

## Imbalances In Socio-Economic Development Of Nepal\*

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The continued persistence of regional imbalances in socio-economic development has been one of the intriguing problems to planners and administrators.<sup>1</sup> In Nepal for the first time this problem has been approached through the adoption of a regional development strategy in the fifth five year plan. However, very few studies exist which focus on the problems of imbalances of socio-economic development in various spatial levels. This paper examines the imbalances in socio-economic development of Nepal on the basis of Development Regions, and Ecological Zones.

The study is based on the development profiles<sup>2</sup> of thirteen selected measures of socio-economic development. Each measure is separately ranked on the basis of twelve ecological zones and 75 districts.

Socio-economic development, as the United Nations has suggested, can be properly defined only by using several indices including health, food, education, working condition, employment, consumption, saving, transportation, housing, clothing, recreation, social security and human freedom. Information is not available on many of these items. The effort in this paper is to measure socio-economic development by using

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1. P. P. Rao and K. V. Sundaram, "Regional Imbalances in India: Some Policy Issues and Problems", *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 5 (1973), p. 61.
2. Peter Haggett, *Geography: A Modern Synthesis* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 468.
3. Hagget, Op. cit., Foot note 2, p. 465.

the following thirteen variables for which data exist: (1) Population density, (2) Percent of farmers, (3) Production of cereal grain, (4) Disimbursement of agricultural loan, (5) Disimbursement of industrial loan, (6) Bank deposit, (7) Road length in km, (8) Air cargo in kms, (9) Mail flow, (10) Post offices, (11) Health institutions, (12) Literacy and (13) Enrollment of students in school.

Variables, such as, farmers, literacy and school students are in percentages. Cereal grain, agricultural loan, industrial loan, bank deposit, air cargo, and mail flow are calculated per capita.<sup>4</sup> The data for road length, post offices, and health institutions are converted into an index based on the ratio of per capita value to population distance. These data are collected from different sources including the Population Census (1971), and publications of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.<sup>6</sup> Nepal Rastra Bank, Department of Roads, Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation, Department of Post office, Department of Health, National Education Committee,<sup>7</sup> and Ministry of Education.<sup>8</sup>

Three development profiles are drawn (Fig. 1) by Development Regions (Fig. 2) by Ecological Region and (Fig. 3) by districts. The Development Regions include the Eastern, Central, Western, and Far-Western regions, the three ecological zones include the Mountains Hills, and the Tarai. Also in each Development region there are three ecological zones. Each variable is ranked from one to twelve. (Figs 1 & 2.) The rank of score for each of the 13 variables is plotted. The rank of each of the thirteen variables is used for computing average socio-economic index by each Economic Development Region, main ecological zones, and the districts in Figs. 1, 2, and 3 respectively, so that these indices or profiles can indicate the socio-economic imbalances by Development Regions, Ecological zones, and by districts randomly selected from Mountain, Hill and Tarai).

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4. Statistics of 1976-77 are used in this study except for cereal grain production and population.
  5. Norton Ginsburg, *Atlas of Economic Development Part V*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 64.
  6. *Agricultural Statistics of Nepal* (1972).
  7. *Nepal Ko Shaikshik Sthitiko Adharma Zillaharu Ko Bargikaran*, Part II (2034).
  8. *Nepal Adhirajya Ko Bidyalaya tatha Shikshak Bivaran* (2033).

# DEVELOPMENT PROFILES

Fig. 1

EAST

CENTRAL

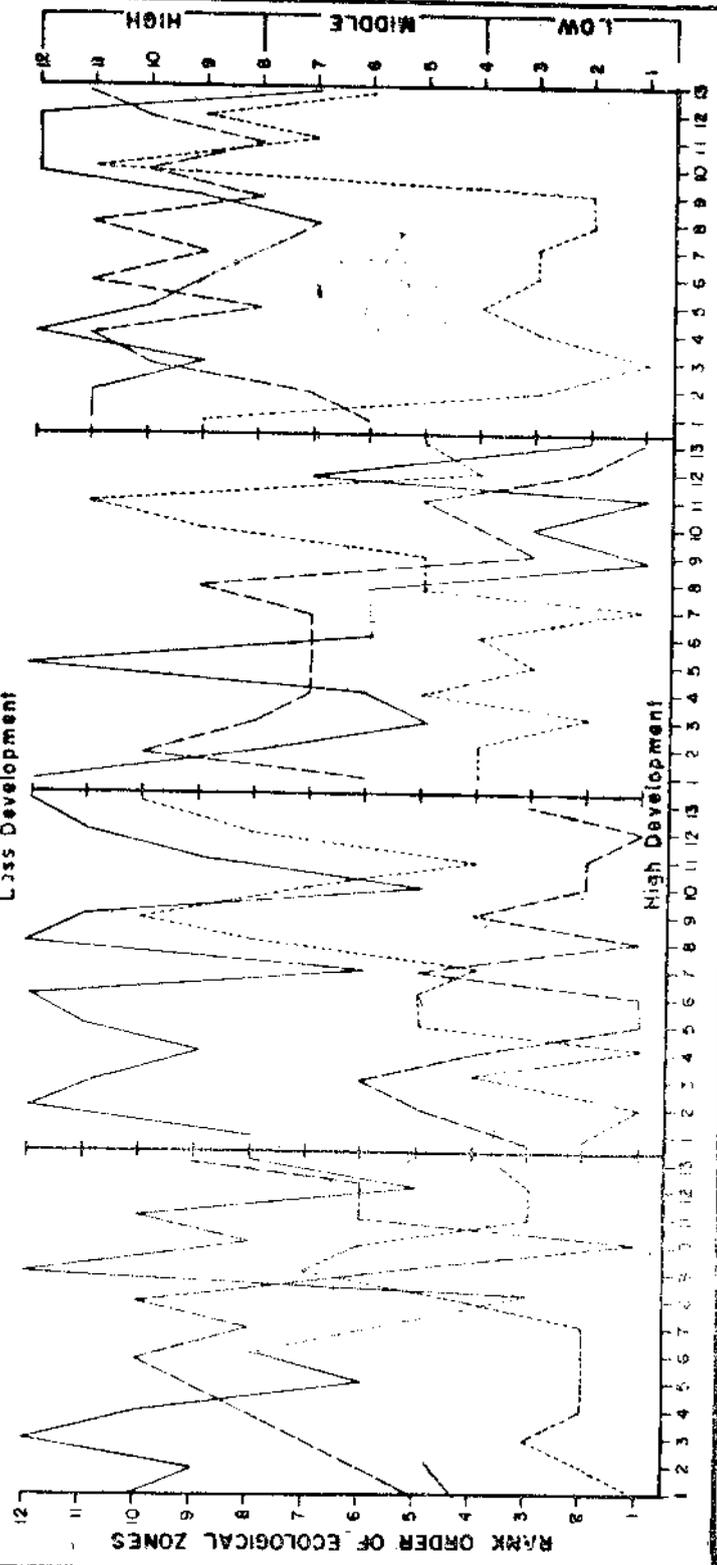
WEST

FAR WEST

Less Development

High Development

Mountain  
Hill  
Terra



- (1) Population Density (12)
- (2) Farmland (12)
- (3) Carved Green (12)
- (4) Agricultural Loan (15)
- (5) Industrial Loan (12)
- (6) Bank Deposit (12)
- (7) Road Length (12)
- (8) Air Cargo (9)
- (9) Mail-Flow (12)
- (10) Post Offices (12)
- (11) Health Services (12)
- (12) Literacy (15)
- (13) School Students (12)

Fig. 2

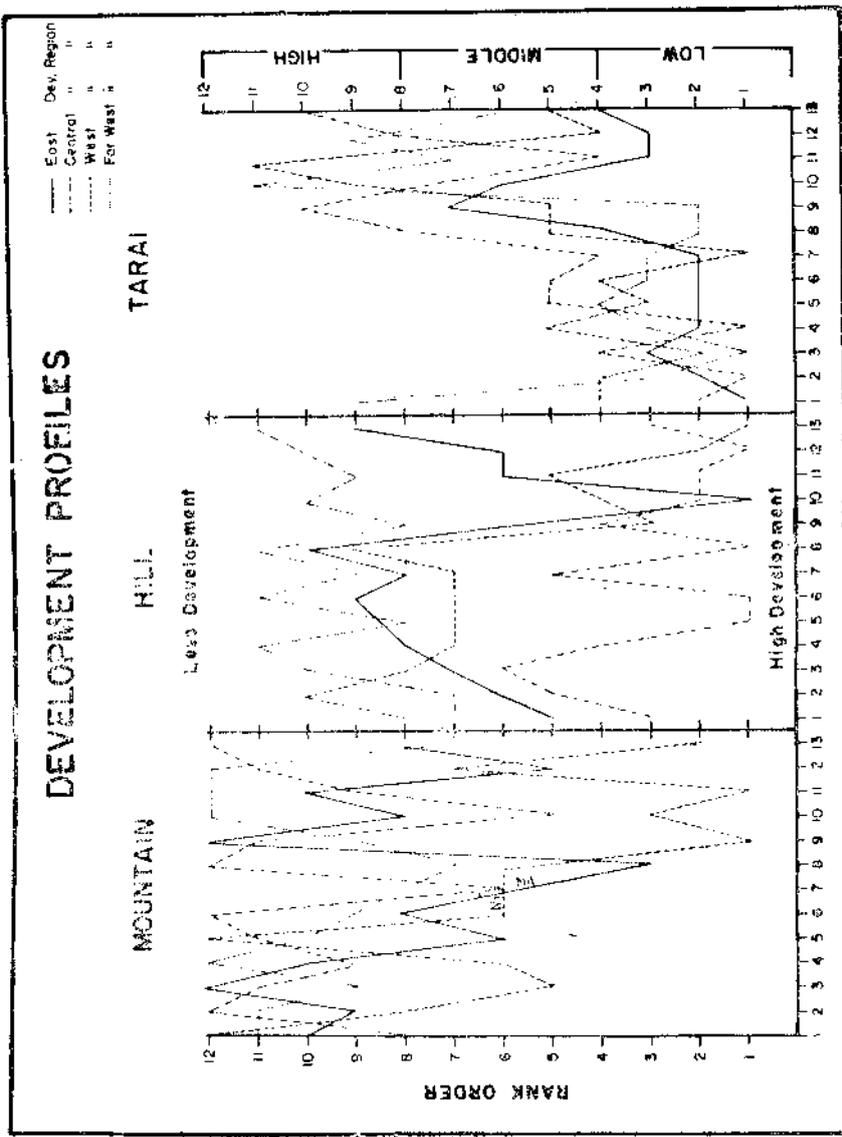
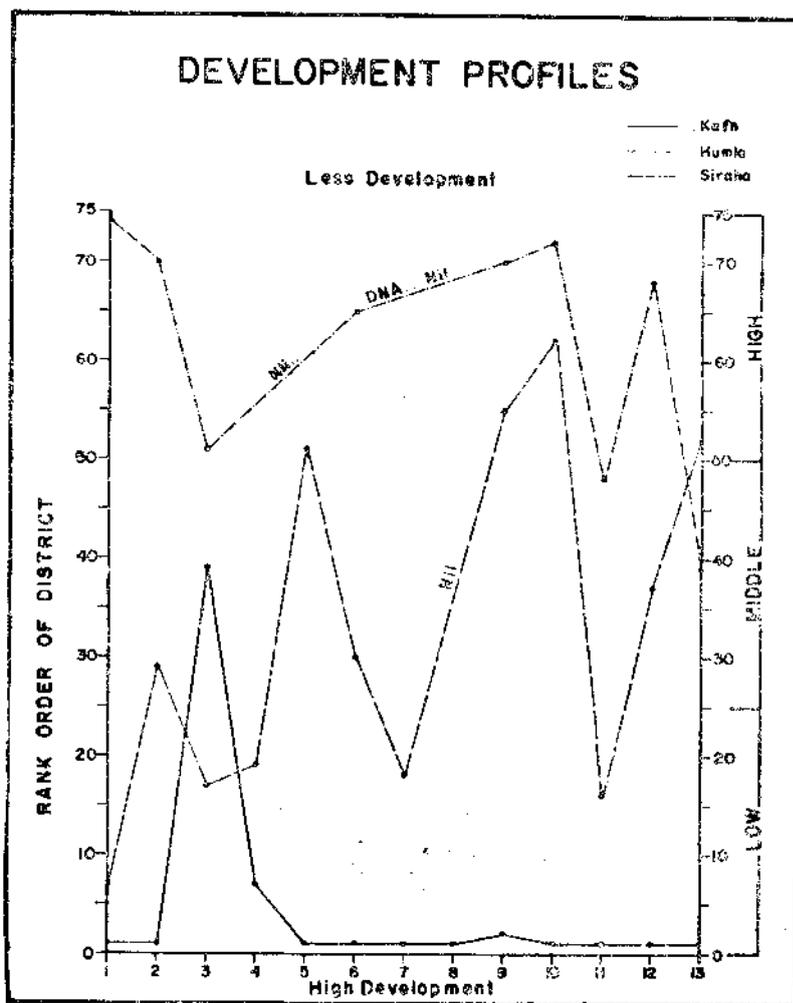


Fig. 3 .



The socio-economic development indices have been ranked from one to thirteen. The rank of one indicates the highest development and thirteen indicates the lowest, Furthermore, the ranked indices have been grouped into low, middle and high in reverse order, which is shown on the right margin of each profile.

**The Eastern Development Region:**

The Tarai of the Eastern Development Region, is the most developed one, particularly in the economic measures. Measures, vary from low (developed) to

middle ranks (Fig. 1). All the measures except the mail flow, the bank deposit and the industrial loan are marked above their national averages. Hill zone ranks from middle to high as less developed in socio-economic measures whereas it ranks first in the post offices. Least developed measures in the Hill zone are air cargo and industrial loan. The range of one to tenth ranks indicates the high degree of imbalances. The Mountain is another highly imbalanced zone and has relatively low measures. Except for the air cargo it is the most backward among regions. The Eastern Development Region stands above the national average in eight measure of socio economic index and should be considered as developed.

#### **Central Development Region:**

In this region the Hill zone appears to be the most developed. Measures vary from first to sixth ranks, It stands sixth in Cereal grain and is less than the national average. Industrial loan, bank deposit, air cargo and literacy are the highest developments holding first positions in the Kingdom. Measures of the Tarai zone vary from first to tenth rank with high imbalances. The smallest percentage of farmers and the highest agricultural loan are measures with highest ranks. Mail flow and school students are the least developed. In the least developed Mountain zone of the region measures vary from fifth rank of post office to twelfth ranks of bank deposit, air cargo, and school students. There is a distinct gap of development between the Hill and the Mountain zones. However, the Central region is the most developed region having eleven measures above their national averages (Table 1)

#### **The Western Development Region:**

In this region the development measures range, in extreme, from first to tenth, eleventh, twelfth ranks with the highest degree of imbalances in all the three zones of Hill, Tarai and Mountain respectively (Fig. 1). This Mountain zone is the most developed area in comparison to other Mountain zones of the Kingdom. The development of the Hill zone almost parallels with that of the Mountain zone with low values in the economic sector and very high values in the social sector. But the Tarai zone is well developed in the economic sector, and less developed in the social sector. The road length of the Tarai zone is the highest in the Kingdom. Mail flow and health institutions in the Mountain zone, and school students in the Hill zone are other first rankign measures. The Western region is economically backward but socially developed (Table 1).

**The Far-Western Development Region:**

In this region the Tarai is well developed zone. The measures of Tarai zone vary from first to eleventh rank with high imbalances in development (Fig. 1.). Here the Cereal grain occupies the first rank in the Kingdom, followed by air cargo and the mail flow. The Hill and the Mountain zones are the least developed area of the Kingdom. There is a wide gap of economic developments between the Tarai zone and the Mountain and Hill areas. The region as a whole including Mountain, Hill and tarai zones is the most backward since all measures are less than their national averages (Table 1.).

**Ecological Zones:**

Imbalances of the socio-economic measures are varied in the ecological zones. The most backward Mountain zone has the measures with a high range of variation from low to high ranks (Fig. 2.). The economic sector is generally least developed with concentration of measures in low ranks. The social sector varies from high to low. The Mountain and Hill zones are also backward area (Table 1.) Except some social measures, all other measures are concentrated in the middle and the high ranks signifying less development. Only four measures of the economic sector are less than their national averages in Hills (Table 1.). The Tarai zone is marked economically the most developed and socially less developed with imbalances in measures between economic and social sectors ranking from first to eleventh ranks. Social measures are developed in Hill and Mountain areas while economic measures are developed in the Tarai. Imbalances in social-economic development are pronounced in all the ecological zones.

**Districts**

For a comparative study of developed and under-developed districts, three districts of Kathmandu, Siraha and Humla are selected as representatives of the developed, developing, and under-developed districts from different ecological zones. Kathmandu is the most developed district of the Kingdom ranking first in all the measures except for the cereal grain, agricultural loan and the mail flow. The cereal grain measure is backward ranking thirty-ninth, otherwise the district is developed without major variation. Siraha district of the Eastern tarai is considered as moderately developed unit. The measures

National Averages and Development of Zones  
and Regions

TABLE I

	National averages	Mountain	Hill	Tarai	EDR.	C.D.R.	W.D.R.	F.W.D.R.
1. Population density per sq km.	79.50	23.20	97.70	129.10	59.20	141.50	85.30	40.10
2. Percent of Farmers	39.45%	48.80	42.50	32.90	36.60	36.60	45.10	41.60
3. Cereal grain production per capita.	301.60 kg.	0.16	0.19	0.48	0.32	0.31	0.28	0.28
4. Agricultural loan per capita	Rs. 17.28	4.40	11.70	28.30	17.70	25.10	11.90	9.80
5. Industrial loan per capita	Rs. 30.37	1.60	37.40	28.30	28.70	59.60	12.70	3.90
6. Bank deposit per capita	Rs. 188.62	25.00	255.00	141.10	105.20	401.40	77.10	59.60
7. Road length*	3.19	0.30	2.30	6.80	3.40	4.90	3.10	1.90
8. Per capita air cargo.	0.13 kg.	0.08	0.15	0.12	0.11	0.22	0.07	0.08
9. Mail flow per capita	3.64 pieces	1.70	4.40	3.10	2.90	3.40	5.20	3.30
10. Post offices*	0.86	0.70	1.00	0.80	1.00	1.00	0.90	0.60
11. Health Institut on *	0.52	0.40	0.58	0.59	0.55	0.65	0.54	0.43
12. Literacy	13.88	9.90	14.80	13.7	15.20	14.20	16.60	9.00
13. School students	32.00	24.80	33.80	31.4	31.00	30.80	41.30	25.60

\* Density per 1,000 persons to population distance.

vary from sixth to sixty-second ranks with large imbalances. Humla district of the Far West Development Region is the least developed having less than their national averages in all measures. Thus, these three districts show the various regional development status of the country and imbalances of measures.

**Conclusion:**

Inequality in the regional development is marked highest in the Tarai of the Eastern Development Region, and lowest in the Mountain of the Far-West Development Region. Development is generally decreased from the Tarai to the Hill, and Mountain respectively except in the Western Development Region. The Hill of the Central Development Region appears more developed due to the high figures of Kathmandu Valley.

Imbalances of the socio-economic variables are extensively marked in different spatial levels of Nepal. There is distinct imbalance between economic and social developments. Tarai is relatively more developed in the economic sector than in the social one, while the Mountain region has the reverse case. The region has the imbalanced socio-economic measures. The Kathmandu district is developed in comparison to highly imbalanced socio-economic variables of other districts.

An introduction of improved and continued regional evaluation, and arrangement of feed-back systems in various spatial levels appears as essential elements to be added in our planning procedures so that it will help to reduce the gap of imbalances, and ultimately to form a sound base in the stages of development for achieving the desired goal of the optimum socio-economic progress.