

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT AND EXTENSION AGG 3811- RURAL SOCIOLOGY

INTRODUCTORY NOTES: PART I

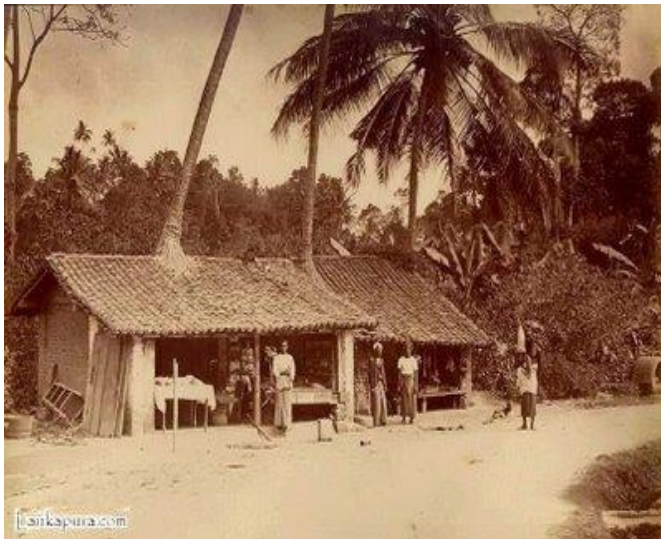
Rural Sociology

1. INTRODUCTION TO RURAL SOCIOLOGY

Background Sociology

The understanding on sociology tells us that the immediate goal of sociology is to acquire knowledge about society like all the sciences....., as Samuel Koenig has pointed out the ultimate aim of sociology is " to improve man's adjustment to life by developing objective knowledge concerning social phenomena which can be used to deal effectively with social problems".

1.1 Introduction of Rural Sociology



Rural Sociology is a specialised field of sociology. As the name indicates, it deals with the society of village or rural society. It is a systematic and scientific study of rural society. The majority of the people on the earth live in villages and rural areas. They follow patterns of occupation and life, and beliefs are conditioned and deeply influenced by their rural environment. A specialised branch of sociology called, Rural Sociology, has therefore, emerged to study the rural society

1.2 Origin and definition of Rural Sociology

1.2.1 Origin of Rural Sociology

Rural Sociology is comparatively a new branch of sociology. It was first originated in the United States of America. It has taken more than half a century to become established as a distinct academic field or professional study. The main contributors to the development of rural sociology are Charles Sanderson, Burtherfield, Ernast Burnholme, John Morris Gillin, Franklin H. Giddings and Thomas Nixon Carver. As a systematic science, rural sociology emerged in United States of America and the American society was facing severe disintegration from the period of 1890 to 1920. The problems included mass poverty, economic crises, and no land rights with the cultivators etc. Such problems led to mass migration of the people from the rural hinterlands to the cities. As a result, there was severe shortage of food grains and also there was fear that the entire rural society was facing a threatening decay.

It was President Roosevelt who, through the appointment of 'Country Life Commission' gave a good encouragement to the development to the rural sociology in 1908. The report of this Commission encouraged the studies of rural society. The report of this Commission encouraged the studies of rural society. The Country Life Commission (CLC) appointed in America to study the degrading situation of the rural society provided relevant data from the field and the findings were referred to the American Sociological Society in 1912. Reputed sociologists, such as James Michel Williams, warren H. Wilson and Newell L. Sims contributed extensively to the study of American rural society. During those days, the rural sociologists used statistical and historical data along with field interview to find out empirical reality of the US country life. The works on rural sociology in America were discussed from humanist viewpoint and the solutions that it offered were highly revered in national level policy planning. The way general sociology emerged due to the problems in general life, similarly rural life problems necessitated the emergence of rural sociology.

In 1917 the Department of Rural Sociology was set up by the American Sociological Society. In 1919, a 'Rural Sociology Department' was established under the chairmanship of Dr. C. J. Galpin. The Great Depression of 1930 provided another stimulus to the growth of rural sociology. In 1937, 'Rural Sociological Society' was formed. It started publishing a professional journal 'Rural Sociology' containing results of rural sociological research. C. J. Galpin of University of Wisconsin developed techniques for defining and delimiting the rural community. His approach is still popular today.

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The Great Second World War gave yet another boost to the growth of rural sociology. The heavy destruction caused by the war demanded reconstruction. The reconstruction work brought further encouragement to the science. By 1958 there were about 1000 professional rural sociologists in America. Rural sociology crossed the boundaries of America and became popular in Europe. A European Society for Rural Sociology was formed in 1957, and a similar organization was started in Japan also. In developing countries, the role of the rural sociologists is primarily in the applied field of more effective planning and operation of rural community development programmes.

The birth of rural sociology was due to the requirement of the study of different conditions and aspects of rural life and the prevailing problems that plagues the rural society. Earlier, many social sciences have strived to provide viable solutions for the challenges found in the rural society but have not been able to provide viable solutions to them. In order to provide a discipline for serious and focused study of the rural society, rural sociology was born. According to Charles R. Hoffer, "Like all sciences, Rural Sociology developed in response to a need. It is an elementary fact in the realm of scientific thought that a new science comes into existence whenever phenomena confronting the human mind are not, or cannot be understood satisfactorily by the existing disciplines or sciences". Though rural society exists since a long long time, but rural sociology had then not emerged due the static and unchanged nature of the rural social life. In recent years, the components of dynamism and change have escalated the capability to comprehend the complex problems of life.

1.2.2 Definition of Rural Sociology

Many Western and Indian sociologists have given their definitions regarding rural sociology in their own point of view. Among the sociologists, T.L. Smith, A.R. Desai, Dwight-Sanderson, Chapin etc. are very important Indian contributors to understanding rural sociology. Some eminent personalities like Charles Henderson of Chicago University, Butler Field, Earnest Burnholme, John Moris Gillin, Martin H. Giddings, Themas Ninon Carver and others also made their original contribution regarding the study and development of Rural Society, as a separate discipline of study. Reputed sociologists, such as James Michel Williams, Warren H. Wilson, and Newell L. Sims contributed substantially to the study of American Rural Society. The early rural sociologists used statistical and historical data, along with field interviews to find out the empirical reality of rural life in America.

1. Sanderson says that "Rural sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment".

2. Bertand says that in its broadest sense, "Rural sociology is that study of human relationships in rural environment".

3. F. Stuard Chapin defines rural sociology as follows: "The sociology of rural life is a study of the rural population, rural social organization and the social processes comparative, in rural society".

4. A. R. Desai says that "Rural sociology is the science of rural society...It is the science of laws of the development of rural society".

5. The Sociology Guide (2011) states that rural sociology is "a field of sociology traditionally associated with the study of social structure and conflict in rural areas although topical areas such as food and agriculture or natural resource access surpass traditional rural spatial boundaries".

It is clear from the above definitions that rural sociology studies the social interactions, institutions and activities and social changes that take place in the rural society. It studies the rural social organizations, structure and set up. It provides us that knowledge about the rural social phenomena.

1.2 Characteristic and Scope of Rural Sociology

1.2.1 Characteristics of Rural Sociology:

1. Rural sociology is of recent origin and a very new discipline. Here sociological principles are applied for studying rural society.

2. Rural sociology is multi-dimensional in character. Multidimensional describes anything with many different parts or aspects. You might talk about your relationship with the next door neighbor as multidimensional if, say, he's also your teacher, and if his son is married to your older sister or when you play the roles of a wife, mother and a student at the same time.

3. Rural sociology is scientific and systematic in character. A character or scientific study is a kind of character/study that involves scientific theory, scientific models, experiments and physical situations. It may refer to: Scientific method, a body of techniques for investigating phenomena, based on empirical or measurable evidence that is subject to the principles of logic and reasoning. Being systematic in character means undertaking a methodological and organized approach to learning something. It involves setting specific goals, developing a plan to achieve these goals and logically identifying and characterizing multiple causes and effects, as well as their interdependencies.

4. It has acquired an inter-disciplinary status over a period of time. An inter-disciplinary status **involves two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines**. Thus, in this instance rural sociology combines one area of study or its efforts with other disciplines as opposed to being specific in studying a given matter in society.

5. It emphasizes on micro studies. At the micro level, sociologists examine the smallest levels of interaction; even in some cases, just "the self" alone. Micro level analyses might include one-on-one interactions between couples or friends. Distinguished macro level involves the study of widespread social processes

6. It employs comparative method. Urban as compared to rural areas/communities. The main features distinguishing rural from urban areas/communities include:

- **Size of the Community:** Size refers to areas actually inhabited rather than the total area of land available for use. Rural communities are usually smaller than urban communities. The village communities are smaller in area than the urban communities. As the village communities are small, the population is also low.
- **Density of Population:** As rural areas have larger expanse of land with relatively small population, the population density (i.e. the number of people per unit area of land) is low. As the density of population is low, the people have intimate relationships and face-to-face contacts with each other. In a village, everyone knows everyone.
- **Agriculture is the Main Occupation:** Agriculture is the fundamental occupation of the rural people and forms the basis of rural economy. A farmer has to perform various agricultural activities for which he needs the cooperation of other members. Usually, these members are from his family. Thus, the members of the entire family share agricultural activities. That is the reason why Lowry Nelson has mentioned that farming is a family enterprise.
- **Contact with Nature:** The rural people are in close contact with nature as most of their daily activities revolve around the natural environment. This is the reason why a ruralite is more influenced by nature than an urbanite. The villagers consider land as their real mother as they depend on it for their food, clothing and shelter.
- **Homogeneity of Population:** The village communities are homogenous in nature. Most of their inhabitants are connected with agriculture and its allied occupations, though there are people belonging to different castes, religions and classes. Social Stratification: In rural society, social stratification is a traditional characteristic, based on caste, age, gender.

1.2. 2 Scope of Rural Sociology

Rural Sociology is comparatively a new branch of Sociology which is of recent origin. It is a separate science having its own subject matter and method of study. The scope or Rural Sociology refers to what it studies. To draw attention on the scope, N.L. Sims says, "The field of Rural Sociology is the study of association among people living by or immediately dependent upon agriculture. Open country and village groupings and groups behavior are its concern."

According to Lowry Nelson, "The scope of Rural Sociology is the description and analysis of progress of various groups as they exist in the rural environment. In the words of Bertrand and his associates: "In its broadest definition Rural Sociology is the study of human relationship in rural environment." On account of the opinions given by Sims, Nelson and Bertrand, it is observed that the scope of Rural Sociology covers rural people, their livelihood and social relationship in rural environment.

It studies society from the rural standpoint. But its main aim is concentrated on rural lives. The subjects that are included within the scope are very comprehensive in nature and we can blindly say that its boundary is variably large. The scope of Rural Sociology may be clear from the analysis of the following subjects.

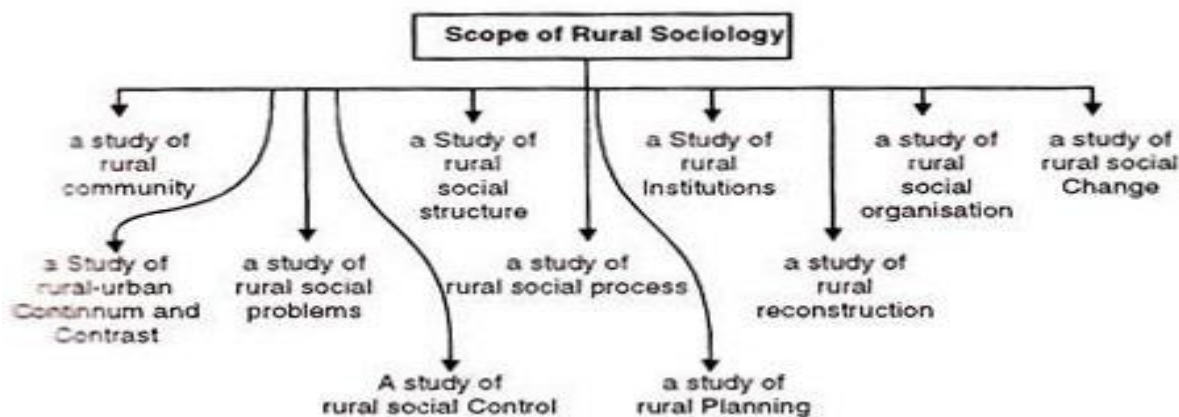


Figure 1: Scope of Rural Sociology

Table 1: Subjects Analyzed by the Scope of Rural Sociology

S#	Subjects Analyzed
1.	<p>Rural Society:</p> <p>Rural Sociology, as is clear by the classification, is the sociology of Rural Society. As sun is the centre of solar system, in Rural Sociology, Rural Society is the centre. Rural Sociology, basically studies Rural society, its nature and basic ingredients from the structural and functional standpoints. Its main aim is to study rural social life. Rural social life covers the behavior patterns, web of relationship, social interactions, standard of living and socio-economic conditions of the rural people. The scope of Rural Sociology, therefore, expands where the boundary of Rural Society is expanded.</p>
2.	<p>Rural Population:</p> <p>Rural population is the basic essence of Rural Sociology. It studies the nature, characteristics, size, density and distribution of rural population from different angles. Rural Sociology aims at the study of the factors of growth of population, its evil effects of Rural Society, rural –urban migration for the greater interest of the country at large.</p>
3.	<p>Rural Community:</p> <p>Rural community is the oldest organisation of mankind. Rural Sociology, therefore, is mainly concerned with the nature, characteristics, social attributes and human ecology of rural community. In Indian societies will include the divine origin, also studies the homogenous rigid and conservative nature of hither to existing customs, traditions, folkways, mores, norms, values and so on in rural community.</p>

4.	<p>Rural Social Organisation:</p> <p>Social organisation is the most fundamental basis of every society as well as social life. The most important function of Rural Sociology, therefore, is to provide basic knowledge about rural social organisation. Rural Social organisation covers the structural and to some degree spiritual lives, religious activities sacred relationship and in Indian societite it will include the divine notion of rebirth, Karmaphala etc.</p> <p>Of rural folk which deeply affect the entire rural social life. Rural sociology, thus, for the betterment of rural life, studies the future prospectus of rural social organisation and governing laws for its development.</p>
5.	<p>Rural Social Institution:</p> <p>Rural social institutions as we mean, is recognised forms of procedure governing the relations between the rural people. Rural sociology, thus, studies the structure, characteristics and functions of rural social institutions. Rural social institutions include family, marriage, kinship, religion, including caste in Indian societies and Rural Sociology studies the sociological importance of these institutions in the rural context.</p>
6.	<p>Rural Economy:</p> <p>Rural economy is basically known as agricultural economy. Agriculture is the backbone of rural economic life. Rural people directly depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Rural Sociology therefore studies the factors responsible for the failure of agriculture and suggests various measures for the improvement of agriculture in rural areas.</p> <p>Besides, the adoption of new agricultural technology among the farming centers, modernization of old farming methods, creation of open markets and providing agricultural training to the farmers are the important areas of the study or Rural Society.</p>
7.	<p>Rural social Process:</p> <p>Rural Sociology mainly studies the two process of rural social interaction, namely, conjunctive and disjunctive. Rural conjunctive process includes co-operation, accommodation and assimilation. Rural disjunctive process, on the other hand, includes competition and conflict. Thus, the nature, characteristics and social importance of these processes are to be properly studied by the scope of Rural Sociology.</p>
8.	<p>Rural Religion:</p> <p>Rural Society is basically a religion oriented society. Religion is the soul of rural people and it is regarded as the chief essence of rural life. Religion, therefore, plays a vital role in Rural Society. Rural Sociology, in this context, studies the concept and social importance of rural religion and its impact on Rural Society.</p>

9.	<p>Rural Culture:</p> <p>Culture, as we mean, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, moral law, art, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Rural culture is strictly based on rigid and conservative dogmas (i.e. views) and it is very static in nature. It includes old customs, tradition, folkways, mores, norms, values and so on. Rural Sociology studies the complexities of rural culture, its different structural organisations, cultural patterns, cultural traits and cultural lag in the rural contexts.</p>
10.	<p>Rural Social Problems:</p> <p>Rural Society is a hell of social evils. It is basically called a hot bed of rural social problems. Its major problems are poverty, unemployment, population growth, illiteracy, class, including casteism untouchability in instances of Indian societies, and so on. Rural Sociology, therefore, studies the causes and evil effects of these problems and also suggests measures for their eradication for the greater interests of the country at large.</p>
11.	<p>Rural Social Control:</p> <p>Social control as we mean, is the control of society over individual. In Rural Society, social control is in formal and rigid in nature. Rural Sociology significantly studies the informal means and agencies such as religions, customs, folkways, mores, norms etc., of social control. In Rural Society, the important primary groups like family and neighborhood play a vital role in social control.</p>
12.	<p>Rural Social Change:</p> <p>Social change is meant only such alterations as occur in social organization, that is, structure and functions of society, Rural Society, now-a-days, is on the way of social change. Due to the impact of money modernizing forces, Rural Society is undergoing tremendous changes in the twentieth century. For a better account of the speed of social change in Rural Society, Rural Sociology undertakes necessary steps. Rural Sociology also studies the various factors responsible for social changes in a systematic way.</p>
13.	<p>Rural Urban Contrast:</p> <p>The study of Rural Society shall not be completed unless the study of rural urban contrast is done in a proper and scientific manner. Both village and city, hypothetically, are the two contrasting modes of community life. Rural Sociology studies the rural-urban contrast on the basis of social, economic, religious and cultural point of view. Besides, Rural Sociology also draws attention on the comparative study of these two societies. As a result, the concept of Rural Society and social institutions can be clear by this contrasting analysis.</p>
14.	<p>Rural Planning and Reconstruction:</p> <p>Rural planning and reconstruction are very much essential for under developed societies. In this context, the poor and backward condition of Zambian or any other countries' Rural Society needs rural planning and reconstruction in a systematic and planned manner. Rural Society is full of social problems. For the eradication of these problems and for the betterment of rural life, the proper planning and reconstruction</p>

should be made by the Central Government. A.R. Desai says, Rural Sociology studies all these subjects and provides proper guidelines in this direction.

It is evident from the above analysis that the scope or subject matter or Rural Sociology, no doubt is very vast. Though, it is the youngest and progressive science, yet it studies the various aspects of Rural Society as well as rural life to a great extent.

1.2.3 Reasons for Studying Rural Sociology and its Importance

1.2.3.1 Reasons for Studying Rural Sociology

Rural sociology is a developing science which is very useful not only to Zambia but also to many countries whose real progress is predominantly agrarian and has majority of its population residing in rural communities or villages. Dependence on agriculture forms the fundamental base of the Zambian rural life and it also acts as a backbone for the rural population. For agriculture plays an economic role that helps in shaping the moral, psychological and ideological life of the rural people. As a study, rural sociology has its societal aims and goals. One of the most important aims of the study is the study of the Rural Society or social complexities in the rural life. As clearly stated by Professor Desai *“The prime objective of Rural Sociology should be to make a scientific, systematic and comprehensive study of the rural social organization of its structure, function and objective tendencies of development and on the basis of such study to discover the laws of its development”*

Like every other science, social or natural, has its aims in the discovery of the hitherto hidden laws of development domain and the nature of society. The basic task of Rural Sociology is to discover the law of development of Rural Society while, the aims of the rural sociology study are:

- i) To study in a scientific and systematic manner, the Rural Society and its various aspects and complexities.
- ii) To study the structure, functions and objective tendencies of development of the Rural Society.
- iii) To discover the laws of the development of the Rural Society.
- iv) To make a scientific study of the Rural Society in order to help in the task of planning for

1.2.3.2 Importance of Rural Sociology

As long as the villages and the rural society assume importance, the rural sociology shall continue to acquire importance. The importance of rural sociology can be better visualized by the following points:

1. Rural Population is in Majority: The world's is more rural than urban. More than two third of people of the world live in villages. It is the village that forms the basis of society. Rural sociology is inevitable for the study of the majority of the population.

2. Intimate Relationship between the Land and Man: Man is born out of land and his entire culture depends on it. Land has been the part of and parcel of human life. Progress starts 10 from the village. The type of land partially conditions the type of society and the opportunities for human development. This close relationship between man and land has also been recognized by economists and political scientists.

3. Villages and Rural Life form the Source of urban Population: Cities normally grow out of towns and villages. No city can come into existence all of a sudden without having a rural background. A village, when improved and thickly populated, becomes a town or city. Thus it is the village population that forms the source of urban life. Rural areas indeed remain growth points if given priority, for the countries development agenda.

4. Psychological Approach to the Rural Life: Rural progress, rural reconstruction or improvement of rural societies is possible only when the people have correct idea about the rural way of life and problems. Rural sociology touches upon the rural psychology and provides a good understanding of the rural people and their society (Bharat Kumar and Nimesh Suranga, Posted June 29, 2009).

Table 3 below illustrates the main characteristics of folk or rural area as presented by Robert Redfield.

Table 3: Redfield's Characteristics of Folk Society

The characteristics of folk society are summarized as follows:

1. Isolated

Folk society is isolated. It is physically immobile. It has its own territory, to which it is limited.

2. Small in size

Folk society is a small society in reference to the number of members. Members have direct contact with each other, but its numerical strength cannot be fixed.

3. Feeling of "we" and "they"

Folk society has community sentiment. Members know that who is a member of the society to whom they include in 'we' and who is from outside, who is considered as 'they', in the society. They have a group consciousness.

4. Personal relation

In folk society personal and direct first hand relations are found. Members know each other by face.

5. Common interest

Interest of folk society is common. Their only interest is to lead a good life. They collect the food from natural resources. They maintain the solidarity of society through group feeling.

6. Simple division of labour

In folk society the division of labour is on the basis of sex and age. Within the same sex and age group, activities are the same.

7. Homogeneity

Members of the folk society show similarity on the basis of dress, custom, culture, way of life, etc.

8. Non-literate

Folk society is non-literate. They are in the beginning.

9. Traditions have a big role

Their way of life is guided by customs and traditions. Their behaviour is spontaneous and uncritical.

10. Simple technology

In folk society technological tools are simple and traditional. They are usually got from natural resources.

11. Independent

In relationship with production and consumption, they produce for the subsistence and they are independent in that.

12. Importance of kinship system

In folk society, familial relations are established from birth. Range of kinship system is larger. Matrilineal and Patrilineal both type of kinship can be seen in folk societies.

13. Magic

Magic has a great importance in folk society. From some specific emotional experiences people try to increase the emotions of the group and reveal the truth. Malinowski in his book "The Argonauts of the Western Pacific," shows the importance of magic in Kula folk societies. In Kula, people take the help of magic in preparation of canoe to avoid the evil.

14. Sacredness of object

In folk society certain objects are considered sacred. In Yucatan Folk Society Redfield finds that if going in the way people find a peace of grain they take it with them. That is considered as lost child. So grain is a sacred object in Yucatan folk society.

15. The economy is one of status rather than of the market

So these are the characteristics of folk society. Folk society is, therefore, uninformed, original and in the beginning of the development or undeveloped or simple society.

1.2.3.3 The Focus on Rural Areas: The Zambian Context

In the Zambian scenario, rural concept is better understood when it is distinguished between rural and urban areas. Its classification is specifically based on:

1. **'Line of rail'**. Includes for example towns like Kabwe, Lusaka, Livingstone and all Copperbelt towns. Mpika, Monze, Kalomo, Kasempa, Mwinilunga Mumbwa are considered rural areas. Though some of the areas are now almost peri-urban to becoming urban areas.
2. **Population too** is used to distinguish rural from urban. For example, the 2000 census revealed 9, 885, 591 people/country. The National average was pegged at 13.1 persons/sq. km. All the areas with < 5.0 persons/sq.km were classified rural and included Kasempa, Lukulu, Shangombo, Sesheke, Kabompo, Mufumbwe, Itezhi tezhi, Kazungula, Mpika, Kaputa and Chama

Areas with between 5.0 - 7.0 person per sq. km are also rural and included Kalabo, Kaoma, Mumbwa, Chavumas, Mwinilunga, Solwezi, Lufwanyama, Serenje, Mambwe, Kaputa, Mpulungu, Mporokoso and Luangwa. With mining activities, Solwezi now qualifies as a peri-urban area.

Mongu, Namwala, Kalomo, Sinazongwe, Siavonga, Kafue, Mbala, Petauke, Katete, Chadiza etc. were shown to have between 7.1 - 13.1 persons per sq.km Other areas with between 17.9 - 47.4 persons per sq.km included Choma, Monze, Mazabuka, Chibombo, Chingola, Chililabombwe, Mufulirila, Ndola, Chipata and Lusaka all which are urban areas

The 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS) results show that the population of Zambia was estimated at 15.5 million in 2015. The population was mainly concentrated in rural areas at 58.2 percent compared to 41.8 percent in urban areas.

Total population from 2016 to 2026 (in million inhabitants) shows following population trends:

Characteristic	Inhabitants in millions
2021*	19.46
2020*	18.88
2019	18.32
2018	17.77

The LCMS (2015), in terms of population distribution by rural and urban demonstrated that the whole country had 15,473,905 people. Of these, 9,001,647 representing 52% of the population resided in the rural areas while, 6,472,258 representing 41% lived in Urban areas.

However, rural and urban classifications be considered areas of reference and that actual divisions depend more on what seems to make most qualitative differences to people's lives rather than on any objective criteria.

Keeping in mind the comparative context related to each of the definitional elements discussed above, series of other definitional criteria has been set surrounding the concept of rurality. The commonly known, ones being *social-cultural, accompanying & ecological features*

1) Ecological Defining features

The ecological defining features consider,

- Population density which is often said to low in terms of people found per square area and kilometer
- The services often offered are of low order
- Scattered population distribution

2) Accompanying Defining features

The focus with this feature is on assessing levels of:

- Interaction /person/unit of time tends to be low. In rural areas interaction per person and per unit of time is observed to be low with regards to time it takes.
- Duration of interaction is long. Rural people are associated to endlessly interact without considering how long it takes. Thus, almost losing the sense of time it takes to interact.
- Density of formal groupings. The numbers of such groupings are low and not many.
- Differentiation of structure of formal groups – is low and involves e.g. duplication of personnel/officers
- Differentiation of occupation is low, mostly agriculture. The main economic motif (i.e. idea, theme) is agriculture with all people involved in cultivation of land.

3) Social cultural

The key social-cultural features in rural settings analyzed include:

- Traditional toleration of cultural differences which most times is low
- Differentiation of cultural differences also found to be low
- Differentiation of cultural values also low
- Differentiation of political ideas which definitely is also low.

In summary, the theories discussed allow us look at societies as falling at one extreme or the other. The two extremes being:

- traditional or modern
- simple or complex
- Open or close
- Integrated or disintegrated

The possible combinations for analysis in this course are more to do with rural versus urban areas, groups, communities, institutions, *situations*, *events*, *processes* or happenings, whatever the case. A village is built up depending on the following:

- Contours of land
- Physiological conditions
- Type of production
- System of road communications
- Traditional custom
- Degree of land consolidation or
- Presence or absence of activities planned by the state

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