

PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THROUGH PRA: FROM DEPENDENCY TO SUSTAINABILITY

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A large number of development programmes of different types (Employment provision, income generation, awareness creation etc.) have been designed and implemented by the central and state governments aiming at enhancing the socio-economic condition of the downtrodden. Many programmes do not succeed in accomplishing the aim for which they were created. The fundamental reason, as every one accepts, is that people are not given a role to play in identifying, analyzing and prioritizing their needs and finding ways and means to solve their problems. Peoples' voice is often ignored. The top-down, hierarchical approach in identifying peoples' need through evaluation of the impact of the projects / programmers must be replaced by participatory approach. Participatory approach must be introduced at all stages of the projects, if we are really concerned with peoples' empowerment. As this approach brings the people to the focus in project activities, the results would certainly be fruitful and rewarding for the people as well as for the implementing agency.

People - Centered Development Projects—Basing Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach to formulate people centered projects (PCP) is meant, "to enable the people to involve, share, enhance, analyse, and prioritize their knowledge of the life, conditions," problems, needs and solutions for formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects for the benefit of themselves with little facilitation from outside the community. People-centered project on the

other hand enhances the people to play a vital role in assessing their needs, materializing and monitoring the projects. With deep involvement and active cooperation.

Participatory Rural Appraisal—PRA is a multi-disciplinary approach to analyze multifaceted problems. The underlying feature is that it could be practiced among all types of people—men or women, educated or uneducated, younger or elder, officials or ordinaries—and could also be applied to understand any field of knowledge—agriculture, forestry, fishery, industry and so on.

A variety of methods of PRA have been designed in such a manner as to make the people participate collectively and interestingly and keep the tempo lively through out the PRA exercise. A great deal of attitudinal change could be possible for both the insiders as well as the outsiders through practicing PRA methods, which is highly pertinent for the success of any project.

PRA hands over the stick to the insiders (villagers), they dominate over the scene and they do almost everything—discussing, analyzing, scoring, sharing and owning-up the information. Outsiders, although may be better placed by virtue of education, play a low profile with the attitude of listening to and learning from the people. PRA approach brings facts and figures into practically captivating pictorial/visual representation in a manner everyone can easily understand. It is comparatively lesser time consuming than survey and other traditional methods of understanding rural realities. Having been embodied with all the

essential and enriched ingredients, it is quite a suitable approach for the people to take active part in formulating people - based projects.

Features of People-Centered Projects :

- It is open, need based, and bottom up. Facts gathered (through PRA) are mostly pictorial and easily understandable.
- Concepts and criteria are evolved locally by the people, which may not remain unchanged in other villages.
- The core of the project is (peoples' needs) thoroughly diagnosed which makes the people fully utilize the project activities.
- Much emphasis on rapport leads to have cordial relationship, which evokes mutual trust on each other.
- With a sense of dedication, responsibility and involvement of the people the processes are performed.
- In its long run process, the scope of making people empowered through different dimensions is abundant.
- Ample scope for bringing in sustainable development through combined activity that will be permanently helpful for the people.

Reversals of Modes in People-Centered Projects :

From Confinement to Revelation—Conventionally, in the process of formulation of projects, the officials are very much confined to packaged programmes unconcerned of its necessity or relevance. On the contrary PRA based-centered projects keep the officials' minds unconditioned and discussions open. Participatory problem-diagnosis and solution designing take place. Every single move is known to everyone. The use of PRA facilities in analyzing the problems on the spot and within a short span of time and so is a handy methodology to the development practitioners.

From Concept Centered to People-Centered—Policy makers and planners of traditional projects sit in isolated places; seldom

visit villages and make lots of assumptions. Many a time the parameters developed prove to be unprudent, the methodology unworthy and finally the targets unachieved or even if achieved the objectives remain unattained. The reason is obvious. Indian villages are heterogeneous in character and need locally appropriate concepts and norms and not a foreign formula intended to be universal. People-centered projects would do away with all the lacunae by putting the people first on identifying their own parameters and assessing their needs through PRA. The parameters evolved are also cross-checked, triangulated with other groups of people; using other methods of PRA and from other sources of information.

From Target Orientation to Need-Oriented—Too much emphasis on targets without looking into the local needs and values only dissipate the resources-capital and human. In a striking contrast to the above situation people-centered projects are need-based, the needs of people are thoroughly analysed before the projects are formulated, through participatory approach. So far as the local conditions are concerned villagers themselves know better than the outsiders. Fuller utilization would be assured, if the needy people are made part and parcel of the project. The successful working of self-help groups (SHGs) among women all over India is a striking example in this regard.

From Mutual Suspicion to Mutual Trust—Failure to create adequate rapport, mutual understanding and trust is another stumbling block that put people and projects at loggerheads. People-centered project on the other hand is built upon through mutual understanding, cordial relationship and interdependence, as both of them need to be interactive in every stage of the project. The use of PRA in this regard is invaluable as its approach is interactive which will provide no room for mistrust or skepticism.

From Ritualistic to Realistic—Monitoring and evaluation are two vital phases of a project cycle through which the performance of project is assessed. Unfortunately, they are taken for granted and the two activities are performed, often enough, as recklessly as possible only with all kinds of ritualistic flavour (Tamilmani, 2002). Just opposite to this in PCP monitoring and evaluation are performed with great care and active cooperation of people. Deviations would be remedied then and there. People themselves monitor the development process.

From Participation to Empowerment—Participants of the project are to be trained in the various development dimensions, namely decision-making, confidence building, responsibility sharing and self-standing. On the contrary the conventional projects aim at input delivery or service rendering programmes to the people forgetting the sustainability and withdrawal dimensions (Mukherjee, 1993).

From Dependency to Sustainability—Over the years people have developed dependency on government programmes under conventional projects. More often the sustainable development aspect is not visualized as it is very much programmed, and ignores the voice of the people. But, the focus on sustainability is highly stressed, by the PRA approach as it respects peoples' values and capabilities.

CONCLUSION

Changes in the approach, strategies and processes of developmental projects need to be made more and more participatory. The end result of participatory projects would be very effective and rewarding. PRA serves as the best-suited developmental approach that can ensure accurate appraisal, timely formulation, effective implementation, in-built monitoring and realistic evaluation of projects.

REFERENCES

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2. Tamilmani, B (2002) People Centered Development Projects PRA, Kurukshetra, Jan 2002, pp: 34-38.

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