Kolkata Metropolitan area and urban complex of Durgapur and Asansole (Dasgupta 1988). It is remarkable that the spread urban population is not restricted within statutory towns rather there is an emergence of large number of census towns. Scholars identified this form of urbanization into different terms. Kundu (2011) noted this form as exclusionary urbanization the poor are downgrade to the degenerated peripheries (Kundu, 2011). Revi *et al.* (2006) highlighted the possible interconnectedness of urban and rural in subaltern urbanization with their proposed concept of Rurbanism. Denis *et al.* (2012) identified this spatial transformation of rural or peri urban area as subaltern urbanization.

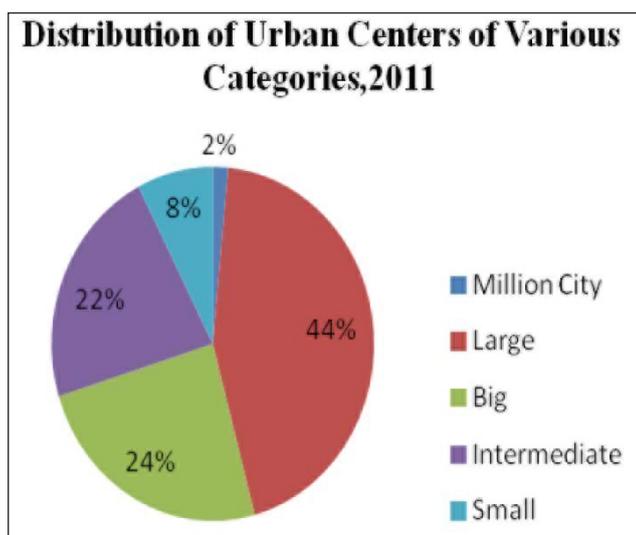


Fig. 6: Types of Urban Centres in 2011

District surrounds Kolkata have large number of towns and they are large in size compare to other towns away from Kolkata. North 24 pgs have total 22 large towns which have population more than 100,000 but less than one million. Only Gobardanga, Garulia, Baduria, New Barrakpore, Taki and Nabadiganta Industrial estate have less than 100000 populations. In Burdwan there are six large statutory towns which include Jamuria, Raniganj, Asansole, Durgapur, Burdwan and Kulti. Apart from North 24 pgs and Burdwan; Hooghly,

Nadia and Medinipur have some large no of towns. Part of Hooghly, North 24 pgs and Nadia is under Kolkata Metropolitan area and these towns are part of suburban Kolkata.

The distribution of urban centers among four categories shows that dominance of large cities is declining while intermediate and small towns are growing. It is remarkable that number of big city emerges in backward districts like Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, Kochbihar and south 24 pgs and Medinipur. All the districts have at least 3 big cities. Such towns have significant role in shaping the pattern and level of urbanization of the district.

Consistent test of 2001 and 2011 shows how level of urbanization is consistent with some other aspects of urbanization across 18 districts of the state.

Rouf and Jahan (2001) used this method to analyze the trend and pattern of Bangladesh urbanization. Paul and Chatterjee (2012) also used this method to analyze North 24 Pgs urbanization pattern. The above Table 3 shows that there exists a significant difference between the census years of 2001 and 2011 regarding the consistency status of the districts. It is also evident from the table 3 that there are two kind of consistency trend across the districts with different aspect. In case of UPD and SUA number of consistent district reduces in 2011 compare to 2001 while in case of PUA and SUP number of consistent district increases from in 2011 compare to 2001. It indicates the dispersal of urban population across the various district as well as growth of share of urban area. It is remarkable that from 1991 to 2001 growth of statutory urban was only 1.92 percent where as this figure become 5.27 percent in 2001 to 2011.

Coefficient of rank correlation was computed for all the four aspects, viz., PUA, UPD, SUA and SUP with LU separately for both of the 2001 and 2011 census years (Table 4). The obtained results support our findings.

It is evident from Table 4 that in both census years SUP remain highly consistent aspect with coefficients of rank correlation 0.824 and 0.828 respectively. In case of PUA it is lowest consistent in 2001 with coefficients of rank correlation -0.14 and become highest consistent aspect in 2011 with coefficients of rank correlation 0.90. It is due to fact that decadal growth of statutory urban area in west

**Table 3:** Consistency Status of the Districts in the Census Years of 2001 and 2011

Census Years	Consistent	Moderately Consistent	Marginally Consistent
<b>Urban Population Density (UPD)</b>			
2001	Kolkata, South 24 Pgs	North 24Pgs, Hooghly, Howrah, Bankura, Murshidabad, Darjeeling	South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, Malda, Birbhum, Nadia, Kochbihar, Burdwan, Medinipur, Burdwan, Puruliya, Jalpiguri
2011	Kolkata	North 24 Pgs, Hooghly, Medinipur, South 24 Pgs	South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, Malda, Birbhum, Nadia, Kochbihar, Burdwan, Howrah, Bankura, Murshidabad, Darjeeling, Jalpiguri, Puruliya
<b>Percentage of Urban Area (PUA)</b>			
2001	Kolkata, Burdwan, Hooghly, North Dinajpur,	North 24 PGS, Howrah, Nadia, Jalpiguri, South 24 Pgs, Puruliya, Kochbihar, Birbhum, Bankura, Malda	Darjeeling South Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Medinipur
2011	Kolkata, Burdwan, Howrah, North Dinajpur, North 24 PGS, Bankura	Darjeling, Hooghly, Jalpiguri, South 24 Pgs, Nadia, Birbhum, Puruliya, Kochbihar	Murshidabad, Malda, Medinipur, South Dinajpur
<b>Share of Urban Area (SUA)</b>			
2001	North 24 Pgs, Birbhum	Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, Jalpiguri, Murshidabad, Kochbihar, Malda	Kolkata, Burdwan, Darjeeling, South 24 Pgs, South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, Puruliya, Medinipur, Bankura
2011	Birbhum,	Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, Jalpiguri, Murshidabad, Kochbihar, Malda, North Dinajpur, North 24 Pgs	Kolkata, Burdwan, Darjeeling, Jalpiguri, South 24 Pgs, South Dinajpur, Puruliya, Medinipur, Bankura
<b>Share of Urban Population (SUP)</b>			
2001	Hooghly, Malda, North Dinajpur, Puruliya	Kolkata, Burdwan, Howrah, Nadia, South 24 pgs, Murshidabad, Kochbihar, Bankura	Darjeeling, Jalpiguri, South Dinajpur, Birbhum, Medinipur
2011	Kolkata, Nadia, Malda, Birbhum, Puruliya, North Dinajpur, Kochbihar,	Darjeeling, South 24 Pgs, South Dinajpur, Medinipur	Howrah, North 24 Pgs, Burdwan, Hooghly, Jalpiguri, Murshidabad, Bankura

Source: Census of India 2001, 2011, Data compiled by author

Bengal increases 5.27 percent in 2011 and it was 1.92 percent in 2001. UPD is lowest consistent with coefficients of rank correlation 0.27 in 2011 and in 2001 coefficients of rank correlation 0.43 was just ahead of the PUA.

**Table 4:** Rank Correlation Coefficient

Spearman Rank Correlation		
	2001	2011
LU-UPD	0.432	0.279
LU-PUA	-0.147	0.905
LU-SUA	0.690	0.574
LU-SUP	0.824	0.828

*Source: Calculated by author*

**Table 5:** Correlation between levels of urbanization and other aspects

	UP	SDPUA	PCSDP	NSSIU	DSR	ESSI	ERF
UP	1						
SDPUA	0.931	1					
PCSDP	0.696	0.867	1				
NSSIU	0.864	0.878	0.740	1			
DSR	0.183	0.095	0.127	0.323	1		
ESSI	0.676	0.667	0.505	0.711	0.205	1	
ERF	0.705	0.473	0.220	0.636	0.378	0.397	1

*Source: Calculated by author*

**UP-** Urban Population, **SDPUA-**State Domestic Product of Urban Area, **PCSDP-** Per Capita State Domestic Product, **NSSIU-** No of Small Scale Industry Unit, **DSR-** District wise Surface Road in Km, **ESSI-** Employment in Small Scale Industry, **ERF-** Employment in Registered Factory

It is important to find out the factors to identify the recent changes of pattern of urbanization. Factors include SDP of Urban Area, Per Capita SDP, no of Small Scale Industry unit; district wise Surface Road in Km, Employment in Small Scale Industry, and Employment in Registered Factory. They have played crucial role in reshaping the pattern of urbanization in West Bengal. Urban population is

highly correlated with three factors which include State Domestic Product of Urban Area, No of Small Scale Industrial Unit, and Employment in Registered Factory, and employment in small scale industry. SDP of urban area and per capita SDP increase due to the growth of small scale industrial unit and its growing employment. The following table 6 is shows the Entrepreneurs Memorandum to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises of West Bengal.

**Table 6:** Number of EMs issued to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises of West Bengal

Year	Manufacturing	Service	Total
2006-07	7379	783	8162
2007-08	16164	1465	17629
2008-09	12225	1206	13431
2009-10	10682	906	11588
2010-11	9089	1012	10101
2011-12	12199	1260	13459
2012-13	9542	788	10330
2013-14	9759	1621	11380
2014-15 (March)	13243	2001	15244
<b>Total</b>	<b>100282</b>	<b>11132</b>	<b>111414</b>

*Source: State Industrial Profile of West Bengal 2015-16 by MSME*

It is apparent that over the decade number of Entrepreneurs Memorandum to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises increases and these units are established mainly in small and medium towns of the state.

### Critical Aspect of Urban Policy Making and its effects on Urban Centers

Today urban policy-making is a serious agenda to both central and state government. The importance of urban policy making was recognized in third five year plan (1961-1966). Though, its focus was very limited. Its concerns include master plan preparation, promotion of housing and outlay for urban development programmes. It is to be noted that this was the period when urban policy focus was lay largely to the metropolitan city. There was grater ignorance to the small and medium

towns. Development economist conceptualized this way of policy making as urban bias or metropolitan bias through overtly taxed agriculture and transferred resources to industry and other urban activities (Lipton 1977). Ferre, Ferreira and Lanjouw (2010) also showed the same thing by examining the case of 8 developing countries. They noted that any strategy for urban poverty reduction that places greater focus on, or allocates more resources to, metropolitan areas, suffers from a "metropolitan bias" analogous to the urban bias of old'. Shaw (2013) noted that top down approach was followed during nationalist period and it gave priority to urban based industrial development, focusing on already developed areas i.e. the large cities and particularly the metropolitan cities. Integrated Urban Development Programme (IUDP) was introduced in the fifth five year plan as broad programme for over all development. However the programme focused on metropolitan cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and areas of national importance. The scheme was discontinued in 1979.

The sixth five year plan (1980-85) put down emphasis on the development of small and medium towns. The sixth five year plan notes the negligence of urban services and infrastructure in the small, medium and intermediate towns and point out that it is necessary for future to focus on small, medium and intermediate towns. With this vision Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) was launch in 1970-80. The programme was applicable to all towns/cities with a population of up to 5 lakh. The scheme continued till the middle of the 10th plan period and covered 1854 towns till 2004-05. After which it was subsumed in UIDSSMT.

The programme is running only 25 urban centers in west Bengal till 2010. Though such programme focus on infrastructure development in small and medium towns which include water supply, sewerage, solid waste management and roads, this programme are not spread across all the small and medium towns. In West Bengal its coverage is only 19 percent. Under this programme all the small and medium towns of the state are mainly involved in water supply program. Apart from limited coverage, slow and small disbursement of fund is major challenge. Such limitations have greater

effect on large and mega cities. On June 2015, ministry of Urban development government of India introduces new programme called *Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation* for 500 Indian cities population with more than 1 lakh. This programme mainly focused on improvement of urban services which include water supply, sewage, transport etc. It shows policy level apathy towards small and towns.

Kundu and Sarangi (2005) also point out that there is an inverse relationship between poverty rates and the size of towns, with the poverty rate in large (one million plus) cities at 14.2% and in small cities at 24.2% in 1999-2000. What is remarkable that Kundu and Gupta (1996) point out that small and medium city are nowhere as attractive as the larger cities for manufacturing companies looking to set up new units. The poor economic profile of these cities has resulted in economic stagnation, and it is this economic stagnation that has repelled rural migration. Economic stagnation in small and medium town is the result of low quality of infrastructure and service delivery in smaller cities. National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) study by Raghupathi (2005) on the status of water supply, sanitation and solid waste management in urban areas confirms that the coverage of basic services in metropolitan cities is higher than other medium and small cities.

In fact towns and cities close to metropolitan area have a greater accessibility of services while the remote towns have very poor accessibility of basic services in West Bengal (Karmakar 2015). Therefore it is imperative to build sufficient infrastructure in small and medium towns to attract industry as well hold those people who are migrating in search of jobs to large and big city. West Bengal small and intermediate towns lack both urban infrastructure and services. There is a lack of policy intervention both from state and centre.

### **Strategies for Sustainable Growth of Small and Medium Towns**

Viability of small and medium towns is possible only if these towns can give service properly, develop infrastructure and planning broadly. Experts points out that economic development along with infrastructure provision and service delivery is essential to ensure the

sustainable development of small and medium cities. Economic development is necessary as it provides greater incentives for in-migration and this in turn compels timely responses in infrastructure and service delivery. On the other hand, infrastructure provision can be seen as a prerequisite to incentivize economic investments that then lead to greater in-migration.

Therefore, there is a cyclic relationship between economic growth and infrastructure provision. It is because economic development provides greater incentives for in-migration and eventually this makes timely responses in infrastructure and service delivery. On the other hand infrastructure provisions incentivize economic investments and that lead to greater in-migration (Sahasranaman, 2012). Now the crucial part is the large scale acquisition of land particularly in the villages surrounding small and medium towns for setting up of industrial unit. Large scale land acquisition may transform peripheral small localities and minor places of small and medium towns. Such interventions would also have significant effect on the land markets in the surrounding region (Raman and Alemma, *et.al.* 2015). It is significant that the fragmentation of land in West Bengal is very high because of redistribution of land so acquisition of large amount of land is very tough task. Land pooling may be one of the option for acquisition. Effect of land acquisition is varying regionally. Western district (Bankura, Puruliya, Medinipur) of the state have adequate barren land that have potential for acquisition. However these districts have small number of towns.

## CONCLUSION

Paper focuses on number of aspects of urban centers of West Bengal. It shows that small and intermediate towns are negatively growing and big and large city are positively growing. Population share of small, intermediate and Million plus city is decreasing while it's increasing in case of big and large city. Therefore people are staying more in large city compare to million cities. It may be due to higher cost of living in million city while poor service and infrastructure in case of small and intermediate towns. Urban area both in percent and share has very high correlation with level of urbanization. Dispersion of urban population is also

a remarkable and it is highly correlated with number of small scale industry units which helps to transform the small towns and surrounding rural areas economy. But lack of infrastructure in small and intermediate town is major problem and there is no major programme or strategy to develop small and intermediate town more attractive.

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