On studying development as an evolutionary process of catch-up
with illustrations from the WASH sectors

10.00 – 10.40: On the development and exploitation of catch-up stories as tools for
research, strategy making and policy design by Shyama V. Ramani

Catch-up is a term coined by evolutionary economists to describe how follower countries
developed industrial capabilities to catch-up with the sectoral performance of richer ones. The
‘catch-up’ literature has explored the reasons for such divergences in catch-up paths through
case studies of the historical evolution of countries and sectors. It has shown that rather than
being a homogeneous or linear process, catching-up in terms of scientific, technological and
industrial capabilities building is likely to be costly, difficult, nation-specific and non-systematic
with sectoral and cluster idiosyncrasies. Thus, technological catching-up cannot be taken for
granted. However, catch-up remains a very general approach albeit very useful for
understanding and policy design. Additionally, it has rarely been applied as a tool to study how
the poor within a country can catch-up with the main-stream population.

In response to the above, Professor Ramani’s contribution to this literature has been to
two fold. First, to standardize the construction of catch-up case studies through game theoretic
representation of processes. And second, to apply catch-up notions more widely than just in the
construction of technological and innovation capabilities in order to understand the multifarious
processes of economic development.

Key ideas that will be discussed: role of science, systems, systems of innovation, micro vs
macro, role of complexity, inductive vs. deductive approach, usefulness of game representations,
role of models, evolution of economics as a lens to understand the world, economic
development, our approach, the WASH sectors.

10.40 – 11.00: Question and Answers
11.00 – 11.30: Tea/Coffee break
11.30 – 12.30: The concepts and methodology outlined in the preceding session will be
illustrated through case studies (each presentation will be for 15 minutes)
- Role of technology and innovation: How the game changes with integration of nature by Dev
  Saha
- WASH Strategies of Schools: What is and What can be by Sangeeta Venkatesh, Anu Govind
  and Chloe Sorel
- Catch-up paths of villages towards ‘Nirmal’ status by Shankhajit Sen
- Why it should matter for firms to play smart in WASH interventions by Rushva Parihar
12.30 – 1.00: Questions and Answers