
Participation and Partnership Approach to Rural Development

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Rural development is an important component of national development in the developing and backward economies. International agencies, Governments and NGOs are experimenting various exercises in this field. Recently, it has been realized that there has to be a collaborative effort to achieve the goal of rural development and it cannot be achieved merely with supply packages of schemes and programmes, rather there is a need to achieve people participation in the programmes implemented. Therefore, the key element of rural development is the role of the government and NGOs, their collaboration and the people's participation.

Scope and Objectives:

It is universally acknowledged that the goals of our socio-economic development are not achievable unless the citizens actively involve themselves in the participation, implementation and follow-up of the development plans and programmes. Though, this basic philosophy is highly accepted right from the days of planning, till today the spirit of participation has not been realized. During the last two decades several new approaches like 'planning from below', 'bottom up planning', 'micro level planning', and 'multi-level planning' have been thought of in the context of involving the people in every phase of development. Participation in decision making has also received attention. In this context, an attempt has made in this study to discuss participatory and partnership aspect of rural development in general. The various objectives of the study are as follows:

- Assessing the loopholes of present model of rural development.
- To discuss the need for participation and partnership approach to rural development.
- To highlight the importance of institutions like NGOs, SHGs, Panchayatraj institutions in development process.

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- Suggesting ways and remedies to promote Governmental-Non Governmental Organizations Model for development.

Methodology:

An attempt has made in this study to discuss participatory and partnership aspect of rural development in general. Success storey of leading NGO of Dakshina Kannada District has taken into account. The present study is based on primary source and secondary source of information.

Evolution of Rural Development Strategy in India:

India has gained vast experience in the implementation of rural development programmes. The approaches to rural development and areas planning have also changed over a period of time. In the light of the experience gained by following a particular approach, a new approach has been evolved. The shift in emphasis is intended not only to accelerate the pace of growth in the rural sector but to ensure social justice by minimizing wastage and leakages. In the changing scenario of economic development, researchers, policy makers, administrators, intellectuals etc; are actively engaged in examining and innovating new strategies and approaches for rural development to protect the interest of rural poor.

The past five decades witnessed the evolution of many development strategies and theories, of them, two main trends have emerged in practice¹. The first is where ‘development’ starts with the outsiders providing some goods and services, which a community may or may not need. This is also known as top-down approach, is still prevalent. The second one is people-centered or bottom-up approach to development. This approach concentrates on the needs of the people what they want and need. They define the goals of development and participate in development ‘projects’ from the beginning.

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realized². During the last two decades several new approaches like ‘planning from below’, ‘bottom up planning’, ‘micro level planning’, and ‘multi-level planning’ have been thought of in the context of involving the people in every phase of development. Participation in decision making has also received attention. The increasing interest in participatory forms of rural development can be seen in the context of the wider shift in models of development from exogenous to endogenous approaches.

Concept of Participation

It is a process wherein people involve themselves in planning, decision making and carrying out activities, projects, movement or whatsoever towards betterment with or without external support and sustain the same as individuals, Peoples’ organizations and social institutions. According to N.T.Uphooff and J. Cohen³ “Participation includes people’s involvement in decision making process, in implementing programmes..... their sharing in the benefits of development pogrammes and their involvement in the efforts to evaluate such programmes”.

In the words of Pearse and Sjjefel,⁴ “participation is concerned with the organized efforts to increase control over the resources and regulative institutions in a given social situations, on the part of the groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such controls”. According to David C. Korten, participation refers to “a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspiration”.⁵

Development is determined by the people. To highlight the prominence of people’s participation the UNDP published in 1990 the first Human Development Report.⁶ This created a new paradigm of development called Human Development paradigm. This paradigm emphasizes that the real objective of development is to increase people’s development choices. The concept of human development is elaborated along the following lines. “People must be at the centre of human development. Development has to be woven around people, not people around development. It has to be development of the people, by the people and for the people.

David C. Korten has articulated such concept of people involvement as people centered development. Earlier, in the growth centered development, production occupied a significant place”.

Important elements in effective participation

Oakley and Marsden have been listed out some of the important elements in effective participation. They are mentioned below-

- The process nature of such project work, in which it is difficult to establish, fixed, quantifiable parameters;
- The desegregation of the rural poor and the identification of discrete socio-economic groups as the basic unit of development;
- The notion of bottom-up with the absence of any predetermined models and the emphasis upon the emergence spontaneously of a relevant approach from below;
- The principle of self-reliance and the need to reduce development based upon dependence;
- The issue of local control of the development project activities by the groups concerned;
- The importance of collective action by the group to tackle the problems which they confront.⁷

Planning and development policies for the eradication of rural poverty in India have started since the inception of Five Year Plans. Though importance of rural development was recognized in the earlier plans, it was only from the Sixth Plan onwards due emphasis was laid on rural development. For the first time need of people’s participation at the grass root level was felt essential in the seventh plan, from there it went on to people’s self managed institutions in the Eighth Five Year Plan with greater voice and choice⁸.

There are two types of institutions functioning in the village level and they are both formal and informal in nature. Formal institutions refers to those institutions, they carry out certain specific functions which are mostly programmes and schemes of the government. Organization structure and functions are devised from the perspective of the policy makers at the centre without taking into account the problems of periphery. On the other hand, informal institutions had been evolved and innovated by the community itself. These organizations are local specific and

meant for certain earmarked responsibilities. They are always serious in attending the works of the organizations. Mostly they are informal in nature and they are evolved over a period of time⁹.

At present, India is in the process of evolving new institutional arrangements to deal with different types of problems. Rural development is now experiencing the need of many problems solving institution. In order to reduce the burden; governments have started reinventing people's institutions or organizations to carry out activities at the grassroots. Sethi and Fellow activists feel that people working with the existing system shall have to attempt mobilization of the poor through politically neutral voluntary agencies.¹⁰

During the past few years, there has been a paradigm shift in the strategy for rural development with focus on decentralization through speedy and effective devolution of financial and administrative powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). A strategic pro-poor policy has been adopted wherein the rural poor are treated as a resource with their ideas and experiences providing important feedback for development strategy. Under most of the rural development programmes, PRIs have been assigned a crucial role¹¹. As NGOs work mostly for the betterment of the disadvantaged groups which have constitutionally been provided considerable space and encouragement through PRIs, there is now scope for these two different actors in rural development to come together in the area of rural development.

All evidences indicate that in the changing scenario of economic development top-down approach led by the government has no much role to play in rural development administration. There is a strong argument in favour of local initiation and enterprise in using the mobilizing local development projects. This led to the emergence of voluntary organizations, Non Governmental Organizations, Self-help groups etc; in the process of rural development administration. The Ministry of Rural Development is planning to increasingly associate voluntary agencies with every stage of plan formulation and plan implementation particularly in the administration of anti-poverty programmes. In this changing context, partnership approach to rural development has to be experimented in speedy manner.

Partnership Approach to Rural Development

Economic development is essentially the product of collective action in society. Individual stakes and interests can be enormously varied with not everyone gaining, or at least not gaining in the same degree. Finding ways of reducing the constraints on collective action is equally important. How can the returns to opportunistic behaviour be reduced, how can norms of social trust and reciprocity be nurtured, how can information flows and property rights be made more precise, how can transaction costs be reduced – these are questions that must constantly be raised to improve the quality of decisions in civic engagements.

Like participation, partnership means different things to different people. For some, participation is predominantly normative.¹² From the grassroots perspective the ideal type of participation is initiated from below, voluntary, organized, direct, continuous, and broad in scope and empowering¹³. Similar arguments are made with respect to partnership. The ideal type of partnership, drawn primarily from the normative literature encompasses a range of partnership principles including mutual trust, respect, accountability, and influence, with mutual determination of ends and means¹⁴.

Organization identity is the foundation for partnership. Partnerships with other actors are pursued precisely because these actors have something unique to offer, whether this is resources, skills, relationships, or consent. If organizational identity is lost, by definition comparative advantages are lost, the organization loses legitimacy in the eyes of its defined constituencies, and its effectiveness wanes. Extension, absorption, bureaucratic creep, or, more broadly, the infiltration of one organizational culture into another can all lead to a diminished capacity of a partner to maximize its contribution in the longer run¹⁵. There is no longer rationale to justify the extra effort required for a partnership. Mutuality affords opportunities for partner organizations to contribute their skills and other advantages as needed. With mutuality, these partners can more easily raise new ideas and propose new, more effective approaches. In addition, mutuality can help to ensure acceptance of the partnership's policy and procedures, and ease their implementation, when each actor has agreed to them and feels sense of ownership¹⁶.

Now a day Government and NGO act as partners of development. With the current growth and visibility of the NGO sector in many less developed countries, it is difficult, if not impossible, for governments to conduct rural development efforts in complete disdain of their NGOs, just as NGOs do not operate in a vacuum. The last two decades have witnessed a significant rethinking of what governance means, what government is and should be responsible for, and coinciding drive to maximize scarce resources in the pursuit of public good. The 1980s and early 1990s focused particularly on redirecting the role of the state from 'rowing' to 'steering' and expanding the delivery agents of public services to include the private sector and non-governmental organizations. As the new millennium begins, attention to the role of the state and the citizen is evolving further to encompass the notion of partnerships for public service.

Government and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are experimenting various rural development programmes with different strategies. In this context, interaction and institutional collaboration between the government organizations and non-government organizations have become an institutional strategy for development. Throughout the developing world, opportunities are growing for the third sector to work together with government in helping rural people to improve the quality of their lives.¹⁷ Government and Third sectors collaboration would essentially bring the process of institutional dialectics in operation by reducing the comparative advantages of the one over the other, through which limited resources can be used properly. In the ambit of development climate, Government-Third sector collaboration appears as of crucial importance.

Shri Kshethra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project(SKDRDP)

SKDRDP founded in the year 1982, on the occasion of the installation of 39 feet monolithic statue of Lord Bahubali in Dharmasthala, is the fondest of Dr. Veerendra Heggade's dreams realized. Ever since, the project has encompassed various aspects of rural development to make the rural living an enjoyable process. At present SKDRDP is active in 13 districts of Karnataka state, is engaged in intensive fight against poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, alcoholic abuse, gender discrimination, division of villages on the lines of caste, creed and money power.

The Shri Ksherta Dharmasthala Rural Development Project encompasses all aspects of enriching the rural life. It is currently engaged in developmental activities in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi,

Uttara Kannada, Coorg, Shimoga, Chickmagalur, Dharwad, Haveri, Gadag, Tumkur and Belgaum districts operating in 8,000 villages covering more than 17,50,000 families. SKDRDP is active with its Community Development Programs throughout the state of Karnataka and holds its presence in six coastal towns under the Karnataka Urban Development and Coastal Environment Management Project.

Objectives of the project

- To work towards the upliftment of the rural poor
- To organize the rural populace in mobilizing the rural infrastructure for a swift development
- To utilize locally available natural and human resources for progress
- To introduce gainful sustainable means for development of agriculture
- To encourage farm sector and the non-farm sector activities
- To blend integrity, discipline and values in the process of development
- To facilitate participatory community and village development programmes

SKDRDP works in the villages as a single window for initiating the development process. The animator identifies the eligible and prospective stakeholders, sits with them and identifies the areas requiring intervention. He/she then promotes the Self Help Groups containing people from similar background and promotes the federation of Self Help Groups.

The animator helps with:

- Agriculture extension
- Transfer of technology
- New avenues for income generation

The animator promotes:

- Community participation in village development
 - Creation of assets
 - Community development programs
 - Escorts the stakeholders to avail the benefits of Government programs
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- Manages the Micro Finance
 - The social health schemes of the project.

Partnership Approach of SKDRDP

SKDRDP has invented partnership approach to rural development. To achieve higher rate of success in rural development, it has sought support from various institutions. It includes Government, corporate houses, commercial banks, universities and research institutes, local bodies etc. The aim of the partnership approach is to build a sound model for rural development. SKDRDP has collaboration with various organizations, they are mentioned below.

Sri Dharmasthala Temple
National Bank for Agricultural & Rural Development (NABARD)
Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
State Bank of India (SBI)
Vijaya Bank
ING Vysya Bank
Central Food and Technological Research Institute (CFTRI)
Infosys Foundation
Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP).
Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India
Government of Karnataka
ICICI Lombard Pvt Ltd
Corporation Bank
Canara Bank
Syndicate Bank
Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
Small Industries service Institute
University of Agricultural Sciences and its branches

The above information reveals that, the SKDRDP has promoted participatory and partnership approach in rural development. Results have demonstrated that problems can be overcome by participation and by optimum utilization of resources, provided there is a vision and a dedicated team work.

It is evident from the above discussion that, the partnership between government and NGOs is considered to be suitable model for less developed countries to provide public services. It is important to see that rural development process should be supported by the local organizations and not necessarily by government authorities and the bureaucracy. Interaction and institutional collaboration between the government organizations and non government organizations have become an institutional strategy for development. At the grass root level, cooperatives, Panchayat Raj Institutions, Voluntary Agencies and Self Help Groups are involved in promoting rural development.

To conclude, rural development should be looked upon and treated as a joint venture of the public, corporate, cooperative and private sectors, and a systematic approach has to be followed to bring about all-round and balanced development of the economy. Although it is true that the government has been, still is, and will continue in the future to be the most important actor in the field of rural development in India, it alone cannot tackle all the problems of rural development. NGOs, Panchayat Raj Institutions, Cooperatives, Private Companies and Corporations and Universities can all play important roles in the process of development, by complementing and supplementing the functions and activities of the government. The role of the government should be to define the roles of other agencies, coordinate and, if necessary, regulate their activities, and provide such infrastructural facilities and services as cannot be provided by other agencies. Above all, the government should help to organize the rural poor within an institutional framework that can give them access to the nation's economic and political systems.

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