

AGRICULTURE POLICY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

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In the current global scenario, Shorted of food and immense increase in population are two closely intertwined factors that are the crux of most problems faced by regions across the world. As population grows, land scarcity increases and water and other natural resources decrease. With the population boom, a sustainable increase in the production of food crops to feed the ever increasing hungry mouths is becoming tremendously difficult. Thompson (1998) estimates that, "world demand for food is to double by 2025 because of an expanding population and rising per capita income". Thus, the world farmers will need to produce at least twice as much food, 25 years from now. Farmers are expected to accomplish this without harming the environment. The world's agriculture production systems must be sustainable to meet this food production target. The only alternative to this scenario is to increase productivity per hectare using technologies that have minimum adverse environmental impact. This objective is not just a research and technology issue. Public policy establishes the incentive structure, which defines research agenda.

Policies also influence which crop farmers decide to grow and what technologies and mixes of inputs they will use. It is as important to agriculture productivity to craft appropriate public policies as it is to use appropriate technologies. It provides opportunity for people to participate. There are several studies showing that in agricultural/ rural development programmes people's participation is lacking. Now a day's people's participation is becoming a yardstick of success and failure. Many scholars are relating people's participation to sustainability of the technology, and development. This paper is our attempt to develop an understanding regarding meaning of participation, need of people's participation and remedies.

Meaning of People's Participation : The Lexicographical exploration of participation gives the definition of the word as sharing/ taking part/ involvement or a role in decision making. But the stipulative definition connotes self-activity. Stated otherwise, the whole process has to be substantially endogenous; meaning thereby growing or originating from within. But at the same time it is a product of group motivation or collective action. The UN (1981) observed that participation entails; "the creating of opportunities that enable all members of a community and the larger society to actively contribute to influence the development process and share equitably the fruits of development." While community participation can be understood as referring to the entire political and economic process of a nation. In the above definition, the involvement of individual is lacking.

The current trend is to view participation more as a process. For instance, in a study for the World Bank. Paul (1987) defines it as, "an active process by which beneficiary/ client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance of other values they cherish". Narayan (1997) came to the conclusion that beneficiary participation is determined by characteristic of both, the beneficiaries and agency or project. She added, "to be effective, beneficiary

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participation should be viewed as an organic, evolving process rather than something to be injected at a later stage". Shastri (1997) gave an operational definition of participation with more careful consideration of 'political education', 'conscientization' and 'empowerment' that, "participation encompasses institutional and psycho-social processes of development oriented to maintaining and sustaining an atmosphere conducive to higher level of sharing and involvement in socio-political, economic and administrative spheres on the part of citizens, particularly those belonging to lower or weaker socio-economic strata". Therefore, participation means sharing and involvement in a process with a view to determine or atleast influence the outcome of the process.

People's participation was usually conceived of in terms of the percentage, they contributed to a project's total cost and their contribution was generally in the form of voluntary labour. But since the local people can not contribute cash, their contribution is most significant in activities that require a lot of unskilled labour, Bogati (1997) discussed different models of people's participation, which are commonly in practice. The same are given below;

No participation model—In this model, information about programmes, budgets and project evaluation is given only to the organising/funding bodies.

Information sharing model—In this, the project shares information with the district level/local administrations and discuss project evaluation.

Political participation model—In this model, the project field staff share information with the village level/gross root level and elicit input about identifying, planning, monitoring and evaluating activities.

User's participation model—Here, the resource users form groups and put pressure on grass root level/village and local level/district level political units to, identify, plan, implement and maintain project activities, Project negotiates with user's group through field staff.

Individual participation model—In this model, the individual farmers are considered in planning and implementing farm level conservation packages on private land. Projects negotiate with individual farmer who then strengthen the user's group.

Jaiswal *et al.* (1984) studied the extent of people's participation in planning implementation, maintenance of assets created and the impact on them. Santhanam *et al.* (1984) studied the people's participation in two parts; Part I covered the personal, social and economic aspects and Part II covered the information on different aspects of participation and psychological variables. This part was further subdivided into three areas; Part IIA—covered variables like awareness of the structure and functioning of the organizations of which the respondent was a member, extent of participation, involvement of decision making, perception about participation. Part IIB—contained items on awareness of functioning of social organizations, the reasons for not becoming members etc. and Part IIC—covered the psychological variable like achievement motivation, approval motive, locus of control, self-esteem, faith in people, fatalism, extraversion, items on political participation, religious participation and leadership which are common to both members and non-members.

On the basis of above review and the definition of participation given by Shastri, it is clear that the study of Santhanam *et al.* is very close to definition. In people's participation, the involvement of members depends upon awareness of institutional and psychosocial and economical process. The sharing of the benefits depends upon the socio-political, economic and administrative infrastructure.

Need of people's participation : The study of participation in development is an area that has failed to capture the imagination of social scientists. In recent times, however, it has started receiving both attention as well as recognition since most of the developing countries are facing various problems concerning the process of development. These countries, never the less, also suffer from several different kinds of constraints like the resource development aspiration lag and time development lag (Panandiker and Mehra, 1986). And the debilitating effects of these compulsions are very acute. Development programs/ projects in spite of having great amount of money, resource and precise time are resulting only in partial/ nominal success. They are not making a permanent dent on the civilisation of the area. There is, therefore, a growing sense of concern that participation would, hopefully, be able to narrow, if not completely bridge, both resource development aspiration lag and time development lag. A UN (1975) study focuses that popular participation can be an effective means of promoting policies for economic and social development—(through) a sincere commitment by national political leaders to promote popular participation—and a willingness to create the necessary institutional structure and the political conditions that may make popular participation possible. With the viewpoint and owing to larger interests in the development, the UN has begun to examine participation as a, plausible vehicle to the problems faced in the development process. Pursuant to this, it has sponsored several studies, which include social development policy, participation in decision making, peoples' participation in development process etc.

Santhanam *et al* (1984) reported that the extent of participation in a community event was limited to fulfilling the social obligations—as the psychological sense of community, a majority of respondents, perceived the need for civic amenities as the issue facing community right, followed by social economic needs. Jaisawal *et al* (1984) reported that people's participation was totally absent at all stages of watershed management except that at implementation. Thus, the watershed people had no part to play in designing the water shed plan (Project Formulation), maintenance of assets and evaluation of programme. Sen *et al.* (1984) summarised that in the event of highlighting the economic incentive of farm forestry programme, the participation of people will be forth coming as it will act as a motivating force for them to accept the programme in their situation. Bogati (1997) reported that unfortunately, peoples' participation being a social pheno-menon, it takes a long time to evolve, while water shed degradation is a natural process which occurs at a much faster rates. In order to reduce this discrepancy and to encourage peoples' participation in the development and management of the water shed resources, project's intervention was necessary. Gamage (1997) recommended that to develop a system it is necessary to prepare the minds of people on sound principals of indigenous leadership qualities and responsibilities. The collective decision-making and farmers group actions based on local indigenous experience should be encouraged. Active involvement of people to develop their own work plan, crop calendar and cropping system is important. They have to be involved right from the beginning and participate in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The above studies argues that the peoples' participation is must for any development program/project and the benefits should be shared by all sections of the society.

Constraints in People's Participation : It is established that people's participation is undoubtedly necessary and important for the development program/projects. To achieve peoples' participation in the development process is becoming difficult even though the development process starts for the betterment of the people. Therefore, it becomes a matter of discussion that which factor creates hurdles for peoples' participation. It has already been discussed that participation is a institutional and socio-psychological process and the socio-political, economic and administrative spheres at in this process. As an individual is a social member, the entire

factor acts on him. Sen *et al* (1984) reported that the department of forest was needed to develop the organisational infrastructure to take up the challenging task of motivating the people. It was thus necessary to establish a strong extension in the social forestry organisation. To motivate people there should be an organisation as an individual can be motivated in the group. In the group the psychological factors get positive directions. Santhanam (1984) mentioned that since person is important in bringing about participation, it was appropriate to study some of the personality dimensions, which augment or hinder participation like achievement motivation, approval motive, locus of control, dogmatism, extra version, self esteem, risk taking, political participation, faith in people, personal efficiency, fatalism and concept of ideal/real community. These factors are also responsible for motivation of an individual and group cohesiveness. Both motivation of an individual and group cohesiveness results in many positive attributes in organisation, which provide solidarity, power, frequent communication, trust, etc.

Bhatt *et al* (1998) defined the term cohesiveness it is the degree to which the members of a group like and support each other. He further mentioned that cohesiveness exists as a dynamics, when the following conditions are present.

- ☐ The members exhibit a high degree of solidarity.
- ☐ The member defines the group from internal and external threats.
- ☐ Volunteer attendance, participation and mutual help are high.
- ☐ The difference of the group norm is strong.

These conditions help the members feel sufficient interest in the group. It provides ability to share personal concerns comfortably. It motivates them to work towards group objectives, to achieve group goals. It has positive effect on group thoughts of thinking. It facilitates in organising the group. Therefore, group cohesiveness is important for participation.

The institutional factors like infrastructure awareness, extent of participation, involvement in decision making, perception about participation are related with socio-economic, education, political and administrative situations. Thompson (1998) reveals five strong constraints in development programs/project for participation :-

- ☐ Lack of correct public policy incentives to achieve sustainability objectives.
- ☐ Lack of correct estimation of relationship between agricultural production processes and environmental effects.
- ☐ Lack of international trade. Trade is most powerful stimulant to economic development.
- ☐ Narrow perspectives of public policy.
- ☐ Lack of the income elasticity of the demand for environmental amenities, which may not rise very quickly in the low to mid levels of per capita income.

The above constraints require the honest effort in educating the poor and marginal masses, and making policy for their welfare at the global level. Bogati (1997) reported that lack of well defined role for the community development for the conservation committee (CDCCs) in particular the misunderstanding of the role by the women members. Other needs are strengthening capacity, synchronising development and agricultural work schedule and better maintenance of work. Gamage (1997) reported that traditional practice of avoiding unnecessary risk in cultural practices have to be given due consideration. It is also necessary to give equal emphasis for both long terms as well as short term benefits.

There are several reports highlighting the constraints in participation. It is necessary to have the above points discussed for better participation.

Suggestions : To encourage people's participation the following measures should be taken care :—

- ☐ The programmes should be formulated with a broader perspective of public policy which could provide opportunities to poor and neglected masses.
- ☐ The correct public policy incentives should be incorporated into the program to achieve sustainable objectives.
- ☐ International trade has a powerful capacity to relax pressure on resources and it works as a stimulant in economic development and therefore, to poverty reduction in low-income countries.
- ☐ The social psychological aspects of participation should be taken care since inception of the program.
- ☐ Peoples' participation must be taken as an objective of the program and the organisation building should start in the beginning.
- ☐ Well-defined role of the organisation should be chalked out at an early stage.
- ☐ Traditional and cultural knowledge should be recognised and incorporated in the program.

CONCLUSION :

People's participation in an essential process for the development. It encompasses the institutional structure and socio-psychological factors. Awareness and functioning of infrastructure, transparent policy having broader prospective increases peoples' participation. Group cohesiveness and motivational factors increase the power in organisation and give significant positive result in participation. Public policy incentives, international trade, prior consideration of peoples' participation in the program mobilise people to co-operate and co-ordinate in the development process. By this way the fruit of development reach those belonging to the lower or weaker socio-economic strata of society.

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