

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Varsha Parikh¹ & Dimple Kshatriya²

Conservation of natural resources has been an integral part of human civilization. Conscious conservation of natural resources is essential at this juncture of development of human society to arrest the rapid pace of their degradation and depletion. The world's biological resources-its species, habitats and ecosystems are under threat from a growing population, unsustainable consumption pattern, pollution, wasteful resources use and global use and global change. It is certain that, if the current process of degradation and depletion goes on unhindered, the existence of the planet and human society will soon be in jeopardy.

The environment sustains all life; the plants and animals that provide us food, clothing, medicines, raw materials and all other human needs including a live-able atmosphere; providing the basic life support system to us. Natural resources form the basis of all our scientific advances, technological progress, genetic engineering, agriculture and industries. It is the basis of human survival itself.

Natural resources, which are vital for food, livelihood and environment security, are under intense pressure today. In the emerging development paradigm shift of all development systems, a constant critical and unfortunate result has been the vast plunder and destruction of our natural resources and forestries, especially in the developing countries. A major reason has been the obsession of mankind with material and physical growth, and for consumer goods for the enjoyment of the luxurious life of the maldeveloped elite. This led to the unhampered exploitation of the world's most precious natural resources, ranging from water, trees, minerals to virgin

soil and even animals (not just for food, but for their furs and claws, tusks etc.) and thousands upon thousands of the planet's once unlimited flora and fauna. Man's insatiable appetite for material goods and the money to buy these goods have created this imbalance in our value system. Simply put the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. The world is at a critical stage today.

The world faces a wide variety of environment threats: degradation of soil water and marine resources essential for increased food production; widespread health threatening pollution, stratospheric ozone depletion, global climate change and loss of bio-diversity.

The land base per person is shrinking, posing the challenge of maintaining the soil health while obtaining more and more from less and less area and quality of land. Soil erosion accelerates green house effect (on a global scale, it causes emission of 1.14 billions tons of carbon to the atmosphere every year). The task is to reverse land degradation under the present patterns of land use, biotic pressure, state of technology and investment.

The country's water resources are also facing problems of pollution leading to high occurrence of water borne disease. Even today about 200 million people in India do not have access to safe drinking water. Most of our water resources are polluted with untreated/partially treated wastes from industry, domestic sewage and fertilizer/pesticide runoff from agricultural fields. The planning commission in the 10th plan envisaged that all the villages of our country should have sustained access to the potable drinking water and cleaning of

1&2. Lecturer, Dept. of Home Science Extension & Communication, M.S. University, Baroda (Gujarat)

major polluted rivers within the plan period i.e. by 2007. This would mean bringing up extensive investment both by the government and private sector for drinking water supply, water treatment and disposal, providing primary education, gainful employment, basic health care and conservation of natural resources.

The area of wild lands continues to decline, reducing the habitat available for species other than the few that humans manage or that can survive in the domesticated environment. Tropical forest, coral reef ecosystems, coastal mangrove forests and other wetlands and many other unique habitats are being rapidly destroyed and species extinction is increasing. Thus extinction is contributing to the imbalance of the food chain thus the whole ecosystem.

The major task before the country is to rehabilitate the degraded forests and to enhance the area under forests/ tree cover to 33% of total area as envisaged in the National forest policy, 1988. To achieve the goal of the National forestry Action programme (NEAP); a comprehensive strategic plan to address the key issues underlying the major problems of forestry sector. The planning commission in its 10th five year plan under its monitorable target brings out that the forests cover of the country should be increased by 25% by 2007 and 33% by 2012. This would mean bringing up extensive tracts of land under tree cover that would require a substantial investment both by the government and private sector.

Many ecosystems and species of flora and fauna have come to be endangered. Simultaneously we are increasingly witnessing dwindling aquifers, declining farm productivity and accelerated impoverishment of people, especially in these natural regions. The current levels of field conservation are not adequate to contain these adverse trends especially because the communities living in and around protected areas are among the most disadvantages due to inadequate and inappropriate in rural development and welfare

programme too. Since, their dependence on natural bio-resources is substantial; their well-being and safeguarding the natural ecosystems, new 'landscape' based strategies for ecologically sustainable rural development are called for these have to be backed by packaged alternatives for local people in the form of efficient but conservation friendly utilization practices for bio-resources, as well as supplemental livelihood activities.

CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES :

Participatory approach can be defined as a semi-structured process of learning from, with and by rural people about rural conditions. Participation can be defined in many ways. According to modernization theory, participation refers to citizen's involvement in the process of self-governance and is enacted through voting and association with political party mechanism (Survaer et al 266). It aims at promoting socio-economic, political and educational development of people. PRA is a 'family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions to plan and act. Thus, conservation of natural resources requires participatory approach. There are many examples of the use of participatory methods and techniques for agricultural research and community based rural development programs. The use of PRA/RPA/RAP methods in conservation of natural resources as mainly it is understood as a responsibility of the state and national official to look after.

On the other hand, sustainable development refers to the process of growth-oriented development, which aims at harmony between natural environment and human actions. It means that the richness of earth's biodiversity would be conserved for future generations by greatly slowing and if possible halting extinction of habitat and ecosystem destructive. One of the priority requirements for achieving

sustainable development is to create sustainable human societies. Environment education and research are critical not only for the establishment of sustainable human societies but also to develop technologies, skills and expertise, which translate into tailor made solutions to environment problems.

In brief depletion of natural resources exist at local, regional, national and global levels. The roots of these problems lie in factors associated with a very low level of eco development and insufficient awareness on part of conservation of natural resources caused by a lack of education concerning to conservation of resources. What is needed is to understand the causes and effects of these problems and devise ways and means for their solution. Where the powerful, rich and leaders neglected the environment and natural resources, how would one expect the individual or community to take the right attitude? Yet today we know if quality development is to take place the protection and conservation of the environment and natural resources should be everyone's concern. The imbalance that must be corrected, everyone must take action in environment and natural resources conservation and protection - the individual community, government, regional and national levels. One of the biggest obstacles to sustained growth, endogenous technological progress and environment and natural resources management education in the developing countries is the lack of education

The conventional means of spreading education are proving to be inadequate in the face of growing population. This is not to deny that all sectors must be approached- males, females, children, and old folks, even the disabled those outside the normal circles of society. All must be addressed every one need to know something about the conservation of natural resources and environment. Although it may not be equal in scope or depth. This is because everyone lives in some sort of environment and natural resources, so their

actions either enhance or destroy their surrounding environment. A dynamic measure that could bring appropriate responses to this problem would be to educate the people of all ages on the environment for making better decision.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGY :

Environment strategy needs to be based on realism about where we start from our-strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Our strength include a unique endowment of natural resources and an age-old tradition of environmental protection and conservation and above all this innovation among our people. A weakness is the extent of change wrought on the natural environment in a short time.

Education on conservation of natural resources becomes a corner stone of public awareness about the resources and solution and prevention of its problems. The need of the hour is a step-by-step systematic approach inspired by determination to set things and restore our ecological balance. Thus, vital steps that need the attention in order to sustain our environment and natural resources are:

- Encouraging multi-stake holder participatory process involving effective and efficient exchange of information.
- Evolving methodology and apparatus from indicators/indices of sustainability, monitoring progress, assigning responsibility, evolving systems of incentives and accountability.
- Promote sustainable consumption levels and pattern through effective dissemination and awareness programme such as short documentaries and clip lets on prime time, van meals, environmental consciousness, eco-labeling, and packaging. Thus innovative communication strategy needs to be developed for creating awareness.
- Promote sustainable, production, transportation, packaging and distribution of goods and services clean technology, waste

minimization renewable, energy efficiency, (reduce, reuse and recycling).

- Evolve long-term vision and perspective on sustainable development.
- Evolve an early warning and rapid response system through strengthened, meaningful, comprehensive and integrated surveillance system on sustainable development by linking health, safety and environmental and forestry monitoring networks.

CONCLUSION

Over the recent years, the people's movement for protection and preservation of environment and natural resources at the grassroots level has developed in the entire country. The failure on the part of government's various schemes to protect the environment, forest and other natural resources mostly due to non-participation of local people, of late, has largely been responsive for this development.

On the other hand, it's also very important to understand that ideal eco-restoration and sustainable development enlisting people's participation at the village level, encouraging them to restore and conserve forests and understand the need of harmonious relations between man and forests for their own survival is visible only when the needs of the forests villages such as housing, fuel, fodders etc are fulfilled.

The linkages between environment conditions including the management of natural resources and human well being is complex

but at the center of the thematic aspect is the imperative to positive environment stability as the core element of the focused strategy. Thus the environment is not to be construed as the core element of the poverty focused strategy.

There is a greater emphasis in built into the Tenth plan for enhancing economic and social opportunities for all individuals and groups, increasing reduction in disparities and to promote greater participation of the community in the decision making process. All these aspects underscore the increasing thrust for linking the environmental concerns with the developmental strategy to attain three key objectives namely,

- Enhanced people's livelihood
- Reduced people's vulnerability
- Improve people's health and living environment.

It is a time we should think and evaluate our own steps by generating a sense of belongingness with constructive ideas and process of mass involvement in a participatory approaches for implementing any plans or programs on conservation of environment and natural resources to get the desired results.

Needless to say of course, all effort should be to directed towards care of the basic infrastructure and facilities for maintenance of our environment and ecology. We need to improve the state of our environment for present and future generations. The ultimate solution lies in our proper use of the basic civic amenities as good citizens.

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