

PURA Corporation

In the previous chapter we discussed the stepwise implementation model for realizing sustainable development. We also saw that the Central and the state governments are engaged in PURA implementation.

Earlier in the book we had also stressed that approximately 7,000 PURAs would be required to cover India's 600,000 villages and about 30,000 PURA complexes across the world to transform rural areas into vibrant economic and socially advanced entities that would propel growth in the coming decade. Such large-scale implementation would, beyond doubt, require unparalleled collaborative effort from many stakeholders, both private and public.

To ensure the success of such a multi-pronged effort, it is essential to create a framework through which different initiatives towards PURA can be promoted, synergized and economized. Towards the end of the previous chapter, we discussed key challenges which need to be overcome in order to make the PURA mission a truly participative process for all the stakeholders who wish to engage in the mission of sustainable development. In this chapter we will discuss the creation of this platform and how it can act as a flexible creator of enterprises and an integrated developer and pool of technology and investment for rural India.

FROM 'WHEN CAN I SING THE SONG OF INDIA?' TO 'INDIA CAN DO IT!'

During the last few years, and especially in this decade, I have seen how India Vision 2020 has inspired people, particularly the youth of India, and has resulted in many taking up missions directed towards it. The youths of today's India and of different nations of the world, filled with self-confidence, are prepared to take up the challenge through entrepreneurship, hard work and technological leadership.

I recall a situation at the beginning of 1990 when I was interacting with the youths of Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat. One lively girl asked me: 'Mr Kalam, can you please tell me when I can sing a song of India?' I tried to find the reason for her question and came to know that at that time her elder brother was in the United States and he was always talking about what was good there and how that country had assumed leadership in development, prosperity and technology amongst all the nations of the world. This little girl, sitting in India, was fed up with her brother's stories and had posed the question to me in her quest to find an answer.

How did I reply? I explained the developed India Vision 2020 to her and told her to be confident and that she could certainly sing the song of India by 2020. The same spirit—of when and how India would emerge as a nation with global prominence—echoed everywhere at that time.

But, during the last few years, while interacting with young people, I have seen a remarkable

change in their thinking. Long gone are the doubts about the ‘song of the nation’. Today, the young at heart ask me, ‘What can I give to the nation?’ That means they are prepared to contribute to national development. And recently, in the last three years, I have seen a further change: they tell me, ‘I can do it,’ ‘We can do it,’ and ‘The nation will do it.’ This spirit and urge to contribute is found in almost all walks of society regardless of whom I meet—students, professionals, homemakers, people of Indian origin living abroad, industrialists and social workers. This means the nation and its citizens are ready to undertake, relentlessly and untiringly, the challenge of developing the nation. And this development has to start in a sustainable manner at the grass-roots and the rural levels. The task before us is to create a platform where the energy, talent, commitment and knowledge of all Indians can find a confluence and emerge into a well-directed resplendent growth.

PURA CORPORATION: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

In 2008, I conducted a course on ‘Globalizing Resurgent India through Innovative Transformation (GRIIT)’ at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, where my co-faculty and I worked with students towards objective missions for attaining Vision 2020 and sustainable development systems. My students evolved a unique enterprise-driven model of a sustainable welfare model through the idea of a PURA Corporation.

PURA Corporation is a virtual and physical platform which aims at the facilitation of ideas into investment and of investments into results. It envisions being a one-stop repository for all stakeholders who are working, or desire to work, for implementing sustainable development across the nation. The fundamental principle behind PURA Corporation is to establish feasible sustainable development models along the lines of economics, societal structure, environment, technology and stability, through a chain of entrepreneurial ventures. This would be achieved by interventions on the input and the output (sales or delivery) side of the system. This is depicted in [Figure 10.1](#).

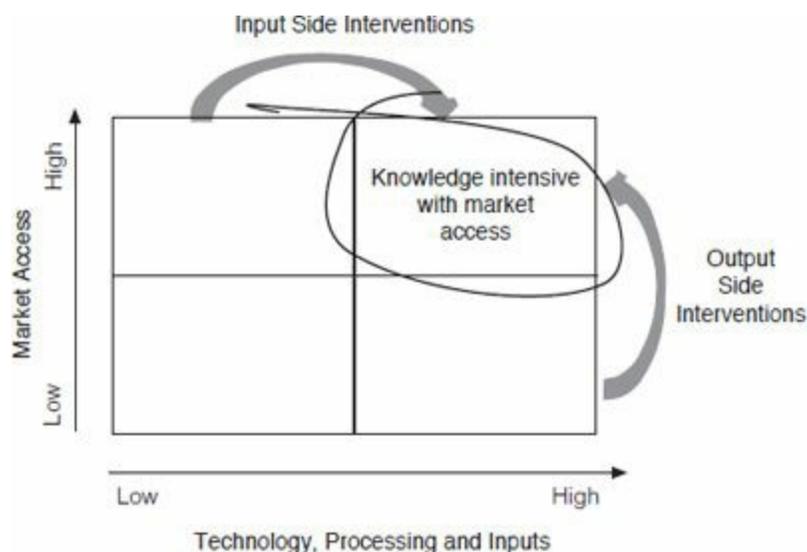


FIGURE 10.1: The input–output matrix

KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY

PURA Corporation will act first and foremost as a repository of knowledge, an open source for technologies and innovation, which can be of practical use in the rural context. A contributor to the repository can be an individual or an institution who can either generate the idea or report an existing significant implementation from across the globe. The knowledge repository would be translatable into various media and languages. This would also enable village-to-village learning across the nation, where a village in Gujarat can learn and replicate, in its own context, a venture that has been started in Assam. If all the 600,000 villages could present one unique workable idea each, then through village-to-village learning itself, the knowledge repository would be enriched by more than half a million practical solutions.

To connect the different stakeholders that would lead to the evolution of PURA plans, multiple communication media would be employed to network with each other. For a start, a web-based platform would be created to facilitate the inflow of knowledge from all around the globe. This would open up fresh knowledge and technology resources, introduce new market opportunities and help form a network of interested entrepreneurs and investors. Concurrently, alternative channels for establishing a knowledge network would have to be worked on, which would reach remote villages and bring out the best inputs through media in the form of community radio that could be customized according to the local language and context.

Academic institutions can play a significant role in acting as source points of knowledge and students can be encouraged to conduct projects on development plans for the villages near their institutions.

MAPPING OF CORE COMPETENCIES AND NEEDS

PURA Corporation and its partners would also conduct comprehensive resource-mapping and profiling of the intended PURA complex. To accomplish this, the respective panchayats need to be included and the views of the local community taken into consideration.

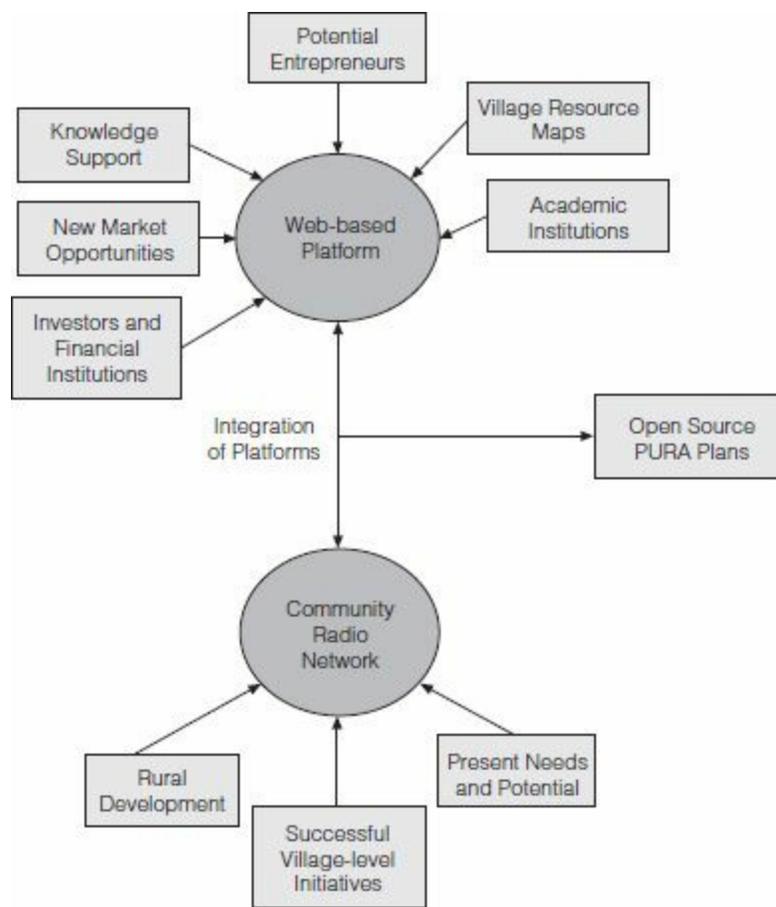


FIGURE 10.2: PURA Corporation: Knowledge-system architecture

INTEGRATION

PURA Corporation would also act as a knowledge-provider in terms of integration of ideas and innovations. Technologies—to grasp the practical implication at the ground level—need sustainable enterprise models that can ensure their delivery. This requires an integration of multiple ideas and solutions for a common problem with customization at the local level.

CREATION OF LOCAL PURA CHAMPIONS

Each PURA complex would be endorsed by a regionally acclaimed champion—it may be an institute or an individual—who will do the handholding for the PURA entrepreneur in his journey to realize the PURA mission and help him with local support from the community. PURA Corporation will facilitate the creation of such local PURA champion agencies for each PURA.

PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The essence of PURA Corporation is to generate jobs through the determined creation of enterprises at the micro level. These would not be merely enterprises that are based on core competencies, but also enterprises based on servicing the primary economic activity; enterprises involving capacity-building and providing amenities, as was discussed in [Chapter 9](#). Through its network of industries, academic institutions and youths, PURA Corporation will encourage the spawning of such enterprises

at the local level through its incubation channel.

PURA Corporation will nurture two kinds of entrepreneurs:

1. Resource Entrepreneurs: With the help of customized technology and modern management techniques for enhancing the income level for every household, they will focus on an economic realization of natural, traditional and human resources. They will play the critical role of moving resources up the value chain by applying the best practices and by matching product to market. This will generate wealth for the community and augment the purchasing power of the people. Their performance will reflect in the overall growth of the GDP of the rural complex.
2. Social Entrepreneurs: This second category will work closely with the resource entrepreneurs. They will focus on improving the human development index (HDI) in terms of education, health care and the standard of living by providing amenities and equity across diverse areas. These entrepreneurs will, therefore, promote the translation of the purchasing power into a better life and, in turn, introduce a more skilled workforce into the area. Their performance will reflect objectively in enhanced literacy levels; reduced IMR, MMR and sickness; enhanced nutrition; access to good habitation, sanitation and clean drinking water; and quality energy. It will also lead to environmental consciousness and a reduction in societal conflicts.

The entrepreneurs of PURA Corporation would work in close synchronization and integration with the help of local PURA champions. They would be partners with the government, the local administration and the panchayati raj institutions. The enterprise network of PURA Corporation has to evolve with technical collaboration from a multidimensional array of technological and managerial institutions (Figure 10.3).

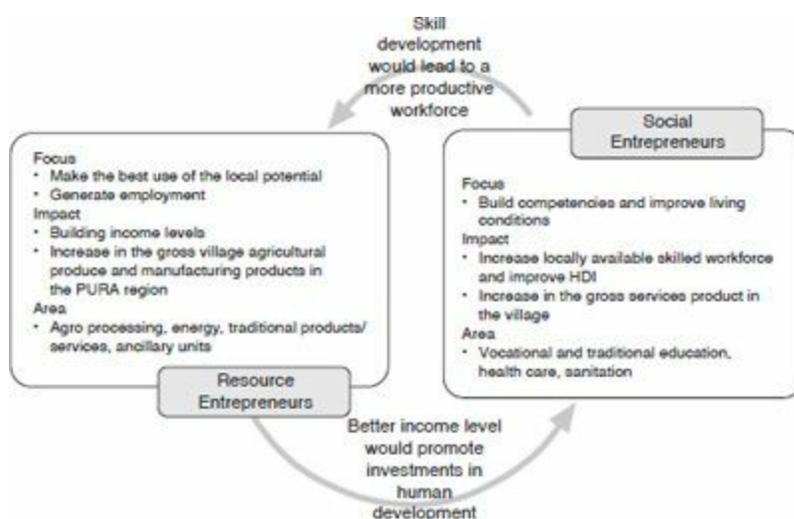


FIGURE 10.3: PURA Corporation: Enterprise network

INCUBATION AND INVESTMENT MECHANISM

One of the most significant factors that inhibits the creation of enterprises is the lack of timely financial investment which, at rural micro levels, is even more critical. On the other hand, the financial market in the nation has been vibrant with significant investors, even in the time of global recession.

We have seen how rural enterprises that are managed well have been consistently yielding returns upwards of 20 per cent over the decades. Besides being social missions, they are thus also excellent investment opportunities which can be mutually beneficial to the enterprise creator, the rural population and also the financiers.

PURA Corporation, through its management team, would act as a business forecasting engine and present each venture as a unique investment opportunity, with provision for vertical integration for enhanced returns. Thereby it would accept responsibility for attracting equity investment for the creation of rural enterprise. The primary shareholding in this case would be based on monetary transaction.

Moreover, there are numerous corporate social responsibility initiatives which can be channelized into objective and integrated development systems of PURA creation, especially on the side of capacity-building. With PURA emerging as a national brand, the CSR investments would lead to public participation on a large scale. Similarly, many individuals and institutions may like to work on a specific sector of rural transformation within the PURA framework. All these non-profit-oriented investors can also be given equity, which would be notional and would correspond to a particular form of capacity-creation. For example, a particular investor who wished to invest in improving the primary education centre could be presented with a series of options to invest, based on the existing proposed sustainable models generated and, against the investment, given a shareholding in the initiatives which would correspond to the education capacity created. This is shown diagrammatically in [Figure 10.4](#).

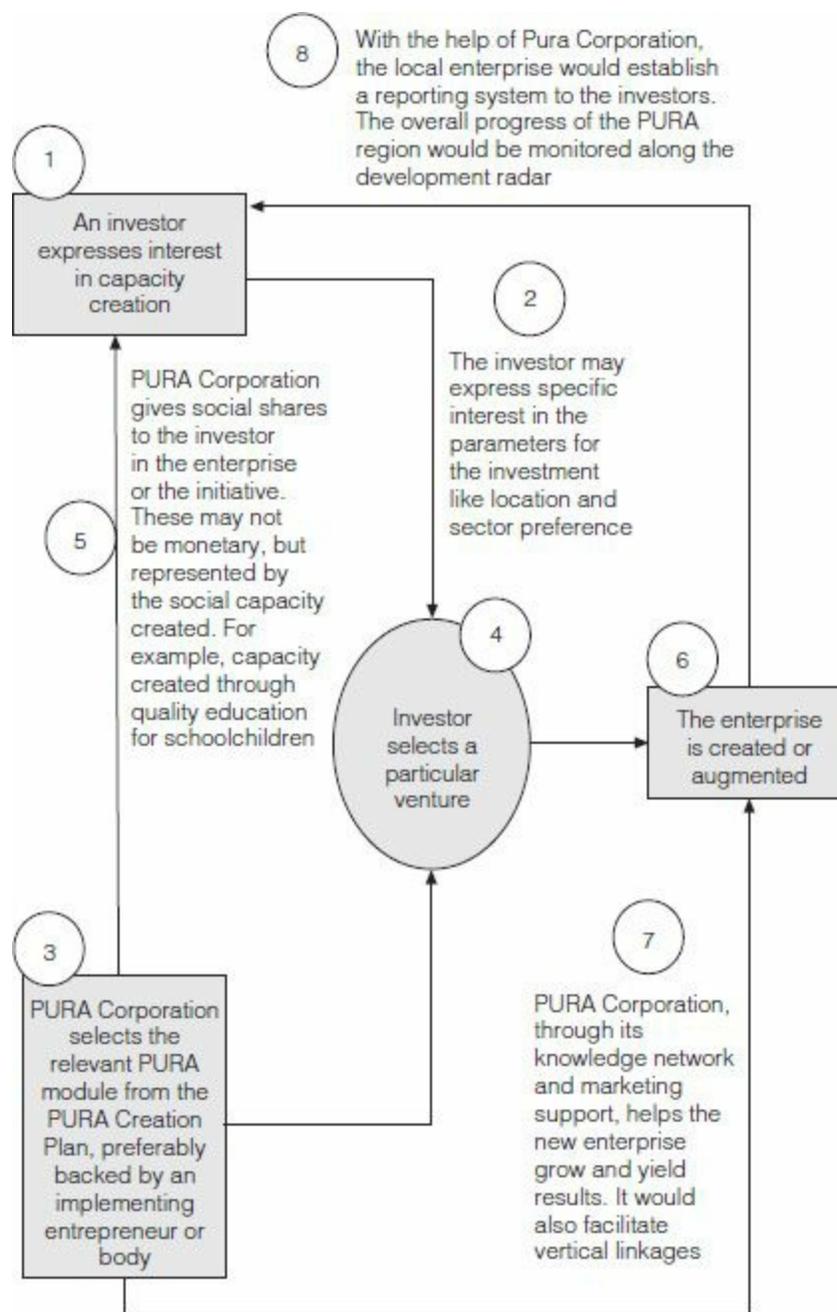


FIGURE 10.4: Stakeholder investment model

Another method of attracting investment is in the form of local cooperatives which would lead to community ownership. PURA Corporation, with the help of local PURA champions, would work towards creating such cooperatives to implement PURA by lending them technological, marketing and managerial support.

SHARING FIXED COSTS

Since PURA Corporation would be engaged in the creation of a sustainable development system, many of the fixed costs—based on both equipment and knowledge—can be shared across the ventures, making each of them more feasible and stable.

TYPICAL COST SHARING

- Equipment
- Marketing and advertising
- Technology identification
- Administrative support
- Monitoring tools
- Human development
- Financial tools and capital-raising costs
- Integration

ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

PURA Corporation would set up a mechanism for objectively monitoring performance, based on the initial conditions of the rural region, the connectivity and the basic model of the initiatives. The assessment would be based on the ‘real impact’ created from the perspective of the end user, and not merely focused on the outlay. The quality of the product or service would also be a criterion for monitoring. The audited report of the individual PURA initiatives and the overall PURA status in all the complexes would be worked out as a performance benchmark for the purpose of establishing accountability to the investors and the knowledge-providers. In the monitoring and assessment realization, local academic institutions can play a significant role by designing effective tools; by ensuring student participation for in-depth impact assessment at the household level; and by suggesting strategies for improvement in performance.

MARKET INTERFACE, BRANDING AND QUALITY CONTROL

One of the foremost contributions of PURA Corporation would be through the evolution of common brands which can establish market positioning through a shared brand-building exercise. It would be difficult for rural brands to establish themselves individually in export and city markets but, aggregated under the common umbrella body of PURA Corporation, and backed by well-directed promotion, small and micro enterprises at the rural level can be popularized as significant market brands. Moreover, large industries can partner with PURA Corporation and source their inputs from PURA enterprises.

PURA Corporation, through its knowledge channels, can also set up a mechanism for providing market intelligence to support PURA enterprises, and thereby ensure that the products and services being created are matched to the market needs in order to lead to better yields.

Of course, access to a high-value market would also imply standardization and quality control techniques. This would be collectively formulated by the market demand and the rural enterprise specifications, and quality control would be enforced by PURA Corporation.

FUTURISTIC GROWTH

The PURAs being created by PURA Corporation have to have a stable and feasible system over the long run. In view of continually changing technology, research, market demands and the emergence of competition, they have to be tuned in to the changing times. To achieve this, a constant evaluation of

the PURAs has to be conducted, and fresh ideas and markets have to be regularly explored. This would lead to the process of an unrelenting evolution of the sustainable development system.

DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS AND ROLES IN PURA CORPORATION

PURA Corporation strives to bring a wide range of people and experts towards the common integrated mission of realizing PURA. Essentially, it would be composed of the following stakeholders in the system:

VILLAGE PROPOSERS

The stakeholders would aggregate and analyse the needs of a particular cluster of villages where PURA could be implemented and also lead to the creation of open-source PURA designs. They can be local community members or government officials, panchayats, academic institutions through their projects, or entrepreneurs. The overall PURA plan would also have to be broken down into village-level layout plans pertaining to specific initiatives, like a primary health centre for a particular village.

KNOWLEDGE-PROVIDERS

The knowledge-providers would be students, researchers, technologists, social workers and professionals from a global audience who would contribute the best ideas, technologies and innovations to transform the rural enterprise models. Another part of the knowledge-providing exercise would be scouting around for existing village solutions which are impactful, in order to facilitate village-to-village learning.

INVESTORS

Investors can be interested parties who wish to invest in resource-harnessing or creating a particular social asset class. They may be individuals, industries, CSR implementers, development funds or financial institutions. Investments can also be put into local cooperatives where the community itself would be a collective stakeholder. (Cooperatives have been explained in [Chapter 9](#).)

LOCAL CHAMPIONS

Local champions would act as the empowered one-stop solution point for the creation of PURA. They would facilitate linkages with the government, ensure quality, manage integration and guide the entrepreneurs at the beginning. They would also mobilize community participation. They can be local institutions, local industries or trusted individuals of high repute.

ENTREPRENEURS

The entrepreneurs would be the backbone of the implementation under PURA Corporation. They

would take up specific roles within its master plan and be supported by the local champion. They would be provided incubation support and technology know-how by PURA Corporation. They will be expected to objectively set a target, after giving due consideration to community needs and local conditions, against which their performance will be assessed and monitored.

COMMUNITY

The community members would be a crucial element of the PURA implementation, ensuring that the benefits expected from PURA are realized on the ground level. For this, community opinion has to be considered at all stages, and the members from the community empowered and encouraged to be PURA activators. This also envisions a significant role for the panchayati raj institutions, which can play a most significant role in granting land for the development projects under PURA.

MARKET LINKERS

Stakeholders can also be in the form of active marketeers for PURA products and brand, both within the nation and for export. For this, individuals in their geographic location can take up the task of creating a market for the products and services coming out of the PURA complexes. Similarly, industries can help in quality-building in the PURA complexes and create permanent sourcing from them, thereby helping them reach markets where the best value can be realized.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The government bodies, through their various officials and departments, will have to play a significant role in the PURA implementation by helping dovetail the existing schemes and initiatives with those of the PURA complex project. They can also empower the local champion and be an active partner in the championing body at the local level. The government officials can help in encouraging community orientation towards PURA.

EVALUATORS

PURA Corporation would set up objective goals for each of the entrepreneurs and the initiatives, and also the overall vision for the PURA complex. Local institutions, through their students and faculty can take up projects to monitor the progress and to find ways to accelerate the transformation of the rural complex.

GROWTH PROPELLERS

Even after PURA has been set up, it needs to undergo a constant process of evolution. This would require critical inputs based on the external environment changes with time and the internal performance of the PURA complexes.

Thus, PURA Corporation is an attempt to bring together multiple stakeholders in the fold of PURA

implementation, depending on their individual ability and competency. In many cases, these roles will definitely overlap, and a single entity would be in a position to take up multiple roles in the life cycle of the PURA implementation.

CONCLUSION

PURA Corporation is an ambitious yet practical solution, unique in its approach to provide everyone with space to contribute and be a stakeholder in the process of the development of the nation, beginning from its roots. It is based on integration, sustainability and enterprise creation. Such a system can be a cornerstone for achieving vibrant socio-economic entities in the villages which would bring empowerment and growth to the 700 million people in India's villages and also across the developing world. Such an empowered society would be the foundation of a nation which is inclusively prosperous, universally empowered and a true symbol of a dynamic knowledge society, where none lives in poverty and where a lack of fundamental amenities is not a hindrance to one's pursuit of missions.