

Rural Development Challenges and Economic Opportunities in Basirhat Block-I, North 24 Parganas

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ABSTRACT

Basirhat Block-I is a predominantly rural community development block situated in the Basirhat subdivision of North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal. The block represents a typical transitional rural economy where agriculture, pisciculture, agricultural labour, household industries, small-scale manufacturing, and service-sector activities coexist. The present study examines the major rural development challenges and economic opportunities in Basirhat Block-I using secondary data from Census 2011, the District Profile of North 24 Parganas, NABARD district planning documents, and relevant academic literature on rural development and livelihood diversification. The study finds that Basirhat Block-I has a total population of 171,613 persons, of whom 150,520 live in rural areas and 21,093 live in urban areas. Thus, about 87.71% of the population is rural. The occupational structure shows 52,754 main workers, 10,749 marginal workers, and 108,110 non-workers. Among main workers, 7,957 are cultivators, 12,552 are agricultural labourers, 4,311 are household-industry workers, and 27,934 are other workers. These figures indicate that although agriculture remains important, the largest share of main workers is engaged in non-agricultural activities. The main development challenges include dependence on agricultural labour, low female workforce participation, rural underemployment, limited formal industrialization, pressure on land, inadequate market infrastructure, and dependence on informal or small-scale activities. At the same time, Basirhat Block-I has strong economic opportunities in agriculture, pisciculture, rice mills, readymade garments, medical gauze and bandage manufacturing, brick fields, vehicle repairing, rural services, agro-processing, women-led household industries, and skill-based employment. The study concludes that sustainable rural development in Basirhat Block-I requires an integrated strategy combining agricultural improvement, fishery development, rural industrialization, women's employment, credit access, infrastructure development, and local enterprise promotion.

Keywords: *Basirhat Block-I, Rural Development, Economic Opportunity, North 24 Parganas, Agriculture, Pisciculture, Rural Non-Farm Employment, Household Industry, Women Workers, West Bengal.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a multidimensional process involving improvement in income, employment, infrastructure, education, health, gender equality, agricultural productivity, market access, and social welfare. In India, rural development cannot be understood only through agriculture because rural households today depend on many sources of livelihood. These include cultivation, agricultural wage labour, livestock, fisheries, small trade, transport, construction work, household industry, migration, informal services, and small manufacturing. This mixed livelihood structure is especially important in densely populated states like West Bengal, where landholdings are often small and rural households must depend on both farm and non-farm sources of income. Basirhat Block-I is located in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. The district has five subdivisions: Barasat, Barrackpore, Bangaon, Basirhat, and Bidhannagar, and Basirhat Block-I belongs to the Basirhat subdivision. The official district website describes North 24 Parganas as a district bounded by Nadia in the north, South 24 Parganas in the south, Bangladesh in the east, and Hooghly and Kolkata in the west. This geographical location is important because proximity to Kolkata, the Bangladesh border, and nearby rural markets influences trade, labour mobility, agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale enterprise development.

Basirhat Block-I has a population of 171,613 persons according to Census 2011-based sources. Of this population, 87,717 are males and 83,896 are females. The block has 38,033 households and a sex ratio of 956 females per 1,000 males. The child population aged 0–6 years is 21,094. The District Profile of North 24 Parganas also identifies the important economic activities of Basirhat Block-I, including agriculture, pisciculture, manufacturing of gauze and bandage as medical items, rice mills, readymade garments, brick fields, and servicing and repairing of vehicles.

The rural character of Basirhat Block-I is very strong. Out of the total population of 171,613, about 150,520 people live in rural areas and 21,093 live in urban areas. This means that nearly nine out of every ten persons in the block live in rural settlements. Therefore, the development of Basirhat Block-I depends largely on the improvement of rural livelihoods, agricultural productivity, fishery resources, small-scale industries, rural employment, and social infrastructure.

The occupational pattern of the block indicates both dependence and transition. A significant number of people remain connected with agriculture, either as cultivators or agricultural labourers. At the same time, the number of “other workers” is larger than the number of cultivators and agricultural labourers separately. This suggests that the block is no longer purely agrarian. It is gradually moving toward a diversified rural economy, where income comes from agriculture as well as non-farm activities such as garments, repair services, local trade, household industry, rice mills, and wage work.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on rural development and livelihood diversification provides the theoretical background for understanding the economy of Basirhat Block-I.

Thomas Reardon, in 1997, examined household income diversification and the rural non-farm labour market. His work showed that rural households do not depend only on farming; instead, many households diversify into non-farm wage labour, self-employment, trade, and services. Reardon's argument is useful for Basirhat Block-I because the block has a large number of "other workers," indicating the importance of non-farm livelihoods.

Frank Ellis, in 1998, defined livelihood diversification as the process through which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in order to survive and improve their living standards. Ellis emphasized that diversification is connected with poverty, income distribution, farm production, and gender relations. This concept is highly relevant to Basirhat Block-I because households in the block depend on agriculture, pisciculture, wage labour, household industry, repair work, and informal services.

Barrett, Reardon and Webb, in 2001, argued that asset, activity, and income diversification are central to rural livelihood strategies. They explained that rural households diversify not only because of opportunity but also because of risk, poverty, and uncertainty. Their framework helps explain why households in Basirhat Block-I may combine farming with wage labour, fishery work, household industry, and small trade.

Daniel Start, in 2001, discussed the rise and fall of the rural non-farm economy and its poverty impacts. He argued that the rural non-farm economy is increasingly important in rural development debates, but its impact depends on local conditions, stages of development, and policy support. This is relevant to Basirhat Block-I because non-farm activities such as rice mills, garments, brick fields, medical-item manufacturing, and repair services have growth potential, but they require infrastructure, credit, training, and market access.

Lanjouw and Shariff, in 2004, studied rural non-farm employment in India, focusing on access, incomes, and poverty impact. Their research found that the non-farm sector can contribute to household income and poverty reduction, but access to better non-farm work is often unequal. This is important for Basirhat Block-I because many workers are outside cultivation and agricultural labour, but not all non-farm jobs are secure or well-paid.

Lanjouw and Murgai, in 2008, examined the relationship between poverty decline, agricultural wages, and non-farm employment in rural India. Their work showed that non-farm employment can influence rural wages and poverty reduction. This insight is applicable to Basirhat Block-I because a high number of agricultural labourers suggests the need for non-farm job creation to reduce seasonal unemployment and increase rural income.

Haggblade, Hazell and Reardon, in 2010, argued that the rural non-farm economy has strong potential for growth and poverty reduction. However, they also noted that pro-poor growth in the rural non-farm economy does not happen automatically; it requires market linkages, regional growth, infrastructure, and access for poor households. Their findings are relevant because Basirhat Block-I has several non-farm activities, but their development depends on credit, roads, markets, training, and enterprise support.

Himanshu, Lanjouw, Mukhopadhyay and Murgai, in 2011, studied non-farm diversification and rural poverty decline in India. Their research showed that the rural non-farm sector in India has grown over several decades and has contributed to poverty reduction in many places. This helps explain the importance of “other workers” and household-industry workers in Basirhat Block-I.

Biswas, Das and Mandal, in 2014, examined socio-economic dimensions of composite fish farming in North 24 Parganas. Their study is particularly relevant because pisciculture is one of the major sources of earning in Basirhat Block-I. Fish farming has the potential to increase rural income, generate employment, and support allied activities such as fish feed supply, transport, processing, and local marketing.

Ghosh and Ghosal, in 2021, studied households’ choices and drivers of rural non-farm livelihood diversification in West Bengal. Their work found that rural households in West Bengal diversify into non-farm activities due to socio-economic, environmental, and institutional factors, and that non-farm households often have relatively higher earnings than farmers. This directly supports the interpretation that Basirhat Block-I’s rural economy is moving toward diversified livelihood patterns.

Overall, the literature shows that rural development depends not only on agriculture but also on livelihood diversification, infrastructure, credit, skill development, social inclusion, and non-farm employment. Basirhat Block-I reflects many of these themes because it has a rural population base, agricultural dependence, high agricultural labour presence, and growing non-farm work.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the demographic and rural-urban profile of Basirhat Block-I.
2. To analyse the occupational structure and workforce pattern of the block.
3. To identify the major rural development challenges in Basirhat Block-I.
4. To examine the main economic opportunities available in the block.
5. To analyse gender differences in workforce participation.
6. To suggest policy measures for sustainable rural development and livelihood improvement.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It is based mainly on secondary data.

4.1 Sources of Data

The study uses data from Census 2011, the District Profile of North 24 Parganas, NABARD district planning documents, and published academic literature. The Census of India’s Primary Census Abstract provides block-wise demographic and workforce data for North 24 Parganas. The District Profile of North 24 Parganas provides information on block-level earning sources and local economic activities. NABARD’s district planning documents provide information on rural credit potential, agriculture, fisheries, and rural infrastructure in North 24 Parganas.

4.2 Method of Analysis

The study uses percentage analysis, ratio analysis, and descriptive interpretation. Percentages have been calculated from the available Census-based numerical data. The results are presented according to the objectives of the study.

4.3 Limitations of the Study

The study mainly uses Census 2011 data because detailed Census 2021 block-level data is not available. Therefore, the article should be treated as a structural study of rural development challenges and opportunities based on the latest widely available block-level Census data. Some economic activities are discussed from district-profile sources, but detailed income-level data at household level is not available.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basirhat Block-I has a total population of 171,613 persons. The male population is 87,717 and the female population is 83,896. The number of households is 38,033. The sex ratio is 956 females per 1,000 males. The child population aged 0–6 years is 21,094.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Basirhat Block-I

Indicator	Value
Total population	171,613
Male population	87,717
Female population	83,896
Total households	38,033
Sex ratio	956
Child population, age 0–6	21,094
Scheduled Caste population	22,070
Scheduled Tribe population	1,268
Illiterate population	63,083

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas.

The demographic profile shows that Basirhat Block-I has a large population base. A high population creates both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, it increases pressure on land, employment, education, health services, and infrastructure. On the other hand, it provides a large labour force for agriculture, fisheries, small industries, construction, trade, and services.

Table 2: Rural-Urban Composition of Basirhat Block-I

Category	Population	Percentage of Total Population
Rural population	150,520	87.71%
Urban population	21,093	12.29%
Total population	171,613	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011; percentages calculated by author from Census-based population data.

The rural-urban composition clearly shows that Basirhat Block-I is overwhelmingly rural. About 87.71% of the population lives in rural areas. Therefore, rural development policies are central to the block’s overall development. Improvement in roads, irrigation, fishery infrastructure, schools, health centres, markets, and rural credit systems can directly affect the majority of the population.

The workforce structure of Basirhat Block-I reveals the nature of the local economy. The block has 52,754 main workers, 10,749 marginal workers, and 108,110 non-workers. Main workers are persons who worked for the major part of the reference period, while marginal workers worked for a shorter period. Non-workers include students, children, elderly persons, homemakers, and others outside recorded employment.

Table 3: Worker and Non-Worker Composition

Category	Number	Percentage of Total Population
Main workers	52,754	30.74%
Marginal workers	10,749	6.26%
Total workers	63,503	37.00%
Non-workers	108,110	63.00%
Total population	171,613	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas. Percentages and total workers calculated by author.

The table shows that only 37% of the total population is recorded as workers. The remaining 63% are non-workers. This indicates a major development challenge because a large population depends on the earning members of households. The high share of non-workers may be due to children, students, elderly people, homemakers, and persons without regular employment.

Table 4: Main Worker Categories in Basirhat Block-I

Main Worker Category	Number	Percentage of Main Workers
Cultivators	7,957	15.08%
Agricultural labourers	12,552	23.79%
Household-industry workers	4,311	8.17%
Other workers	27,934	52.95%
Total main workers	52,754	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas. Percentages calculated by author.

The occupational structure shows that “other workers” form the largest category, accounting for 52.95% of main workers. This category includes workers engaged in services, transport, trade, construction, repair work, small business, and other non-agricultural activities. Agricultural labourers account for 23.79%, cultivators for 15.08%, and household-industry workers for 8.17%.

This pattern proves that Basirhat Block-I is not a purely agricultural economy. It is a mixed rural economy where non-farm employment has become more important. However, many non-farm jobs may still be informal, low-paid, and insecure. Therefore, the challenge is not only to create employment but also to improve the quality of employment.

Basirhat Block-I faces several rural development challenges. These include agricultural dependence, high agricultural labour presence, low female participation in regular work, underemployment, limited formal industrial employment, lack of large-scale enterprise, pressure on land, and dependence on informal activities.

Although “other workers” are the largest group, agriculture remains a major livelihood base. Cultivators and agricultural labourers together account for 20,509 main workers, or 38.87% of total main workers.

Table 5: Agriculture-Dependent Main Workers

Category	Number	Percentage of Main Workers
Cultivators	7,957	15.08%
Agricultural labourers	12,552	23.79%
Total agriculture-dependent main workers	20,509	38.87%
Non-agricultural main workers	32,245	61.13%
Total main workers	52,754	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas. Agriculture-dependent and non-agricultural worker totals calculated by author.

Agricultural labourers are more numerous than cultivators. This means that many rural households may not have enough land of their own and depend on wage labour. Agricultural labour is usually seasonal and uncertain. During non-cropping seasons, workers may have to search for work in construction, brick fields, transport, small trade, or nearby urban areas. This creates income insecurity.

5.1. Rural Underemployment and Marginal Work

Marginal workers form 6.26% of the total population. While this may appear small, marginal work often represents seasonal or irregular employment. In rural areas, marginal workers may include people engaged in part-time agricultural labour, household industry, fishery support work, informal services, or occasional wage labour.

Table 6: Main and Marginal Worker Ratio

Category	Number	Percentage of Total Workers
Main workers	52,754	83.07%
Marginal workers	10,749	16.93%
Total workers	63,503	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011. Percentages calculated by author.

The presence of 10,749 marginal workers shows that a section of the workforce does not have regular employment. This is a development challenge because irregular work results in unstable income, low savings, dependence on informal credit, and vulnerability during illness, crop failure, or economic shocks.

Gender inequality in workforce participation is one of the major development challenges in Basirhat Block-I. Women are present in household industries and marginal work, but their share in regular main work is low.

Table 7: Gender-wise Workforce Pattern

Category	Male	Female	Total	Female Share
Main workers	45,683	7,071	52,754	13.40%
Marginal workers	6,100	4,649	10,749	43.25%
Non-workers	35,934	72,176	108,110	66.76%
Total population	87,717	83,896	171,613	48.89%

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas. Female-share percentages calculated by author.

Women form 48.89% of the total population but only 13.40% of main workers. This shows a major gender gap in regular employment. However, women form 43.25% of marginal workers, suggesting that they are more likely to be involved in irregular, seasonal, part-time, or home-based work. This indicates the need for women-focused livelihood schemes, self-help groups, tailoring and garment training, food processing, fishery-related activities, micro-credit, and market linkage.

The District Profile of North 24 Parganas lists several economic activities in Basirhat Block-I, including gauze and bandage manufacturing, rice mills, readymade garments, brick fields, and vehicle servicing. These activities are important, but many are likely to be small-scale or informal. The challenge is to upgrade these activities into more stable, organized, and productive enterprises.

Rural development depends heavily on roads, transport, storage, cold chains, irrigation, market yards, electricity, digital connectivity, and institutional credit. NABARD notes that Potential Linked Credit Plans estimate rural credit potential and identify infrastructure and support-service interventions required at the district level. For North 24 Parganas, NABARD identifies agriculture, fisheries, and rural economic activities as important areas for credit planning. This is relevant for Basirhat Block-I because agriculture, pisciculture, and small enterprises require credit and infrastructure support.

Basirhat Block-I has several economic opportunities that can support rural development. These opportunities are linked to agriculture, fisheries, agro-processing, household industries, garments, medical-item manufacturing, repair services, rural trade, and local entrepreneurship.

The District Profile identifies paddy, jute, pulses, and oilseeds as important agricultural products in Basirhat Block-I. Agriculture can become more productive through improved seeds, irrigation, mechanization, soil testing, crop insurance, storage, and farmer training.

Table 8: Agricultural Opportunities in Basirhat Block-I

Agricultural Area	Existing Base	Development Opportunity
Paddy	Major crop	Better seed, irrigation, storage, rice milling
Jute	Traditional crop	Fibre processing, value addition, market linkage
Pulses	Listed crop	Crop diversification, nutrition security
Oilseeds	Listed crop	Oil extraction, small processing units
Small farming	Rural livelihood base	Farmer producer groups and cooperative marketing

Source: District Profile of North 24 Parganas; development opportunities interpreted by author.

Agriculture is not only a source of food but also a base for agro-processing. Rice mills, jute processing, oil extraction, pulse processing, and local marketing can generate additional employment.

Pisciculture is specifically identified as a major earning source in Basirhat Block-I. North 24 Parganas has strong fishery potential because of water bodies and demand from nearby markets. NABARD’s district planning source notes credit potential for fisheries activities such as fish farming and pond excavation in North 24 Parganas.

Table 9: Pisciculture Opportunities

Area	Opportunity
Fish farming	Income generation through pond-based fish production
Pond excavation	Expansion of fishery area
Fish feed supply	Allied rural enterprise
Fish seed supply	Support service for fish farmers
Fish transport	Employment in local marketing
Cold storage	Reduction of post-harvest loss
Fish processing	Value addition and higher income

Source: District Profile of North 24 Parganas; NABARD district planning document; opportunities interpreted by author.

Pisciculture can be one of the strongest engines of rural development in Basirhat Block-I. It can provide employment to small farmers, landless workers, youth, women’s groups, and local traders. It also creates demand for nets, feed, transport, ice, storage, and market services.

The occupational structure shows that non-farm workers are already important in Basirhat Block-I. Household-industry workers and other workers together form 32,245 main workers, or 61.13% of main workers.

Table 10: Farm and Non-Farm Main Workers

Category	Number	Percentage of Main Workers
Farm workers: cultivators + agricultural labourers	20,509	38.87%
Non-farm workers: household industry + other workers	32,245	61.13%
Total main workers	52,754	100.00%

Source: Census of India, 2011. Farm and non-farm grouping calculated by author from worker categories.

This table shows that non-farm employment is not a small supplement; it is already the majority category among main workers. This creates an opportunity to promote rural services, local trade, repair work, transport, construction, garments, and small manufacturing.

Household industry is especially important for women. Among 4,311 household-industry workers, 1,903 are women. This means women make up 44.14% of household-industry workers.

Table 11: Gender Participation in Main Worker Categories

Worker Category	Male	Female	Total	Female Share
Cultivators	7,566	391	7,957	4.91%
Agricultural labourers	11,320	1,232	12,552	9.81%
Household-industry workers	2,408	1,903	4,311	44.14%
Other workers	24,389	3,545	27,934	12.69%
Total main workers	45,683	7,071	52,754	13.40%

Source: Census of India, 2011; District Profile of North 24 Parganas. Female-share percentages calculated by author.

The table shows that women’s participation is highest in household industries. This suggests that household industry can be used as a development path for women’s economic empowerment. Training in tailoring, readymade garments, food processing, fish processing, packaging, handicrafts, and medical-item production can increase women’s income.

5.2. Small Manufacturing and Rural Enterprises

The District Profile lists manufacturing of gauze and bandage, rice mills, readymade garments, brick fields, and vehicle servicing and repairing as important earning activities in Basirhat Block-I. These activities provide a base for rural enterprise development.

Table 12: Small Enterprise Opportunities in Basirhat Block-I

Existing Activity	Economic Opportunity
Gauze and bandage manufacturing	Medical supply production, women’s employment, small manufacturing
Rice mills	Agro-processing, local employment, value addition
Readymade garments	Tailoring, stitching, women-led enterprise, market linkage
Brick fields	Seasonal wage employment, construction supply chain
Vehicle servicing and repairing	Skill-based youth employment
Local trade and services	Self-employment and rural market development

Source: District Profile of North 24 Parganas; opportunity analysis by author.

These activities can be improved through MSME registration, bank credit, training, electricity supply, marketing support, digital payment facilities, product standardization, and cooperative production models.

Inclusive rural development must address gender inequality. The data show that women are under-represented in regular main work but more visible in marginal work and household industries. This suggests that women participate in the economy, but their work is often informal, unpaid, part-time, or under-recorded.

Table 13: Female Participation Comparison

Category	Female Workers / Population	Total	Female Share
Female population	83,896	171,613	48.89%
Female main workers	7,071	52,754	13.40%
Female marginal workers	4,649	10,749	43.25%
Female household-industry workers	1,903	4,311	44.14%
Female non-workers	72,176	108,110	66.76%

Source: Census of India, 2011. Percentages calculated by author.

The table shows that women's share in the total population is nearly 49%, but their share among main workers is only 13.40%. This is a major development concern. However, their high share in household industries and marginal work shows that women can become important contributors to the local economy if proper support is provided.

Women-focused development strategies may include self-help groups, micro-credit, tailoring centres, fishery-related training, food processing, digital literacy, market access, cooperative marketing, and childcare support. Such measures can transform women's participation from irregular and unpaid labour into income-generating employment.

Based on the findings, the following measures are suggested for sustainable rural development in Basirhat Block-I.

5.3. Strengthening Agriculture

Agriculture should be made more productive and profitable. Farmers need access to quality seeds, irrigation, soil testing, crop insurance, fertilizers, machinery, storage facilities, and better markets. Paddy, jute, pulses, and oilseeds should be supported through crop-specific programmes.

5.4. Promoting Pisciculture

Pisciculture is already an important earning source. The block can benefit from fishery training, pond renovation, fish seed supply, fish feed production, cold storage, ice plants, transport support, and fish-processing units.

5.5. Expanding Rural Non-Farm Employment

Since non-farm workers already form 61.13% of main workers, rural non-farm employment should be treated as a central development priority. Skill development in tailoring, vehicle repair, mobile repair, electrical work, food processing, packaging, and digital services can increase employment.

5.6. Supporting Women's Livelihoods

Women's participation in household industry should be expanded through self-help groups, bank linkage, training, raw material supply, local production centres, and market access. Readymade garments, food processing, fish processing, and medical-item manufacturing can be promoted among women.

5.7. Improving Credit and Market Access

Rural producers need affordable institutional credit. NABARD's role in district credit planning is important because it identifies credit potential and infrastructure needs for rural economic activities. Farmers, fishers, women's groups, and small entrepreneurs should be linked with banks, cooperatives, and government schemes.

5.8. Developing Infrastructure

Rural roads, electricity, water supply, storage, cold chains, markets, digital connectivity, and transport facilities are necessary for development. Without infrastructure, agricultural and non-farm activities cannot become profitable.

5.9. Formalizing Small Enterprises

Many rural enterprises operate informally. Formalization through MSME registration, GST support where applicable, bank accounts, digital payments, quality certification, and product branding can improve their income and market reach.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

The study finds that Basirhat Block-I is a predominantly rural block, with 87.71% of its population living in rural areas. This makes rural development the central issue for the block.

The occupational structure shows that total workers form only 37% of the population, while non-workers form 63%. This indicates pressure on earning members and highlights the importance of employment generation.

Agriculture remains important, but it is not the only livelihood source. Cultivators and agricultural labourers together form 38.87% of main workers. Agricultural labourers outnumber cultivators, showing dependence on wage labour and possible land-related vulnerability.

Non-farm employment is already very important. Household-industry workers and other workers together form 61.13% of main workers. This indicates that Basirhat Block-I is a diversified rural economy.

Women's participation in regular main work is low. Women form 48.89% of the population but only 13.40% of main workers. However, women form 44.14% of household-industry workers, showing strong potential for women-led rural enterprise.

The main economic opportunities are agriculture, pisciculture, rice mills, readymade garments, medical gauze and bandage manufacturing, brick fields, vehicle repairing, household industries, rural services, and agro-processing.

7. CONCLUSION

Basirhat Block-I represents a rural economy in transition. It is not purely agricultural, yet agriculture continues to play an important role. The block has a large rural population, significant agricultural labour, growing non-farm employment, household industries, pisciculture, and small-scale

manufacturing. The occupational data show that 38.87% of main workers are directly dependent on agriculture as cultivators or agricultural labourers, while 61.13% are engaged in household industries and other non-farm activities. This confirms that livelihood diversification is already a major feature of the block.

The main rural development challenges are agricultural labour dependence, low female workforce participation, rural underemployment, limited formal industrialization, lack of strong market infrastructure, and dependence on small-scale informal activities. Women's low participation in main work is especially important because it limits household income and inclusive development. However, women's relatively higher participation in household industries shows that they can become central actors in rural economic growth if supported by training, credit, and market linkage.

The major economic opportunities lie in agriculture modernization, pisciculture, agro-processing, rice mills, garments, gauze and bandage manufacturing, brick fields, vehicle repair, rural trade, and local services. Pisciculture is particularly promising because it is already recognized as a major earning source and has strong market potential. Similarly, household industries and readymade garments can support women's employment.

The development strategy for Basirhat Block-I should therefore be integrated. It should not focus only on agriculture or only on industry. Instead, it should combine agricultural improvement, fishery development, rural non-farm employment, women's enterprise, skill training, small manufacturing, market infrastructure, and institutional credit. Such a strategy can reduce poverty, increase employment, improve household income, and make the rural economy more resilient and inclusive.

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