We have just completed fifteen years of our experience as PRIA. The seeds of this organisation were sown by the early work on participatory research during the late 70s. That experience provided the philosophical basis for our work: Knowledge is Power. This perspective inspired the early activities we undertook by promoting a number of initiatives which emphasised recognition and articulation of indigenous popular knowledge in the fields of education, health-care, natural resource management etc. Over the years, different ways of expressing that philosophy gained ascendancy in PRIA’s work. Today, our work in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions as mechanisms of local self-governance is its most explicit expression. We are using methods of organizing and promoting the learning of leadership in local bodies to play their rightful role as self-governing institutions. Special emphasis is being placed on learning and empowerment of new leadership in these institutions: women and socio-economically weaker sections of society.

In building a body of new knowledge on Occupation and Environmental Health in India and South Asia, PRIA relied on deepening the understanding of processes which make work place and community healthier and safer. New knowledge has been generated on the basis of existing knowledge and experiences of workers and community members in this otherwise 'technical' field.

As government and international development agencies have begun to emphasise participation of primary stakeholders in large scale development projects, PRIA has undertaken a series of initiatives to ensure that learning and capacity building of primary stakeholders is seen as an integral part of the promotion of people-centred development. What was a decade ago merely an experimentation in micro areas by voluntary development organisations has now acquired an increasingly central place in development projects of a large scale nature. Thus, the greatest challenge facing us is to bring the principles of learning and knowledge as elements of empowerment into the design, implementation and monitoring of large scale development projects, particularly in the
social sectors. This is indeed a new challenge because it involves sensitivity and competency in engaging a variety of stakeholders to value the centrality of participation as a vehicle for relevant and sustainable development.

From the early days of Participatory Research, this is indeed a long distance travel. Our work in PRIA today may appear as having increasingly focused on macro issues and macro players, but our underlying philosophy and perspective continues to be that of knowledge as a source of power and control in the hands of those who are otherwise excluded from such development initiatives. For practitioners of Participatory Research, therefore, it implies building our understanding of macro forces, on the one hand, and sharpening our capacity to work simultaneously in micro settings. While organisationally PRIA is continuously equipping itself in this direction, it certainly poses new challenges for enhancing the capacities of our colleagues and partners. Our ability to utilise this opportunity to broaden the impact of our work demands our continued rootedness in the theory and practice of Participatory Research.

- Rajesh Tandon
Using information to empower local communities

MAYA PINTO

The communities living in the Central Himalayan region known as Uttarakhand, are amongst the most backward Pabalis (hill dwellers) in the country. Repeated assaults on their natural resource base coupled with the inadequacy of measures to integrate them into the development mainstream have had an adverse impact on their income and livelihoods.

HARC (Himalayan Action Research Centre) is amongst the handful of development agencies which have concentrated on working in the remotest of these areas and enabling communities living there to access mainstream development resources and services. At the core of HARC’s approach is the simple understanding that information is a resource and that in the interests of promoting development which is pro-people and sustainable, voluntary agencies should concentrate on creating a cadre of people at different levels (village, voluntary sector, government ...) committed to the same.

HARC’s interventions are interesting in two respects. First, they relate quite directly to some of the conceptual debates outlined elsewhere in this bulletin such as the link between ‘knowledge’ and ‘action’ or how development can be made to reflect local needs and priorities. Second, they provide a fairly distinctive model for voluntary action, wherein the voluntary agency has avoided ‘projectising’ its development agenda and concentrated instead on the ‘processes’ which enable poor and marginalised communities to participate more actively in development.

It has been argued for some time now, that the manner in which information is obtained, pieced together and utilised as a basis for action, has perpetuated numerous biases in development. The image of an ‘expert’ visiting a village, defining the villagers’ needs and returning to head office to draw up a development plan for the area, is drilled into the mind of every student of rural development as being a ‘worst-practice’ scenario. Alternative images of development practitioners sitting alongside villagers to ‘map’ their surroundings or of village melas and fairs where voluntary agencies popularise health and education schemes, are referred to in a more kindly fashion.

These contrasts which are essentially a reflection of changing models of development, have motivated several development agencies to engage in mass-awareness campaigns, attempts to popularise official development knowledge or the reverse—demonstrate the value of popular (local) knowledge and knowledge systems. The purpose of this article is to explore the full potential of this link between ‘information’ and ‘development’. The discussion is based on the approach and activities of a single voluntary agency called HARC or the Himalayan Action Research Centre, based in Dehra Dun. Its experiences suggest that information (if strategically employed) can catalyse community-based initiatives in the broader context of development and social change.

Development in the Hills

HARC operates in the Central Himalayan region known as Uttarakhand. Its primary constituencies are the local (indigenous) communities living there.
The basic problem facing these people is that the area's natural resource base (on which they are almost entirely dependent for their income and livelihood), is being eroded at a near catastrophic rate. Mainstream development agencies have concentrated on establishing 'structures' or 'facilities' or 'subsidies' in abundance but with limited knowledge of local needs and almost no involvement of local people, have actually aggravated the situation. As a result, traditional institutions (which hitherto functioned to protect local interests) have been unable to align themselves with external forces such as the market or the state and are falling into disrepair. Individuals, conditioned to receiving handouts and subsidies are losing faith in their capacities to find solutions to the problems they face. In sum, the situation closely resembles the 'worst-practice' scenario described earlier and one in which the willingness and ability of local people to participate in development is steadily being eroded.

**HARC's response**

HARC's response to this situation has been in the form of development education interventions (see box below) in the fields of natural resource management and human resource development.

This response is closely linked to HARC's understanding of the role voluntary agencies in the Hills can or should be playing. Through development education HARC is endeavouring to restore local people to their rightful place as active agents in the development process without creating additional 'blockages' in the system. It also views development education as a means to propagate its alternative development model to other development/civil society actors.

HARC's educational strategy is to build on information which is suited to local conditions and needs and which is of strategic importance to local people — strategic in the sense that it should enhance their knowledge and capacities to participate in development. This strategy is best illustrated by examining a selection of HARC's programmes:

One of its earliest programmes for example, was a **Mass Contact Programme** in which it drew on the talents and motivation of university students to explain and spread understanding of village life in the Hills. HARC trained several hundred students who then went on to study the development needs of different villages. Over 250 villages were covered in this manner. Apart from initiating a process of rapport-building between villagers and outsiders, the programme was a means for HARC to enhance its own understanding of development in the region.

In recent years, it has adopted an even more innovative approach to disseminate this knowledge and information. **Village Eco-system Planning** or VEP as one of HARC's most popular programmes is called, involves adopting a holistic approach to micro-level planning. HARC provides VEP training to a wide range of participants from voluntary sector, government, academia and the villages themselves. This training has established a channel for micro-level development realities to feed into and refine existing development knowledge both within HARC and outside. The holistic approach also provides villagers with a development framework they can identify with and use to initiate their own development actions.

Another commendable initiative, is to the setting up of **Village Information Centres** or VICs. As the name suggests, the primary role these play is to ensure that information of relevance to local people is within their reach. VICs also provide HARC staff with opportunities to observe and respond to the fast-changing local development realities.

Also promising, are certain **extension education** activities HARC has initiated in recent years. These essentially involve 'demonstrating' technologies and schemes which can provide some value-addition to the income/lifestyles of local people. Extension education has been carried out by HARC in areas such as water
harvesting and oil extraction from Himalayan oilseeds. HARC’s role in these is mainly that of an initiator: identifying local produce, tapping technology and skills from outside and establishing market links. To date, none of these activities have developed into fully-fledged extension programmes under HARC’s control. The understanding is that villagers through the process of demonstration and education will be competent enough to take these activities forward independently.

Impact: some field-level illustrations

The impact of HARC’s educational interventions is most evident in Nauago block where HARC has its field office and where it has piloted several of its recent initiatives.

Staff members observe, for example, that the villagers’ motivation to participate in development-related activities has increased tremendously. Their attitude towards HARC initially, had been one of disinterest as no subsidies or finances were being offered by the Organisation. Today, however, they are enthusiastic about attending meetings convened by HARC even if no immediate material gains are being offered. They are open to discussing their problems and seeking out possible solutions.

A further and tangible impact of development education in Nauago has been in terms of raising awareness about government schemes and programmes earmarked for this region. The situation before HARC started work in Nauago, was that information about programmes run for the benefit of the local people never actually reached them. If information did reach, then more often than not it was in a distorted form. In most cases, the actual objectives of the programme were missed out on. At present, the communities living in and around Nauago are visibly informed. A vivid illustration of this was provided during a quiz organised by HARC field staff in Nauago recently. All the local respondents were able to explain “what DWCRA stands for” or “what benefits they could seek under JRY”.

Finally, development education has been instrumental in terms of strengthening local level leadership and institutional capacity. Although this district and neighbouring ones have witnessed several environmental/popular movements such as the famous Chipko Andolan in the past, by and large these did not leave behind any institutional structure to continue promoting local interests. The knowledge and skills local people are receiving through HARC’s activities serve therefore as a platform for them to organise themselves to take on new roles and responsibilities in the development process. This trend is particularly evident amongst the women folk in Nauago. Following HARC’s educational interventions several Mahila Mangal Dhal (women’s organisations) have been constituted. These are gradually increasing the development options for women both at an individual and group level. Some examples of impact include an increased number of women participating in leadership development and awareness programmes, getting involved in income generation activities and standing for panchayat elections.

Learning from the field

As word of HARC’s approach and activities spread, many more villagers, government officials and others (voluntary agencies, academics, students…..) in Uttarakhand have expressed an interest in supporting this educational process.

The Nauago experience is also of relevance to voluntary agencies working beyond the Uttarakhand region as it provides some key insights into the kind of competencies voluntary agencies committed to facilitating similar pro-people, sustainable development processes need to develop. As an organisation, HARC has benefited greatly from the fact that:

- the skills mix within the Organisation, particularly with regards to human resource development and natural resource management, corresponds to the development needs of local communities
- staff members are comfortable with a process-oriented approach to development rather than being bogged down by quantifiable targets
- there is a high degree of interaction between HARC and the villagers. Over the years they have been able to establish a two-way channel of communication where the villagers come forward of their own accord to discuss problems and seek out possible solutions
- its operational planning/implementation methodology is innovative and flexible and enables the Organisation to synthesise ‘learning’ with ‘action’ and respond quickly to changing development realities at the village-level.
- it has also, over the years, built up confidence and the credibility to advocate on issues of local development significance in regional and national development forums.
After information: what next?

The title of this article should ideally have read as: "...creating a base for empowerment", as empowerment clearly is not a stage or item which can be ticked off on a voluntary agencies' agenda of actions 'to be completed'. Information-related development strategies should in this context, be seen as a means to activate a process whereby local communities gradually assume greater responsibility for the decisions and actions which affect their lives.

While HARC's educational interventions have clearly set a base for these broader processes, several additional development hurdles have to be surmounted in the near future. Issues related to establishing a sustainable livelihood base will be of prime importance. HARC's extension education activities have shed light on the kind of viable income generation alternatives local people and others can get engaged in. It remains to be seen how these can be replicated on a larger scale. Likewise, issues regarding a political/legal framework for sustained community-based initiatives also need to be addressed. The recent constitutional amendments in favour of strengthening local self-governing institutions are one example of a positive trend which voluntary agencies like HARC can cash in on.

Maya Pinto is Programme Associate in PRIA's Centre for Participation and Governance. The article has been based on discussions with HARC's staff and visits to Nainital during the course of an evaluation exercise in which the author, Mr. C. Datta (PRIA) and Dr. A. Ravat (UP Academy of Administration) participated.
In recent years, participatory development has emerged as a discourse with both global and local dimensions. This section of the bulletin takes a look at three 'circles' or networks which are playing a significant role in influencing and extending the boundaries of the discourse even further.

As debates on 'participation' or 'participatory development' are essentially about reversing the development process in favour of the powerless, the presence of global (and powerful) voices in these is a matter of concern for some participation-stalwarts. It is alleged for example, that many global and international agencies while professing a rhetorical interest in participatory development have made a marginal effort to alter their field practices. Or else, that participatory approaches and methodologies can actually be manipulated to accommodate their top-down agendas.

Notwithstanding these allegations, it is clear that these agencies have made some positive contributions in terms of adding to and disseminating knowledge on participatory development. The following pages provide information about a Working Group on Participation formed by the OECD* (an inter-governmental network), the Inter-Agency Learning Group on Participation (a multi-sectoral network initiated by the World Bank) and the Cartagena Conference which will draw together some of the most prominent advocates on participatory development to discuss: "action research, action learning and process management" later this year. Like all networks, these are significant in that they provide a platform for information sharing; joint agenda setting and mutual control. The following months promise to be exciting for those interested in following their discussions.

WORKING GROUP ON PARTICIPATORY
DEVELOPMENT AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Background

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*), is a forum for governments to discuss each other's economic and social policies, analyse the impact of national policies on the international community and in some cases, establish legally-binding agreements.

This exchange is structured through committees, one of which is the Development Assistance Committee or DAC.

The focus of the DAC's work is on the budgetary allocation of OECD member countries to assist developing countries. DAC monitors aid budgets, how they are spent and whether they conform to its agreed priority of economic growth which is sustainable in terms of the environment and population.

In 1993, the DAC Orientations on Aid for Participatory Development and Good Governance were published and an ad hoc Working Group on Participatory Development and Good Governance with a three year mandate was constituted. The Working Group operated by holding two or three workshops per year. The final meeting of the Working Group took place in October, 1996.

Who’s voice?

OECD (DAC) membership is linked to a country's commitment to a market economy and pluralistic democracy. Its membership and outreach has however expanded considerably through the years. At present 26 countries belong to the OECD club including some developing countries. The OECD's contact with the broader public (beyond the governmental level) however is limited.

Emerging issues, impact

Participatory development in the context of DAC's work has been linked with the issues of good governance and also those of democratisation and human rights. The DAC Orientations and the Working Group together, have contributed towards placing these issues firmly on the aid agenda. Their impact can be seen in:

- the frameworks several donors (particularly in
Europe) have developed in order to assess country contributions to participatory development.

- Questions raised regarding aid management and delivery e.g. the kind of planning/implementation tools which promote participatory development, the financing of smaller projects.

- A growing interest in donor co-ordination and policy dialogue in the area of participatory development.

The ad hoc working group having terminated its activities is now replaced by an informal network on Participatory Development and Good Governance whose main task will be to continue an exchange of information. The idea is to aim for closer co-ordination of these issues amongst donors in 6 or 7 developing countries with one DAC member volunteering to take the lead in each country. The logistics of this new activity are yet to be worked out.

Documents to look out for

- Participatory Development: in concept and action, summary of workshop held in Paris
- Participatory Development and Good Governance, Development Co-operation Guidelines Series, 1995
- DAC Annual Reports
- The final report of the Working Group which will be finalised sometime this year

INTER-AGENCY GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

Background

In 1992, the World Bank published its 'Policy on Participation'. This development gave a further boost to discussions regarding the Bank and other donor agencies' commitment to participatory development. Two interesting institutional initiatives have emerged as a result. The first, is the setting up of an Inter-Agency Learning Group on Participation (IGP), and the second is a Working Group on Participation within the already existing NGO-World Bank working group.

The IGP operates with three formal objectives which are: (i) mainstreaming of participatory development inside donor agencies (ii) exchanging information and analysis on participatory development (iii) supporting capacity building on participation at local and national levels. The Working Group on Participation looks more specifically at the World Bank's action vis-à-vis participatory development and in this sense complements the IGP.

Both groups meet periodically at an international and regional level to conceive of and then review action plans.

Who's voice?

The IGP as its name suggests, draws together representatives from multilateral and bilateral donors as well as voluntary agencies whereas the Working Group on Participation is composed primarily of voluntary agency actors with some representation from the Bank. Both networks have representation from Northern and Southern countries.

The advantage of both these networks (particularly when compared with others like the OECD) is that the voice of non-governmental actors is on par with that of governmental/official agencies.

Emerging issues and initiatives

The main impact of this collective experience sharing at international and national levels has been a concerted effort to monitor and influence effective implementation of the Bank's Policy on Participation.

In 1993, the Bank produced its Regional Participation Action Plans and several voluntary agencies since, have been attempting to take stock and draw lessons from the progress on these. One particularly interesting initiative in this respect, concerns the monitoring of participation by voluntary agencies. A common monitoring framework is being developed which will be applied to provide feedback about participatory processes in Bank funded projects around the world.
In a more general sense, this networking was been instrumental in extending the ‘participatory development and donors’ discourse to a wider civil society audience. The issue of tri-partite arrangements (between government, donors, local organisation) and how they can promote participatory development at local and global levels, is receiving attention. The question of building in country capacity to promote participatory development has also been addressed.

Documents to look out for
- World Bank Sourcebook on Participation
- World Bank Policy on Participation

THE WORLD CONGRESS ON ACTION RESEARCH, ACTION LEARNING AND PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Build up ......

From the 1st to the 5th of June, an international meeting is being convened in Colombia to discuss the ever-expanding field of participatory and action approaches. The purpose of this meeting is not to develop any ‘global theory’. As the convenors explain: “For twenty years participatory and action approaches in different regions and conditions have gone their own ways and looked for their own answers. What is required at this point, is to induce the formation of a combined world-view which represents the convergence of ideas from the North and South, practitioners and intellects”.

Issues
There are three main subjects to be covered during the conference:
- action research with and for people
- action learning
- process management

In logistical terms, discussion will be structured through three working group, the topics of which are (i) construction of democratic societies and cultures: theory and practice (ii) creation, transmission and utilisation of knowledge (iii) System building for socio-economic, industrial and ecological administration

The output of the Congress will represent the experiences and views of some of the finest minds in the field including academics, writers and practitioners. As the multiple labels of: ‘action research’, ‘learning’, ‘process’, ‘management’ suggest, one can expect a good cross-fertilisation of disciplines and ideological orientations. It is hoped that this process will take stock of some of the recent trends in the research and action particularly those from developing countries.

Output
Check the Participation and Governance bulletin in July!

ORGANISING PARTICIPATION: Participation and Governance, July Edition

The forthcoming edition of Participation and Governance will focus on the issue of organising local communities as a means to enhance their participation in the development process. We welcome contributions which examine some of conceptual debates around the issue of organising participation as well as field-level narratives on the same. If your organisation (or individual staff member) has experiences they would like to share, do write in to the editors. Contributions should be received no later than April 31st.
Micro-planning: the Mandi experience

SOHINI PAUL

It is now a generally accepted fact that planning done at the national level is not always locally relevant, for each local area has its personality, potential, problems and needs. Against this background, the practice of 'micro-planning' is gaining popularity with many development agencies.

This article describes a micro-planning initiative underway in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. Micro-planning as the author explains involves attempting to understand the relationship between human 'activities' and 'needs' in a particular area or space. The 'space' considered in this case, is a panchayat and the technique or method of planning is participatory. The aim is to initiate a bottom-up planning process with plans emerging from the panchayat groups and feeding into block and district level planning.

Background

The 73rd constitutional amendment has transformed the face of panchayats nation-wide, from a situation in which they were considered as the implementing agencies of state governments to one in which they can begin to function as local self-governing entities. Panchayats today have their own constitutional existence and sanction to prepare plans and programmes within the overall framework for the development of the nation.

With these developments in the background, the process of bottom-up planning is receiving renewed attention. By planning at the panchayat-level and feeding these plans up to regional and national levels, the country can hope, in the long run, to reduce people's dependence on the government and increase their self-reliance. It can also hope to improve the relevance of our national plans.

One such initiative to plan at the local or 'micro' level is underway in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. The initiative is being facilitated jointly by PRIA staff and staff from the Rural Technology and Development Centre (RTDC). In methodological terms what this initiative involves, is focussing on a particular area or 'space' and attempting to understand the relationship between human activities/resources and needs. The 'space' selected in this case is a panchayat in light of the panchayat elections held in Himachal Pradesh in December of 1995 and the ensuing need to equip panchayat members to handle their new responsibilities.

So far, facilitators have concentrated on one panchayat (Kehar panchayat) and over the past 8-9 months have developed a micro-plan with the active participation of the local community there. Following are some glimpses of the process involved, the major outcomes to date and lessons learnt by the facilitators.

THE PROCESS

1. Selection of panchayat for micro planning exercise.

The initial stages of any planning exercise are of critical importance, as they build the base for all future activities. As facilitators, one needs to think through all initial decisions such as which panchayat to select or how to approach the community there. Our selection of Kehar panchayat was influenced by RTDC's presence there. Also, because the co-ordinator of RTDC is elected as pradhan of the panchayat. This greatly enhanced our ability to establish a rapport with the local community there.
2. Environment building

As micro-planning requires active involvement from the local community, it is essential to motivate them from the onset. Our approach to this was to form a core team who would work directly with the community. A workshop organised for the core group marked the formal commencement of the exercise. Following this, meetings were held with the gram panchayat leaders and in individual wards. Through these activities we were able to create a considerable amount of awareness about the process and also to identify volunteers from each of the wards. A total of 22 volunteers were identified from 11 wards and they were provided with additional training.

3. Collection of data and information and its tabulation & analysis

The objective of the next phase of our micro-planning exercise, was to understand the existing situation in the area through systematic collection of data and information. The focus was on getting community members to reflect upon their individual realities employing a combination of data-collection methodologies. The door-to-door surveys proved to be the most accurate in this situational analysis. A total of 747 households were covered. The collection of this information was done by the volunteers (i.e. community members themselves).

4. Sharing of the findings with the people

As the tabulation of data was done by the facilitators, we thought it essential to share all findings with the community soon afterwards. Again, we favoured the workshop/meeting approach as this enabled us to move from 'individual' to 'group' realities. The focus of the workshop was on getting the community members to understand the socio-economic situation of the village as a whole and the major problems therein.

"Bheek bakri se hamara kya faida? Hamari samasyon ka samadhan karo."

[What do we do with statistics on animals? please solve our problems for us]

During the session on sharing of findings, people were more interested in problem solving.

5. Community problem analysis and identification of development priorities

This appeared to be the most crucial stages for the formulation of a micro-plan. We encouraged the community members through a series of workshops, to analyse problems faced at an individual, village and panchayat level and then rank these according to their priorities. From the ranking it was simple to ascertain what the development needs of the village were.

"Aap logon ne 21 vi shatabdi mein chalang mar marni hai, lekin aapko gaon ke logon ko nazar se sochna chaahiye."

[You people have leaped into the 21st century without taking into consideration the villagers way of thinking]

The comment was on the method of prioritisation, where people were asked to tick on the wall chart.

6. Identification of solutions and strategies

The community members then went on to identify possible development actions to address these needs. Some guidance was required at this stage in order to get the community members to select the right development strategies. We laid emphasis on people's contribution (in terms of labour, material and money) towards the betterment of the village. Optimal use of the locally
8 Steps in making

1. Selection of panchayat for micro planning exercise.
   - Good relationship with a grassroots NGO
   - Good rapport with the people based on trust and support
   - Contact with community-based organisations - Nehru Yuvak Mandal, Mahila Mandal, etc.

2. Environment Building
   - Use of poster and banner
   - Identification of volunteers and training them
   - Meetings with community members in all 11 wards of Kehar panchayat.

4. Sharing of the findings with the people
   - Use of graphical illustrations on flip charts
   - Analysis of the village land use map
   - Discussion on the emerging problems.

5. Community problem analysis and identification of development priorities
   - Community problem analysis done through meetings at the village level
   - Based on the problems and needs identified, development priorities by the village through wall charts.
a "MICRO PLAN"

3 Collection of data, its tabulation and analysis
- Collection of Socio-economic data through household survey (questionnaire)
- Tabulation of the data to make it easily understandable
- Situational analysis – to understand the present in order to plan for the future.

6 Identification of solutions and strategies
- Based on the priorities, strategies evolved to overcome the problems faced by the people. Eg: drinking water, road construction
- Formation of Village Development Committee to formulate and implement plan.

7 Preparation of micro plan
- Consolidation of all the village level plans at the panchayat level.

8 Implementation
- Village Development Committees along with Panchayat to implement the plan
available resources was also stressed. At this stage Village Development Committees (VDC) were formed in each village. The main function of this committee (comprising of technical experts, men and women etc.) is to help in the formation and implementation of the development plan.

"Pehle hum logon ko lagta tha ki yeh kaam ayna shemon ki tarah hi hai, lekin ab lag raha hai ki is kaam se hamare gaon ke vilas ke kuch sabhi kaam bho gaya."

[Earlier we used to think that this work is like any others scheme, but now we feel that something positive is happening for our villages development]

7. Preparation of the micro plan

We are currently at the stages when the final micro-plan is being drawn up. The process at this stage is more in the hands of the community members than the facilitators. The Village Development Committees will formulate plans at the village level and these will then be consolidated to form a panchayat level plan.

8. Implementation of the plan

The main actors behind this will be gram panchayat, members of VDC, gram sabha members and concerned government departments.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Looking back, we feel some of the main outcomes of this initiatives in Kehar Panchayat have been:

- **The development of a core team and a group of volunteers.** This team can now carry out a similar (improved) process of micro-planning in other panchayats of this region. One such initiative is already planned.

- **Orientation of the gram panchayat members about the concept of micro planning:** its importance and the need for their involvement in this exercise. The elected representatives feel responsible for the successful implementation of the plan. This is evident from the initiatives taken up by them in each of the village level meetings, from informing the people to the making of the Village Development Committee and the micro-plan.

- **Active participation** on the part of the people (both men and women from different sections of the community) in meetings held during the various phases. This shows their interest in the programme and can be definitely considered to be a first step towards awareness generation and a feeling of involvement in the planning process. There was also representation from the village level organisations like Nehru Yuva Mandal, Mahila Mandal and Kisan Sabha.

- **Making of a panchayat level development plan** which takes into consideration the problems and priorities of the people and identification of schemes which can be implemented by the panchayat along with the villagers. It is hoped that Kehar will be considered to be a model panchayat in this process of people-centred, bottom-up planning in Himachal Pradesh.

Some problems faced

- During the course of the programme, some of the volunteers left the project due to various reasons like marriage, education, ill health or a general lack of interest.

- Breaks and long gaps between the different phases led to loss of interest on the part of some people and some of the volunteers.

- Assignments given to the members of the core group took long time to finish, thus delaying the entire process.

- Due to lack of proper orientation and opportunity, it was not possible to conduct PRA exercises which had been planned earlier as a part of the original plan. In retrospect we feel that this would have been helpful.

Lessons learnt

- Participatory planning and community participation in village development activities is a new approach for villagers who till recently have been totally dependent on the government for all kinds of support. While meetings and participatory exercises are useful in securing this involvement, it is only through participatory planning and the implementation of that plan that intervening agencies can win full support of the people.

- Constant interaction and communication has to be maintained with the people. In particular, voluntary agencies have to work to maintain the initial enthusiasm and enable community members to
• Constant interaction and communication has to be maintained with the people. In particular, voluntary agencies have to work to maintain the initial enthusiasm and enable community members to translate this into concrete actions. Care must be taken to utilise a wide range of communication channels and media. The planning process should not alienate the vast proportion of rural poor who might be illiterate.

• Time is a major constraint for the rural people, since agricultural activities take up most of their day. So the limited time that the people can spare should be used in a constructive manner. Meetings with the villagers should be kept short (3-4 hours) as long meetings can discourage further involvement.

• Gathering of data through a household survey is a good method of getting authentic, primary information of the entire population of the panchayat. This process is also a means of meeting people and explaining the need, importance and people's participation in the development process. However, in spite of these merits, survey method of gathering data is very time consuming. Besides, data tabulation and compilation is a very tedious and long drawn process.

• It was realised towards the end of the planning process, that it is helpful to carry out some Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises with the people during the first phase which includes building a conducive environment for micro-planning and rapport building with the people.

• People’s role and their participation in the planning process needs to be more clearly defined to them. Innovative and new methods of reaching out to the people, to generate more interest and involvement on their part needs to be worked out. Many people (especially the illiterate) are still unaware of the micro-planning exercise being carried out in their panchayat and the need for it. So more efforts need to be undertaken in this direction.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion it can be said that panchayats are to be considered as the 'third tier' of governance in the country or as self-governing institutions then micro-level initiatives such as these need to be scaled-up to influence planning at district, state and national levels. The idea of enabling villagers to set their own development agenda should be to influence national level priorities and plan. We hope our micro-planning initiative will lead in this direction.

Sahini Paul is working as a Programme Associate in the (Panchayati Raj Institutions) PRI unit of the Centre for Participation and Governance, PRIA. She is co-ordinating PRI activities (training, micro-planning, research, preparation of educational material) in Himachal Pradesh. She has a Masters degree in Regional Planning from the School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi.
The Historical Roots and Contemporary Tendencies in Participatory Research

The following extract provides an overview of the field of participatory research examining its emergence as well as the trends which have maintained its relevance in the contemporary context. This discussion is useful as it provides some understanding of the linkages between the various ideologies and methodologies which have mushroomed around the issue of participation, particularly in the context of development. Participatory research both as a body of knowledge and as a method of enquiry, is a useful vantage point from which to look at these variations.

History

Participatory research (PR) in its early formulations, was earlier seen as an alternative social science research that challenged the very premises on which social science research methodology was based: premises of neutrality, objectivity and value-free character, the distance between the researcher and the researched, the dichotomy of the subject and object, the reliance on statistical and quantifiable techniques—were all subjected to comprehensive critique in early years of formulation of PR. As part of its history, it is important to recognise six significant trends that seem to converge together to contribute to the evolution of the concept and the practice of PR.

First and foremost, was a debate about the sociology of knowledge and its implications on epistemological formulation (forms of knowing) throughout human civilisation. This debate continues to pose the question that knowledge of human civilisation is conditioned by historical context. It is within this framework that many views of history, of struggle and of social transformation were posited. The most famous of these collections came to be known as Subaltern Studies. These presented the view of society, human order and human history from the point of view of the weak, as opposed to the dominant form of knowledge produced and articulated throughout the history from the point of view of the rulers, the Kings or the Brahmins.

The second historical trend which in fact stimulated the very first articulation of the phrase ‘participatory research’, came from the practice of adult educators in the countries of the South. Adult education is essentially based on facilitating a horizontal dialogue between the teacher and the learner and its methodologies aim at establishing the control of the learner over his or her own learning process. With the professionalisation of the discipline however, many adult educators found themselves faced with a contradiction as research had begun to distance them from the learners. This contradiction led to a reformulation in their approach to research, both in theory and in practice. It is here that, in 1974-75, the phrase ‘participatory research’ was first projected, and subsequently promoted through the International Council for Adult Education and its national and regional member organisations.

The third parallel support to the ideas and practice of PR came from the work of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich. Illich’s critique of schooling in modern societies and Freire’s contribution to an alternative pedagogy became the basis for linking PR as an educational process within the framework of popular education. A number of contributions related to this theme emerged in the late 60’s and early 70’s which paved way for strengthening arguments in favour of PR.

Another trend which travelled in parallel for a member of years was the field of action research. In particular, it challenged the myth of a static notion of research and inquiry. It argued for “acting” as a basis of learning and knowing. This formulation of action research, going back to the work of Kurt Lewin, was recaptured in Latin America and subsequently became the basis for the formulation of participatory action research. It emphasised the notion of action as a legitimate mode of knowing, thereby taking the realm of knowledge into the field of practice.

A fourth trend which also merits consideration, is the field of phenomenology. These contributions focus on experiences as a basis of knowing and thereby expanded enquiry beyond mere intellectual cognition to
include human emotion, experience and feelings. Subsequently this stream of work developed in a significant way within the framework of experiential learning.

**Finally**, the debate on development paradigms, raised the question of participation - people's participation, women's participation, participation of those whose development is being attempted - as a critical variable. This received significant support owing to failures of top-down, expert-designed development projects and programmes. A fundamental tenet in the promotion of participation as a central concept in development is the use of knowledge and skills of those who are critical participants and central actors in the development process.

These trends in the evolution of PR are worth recalling because they represent the complexity in the evolution of this field over the last two decades. Each trend has made its own unique and important contribution, both in concrete PR practices around the world as well as in elaborating its theoretical principles, methodology and epistemology.

**Contemporary Tendencies**

The significance of participatory research continues to be reinforced in the contemporary context. Following are some more recent trends which have contributed towards this.

The first important trend is what is referred to as the 'new politics of science'. This suggests that science based on instrumental rationality, the logic of manipulation and control of nature (both material and human) has been the basic instrument of ensuring continued hegemony of the ruling classes. It is this science which has also been the basis of expert-led, top-down, centralised models of development.

The second contemporary development is part of the long standing historical trend between ideology and education. Two contrasting streams of education have become visible. A system of education which perpetuates the status quo and socialises people into acceptance of the dominant order is based on the positivistic notions of modern science and knowledge enterprise. An alternative is, a system of education which links education to social transformation and is based on the traditions of popular knowledge and popular education. In a world presently divided in conflict, the role of education and its links to ideology have become, once again, crucial instruments of regulation and control.

A third and significant contemporary development which has enriched the theory and practice of PR has its roots in feminist perspectives and struggles. Feminist research through the years, has critiqued the male biases and patriarchal roots of dominant science. It has also revealed the modes and forms through which women 'know' and act to change their reality. These insights have strengthened both the ideas and practice of PR.

The fourth trend which has reinforced many premises of PR arises from the ecological movement. Research in sustainable human life, ecological balance and harmony has demonstrated the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems. The framework of knowledge acquired over centuries of struggle and survival by tribals and other indigenous communities throughout the world has found new support in light of the growing critique of ecological degradation and destruction in modern societies.

A fifth contemporary trend which has expanded the scope of original formulations of PR is demonstrated in the many new methodological labels that have emerged in recent times. There is now a growing body of literature available on participatory rural appraisal. This approach to analysing rural reality has evolved innovative techniques and tools which make the process of village-based investigation of local reality far more accessible and practical. Similarly, new strength has been given to the formulations of action research and its practice in diverse settings. Some of the most interesting formulations of this have emerged in the context of aboriginal educational systems, institutional development and community organisations.

Another stream of work has been labelled 'New Paradigm Research' and has brought together a number of trends of PR in practices such as human social service, counselling, therapy, learning for the slow learners etc.

Finally a number of practical applications of PR have grown in the last decade. These have focused on evolving examples of people-centred development in organising and mobilising women, youth, tribals, workers and the marginalised. Applications of PR in
training programmes and in systems of monitoring and evaluation have also grown immensely and further enriched the original formulations. A number of examples have appeared in recent literature which describe these applications and thereby contribute to further clarifying this vast alternative that was originally labeled participatory research.

Extracted from:

One day orientation of sarpanchs, January 4th - 7th, Haryana

PRIA in collaboration with 2 voluntary agencies: Gramin Vikas Aum Sanj Kaylan Sabha and Mekha Angan, organised a one day orientation workshop for sarpanchs from districts Faridabad and Gurgaon in Haryana. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- further understanding of local self governance vis-a-vis the 73rd constitutional amendment
- provide details of the Haryana Panchayat Raj amendment act
- identify strategies for the successful implementation of the Act

4 sarpanchs from Bahadurpur and 4 sarpanchs from Mewat participated in this workshop.

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Animators training for micro-planning, 15th and 16th January, Rohtak

PRIA in collaboration with Asha Sahay conducted a 2 day training for animators at Chuckwar, Rohtak. The participants were field workers who have been actively involved with women’s groups and panchayats in that area. These animators will be involved in carrying out a bottom-up planning exercise in that area in the future. The workshop agenda concentrated on:

- identifying objectives for people-centred planning
- encouraging a team culture amongst participants
- establishing a relationship with a network of Human Service

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Training workshop on Awareness Generation Programme for Rural and Poor Women in Haryana, Nolokheri, Karnal district, 17th - 22nd February

This six day training programme was organised by the Central Social Welfare Board as part of its Awareness Generation Programme for rural and poor women. CSWB has identified PRIA as a nodal agency for this programme.

A total of 16 participants attended the workshop. The main objectives of the training were to:

- equip the staff of grassroots voluntary agencies with knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for implementing AGP camps
- discuss the issues which will be dealt with during the camps mainly on topics related to health and sanitation, social legislation and laws relating to women
- develop participatory training skills
- inculcate the ability to motivate cadres of socially conscious women from amongst the poor
- develop detailed organisation-specific future plans of action

The training was imparted in a participatory manner involving role plays, small and large group discussions, case studies, games etc. Learning material on various topics was also distributed.

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Regional Workshop on Participatory Development, 4-6 February, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

A three day Workshop on Participatory Development was organised by UNNATI (Ahmedabad), in collaboration with PRIA at Jodhpur.

The Workshop drew together a total of 28 participants from 17 voluntary agencies working in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The main objective was to provide a platform for participants to share their understanding of participatory development. Group discussions, exercises and role plays were utilised to obtain involvement from the participants. These covered areas such as: the benefits of participatory development, women’s development and gender equity, grassroots capacity and institution building at a grassroot level, role of community based organisations, community empowerment and the sustainability of development programmes.

An interesting outcome of the workshop was that participants expressed an interest in developing organisation-specific policies on participation.
Workshop on Research Strategy for the Management of Environmental Resources by Communities (MERC), 10th and 11th February, New Delhi

The MERC programme is an initiative to build on the Aga Khan Foundation's (AKF) own experience and that of the NGOs it has supported in creating a network of mutually supporting NGOs that continue to learn from each other and refine approaches to community management of land, water and other environmental resources. In addition to strengthening NGO efforts in Gujarat, the MERC programme would also focus on supporting NGOs in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The India Canada Environmental Facility and Aga Khan Foundation Canada are the primary funders of this Programme.

A meeting was convened by AKF India on the 10th and 11th of February to invite suggestions on developing a research strategy for the MERC Programme. The meeting was attended by various sectors specialists and representatives from governmental and voluntary sector agencies interested in promoting participatory approaches.

Governing Board Meeting, 11th and 12th February, PRIA, New Delhi

A meeting between governing board members and PRIA staff took place at the PRIA office over the 11th and 12th of February. The Governing Board currently consists of Mr. Prem Chadha, Dr. N.C. Saxena, Ms. Shrilata Batliwala, Mr. Vijay Mahajan, Mr. Joe Madiath, Ms. Lalitha Ramdas, Mr. D. Thangappan and Dr. H. N. Sayied.

The meeting was an excellent opportunity for PRIA staff to interact with board members and present their plans for 1997. Centre-wise presentations were made and the Board's suggestions were invited on the same. Our sincere thanks to those members who took time out from their busy schedules to attend the meeting and we look forward to meeting the others over the coming months.

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Announcing: The Second National Inter-Professional Dialogue on Participatory Development and Participatory Research for Social Work Educators of India

As a human service profession, social work has a key role to play in facilitating an alternative approach to development. Professional education and training for Social Work in India has a history of nearly sixty years. Social work educators unlike many other educators, have managed to maintain their links with the field and attempt to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in their analysis and teaching.

Against this backdrop, the Participatory Development -Participatory Research (PD-PR) Unit of PRIA in collaboration with ASSWI (Association of Schools of Social Work in India) and other regional social work associations, is involved in an ongoing development intervention with the social work educators in India. The intervention involves a series of inter-professional dialogues at a national and regional level. These provide a platform for social work educators, renowned academicians and experienced development practitioners to understand and assess the implications of participatory development and participatory research for social work education.

From the 18th to the 24th of April, the Second National Inter-Professional Dialogue is being held at the PRIA office in New Delhi. The programme is being organised jointly by ASSWI and PRIA. A total of 28 participants have been shortlisted for the workshop.
Panchayat Raj - Information Resource Book
Foundation for Research in Community Health, 1996

An extremely useful resource for those working on panchayat-related issues. It includes a listing of 500 organisations working on panchayat-related issues around the country arranged alphabetically and then state-wise, along with a brief description of the nature of their activities. A brief historical background covering pre-independence and post-independence eras is also useful.

The appendix includes: a chronology of Panchayati Raj legislation, the 73rd Amendment Act, government schemes for rural development, selected books and periodicals on Panchayati Raj.

Foundation for Research in Community Health, 84-A, R.G. Thadani Marg, Worli, Mumbai 400 018
Price: Rs. 155

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Current Concepts in Community Forestry Dennis F. Desmond, Social Forestry and Extension Section, Forestry Services Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Royal Government of Bhutan

Since 1979, forestry programmes in Bhutan (as in many other South Asian countries) have tended to emphasise people-oriented goals and strategies. Community forestry, involving the control and sustainable management of local forest resources by the users, is becoming increasingly popular with development agencies in these countries. This document, written in a simple illustrative manner synthesize existing knowledge on the subject with field level experiences from Bhutan and elsewhere (particularly India and Nepal).

The book is divided into two sections: (i) What is Community Forestry and (ii) How do we do it. The first section starts with a lucid coverage of concepts which form the basis of community forestry approaches. Following this, three short case studies of indigenous forest management from Bhutan are presented. A common trend highlighted through these is the gradual erosion of traditional systems and the lack of an alternative sustainable model.

Section two deals with the nitty-gritty of community forestry at a field level. Strategies discussed are: people's participation, the role of the extension worker and the project cycle.

Also useful, is a listing of indicators (social, technological and institutional) which may be used to assess the functioning of forest user groups.

Social Forestry and Extension Section,
Forestry Services Division,
Ministry of Agriculture,
PO. Box 130, Thimphu.
Fax: 075-2-22395. Pages: 80.

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Participatory Appraisal of Natural Resources
Neela Mukherjee, Concept Publishing Company, 1997

This book is the third in a series authored by Neela Mukherjee, which focuses on rural participation through participatory rural appraisal. This particular volume deals with an evolving methodology which the author terms as: "Participatory Appraisal of Natural Resources" or PANR for short. PANR, as the author explains, is essentially an off-shoot of PRA with the difference that the latter is a generic term covering interactive community participation of a general kind while the former is topical and stands for participation around natural resources.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first three introduce conceptual and methodological issues related to participatory appraisal. Chapters four to seven are case studies which explore different aspects of the relationship between local communities and forests, based on the author's field experiences. The book concludes with some policy-related recommendations in the sphere of natural resource management.
Recommended in particular for natural resources managers, researchers, environmentalists and forestry professionals.

*Concept Publishing Company,*
*A/15-16, Commercial Block,*
*Mohan Garden, New Delhi 110 059*
*Pages: 180, Price: Rs. 200*


Sachs' first Development Dictionary is acknowledged as an invaluable resource to development students, practitioners and policy-makers alike. 'The Development Dictionary - a guide to knowledge as power' is a more up to date and critical examination of the constructs that the development discourse builds around. In the editor's own words, it is 'an invitation to re-view the development model of reality and to recognise that we all wear not merely tinted, but tainted glasses if we take part in the prevailing development discourse'.

The Dictionary is essentially a compilation of essays (nineteen in all) written by eminent development critics which together provide an alternative world-view of development. Each essay examines one key concept in development touching upon its historical/anthropological basis and exposing the kind of biases which have built up around it. Examples include concepts such as 'resources', 'needs', 'one world', 'science' and 'state'. One of the essays is on Participation - written by Majid Rahnama. There are three Indian essayists: Ashish Nandy, Claude Alvares and Vandana Shiva.

*Orient Longman Limited,*
*3-6-272 Himayatnagar,*
*Hyderabad 500 029 (A.P.)*
*Pages: 408, Price: Rs. 375.*


This compilation reflects upon some of the recent questions being asked of and within the NGO sector in India, particularly in the context of changing relationships between NGOs and the state and other civil society actors. The authors are mainly from academic and governmental/semi-governmental organisations with an interest in promoting an integrated theory of NGO development and action.

The book has three sections, titled: (i) Non-Governmental Organisations in Development: Theory; (ii) Practice and (iii) Overview. The contents of the first two sections are useful in that they provide some conceptual frameworks with which to critically examine the growth and current status of the NGO sector in India. One interesting article in this respect, is a presentation (based on an empirical study) of two models of NGOs: the first based on NGOs following a Social Work approach and the second following a development approach.

The Overview attempts to construct an integrated theory of people's participation linking NGO action to the process of national-building and decentralised development.

*Kanishka Publishers,*
*4697/5-21A, Ansari Road,*
*Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002*
*Pages: 288, Price: Rs. 450*

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This discussion paper contains the output of an international workshop on Participatory Development held at the World Bank in 1992. While the focus is on the Bank's commitments to participatory development, the paper also draws together the experiences of some large agencies which have a long-standing association with participatory development approaches: BRAC, IFAD, SIDA and UNICEF.

The publication also includes issue-based papers, which provide a flavour of some of the debates advocates of participatory development are currently grappling with: (1) Institutional Mechanisms for
Popular Participation (2) The Building Blocks of Participation; Testing a Social Methodology (iii) Capacity Building for Participatory Organisations (iv) Funding Mechanisms and Participation (v) Monitoring and Evaluating Popular Participation.


The India Development Report 1997 provides up to date information and analysis of economic and social issues currently facing the Indian economy. The Report starts with an overview of the macro-economic climate, examining both national and international trends. It then goes on to analyse prospects within agriculture, infrastructure, banking, financial markets, the social sectors and those related to the natural resource environment. The authors have identified and debated certain critical question facing the country today: Can India attain and sustain higher growth rates? What has been the impact of reforms on the poor? Why are interest rates so high? What can we do to meet our energy and power needs? How should one look at the 'Swadeshi versus Videshi' issues which agitate so many?

Highly recommended for analysts, policy-makers, student and researchers looking for a fuller understanding of India's economy.

Pages: 256 Price: 265


This book is an attempt to capture some of the complexities involved in practicing 'participation' or 'participatory development' in South Asia. Following on from an introductory chapter, there are eight essays: Significance of Participatory Approaches in Empowering People for Sustainable Development; The New Orthodoxy and Old Truths: Participation, Empowerment and Other Buzz Words; Participatory Discourse and Practice in Water Resource Crisis in Sri Lanka; The Social Construction of 'People's Knowledge' in Participatory Rural Development; Participatory Approaches to Development under Civil War Conditions; On Development and Public Action - A Reflection on the Kerala Experience; and Living between 'Participation' and 'Self Determination' - Some Reflections on the Plantation Sector in Sri Lanka

The authors are all researchers and practitioners who participated in a workshop organised in 1995 by Durvogivaran, a South Asian network which is trying to promote participatory approaches in situations of natural disasters and internal conflicts. All the essays point to the need to understand the limitations of participation both at the conceptual level and in practice.

Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd
A-149, Main Vikas Marg, Delhi-110092
pages: 288, Price: Rs. 300

Everybody Loves a Good Drought - Stories from India’s Poorest District P. Sainath, Penguin Books India, 1996

This is a compilation of short reports - vivid and gripping, through which the author has attempted to raise to the public eye the extent of misery and deprivation in India’s most poverty stricken areas. The communities talked about are typically tribal, small-scale and marginalised farmers or wandering artisans. Through their life histories the author demonstrates the manner in which most mainstream development actors continuously fail to make the link between the statistics and projections about poverty and the implications of these on human existence. While the book in itself does not offer any ready-made solutions it is indeed as eye-opener. Those working in the field will find it easy to identify with the issues highlighted.

Penguin Books India
210 Chiranjivi Tower,
43 Nehru Place New Delhi 110 019
pages: 470, price: Rs. 295

Society for Participatory Research in Asia
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062
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Strengthening community organisation

The view that local communities — including the poor and marginalised — are capable of organised and collective action for improving their situation, is not new to the theory and practice of development. Over the years, practitioners and activists working at the grassroots have accumulated a considerable amount of experience in strengthening community organisations. A variety of approaches and methods to mobilise people, form groups and build collective consciousness have been experimented with and new knowledge and tools keep emerging from the field.

At present, the opportunities to utilise this experience are expanding rapidly. Several mainstream development agencies have recognised the significance of poor and marginalised communities to organise themselves. Experiments in organising at the grassroots, are being incorporated in the planning of development projects and programmes of a large-scale nature. Extensive initiatives to revitalise existing community organisations or establish new ones have also been launched.

The contributions to this edition of Participation and Governance are reflective of these trends. Articles featured in our ‘Learning From Field’ section examine how women’s self-help groups and dairy farmers’ co-operatives in India, have enabled local communities to expand their influence well beyond local contexts. The authors also draw attention to the range of stakeholders involved in strengthening these organisations. Similar observations are made in ‘Global Voices’, but in the context of donor-initiated development projects and programmes underway in different parts of the world. The article suggests that community organisations serve as a powerful link between local people and larger development actors. Finally, the ‘Theme’ section explores the historical processes which bring people together and build collective consciousness, providing in this manner a framework within which to situate our ongoing experiences.

On the whole, the commentary suggests that as enthusiasm for organising local communities increases, new challenges and contradictions emerge in field contexts. Support for community organisation is essential, as it accords local people with an ‘official’ space in the macro structures and processes which influence their lives. At the same time however, development agencies need to avoid simply creating community organisations without
paying adequate attention to the inclination, knowledge and capacity of local people to sustain these.

In our country, we have no reason to believe that the current enthusiasm for organizing local communities is just a passing fad. Numerous constitutional and administrative safeguards exist to suggest otherwise. The Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan just stated that "forms of people's participation" like co-operatives, self-help groups and panchayats need to be strengthened and that the government will seek active partnership with the voluntary sector in this respect. For those of us engaged in similar interventions, this calls for celebration. It also calls for a meaningful reflection of our experiences to date.

Maya Pinto

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Organising Self Help Groups: the CASA experience

JOEL A.G.R. BOSE

Organising Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has been a popular activity with non-governmental organisations since the 1980s. In recent years, several other state and national-level institutions have accepted the SHG concept as well. Many nationalised banks and commercial banks for example, are willing to provide credit to SHGs. The concept of SHGs has spread beyond countries like India and Bangladesh to other parts of the globe.

CASA (Church’s Auxilliary for Social Action) views SHGs as a tool for community organisation, an activity of socio-economic development and a strategy for women’s empowerment. CASA organises SHGs with the objectives of:

(i) inculcating a self-help attitude among the women-folk
(ii) developing collective leadership

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Ichikottai Self Help Group

In Ichikottai, an SHG was initiated over an informal meeting between our development workers and the villagers. Mrs. Saroja, one of the villagers, brought a small lamp as an aid for the meeting and that was the day, as the women say, that light came into their lives.

To start with, 20 women joined together to form a SHG and pooled together Rs. 200 each. In six months time, three such groups were organised in the same village. On seeing the first three women SHGs, the men of the village were impressed and the fourth one was formed by the men themselves. Once CASA had organised twenty such groups, these were introduced to the Indian Bank, Thenipatti-Pudupatti. The members now deposit a portion of their savings regularly with the Bank. This has created a linkage between the bank and the womens’ groups. The Indian Bank patronises these SHGs as its grass-root credit base. In units, the SHG becomes a platform between the jaries and the bank.

April 1997 report reveals that the village has raised nearly Rs 50,000. We find a healthy participation among these groups not only in saving, but serving themselves. They have engaged in village activities like road formation, tank deepening, village sanitation, mosquito eradication, availing erment services and linking with nationalised

Participation & Governance 3 Vol. 4 No. 10 July 1997

in 1993, which women working attacked due to acute drought and poverty in the area. CASA started working in such areas and carried out Food for Work projects. After having interacted with these villages it was concluded that SHGs would be a means to address their problems.
Porkudi Self Help Group

In Porkudi, a village adjacent to Ichikottai, the pattern was slightly different. An SHG was initiated in June, 1994. Originally fifteen members contributed Rs. 10 each per month and started saving. Within a month, however, two members dropped out, suspicious that they might not recover their money. Once the SHG started lending money however, the members’ enthusiasm rose. Within a period of six months, the membership had risen to 24 and numbers continue to increase by the day.

A villager, Mrs. Mangala Mary was given a SHG loan of Rs 2,000 for charcoal making. She invested the money, earned an income of Rs 3,400 and repaid the loan. Encouraged by her experience, the group then decided to avail of a sheep loan for ten beneficiaries from Indian Bank, Thenpatti-Pudupatti. Mrs. Mangala Mary was also one of the beneficiaries. When the group approached the Indian Bank, officials were impressed with their regular saving and lending systems. Following this, the sheep loans were released to the members. Accordingly, Mrs. Mangala Mary availed of Rs 11,000 for the purchase of one sheep unit i.e. 20 eves and one ram. So far, she has cleared Rs 3,500 out of the sale proceeds from five lambs. She has purchased some gold ornaments and some household utensils. She plans to sell another five lambs by September, 1997 and clear off the loan. Now she is busy in maintaining the sheep unit which is worth Rs 20,000 and her husband continues managing their charcoal business. She feels secure as the owner of a sheep unit and her life with her husband and three children is much more content.

Few Observations about Self-Help Groups

The growth of SHGs in both cases has followed a similar pattern. It is possible to describe this pattern in stages.

Forming Stage: This is the first stage during which our organisers explain the concept of SHGs. After listening to this, women usually agree to form a group. They give their names albeit cautiously. Some come forward to give their contribution on the same day and some others offer contributions after two or three meetings. It may take from one week to three months time between their first meeting and first lending.

Storming stage: In this stage, a lot of queries arise in the minds of the SHG members. Their hidden anxieties and fears are expressed during meetings. Conflict between individual interests and group interests are also evident. The members tend to argue with the organisers that their savings will have to be distributed to them after a fixed period of one year or so. When the members are told that SHG is a continuous process, some of them withdraw their membership claiming back their contributions.

In a meeting at Sembattur village an elderly woman queried: “I am more than 50. Suppose I happen to die next year, what will the benefit for me be?”. Questions are also asked about what would happen to the savings made by the unmarried girls after they are married to persons outside the village. Other queries may include:

“Sir/Madam, you are asking us to contribute our money. How much are you contributing for the group?” or “Can’t you give a lumpsum amount say Rs 5,000 or Rs 10,000 to start viable in-group lending?” or “Why should we save if you are not contributing anything for this?”

This is a crucial stage for the organisers, as the members need to be clear that the SHG is not a group which will be wound up after a period of time like a chit fund. The members are apprised that the group’s growth is a continuous process which can run not only all throughout their lives but even for generations if they wish; and any problem will have to be solved by the members themselves and not by CASA organisers. At this stage, the group members are ensured that each one of them is the owner of the group and not a
nominee by CASA or any outsider. The SHG decides its own bye-laws, how much to contribute, how long to contribute, how much to lend to each individual and so on. They are reminded that it is a women's owned groups for helping themselves and not a CASA Self Help Group. In fact, CASA plays a facilitating role by not making any financial contribution.

Norming stage: In this stage, members begin to internalise the concept of 'self-help'. The experience of meeting, interacting, contributing, saving and lending, builds trust and a feeling of cooperation among the members. Once benefit in terms of getting petty loans are enjoyed by group members, the loyalty and attachment towards the group is enhanced. They tend to speak well about the SHG to others. Observing the activities of the SHG, interest among the villagers spreads and more people express a desire to join. Often this option is denied by the SHG. If more than fifteen members are willing, a separate group will be organised.

Performing stage: Both the task and the maintenance functions of the group are clearly realised by the members of the group at this stage. Their contributions usually double. They approach the bankers for further credit assistance. They began to articulate their social obligations to the village as a whole. The group is perceived as a means for income generation and collective action. At this stage the group matures to function on its own.

Outcome and Impact

The emergence of SHGs has had a great impact on the lives of the local people, particularly the women in these regions.

Self confidence and security - The women have gained a great deal of self confidence. Previously, when government officials or the bankers interacted with the village women in the absence of their husbands, they generally responded with statements like: "I don't know"; "My husband has gone out"; "What can I say?"; "Let him come" or "He only knows"

Now, the same women are approaching the bankers and government officials and demanding their rights and privileges. Many SHGs have placed demands with District Collectors for drinking water, street lights, IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) loans etc. Through these actions their self esteem is being elevated. The women who felt helpless, now realise that they are secure not only in terms of credit support but also in terms of "feeling as members of the group".

Economic development - Each member of the group is able to improve the economic condition of her family by purchasing assets like goat, sheep, poultry or milk animals. We observed that in almost all the cases, 100% recovery of loans is assured. Hence, the SHG has become a model for an honest credit net and this has become an eye-opener for banking institutions to extend support to SHGs.

Group solidarity - The SHGs do not touch common savings for any purposes other than lending. When one of the members is sent to the bank to deposit their savings, each member separately contributes Re. 1 and that money is used to cover travel and other expenses. This implies a financial management discipline among the members.

Attitudinal change - There have been some amazing examples of attitudinal change induced by the formations and activities of SHGs. In one village, a husband who was involved in the distillation of illicit liquor changed his ways, gave up his obnoxious profession and joined hands with his wife who was running a bakery with money she had loaned from the SHG. Many SHG members are happy to admit that illicit liquor brewing, wife beating and other atrocities have declined since the emergence of SHGs.

Empowerment - The socio-economic activities of the SHGs have generated enormous collective strength among the womenfolk. In most villages, women's participation in decision making was non-existent. Once, when CASA staff wrote women's names in the muster roll of the Food For Work Programme, the men objected very strongly. Some even walked out at the
time of distribution of wheat under the same programme. In these very areas today, women have been elected to head panchayats.

Some suggestions for NGOs

- NGOs can educate the SHGs, particularly in the area of accounts keeping. The “goodwill” and “mutual trust” lending operations often lead to chaos and confusion in the long run. Every individual member must be provided with a pass book which is the most essential part of SHG account keeping. This also ensures the accountability of the group and the members towards one another. It helps avoid suspicion and manipulation.

- NGOs can link the SHGs with the concerned area banks so that they can avail credit from them. More lending of money raised by the members themselves may not suffice for extending credit to viable income generation activities. Commercial banks, on observing the six months savings of the SHGs, actually grant loans to double their savings. NGOs can also play a role in motivating bankers and appraising them on these lines.

- Federating and networking of SHGs is yet another desired role of NGOs so that not only economic development through women’s banking, but also empowerment through women’s solidarity can be achieved.

- There is a immense scope for NGOs in the country to organise SHGs. As per the latest statistics of NABARD, there are 4,757 SHGs spread over 16 states and 1 Union Territory linked with credit which amounts to Rs. 650.80 lakhs. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, a governmental organisation is yet another potential resource agency extending financial support to promote SHGs through NGOs.

There are at least 20,000 voluntary organisations working in the country. If these voluntary organisations could organise at least five self-help groups each year, over a period of ten years, the rural credit needs of the entire country would be met.

The author is Assistant Programme Co-ordinator with CASA, based in Trichy. He has two decades of experience in rural development and is currently working on two books: “Role of Development Workers” and “People’s development in India: Hands or Hearts”. He also participated in PRIA’s ten week Development Management Education (DME) training programme.

From the editors’ desk...

All those interested in reproducing “Micro-planning: the Mandi Experience”, which was featured in the March edition of Participation and Governance, kindly get in touch with us for a corrected version of the article.

We are thankful for the numerous letters of appreciation for the bulletin which we have received over the past few months.
Power of Co-operatives: The NDDB Experience

NAMRATA JAITLI

India has completed fifty years of independence. Eight Five Year plans have been implemented and yet the desired development goals remain a distant dream. Poverty, inequity, hunger, illiteracy continue as painful realities.

In reaction to these dismal conditions, development programmes and policies in the Nineties, are recognizing the need for autonomous and independent organizations, where the poor participate, control invest and share in the benefits of development. Institutions like the panchayats, womens groups, water management committees, forest protection committees are emerging as active partners in development. This article shares some reflections on one such locally relevant and pro-people institutional structure - that of co-operatives.

Dairy co-operatives: the Anand Experience

Cooperatives are essentially grassroot, self reliant, democratically managed and controlled business (economic) enterprises.

Co-operatives within the context of mainstream development approaches in India are yet to become a force to reckon with. The first two five year plans gave considerable emphasis to the promotion of co-operatives. Since then, their significance has declined with each passing plan, then end result being a number of government-dependent, crippled, corrupt and ineffective co-operatives. There are however, some success stories which strengthen faith in the power of co-operatives. The dairy co-operatives are one such example, the formation and growth of which is indeed a unique experiment in people-controlled and people-centred development.

The creation of dairy co-operatives in India can be traced to the success of the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union Ltd., better known as Amul in Gujarat. Amul was started during the mid 1940s, by dairy farmers of Kaira district in opposition to the exploitation by milk vendors, the local creamery and the Bombay Milk Scheme. The dairy sector at that time was in a dismal condition. At the suggestion of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the farmers formed a co-operative union: the union began with two societies and a daily collection of not more than 200 litres of milk.

By 1994, the Anand Milk Union was yielding 9.66 lakh litres of milk daily during peak seasons; had 5.02 lakh members in 941 village co-operatives, and was covering an entire district of 1000 villages. The income yielded was Rs 3,450 per family per year with individual co-operatives investing their annual bonuses in community assets. In 1992-93, the turnover of the union was Rs 3,114 million.

In the Anand model, the farmers own the dairy and their representatives manage the village societies and district unions. Professionals are employed to manage the dairy factories and marketing. The Anand model is a multi-tiered one. The milk producers of a village are organised into village milk co-operatives, managed by elected representatives who must be producers. The village societies are federated into a district union run by the elected representatives of the village societies. The union is then federated into a state dairy federation which is managed by the elected representatives of the district unions, who are elected by the village co-operatives. The district union provides all inputs required by the farmers to increase their production. These include artificial insemination, animal feed, veterinary cover etc. The role of the government is to supervise, guide and if need be, correct the co-operatives.

Replicating the Anand Experience: Creation of NDDB

During first four Five Year plans (from 1950-70), milk production had stagnated. Urban milk traders and private traders alongwith the middle men were exploiting both the producers and the consumers. Seeing the Anand success, Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister, requested replication of Anand in other milksheds of India. National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) was created by Government of India in 1965 to operationalise this process. It was headed by Dr. Verghese Kurien, the General Manager of Anand at that time. Currently, NDDB has its head office at Anand and regional offices in Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai and Bangalore.

NDDB’s need for its own programme and funds to replicate the Anand pattern, lead to the implementation of the well known Operation Flood (OF)
programme, a targeted initiative to link milk producers with relatively small production base to the market through modern processing, with a focus on developing high yielding milksheds.

The primary objectives of Operation Flood in replicating the Anand experience are:

a. organising milk procurement at remunerative prices through economically viable village co-operatives in the milksheds

b. providing efficient marketing of milk and dairy products produced in rural areas by:
   (i) building rural dairy plants to process all milk offered by producers and providing adequate supply of milk to consumers at all times
   (ii) developing basic transportation and storage networks to facilitate regional and seasonal balance of milk supply and demand
   (iii) increasing capacity of city milk plants and establishing new plants

c. increasing the number of modern Operation Flood dairies in the main urban milk markets

Operation Flood I formulated in 1968, sought to create 18 Anands with funds generated from gifted commodities received from the World Food Programme. Operation Flood II in 1979, was funded by a soft loan from the World Bank, money generated from the dairy commodities gifted by the European community and by internal resources of Indian Dairy Corporation. Operation III which terminated in 1996, covered most of the milksheds of the country. It was being funded by a World Bank loan, money generated from dairy commodities gifted by the European Union along with the internal resources of NDDB.

Partners in Development: Role of NDDB

NDDB has emerged as an active development partner, facilitating the growth of the dairy sector by strengthening the institutional base and institutional management of the dairy co-operatives. This includes: promotion, organisation and assistance in implementation of dairy development programmes and other agriculture based industries by encouraging co-operatives on a nation wide basis. Also, undertaking research, consultancy and managerial services and imparting technological know-how to co-operatives and public sector organisations involved in the dairy sector. And finally, the development of a marketing and commodity management system, and collection of data and statistics for efficient management of the National Milk Grid and the National Milch Herd.

The centralised services of NDDB also provide support in terms of promoting partnership and institutional development. These include the Co-operative Services, which aims to provide need-based support to the regions in all operational areas through a single window approach, leading to self reliant and professionally managed co-operative institutions.

The group is working for greater autonomy and self governance of co-operatives by advocating change in the co-operative legislation, which has become archaic and restrictive. Co-operative development programmes and workshops for the members of co-operatives, the union and its employees, and the NDDB staff are an integral part of its development strategy to build the human and social infrastructure.

The Corporate Human Resource Development Management group, the Technical Service Group, the Sectoral Planning and Systems Group (to provide information and systems support to co-operative milk unions and federations and other groups in NDDB) the Corporate Finance Group, the Commodity Marketing
and International Trading Group, Public Relation Group are other centralised service groups. All groups work closely with the milk unions.

Of equal importance is NDDB's Research and Development Group, which includes the Biotechnology Group and the Plant Technology Group, both of whom work closely with the milk unions.

Key to success

India is currently the second largest producer of milk in the world. At the conclusion of Operation Flood III, 72,744 co-operative societies in 170 milkedhs of the country had been established, with a total membership of 93.14 lakhs. It is worth reflecting on, therefore, the factors which have promoted the success of co-operatives in the dairy sector. These may be enumerated as follows:

I The Anand co-operative model wherein:

- The farmer, more than being the supplier is the decision maker and the manager in command. The professional experts employed are actually accountable to the farmer.

- The Anand model is based on the farmer's needs. In particular, there is integration of production, processing and marketing, unlike the earlier fragmented approach of the government.

- Integration of production, processing and marketing provides tangible economic benefits like higher and regular income. There are also intangible psychological incentives i.e. farmer's loyalty to co-operatives, the motivation to cooperate and so on

- A direct link between the producers and the consumers is established with the elimination of the middle men, thereby increasing cost effectiveness and providing the farmer with a larger share of the returns. The farmer is also assured of season long uniform prices, and can invest in a better standard of living.

- The surplus money can be distributed among the member farmers, or can be used for providing them services or can be retained in the form of addition capital assets. In the Anand model, a combination of these three takes place.

- The entrepreneurial skills of the member farmer and their representatives in the union are strength-

ened. One time assistance of 30% of investment is given as grant and the rest is a loan on concessional rates. This helps to regenerate resources for further development. No subsidies are provided as inputs to farmers.

- Modern technology is utilised bearing in mind the needs of small scale producers. Large scale dairy factories complement small scale production units. A process has been initiated to let farmers participate in deciding what technology is suitable.

II Importance of NDDB as development partner:

- Replication and strengthening of the Anand model nation wide under the Operation Flood programme, by organising milk procurement at remunerative prices through village co-operatives, building efficient market mechanism for milk and dairy products produced in rural areas, and increasing the number of modern dairies in urban milk markets.

- Provision of educational, capacity building, managerial, technical and at times financial support to make co-operatives self sustaining, efficient and autonomous. One such development initiative is the Participatory Rural Management Programme (PRMP), launched on pilot basis by NDDB in five unions in the country in October 1995, to implement union specific input programmes, with active participation of the farmers and milk producers in need assessment, planning, implementation and research.

The Challenges

The experiences of the dairy co-operatives and NDDB reconfirm the important role co-operatives play in a country’s and more important, in its' people's development. There is an urgent need now for a supportive
policy and legal framework which will promote co-operatives as autonomous and self-sustaining institutions promoting equity, social justice and economic development.

It is time that the country realises and utilises the enormous 'power of co-operatives' to accelerate its journey towards integrated and sustainable human development.

References:

Namrata Jaiti is in charge of the Participatory Development and Participatory Research Unit (PD/PR) in PRIA. This article is based on the insights gained during a short visit to NDBB. The visit was a follow-up to PRIA’s Training Workshop on Participatory Development which some staff from the Co-operative Services group of NDBB had attended.

Announcements

Second Regional Inter-Professional Dialogue on Participatory Research and Participatory Development for Social Work Educators of Western Region organised by MASWE, ASSW, and PRIA. July 7-9, 1997, Pune.

In keeping with the ongoing collaborative intervention of PRIA with social work educators, the second regional dialogue aims to strengthen conceptual understanding of participatory research (PR) and participatory development (PD) and to assess their implications for social work education and practice at the regional level.


To strengthen conceptual and theoretical understanding on issues of PR and PD, the course is open to personnel from bi-lateral, multi-lateral development agencies, government and semi-government organisations, voluntary development organisations and academia. In order to be effective, it focuses on participants having a basic understanding and experience in facilitating peoples' participation in development, prior to the course. The course fee is Rs 10,000 per participant.


In order to strengthen conceptual and theoretical understanding on PD and on different methods to translate PD into practice, the workshop, the fifth of its kind, is open to professionals from bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies, and government and semi-government organisations. The fees is Rs 6,000 per participant.

For further details about the above please contact:
Programme Co-ordinator, Participatory Development
Participatory Research Unit, PRIA, 42 Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-110062
Understanding Community Organisations

It has become increasingly evident that incentives alone are not sufficient to ensure poor people’s participation. Appropriate institutional arrangements are also required. Learning about local institutional structures which influence decision-making and collective action of community members is crucial at the design stage of a development project or programme. It is also important to work with these local groups during programme implementation. Following are some lessons and trends emerging from large-scale development programmes built around the notion that community organisation ensures realistic and efficient participation of local people.

Seeing Invisible Groups

In a typical poor community, a whole range of groups operate - formal or informal, traditional or modern, indigenous or externally-established. All these have different functions be they productive, social, religious or other. The first important lesson in understanding community organisations, is to “see” the invisible groups. Some of the most active community organisations are the informal ones i.e. the ones that are not listed in any documents and known even to the people familiar with the communities (extension agents, local development agency staff, etc). Learning about these groups may entail visiting the communities and talking with inhabitants about the local decision making structures. Simple “mapping” exercises where local people are asked to identify the community groups by drawing circles of differing size - the bigger the circle the more important and influential the institution it represents, are also helpful.

Building on Traditional Structures

A second trend worth reflecting upon is programmes requiring group building are most like to succeed if the external agency works through existing community organisations and builds upon the already established collaborative experience of these groups.

A municipal development project in Nicaragua (Central America) for example, used existing local grassroots organisations - called the Sandinista Defence Committees - formed during the Nicaragua Revolution. Because of their structure, motivation, and the cohesion of their members, they proved an extremely effective instrument for reaching and involving the local population. Their participation in civil works construction improved the rate of return, increased the quality of construction, and enhanced efficiency. The planned five year project was completed in three and a half years.

Even where new community organisations are formed by external agencies, it is found that they are most successful if based on pre-existing relationships.

In Senegal, Africa in a Small Rural Operations project, groups of farmers were organised around a shared economic interest and following this, registered with local authorities in order to identify and prepare sub-projects, open accounts in the local banking system, and contribute funds for renewal of equipment and infrastructure. A mid-term review of the project found that the most functional farmers’ organisations generally evolved out of old informal groups characterised by social cohesion, mutual trust and a history of joint action. Newly-created farmers organisations
mobilised around a temporary, shared economic activity were the least efficient and most fragile.

**Working with Women’s Groups**

Another common trend is that amongst the various community groups, women’s groups are often cited as being the most effective community-based mechanisms, especially for reaching poor households.

In **Brazil**, programme authorities had trouble getting a municipality project underway in a slum area. Certain restraints like the physical environment, socio-political disturbances, crime etc. the authorities had difficulty reaching community members. Once they started working with women’s groups however, implementation speeded up. Programme managers found that women’s clubs were an effective instrument to reach the community as a whole.

A similar experience was reported from **Gambia**, Africa. Under the Gambia Women in Development programme, women’s groups referred to as “kafos” are the entry point for the skills development component of the project. Kafos, usually with about 100 voluntary members, traditionally provide mutual member support, sharing labour and extending loans to those in need. More recently their roles have expanded to include income generation and basic education. Some Kafos members are being trained by community development workers in imparting basic literacy and numeracy.

**Role of “Catalysts”, “Organisers” or “Facilitators”**

Establishing new groups and building upon existing structures requires a good deal of groundwork, from creating community awareness about the benefits of organising to participate in project design and implementation. The preparation is often done by providing “facilitators” or “catalysts” or “community organisers”. These facilitators may be from the external agency or from a locally-based organisation.

In the **Balochistan Primary Education Project**, collective action was induced with the formation of village education committees. Community workers went door to door to organise parents’ groups, encouraging all the parents to form an association. There was no existing parental involvement in schools at all, in fact many parents were not even aware that their children had a right to public education. Parents joined village education committees, which had clear mandates to perform specific tasks such as identifying teachers and monitoring teacher and student attendance.

In the **Nepal Irrigation Sector programme**, an Association Officer was sent out to each district to meet farmers, inform them about the objectives of the project and encourage them to organise themselves into an Irrigation Association. In many villages, unofficial farmers’ organizations were already functioning around the irrigation system. The Association Officers encouraged the Irrigation Associations to form around pre-existing village societal organisations and villagers were asked to elect an executive committee for the Irrigation Association through their own selection process.

**Federated Structures**

A final trend worth commenting upon is that in several programmes involving community organisation, a pattern of bottom-up integration emerges. This maintains authority and responsibility anchored at the local level while at the same time providing integration and learning between similar groups.

In **Colombia** in South America, a Community Childcare and Nutrition project is administered through a three-tiered community structure. First, parents of children enrolled in 10-15 centres form a Parents’ Association; second, parents at each centre elect three representatives to join a local assembly with 30-45 members; third, the assembly elects five parent
Clippings from Cartagena ....

From the 31st May to the 5th of June, over one thousand people representing 41 different nationalities convened in Cartagena, Columbia for a historically unparalleled World Congress on Participatory Action Research.

The choice of Cartagena, a city tucked away on the northern coast of Columbia in South America, was not incidental. It was in Cartagena, twenty years ago, that the first symposium on PAR was held. The number of participants attending the symposium was 56!

Why this Congress? Why “Convergence”?

Since 1977, PAR has been used in a variety of different situations and in different parts of the world. Related approaches like action-research or action-learning have also been developed and used in the voluntary sector, in industries, in governments and in other organisations; and new initiatives in these domains keep emerging.

It is this spread of participatory action and research approaches that fuelled interest in a world congress. The term ‘convergence’ since, has come to symbolise talking across divides of knowledge, space and time. It has been accepted as a slogan to induce a combined participatory world-view and stimulate participatory initiatives in years to come.

One attempt at ‘counting’ different participatory action and research approaches arrived at the conclusion that there are 36 distinct forms present today! Some of those discussed during the Congress included:

- Critical Systems Thinking;
- Action Research;
- Naturalistic (Constructive) Inquiry;
- Co-operative Inquiry;
- Participatory Rural Appraisal;
- Participatory Action Research;
- Systems Analysis and
- Hermeneutics

"This is urgent for our collective survival. Hence the opportunity to convene all those concerned again in Cartagena, to take stock of the present situations after decades of searching and hoping, in order to converse, to look ahead jointly, and to act in concourse.”

— Conference Bulletin No. 1
The Congress Agenda included:

- Working Groups on three broad themes
- Plenary presentations and panel discussions
- Several informal exchanges and encounters, where participants had the opportunity to meet with pioneers or in smaller groups.
- A glimpse of rural life in Columbia during a field visit to Arroyogrande was also part of the Congress agenda.

**Day 1... Conversation with Wallerstein**

**Day 2... Conversation with Rajesh Tandon:**
"On the Struggle for Knowledge: A Personal Journey"

**Day 3... Conversation with Max Neef:**
"On Human Economics"

**Day 4... Conversation with Robert Chambers:**
"On Whose Reality Counts? Converging on Frontiers for Innovation and Change"

-from the Conference Calendar

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**At the start of the Congress ......**

**Key note presentations**

- Orlando Fals Borda, Coordinator of the Congress and pioneer in PAR
- Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of Columbia
- Francine Fournier, UNESCO
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, author, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner

**Also on the first day.....**

- Gustavo de Roux spoke on “Exhortation for Peace”
- Immanuel Wallerstein spoke on “Space and Time as the Basis for Knowledge”

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**Summaries of these three working groups and papers presented in the sub-group on Construction of Knowledge Systems will be in the PRIA library shortly**

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**Intercultural Learning, Integration and Social Service**

- Art, literature and Science: Creativity and Convergences
- Impact of Technology and Media
- Construction of Knowledge Systems
- System Building for Socio-economic, Industrial and Ecological Administration
- Democratic Use of Land, biodiversity and Natural Resources
- Contemporary Critical Trends in Capitalism
- Against Poverty and Hunger: Humanization of Economies
- Participation of (Micro) Entrepreneurial Management
- Problems of Complex Industrial Organisations

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Participants honoured a two minute silence in memory of Paulo Freire and his immense contributions to the world of participatory action research.

Psalms were also made in recognition of the contributions of other pioneers: G. De Silva (from Sri Lanka), Andrew Pearse (United Kingdom), Myles Horton (United States).
# Panel Discussions during the Congress

## Panel on Convergence and Divergence:

The panel was a forum for pioneers from different schools of PAR to share what brought them to their approaches, their perceptions of convergence and divergence and the future of PAR. Some of the themes emerging from the discussion were that:

- successful PAR is about being able to understand the world as a whole and rooting both theory and practice in social reality
- despite different roots, those working towards a participatory world-view have participated in similar struggles, particularly the struggle to move from individual to institutional and societal change
- more than convergence in thought, different schools need to share their logic of action

### panelists

Robert Chambers (UK), Robert Flood (UK), Davydd Greenwood (USA), Morten Levin (Norway), Yvonna Lincoln (USA), Robin McTaggart (Australia), Peter Reason (UK), Maruja Salas (Peru), Timmi Tillman (Germany), Michael Schrartz (Austria), Rajesh Tandon (India)

## As a mark of solidarity.....

A march was organised in memory of two Columbian youth who had been victims of a crime wave in the city. Congress participants joined the march as a mark of solidarity against violence and aggression in society.

## Panel on the History of Participatory Research Endeavours:

Initiated by the International Network on Participatory Research, this panel brought together some of the first global leaders of PAR. The theme: "what can we learn from our history?" What the Congress participants did learn was:

- that the history of PR is a living history, experts and students alike are challenging, reconstructing and revitalising knowledge and tools and this is what makes PAR special!
- that while we need to address issues of scaling-up and macro-level change, we must maintain our rootedness in micro, local contexts
- in 1977, PAR was viewed as a radical approach, today this is not always the case. As support for our work increases we should be careful that the legitimacy we enjoy does not lead us to compromise on the legitimacy of the people we seek to represent

### panelists

Dave Brown (USA), Budd Hall (Canada), Francisco Vio Grossi, Ted Jackson (Canada), Patricia MacGuire (USA), Peter Park (USA), Ramesh Singh (Nepal), Marja Liisa Swantz (Tanzania/Finland), John Gaventa (UK), Robin McTaggart (Australia), Orlando Fals Borda (Columbia)

Other panels ....Roundtable with Leaders of Popular Thought and Action
Priority issues for the future

- Using research as a tool to improve people's lives
- Bridging the gap between different forms of knowledge: popular knowledge, academic knowledge, traditional wisdom etc.
- Resisting commodification of PAR by communicating not just the "rhetoric" or "methods", but also the experiences which make these meaningful.
- Moving beyond interventions at the individual or interpersonal level to those which change the institutions and societies we work within.
- Expanding the dialogue on participatory approaches to include many more civil society actors and coalitions.
- Setting up structures which enable us to communicate with "the other side": the conventional universities, the elitist corporations, bureaucratic governments etc.
- Revitalising and sustaining the networks and relationships which support participatory action and research.

Closing reflections......

"Thirty decades ago, people were sure that history on their side, almost arrogant about it. Today I sense a humility in learning from history, which is most encouraging. Thirty years ago people were looking for solutions from states. Today I find people using terms like 'local' and 'network'. Thirty years ago the emphasis was on everyone being the same. Today I sense a celebration of difference as though it is a virtue."

- Immanuel Wallerstein

"Some arenas for action: One, to find, create and extend relationships outside ourselves. Two, to think systematically about the concept of mentoring and possibly an organisational adoption process. Three, to think sensitively about what "authentic" PAR is and how we need to keep the debate on authenticity alive."

- Yvonna Lincoln

"What did we gain at this congress? What made it special? Good lessons as well as warnings from pioneers, political leaders and activists; an overriding concern with the 'practical'; and a strong sense of personal commitment and ethics."

- Maria-Luisa Swatman

In celebration of convergence....

Through the duration of the Congress, participants noted their ideas, questions and plans for the future on flip charts, on the last day these were joined together to form what must be the longest text on participatory action research. What better way to record the inspiration the conference provided to those present!
representatives to serve as its board directors. The Parents' Associations, through the Board, manage the project funds and the local contributions from parents.

Federated structures have also been invaluable in Nepal's Bhairawa Lumbini Groundwater project. About 150 farm families are served by each tube well, but such a group proved too large to work together effectively. To remedy this, tube well users' groups have been sub-divided into units of approximately 30 families each. Seven or so of these units are confederated into a water users' group, and 4-5 water users' group form a water users' association which has an elected chairman. The sub-units control water distribution at the local level, while the water users association has decision-making authority over issues which affect the system as a whole.

A final word ....

While it is clear from the above experiences that it is through these community organisations that demand can be expressed, participatory processes initiated, and development services delivered, community organisation as a strategy within the broader context of development projects and programmes does have certain limitations. One common failing in forming or working with local groups is the focus on creating an institutional structure, without paying adequate attention to the capacity, knowledge, and technical skills the groups will require. Newly established groups have failed because too much was expected of them too soon. Likewise, attempts to modify the form or function of existing groups to serve project needs does not always work.

What Makes Community Organisations Work?

Listed below are five common characteristics of well-functioning community groups:

- The group addresses a felt need and a common interest. When people share a common problem which can be addressed by group action (such as lack of water supply, a security problem, or a degraded natural resource), they are more likely to mobilise themselves and work with support agencies to change the situation, than if the problem applies to only a few members. Social cohesion tends to break down as groups grow or spread over large areas and it becomes more difficult to control and monitor the behaviour of individuals. For this reason, as groups expand they either create sub-groups or they formalise regulations and delegate decision-making to smaller working groups.

- The benefits of working together outweigh the costs. Benefits may be economic (cash savings, increased production, income, time savings); social capital formation (increased ability to collectively solve problems); increased individual capacity (knowledge and skills); psychological (sense of belonging, confidence); or political (greater access to authority, greater authority, reduced conflict).

- The group is embedded in the local social organisation. Community organisations are most successful when based on existing relationships and groupings, or where members share a common identity such as kinship, gender, age, caste, or livelihood.

- The group has the capacity, leadership, knowledge, and skills to manage the tasks. As noted above, special attention needs to be given to ensuring groups have the necessary capacities for the tasks at hand. Those in leadership positions need to be respected and honest in their dealings – in some cases safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that these leaders are accountable to the group's members.

- The group owns and enforces its rules and regulations. All successful groups and associations are characterised by internalised rules and regulations that are known by its members. Group members should be able to participate in determining the rules and the enforcement mechanisms.

Understanding Community Organisations has been abridged from the World Bank Sourcebook on Participation, a World Bank Publication, 1994.
Grassroots Democracy
RAJESH TANDON

Introduction

After the dictatorships and authoritarian regimes of 1970's and 1980's, many more countries have accepted democracy as perhaps the most appropriate form of governance of a nation. This consensus on democracy at the dawn of the twentieth century was a welcome development globally. Over the years however, in many countries, the substance of this democracy continues to be narrowly defined as multiparty polity, with periodic elections and separation of judiciary, legislature and executive. Democracy as a grassroots praxis has not found place in this definition. This article by examining the experience of democratic governance in India, (as elsewhere in countries of the south) explores the meaning and implications of grassroots democracy and attempts to demonstrate how this can fill the crumbling shell of democracy with life, purpose and vision.

Features of Democracy

Democracy as a form of governance has been variously defined and articulated; it also has a wide variety of forms in practice throughout the world. It is possible, never the less, to identify four essential features of democracy.

The first feature is representation on the basis of universal franchise. Under this principle, all adults participate in the election of their representatives. The rationale is that by providing opportunity to elect representatives, the interests, needs and priorities of each section of the population get represented in the decision-making process.

The second feature of democracy is voice. In a democratic system of governance, all citizens have the right to be heard. Opportunities for people to express their agreements and disagreements and be paid attention to, constitutes an important feature of democracy.

A third feature of democracy is 'due process'. It is a legally sanctified process of petitioning. Should a citizen have a grievance against any section of the government, there should be a mechanism for redressal of this. Courts, tribunals or ombudsmen are examples of such mechanisms of 'due process' in a democracy.

Finally, democracy implies a system of accountability of the governing mechanism to its base population. It is assumed that democratic governance, by its very nature, has built-in mechanisms of accountability to the larger population for whose well-being the system is in place. Leaders in government and public officials are expected to be subjected to regular and comprehensive public scrutiny as a means of ensuring their accountability.

When we examine the system of democratic governance in India as it has evolved in the last 50 years, we wonder whether this democracy is likely to serve and promote long-term, equitable, just and people-centred development. Regular elections, with a few exceptions, have been held. Yet, there are enormous distortions in the process of representativeness based on universal franchise. The system of governance has been 'captured' by a section of the vested interest thereby excluding and denying the voice of a large section of our illiterate, poor, marginal population. The system of legal jurisprudence which we inherited from our colonial masters and have tried to perfect since then, leaves even the educated, urban middle-class feeling cheated, entangled and excluded from the legitimate 'due process'.

Finally, in the current scenario, very little needs to be said about accountability. Open and fair criteria of decision-making, transparency in the process of decision-making, obligation to provide answers for one's conduct etc. (from the government and public officials) is beyond the hopes and imagination of ordinary people.

Grassroots Democracy

The disarray in our system of democratic governance today may prompt many to conclude that this system is inappropriate to meet the challenges associated with economic and social development in our country at the juncture. The alien character of this macro democratic system of governance needs to be understood. The system was inherited from our colonial masters and implemented without any appreciation of the grassroots realities and historical processes. As a result, it did not develop strong links with the existing processes and structure of grassroots democracy.

In comparison to the formal, more legislated system of democratic governance which operates at the national level, grassroots democracy can only be experienced in practice at local levels. It is not a system of functioning based on formal rules, procedures,
Guidelines etc. By its very nature, grassroots democracy is practiced through a system of norms, values, social processes and institutional arrangements fuelled by the commitment and capacities of ordinary people. The expression of the grassroots democracy can thus be seen in myriad, local, informal, formations and associations of people throughout the country. Historically, vast numbers of people have found a way to come together at local level to address common problems. Village society had a variety of such formations: caste formations, tribal councils, associations for undertaking agricultural operations, cooperatives; social associations to meet a variety of cultural and social rituals and obligations, etc. In recent years, contemporary forms of these associations have also developed: youth associations, women's associations, associations of people engaged in joint efforts at the protection of forests and water, people coming together for cultural occasions. Many of these local groups address basic needs of the local community, namely, health, education, drinking water, fodder, etc. As local issues and priorities vary, so does the form and composition of local associations.

**Local institutions**

What are some of the features and aspects of such local institutions? By their very nature, they focus on specific issues: water, health, hygiene, education, children, social functions, agriculture, crime, peace and protection of environment. This specificity of focus provides the purpose and rationale for such associations.

The second feature of these associations is their voluntary character. People come together because they like to do so; not because they are deputed to do so or it is mandatory or there are some external compulsions. The voluntary nature of such associations provides a level of energy and commitment which acts as a fuel for the functioning of such associations.

The third feature of such associations is that they maintain a largely informal basis of functioning. Sometimes they may select a secretary or so-called office bearers to ease their functioning, in most situations, they remain informal. They govern themselves on the basis of commonly held norms and values, they manage themselves on the basis of social and interpersonal processes of communication, mutual trust and obligations. The quality of face-to-face interaction and related social mechanisms provide the basis for informal functioning of such associations.

This combination of features necessitates that associations tap potential, energy and commitment of ordinary human beings. Associations of this variety bring out the capacities for compassion, camaraderie and solidarity inherent in all human beings. They bring out the practice of humanity in a common search of good and peaceful life. Lest it may appear that all local associations represent the ideal type mentioned above, it is important to point out that circumstances and conditions vary greatly across the country. As these associations begin to get formalised, begin to attract external attention and resources, begin to get involved in the mainstream political process, they tend to incorporate many of the distortions of the formal system of governance elaborated above. As a result, internal struggle, in fighting, misappropriation, self-centredness etc. are also many a times visible in these associations. However, any collective human enterprise is bound to generate some tensions and conflicts; differences in attitudes, values, priorities and perspectives are all an inherent part of any collective social and human process. Local institutions develop their own unique and humane ways of dealing with such tensions and conflicts.

**Governance as if People Mattered**

Grassroots democracy, as reflected in the rich tapestry of local institutions and citizen's associations, forms the basis of people's participation in dealing with their immediate realities.

Also, their involvement with macro structures and processes which govern their lives. People's organisations are, by their very nature, diverse and, at times, in conflict with each other. But it is the vitality, energy and continuity of this associational life, of people's participation, of local institutions which provides the continuous fuel for the furtherance of grassroots democracy. If our formal system of democratic governance has to serve the larger socio-economic development and interests of our population as a whole, then it must come to terms with these aspects of grassroots democracy. Democracy does not merely impose creation and nurturance of a political society, where every being is a member of a political party voting for elections and re-elections at the national and provincial levels. Democracy requires nurturance and growth of people, their participation and organisation in order to provide a fertile basis for the practice of collective human enterprise in common public good. This is the arena of grassroots democracy: this is the space for people's participation.
Local knowledge system

The above features which make for effective functioning of local associations are closely linked to indigenous local knowledge systems. Historically, a great volume of knowledge has been produced through collective human endeavour in the solving of specific life problems. This 'knowledge-in-use' has over generations been transmitted largely through oral and symbolic means. This knowledge can be seen in the field of agriculture; in practices associated with multi-cropping and seed-production; in the selection and nurturing of appropriate species in forestry; and, it is the bedrock of our herbal system of medicine. This knowledge is also used to organize local associations with broader participation.

Historically this indigenous knowledge has, however, remained limited to the popular form, and is confined to the personal and subjective domains of ordinary citizens who have relied on it for solving their daily problems. With the rise of modern systems of knowledge production and dissemination, more particularly in the guise of the colonial and post-colonial formations, these indigenous knowledge systems became increasingly de-recognized and de-legitimized. What came to be known as 'knowledge' and certified as such, was produced professionals in recognised knowledge producing institutions - the universities and colleges. Academia became the centre of knowledge production in the dominant language and represented in a printed form. But a vast section of our population is illiterate, and uses local vernacular languages and expressions in oral folk traditions. Their indigenous knowledge quickly lost ground to this formal, academic, printed knowledge.

Our formal system of democratic governance has relied almost exclusively on this formal system of knowledge. Policies and programmes of development were based on the conclusions of this formal system, further negating and undermining popular and indigenous systems which provided sustenance to local associations. The contradictions and tensions between the systems of formal and academic knowledge get reinforced in the dichotomy between the formal system of democratic governance on the one hand, and the practice of grassroot democracy on the other. The former relied exclusively on the formal system of knowledge in pursuit of its own objectives. The latter (grassroots democracy), by its very nature, continued to work through and rely on indigenous knowledge systems available with the ordinary people at the local level. In fact, the effective and sustained functioning of local associations and the sustenance of grassroots democracy is very closely and intricately linked to the promotion and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems.

Rajesh Tandon is Executive Director of PRIA. The above article has been abridged from a lengthier version which was featured in the SEMINAR magazine, Vol. 451, March, 1997.
Discussion

Does PR create conflict in society?

In the month of April, earlier this year, a group of social work educators on the occasion of the Second National Interprofessional Dialogue on Participatory Research and Participatory Development, had the opportunity to explore the ideology and concepts underlying the Participatory Research (PR) approach.

PR, in practical terms, is an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work and action. It is based on the principle of democratic interaction between researchers and those among whom the research is being conducted. Democratic interaction, in this case, involves more than simply including people in the research process; it implies that people have control over the processes of knowing and acting and will use the outcomes of research to improve their lives.

PR, in this manner supports and contributes to the efforts of individuals, groups and movements which challenge social inequality and work to eliminate exploitation. The approach has been implemented with groups and individuals in a wide variety of settings - geographic communities, workplace situations, adult learning groups, community issue groups, movements and development projects or programmes. Participatory researchers have worked with landless labourers and small peasants, indigenous peoples, urban poor, urban and rural migrants, women and workers. Needless to say, very different problems have been addressed in different parts of the world.

While PR is not a recipe for social change, it is clearly a means to enhance people's critical consciousness. To the extent that people begin to question the social problems they face, the structural causes of these and possibilities for overcoming them; PR provides a base for social transformation and empowerment.

Clearly, this approach differs from conventional research methodologies where "experts" and not ordinary people control the process of investigation; and where knowledge-generation and action are regarded as two distinct activities. Hence the question: does PR create conflict? By raising questions about sensitive issues, does PR disturb the social functioning of individuals and groups? If the status quo is being challenged would there not be a clash of interests?

The following pages reproduce sections of a lively debate on these themes, which took place between social work educators and development practitioners present at the National Interprofessional Dialogue. The debate was triggered off by a vote which the resource person for the day called for. While the issues raised following the vote, were raised in the context of social work education and its link to PR, many of them are of relevance to development work in general.

FOUR DIFFERENT VIEWS

YES, PR creates conflict in society

"PR talks about change, change will create conflict in the minds of some individuals and groups".

"Creating consciousness and awareness among people lead to conflict."

"Once people become socially aware and conscious about the problems they face conflict is bound to occur."

"PR raises serious question in the minds of people and so creates conflict e.g. feminists have questioned the male dominance and patriarchal systems of authority and control, in doing so they have created conflict."

![Participation & Governance](Vol. 4 No. 10 July 1997)
PR highlights certain social problems, depending on how that problem is handled, conflict may or may not occur.

**NO, but . . .**

"The concept of conflict has to be understood, whether it is a conflict of ideas or actions. Depending on this PR may or may not create conflict."

"The actual research process does not create conflict, but if these processes of critical investigation are sustained some level of conflict may occur."

**NO, PR does not create conflict in society**

Conflict is already present in society. PR only brings the underlying causes of conflict to the fore and attempts, through democratic investigation and learning, to resolve this conflict. It is possible that confusion or disorganisation occurs once the PR process is initiated, but some degree of confusion or disorganisation exists within all individuals and organisations. Rather than avoiding participatory techniques because of these tensions, these should actually motivate sensitive researchers, activists, or ordinary people themselves, to work for social change. If one is in favour of working in the interests of the poor and marginalised, the issue of creating conflict through the application of a participatory methodology does not arise. It is the outcome of that methodology that becomes important. If through PR, disadvantaged groups can develop a vision of their future and work to achieve that vision, then clearly this is an approach which people-focused professions need to adopt.

What is important, is that those initiating PR are clear about the objectives of PR, their role as researchers and the methods of research.

**Clarity on the objectives of PR:** The primary objective of PR is the production of knowledge and encouraging the poor and oppressed to generate their own knowledge, control their knowledge and control the means of production of knowledge. Awareness as an educational process is a byproduct of this process. In pursuing knowledge and this educational process, ordinary people become aware of forces that control them and delegitimize their experiences and competencies. This alone does not lead to conflict resolution. Conflict resolution and social change requires several types of interventions—organising, mobilising, struggle etc. PR therefore only makes a small although important contribution in this direction.

**Clarity on the role of the researcher:** Many of those who are called "researchers" are products of the elite system of knowledge production for whom, behaving as participants in the ongoing social realities of the poor and the oppressed becomes difficult. If, on the other hand, the researcher is able to reject the separation of roles between "researcher" and "participant", the question of whether PR creates conflict or not can be successfully avoided. The research process then becomes a collective process and the people involved gradually begin to control it. In this manner, any action agenda which emerges from PR can be executed by the people themselves rather than by the "external" researcher.

**Clarity on the methods of research:** PR is an alternative system of knowledge production based on a commitment to collective participation and empowerment of ordinary people in interpreting and acting upon their social realities. What is important therefore, is for those initiating PR to avoid preoccupations with tools, techniques and methods. Once the philosophical basis for research is accepted, then PR has to be geared towards ensuring that people themselves set the agenda of inquiry; are involved in data collection and analysis and control and use the outcomes of research. These participatory processes ensure that the research process per se does not create tension, or give rise to expectations which cannot be fulfilled.

**References:**


This discussion was facilitated by Binoy Acharya, Director of UNNATTI, Ahmedabad, our resource person for the day. The Second National Inter-Professional Dialogue was organised by PRIA in collaboration with the Association of Schools for Social Work in India (ASSWI).
Participatory Training

Training Workshop on Participatory Training Methodologies, State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development (SIPRD), 8th April - 12 April 1997, Kalyani, West Bengal

The purpose of this training workshop, also known as Trainer Development Programme I (TDP) was to facilitate the process of learning participatory training methodologies. The participants were mainly faculty members of SIPRD and government officials (BDOs, District Panchayat Officers etc.) from a few districts of West Bengal. The programme was organised by SIPRD, while the training was given by the PRIA team. In all there were around 25 participants.

Objectives:

a) to facilitate an understanding of participatory principles.

b) to facilitate an understanding of participatory training methodologies.

Emphasis was given to the participatory training methodologies such as small group discussion, case study, role play, simulation etc. The participants were also given inputs on self development and group processes. Finally, action plans were made by the groups, mainly on the designing of the training modules for TDP2, the purpose being to develop District Level Trainer Teams in each of the 17 districts of West Bengal.

Panchayati Raj Initiatives

Panchayati Raj presentation at Social Development Fair, 14th April, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi

During the Social Development Fair, held at Pragati Maidan in Delhi, Central Social Welfare Board organised a series of presentations. PRIA was asked to present on Panchayati Raj initiatives. After presenting on the collaborative efforts of PRIA and Regional Support Organisations in ten states, the interventions in the State of Haryana were highlighted. Some of the panchayat members (men and women sarpanchs and panchs) and Mahila Mandal women from District Rohtak were also present and shared their personal experiences. The presentation was followed by a lot of discussion between the presenters and the audience.

Workshops with Panchayati Raj members, on 3 – 4 May and 6 – 7 May 1997, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

The first workshop held on 3-4 May was held at Khera, a village in Bhawara block, Kangra district in joint collaboration with New HOPE, a grassroot NGO. The second workshop held on 6 – 7 May, was held at Rait in collaboration with Samaj Seva Parishad, also a voluntary agency working at the grassroot level. The objectives of both these workshops were as follows:-

(a) Developing an understanding of the existing relationship between Gram Panchayats on the one hand and Panchayat Samiti & Zila Parishad, the Gram Sabha, the block officials and government officials on the other.

(b) Developing an understanding of the problems and possible practical solutions with an emphasis on women Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIA) members

(c) Assessing needs of PRIA members related to training

(d) Developing a network between PRIA, New HOPE, Samaj Seva Parishad and elected panchayat representatives.

The first workshop was attended by 22 PRI members from four panchayats - Bahi-da-put, Lower Khera, Lahat and Chhenchri. The second one was attended by 20 PRI members of three panchayats, namely Tarwani, Mehma and Rait.

Discussions took place on the role of gram panchayat, their functions and responsibilities and the present situation after 1 1/2 years of existence. Generally, the panchayats are facing certain common problems, like lack of support from Gram Sabha members, lack of knowledge and information etc. Some possible solutions were also suggested by the Gram Sabha Meetings and future training programmes were also finalised.

Three day workshop of organisation working on PRI in Haryana, 13th – 15th May, 1997, PRIA, New Delhi

A three day workshop on Panchayati Raj in Haryana was organised between 13th to 15th May, 1997 at PRIA. The participants were from eleven organisations working in seven districts of Haryana. The main objective was to ensure that gram sabha meetings take place effectively in the months of May, June, November and December as per the Haryana Act. The three days were spent in sharing experiences in organising the gram sabha the previous year and planning strategies for effective gram sabha meetings this year. The
aim was three fold: 1) there would be the desired quorum (one tenth of voters), 2) representation and participation of different social, political economic, gender groups 3) that issues of accountability, transparency, responsibility both from the community and the panchyat would be raised.

Amongst the participants there were representatives of four organisations who were new to our collaboration and expressed keen interest in joining us in this endeavour. Finally action plans were made by each organisation and presented, with PRIA reiterating its supportive role in this collaboration.

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Participatory Development

Second National Inter-Professional Dialogue on Participatory Development (PD) and Participatory Research (PR) for social work educators of India. April 18–24, 1997, PRIA, New Delhi

PRIA, in collaboration with Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI) organised the above mentioned seven day residential dialogue.

Eighteen social work educators from fifteen social work institutions of India participated actively in the dialogue, with experienced practitioners, researchers and academicians also contributing to the dialogue as resource persons.

The inter-disciplinary and logically sequenced design was aimed towards accomplishing the twin objectives of:

(i) developing conceptual understanding of PD and PR, and

(ii) assessing implications of PD and PR for social work education and practice.

Lectures, group discussions, exercises and reading material facilitated the learning process. The highlight of the dialogue were the presentations of three participatory research projects, undertaken by social work educators. These projects were sponsored under PRIA’s ‘Research fund on Participation’, as a follow up initiative to the first National Inter-Professional dialogue undertaken during April, 1995. The dialogue stressed on the need for revising the social work curriculum, in light of the seven day thought provoking and insightful discourse and on strengthening regional social work associations to take this endeavour further.

Second Regional Workshop on Participatory Development. 4–6 June, 1997, Bhopal.

A three day workshop on Participatory Development was organised by SAMARTHAN (Bhopal) in collaboration with PRIA, New Delhi at Seva Sadan, Bhopal. A total of 34 participants from about 17 voluntary organisations working in the state of Madhya Pradesh attended the workshop.

The primary aim of this workshop was to provide a platform for the participants active at the grassroots level to share experiences and understanding of participatory development. Group discussions, case studies, simulations and exercises were used to strengthen the understanding of various issues.

The highlight of the workshop was the formulation of future action plans incorporating dimensions of participatory development.

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Other training programmes

South Asia Workshop on PRA - going to scale, challenges for training. 13th - 16th May 1997, Calcutta. Organised by PRA - Division of Action Aid India and Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK.

A total of 25 participants attended this workshop out of which nine were from the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Dr. Robert Chambers from IDS Sussex was also present. The overall objective of this workshop retreat was to provide a friendly and relaxed opportunity to take stock of the situation, to share experiences and to seek solutions. The rapid spread of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and of the rhetoric of participation, has led to problems of quality. There is some excellent work being done and at the same time, many PRA trainers and practitioners are concerned about the scale of practice which is mediocre or bad. Thus, there is a lot of scope for improvement. This workshop was thus to reflect and share on the following aspects:

- experience with PRA in large organisations
- experience with training of trainers
- evaluation or studies of PRA practices and impacts
- how to become a better trainer

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Reports


The Oxfam Poverty Report draws on Oxfam’s experiences of working in over 70 countries, to illustrate the causes of poverty at a local and national level and also outlines some of the wider policy and institutional reforms needed to create an enabling environment for poverty reduction.

The central theme of the report is that “…when it comes to understanding poverty, the real experts are the poor themselves…(and) ultimately, real progress towards poverty reduction will depend upon local communities coming together to act as a catalyst for change; and on governments, NGOs, and international financial institutions alike listening and learning from them”.

The information and analysis is presented through chapters on - poverty and livelihoods; war or conflict; structural adjustment; international trade; threats faced due to ecological degradation; aid, debt and development finance. The entire analysis culminates in an ‘an agenda for change’, which outlines five critical areas for future development action. These are democratic participation, enhanced opportunity, increased equity, peace and security and a sustainable future. On the whole, a gripping and highly informative presentation.

Oxfam UK
274, Banbury Road,
Oxford, OX2 7DZ
United Kingdom
Pages: 250


This report builds from a study carried out in eight states (Assam, Orissa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra pradesh and Tamil Nadu ) on the state of rural, small and micro-enterprises (RSME), which was later the subject of a national-level workshop.

Presented in a concise, easy-to-read manner, the report provides an overview of the RMSE sector in India and then goes on to review existing policies and institutional framework. Certain “strategic recommendations” are made around the issues of building up rural physical infrastructure; focussing promotion of RMSE; prioritising certain sub-sectors and making changes in credit institutions.

Embassy of Switzerland
Chandragupta Marg, Chanakyapuri
New Delhi 110 021, India
Pages: 22

Books


Isagani R. Serrano is one of the leading thinkers on environment and development. These essays capture some of the key themes which have dominated the environment and development debate since the Rio Summit till today. They have been separated into four thematic sections. The first is titled ‘breaking the environment-development impasses’. The second goes to explore some of the caveats or gaps in current thinking on ‘sustainability’ and introduces the work of the Phillipine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), a well known non-governmental organisation. Next, there are essays which attempt to ‘reconcile environment and development’ through further exploration of the PRRM approach and its relevance to the Phillipines and the rest of the world. The compilation ends with an attempt to apply the PRRM model specifically to the agriculture sector.

While the compilation as a whole, reflects the author’s personal reflections influenced by the state of environment and development in the Phillipines, the issues highlighted are of broader relevance.

Phillipine Rural Reconstruction Movement
Development and Communication Department
940 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City
Phillipines
Pages: 164
Resource Material on Panchayati Raj


A very useful resource for workers of regional organisations and facilitators conducting trainings on Panchayati Raj. This manual is based on the “Read it and do it” concept. All exercises given in the manual have a facilitators note so as to enable easy usage. The subjects range from methods of communication, group exercises for developing communication skills, role of trainer, training design to the preparation of training report.

A CENCORED, Patna and PRIA, New Delhi Publication
CENCORED, Shyama Bhavan
West Boring Canal Road, Patna

Panchayati Raj Prashikshakon ka Prashikshan (Hindi) - A Manual, Sahbbagi Shikshan Kendra, 1995

This manual is based on the experiences gained by Sahbbagi Shikshan Kendra through the preparation of learning material and organising and conducting trainings/other meetings related to PRI.

The main objective of this manual is to build and enhance the capacities of NGO workers vis-à-vis Panchayati Raj Trainings. The manual is divided into two parts- Panchayati Raj related information and information related to capacity building of trainers.

Sahbbagi Shikshan Kendra
4/487, Vivek Khand, Gomti Nagar
 Lucknow 226 010

Video films


This short film is about an experiment which was carried out in the city of Bangalore during the 1996 municipal elections. Residents from eight wards tracked down their ward candidates and asked for answers to questions like: Do you live in this ward? Do you pay taxes? What is your source of income? What is your past record? Are there any criminal or corruption charges against you? The experiment has shown that civil society institutions can respond to the challenge of ensuring transparency and be pro-active in the electoral process. (English, Colour)

Public Affairs Centre
707 6B Cross Road
Block 3 Koramangala, Bangalore
duration: 16 mins; price: Rs 400 (inclusive of mailing)

Samp Seedhi Ka Khel - Adarsh Gram Panchayat Ki Or (Hindi & Kannada)

This is an interesting game developed on the concept of ‘Snakes and Ladders’. The game begins with a person’s entry into politics (panchayat) and ends with the realisation of an ideal Gram Panchayat after overcoming many hurdles on the way and making significant achievements.

The game may be used by the trainers and elected representatives both for fun and learning.

Published by FES and ISST
Institute of Social Studies Trust
42, 4th Temple Street
15th Cross Malleswaram
Bangalore 560 003

A nine volume Training Manual set devised to provide training and communication support to elected Gram Panchayat women members has been prepared by SEARCH and published by the Department of Women and Child Development. The set is available in Kannada language. It covers subjects ranging from functions/duties of gram sabha and gram panchayat, gender relations, government schemes to the relationship between the government and the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Attempt has been made to contain enough information to catch the attention of GP members and make them inquisitive, analytical, critical and conscious about their rights.

SEARCH
219/26, 6th Main, 4th Block
 Jayanagar, Bangalore 560 011

Panchayati Raj Aur Hamara Sanjha Vikas (Hindi)
- A booklet, SAMARTHAN - Centre for Development Support, 1996

It is now an established fact, that if the panchayats have to become effective units of local self governance, they will require support in a number of areas. This booklet is the result of this realisation and the fact that that the basic contents of the 73rd amendment must be made
available to the concerned people in a simple, yet comprehensive manner. Through this booklet, an attempt has been made to present in an easy and readable manner, the role of panchayats in development and the details of the new Panchayati Raj structure vis-a-vis the 73rd amendment.

SAMARTHAN

PARTICIPATION & GOVERNANCE BULLETIN

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also been made to articulate some concerns and initiate a dialogue, so as to enable brainstorming for a common understanding on approaches and the content of training elected women representatives.

Strengthening the Core - A Resource Book for Women in Panchayati Raj UMA - A Resource Center for Women in Panchayati Raj

This book attempts to present in a simple and succinct form, the key issues like highlights of 73rd amendment, gender equality etc., vital to women representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The book may be used in formal facilitation programmes as well as informal discussions. A Kannada version of the book is also available.

Institute of Social Studies Trust
42, 4th Temple Street
15th Cross Malleswaram
Bangalore 560 003

Moving Forward Together (Stories from the Women’s Movement) UMA - A Resource Center for Women In Panchayati Raj

This book is a collection of some stories of the Indian Women’s Movement. It is an excellent resource for elected women representatives and can be used in facilitation programmes as role plays and as discussion material to focus on the strengths of collective action and women’s intrinsic capabilities.

Institute of Social Studies Trust
42, 4th Temple Street, 15th Cross Malleswaram
Bangalore 560 003

Vikas Ke Liye Gram Satar Par Sahbhagita- Ek Pustika
Society for Participatory Research In Asia, 1997

This book is divided into four sections - Health, Education, Water and Sanitation and Gender. An attempt has been made to provide information on the said four topics so as to initiate and guide the participation of community, Gram panchayat, village level government and voluntary functionaries and other persons and organisations interested in the village development.

The book may be used as a learning material or an information source by trainers and all the people concerned with initiating peoples participation in development at the village level.

Society For Participatory Research In Asia
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi 110 062

The Reportage and Resources sections of this bulletin were compiled by Yogesh Bhattacharya, Sheela Choudhry, Namrata Jaith, Shagun Mehta and Sohini Paul, Centre for Participation and governance, PRIA.
In Memory of Paulo Freire
Pioneer in Adult Education for Social Change
1921-1997

It is with deep sadness that we note the passing of Dr. Paulo Freire - educational philosopher, practitioner and leader in the movement of education for social change. Dr. Freire played a critical role in the development of the International Council for Adult Education, inspiring adult educators throughout the world.

Freire's life brings to the fore the integral links between educational practice and the social struggles in which this is embedded. Born in 1921, in one of the poorest regions of Brazil, Freire was deeply influenced by his early experiences with rural trade union movements and peasant associations working for land reform in the Northeast of Brazil. His concern for the struggles of the poor led him to initiate numerous literacy activities for them. For this, he was imprisoned and sent into exile.

Some of the fundamental concerns, sparked by Freire's early experiences, underpinned his work throughout his lifetime - his concern for articulating the role of education in social struggles; his efforts to elaborate a holistic view of the individual learner imbedded in society and history and thus mitigate against education which objectifies learners and makes them passive recipients of neutral knowledge; and his struggle to develop pedagogical methods which facilitate learners' critical analysis of their reality (conscientization), and support their efforts to act upon and transform it.

A strong advocate of critical dialogue and communication, he once explained that he preferred not to edit his early works but to improve on them instead. This he did in new works after reflection, practice and open analysis and critique. His belief in the power dialogue and communication made him welcome an exchange of ideas and propositions on these and other social change and critical educational issues.

Author of numerous works, mentor to generations of adult and popular educators, his insightful voice will be deeply missed even as his ideas continue to influence our struggles and enrich our work.

- Carmen Melancia Madrinan

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Opportunities of scale

"...when it comes to a question of size: there is no simple answer"


When E.F. Schumacher’s epic study was first published, it gained universal acclaim for providing an alternative and holistic view of development - one which challenged the economic and technological criteria on which development had hitherto been premised. ‘Small is Beautiful’ however, did not discount the relevance of large organisations and structures. Rather, it stressed the need to restore some kind of balance: “for his different purposes man needs many different structures, both small ones and large ones, some exclusive and some comprehensive”.

Today, over two decades later, this duality of human needs is still felt. The development enterprise is ostensibly at crossroads. On the one hand, the notion of ‘small is beautiful’ continues to be invoked to protect local needs and interests, while on the other, a variety of demands and opportunities have emerged to expand, replicate or ‘up-scale’ local, people-centred initiatives.

This edition of Participation and Governance focuses on some of these ‘opportunities of scale’: a large-scale development programme which has in-built mechanisms for community participation; an amendment to our national constitution which provides the legal framework for decentralised governance; and similar policy and programme developments in other parts of the world.

Opportunities of scale, to paraphrase one of our contributors, offer a powerful means to promote democratisation, to strengthen civil society and to mobilise new energy and resources for overcoming poverty and deprivation. Yet, the dangers of misuse are also present. The institutionalisation of ‘participation’ or ‘local self-governance’ at a macro-level can lead to co-optation of grassroots efforts, bureaucratisation and standardisation, which impedes rather than strengthens democratic functioning.

These conflicting trends pose some serious dilemmas for voluntary agencies which typically, are familiar with local, grassroots development contexts. Should we continue to invest our energies in small, locally relevant initiatives? Or should we adventure into the arena of large-scale programmes and policy advocacy? Clearly, when it comes to a question of size: there is no simple answer!
Several contributions to this edition of Participation and Governance have been inspired by “Revisiting Participation”, an advanced workshop organised by PRIA a few months ago, which brought together development professionals from all over the country to reflect critically on past lessons and future challenges in this field. S.A. Khan, Regional Director of NIPCCD and one of the participants in the workshop, profiles the scope for community participation in Integrated Child Development Schemes. John Gaventa, resource person from the IDS, Sussex, traces the changing definitions of people’s participation in government programmes in the United States, and C. Upendranath from Action Aid, Patna, discusses some lessons emerging from the workshop.

Our theme article is inspired by PRIA’s ongoing programme to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions all over the country. The month of August marked the culmination of a two-year collaborative intervention between PRIA and the Network of Regional Collaborating Support Organisations.

As we review the past year’s experience and plan for the future, we feel a sense of excitement and commitment to continue our endeavours to promote people-centred and people-controlled development. We are grateful to our supporters, partners and friends, without whom this learning would remain behind closed doors. A sincere word of thanks to all of them as well as to all our readers - a very Happy New Year!
Community Participation in Government Programmes - A Case Study of ICDS

S. A. Khan

Community participation is the cornerstone of success of all development programmes. These programmes cannot achieve their intended objectives if they do not have some built-in mechanisms for involving people in their planning, implementation and monitoring. Community participation is also necessary to reduce the administrative and operational costs of developmental programmes and to ensure their self-sustenance when Government withdraws from the scene. It also helps develop people's social sensitivity and competence through their participation.

Five Year Plans have laid stress on public cooperation for successful planning and implementation. Recent Plan documents emphasise "promoting active involvement of all sections of the people in the process of development through appropriate education, communication and institutional strategies". While the very process of planning connotes state intervention and a degree of centralisation or regimentation; in a democratic set-up, it attains depth, meaning and relevance only if supported by people's spontaneous and wholehearted cooperation. Keeping these ideas in view, Panchayati Raj Institutions, cooperatives, NGOs etc. were created to mobilise the vast human resources in local planning and development.

The Government and the voluntary sector realise that the precise methods of involving people in development programme and the problems encountered in this process are not very clear. In government programmes, the problem in most cases is the limited scope for people's participation in planning or implementation. As a result, many programmes launched with laudable objectives and great expectations sooner or later start loosing momentum. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is therefore distinctive, as it has an in-built system for community participation.

Integrated Child Development Services

ICDS is a Government of India scheme which was launched in the year 1975 on an experimental basis in 33 blocks of the country. Today, ICDS is one of the world's largest and most unique outreach programmes for early childhood care and development. It covers about 60% of the total 5,279 community development blocks in the country and symbolises India's commitment to its children.

The programme provides an integrated approach for converging basic services for improved child care, early stimulation and learning, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation. The target groups are young children (0-6 years), expectant and nursing mothers and women/adolescent girls. They are reached through nearly 300,000 trained community-based Anganwadi workers and a near equal number of helpers, women's groups and other supportive community structures.

ICDS is thus a powerful outreach programme to help achieve major national nutrition and health goals, embodied in the National Plan of Action for Children, 1992. It also contributes to the National Goals of Universal Elementary Education.

Objectives and Services

The specific objectives of ICDS scheme are as follows:

- Improve the nutritional and health status of children below the age of six years,
- Lay the foundation for the proper psychological, physical and social development of the child,
- Reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school drop outs,
- Achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation among various departments to promote child development; and
- Enhance the capability of mothers to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of their children through proper health and nutrition education.

In accordance with these objectives, ICDS provides:

Health services: such as immunisation, regular health check-ups, referral services and treatment of minor illnesses.
Nutrition services: through supplementary feeding, growth monitoring and promotion of nutrition and health education.

Early childhood care and pre-school education: to children in the age group of three to six years.

Convergence with other supportive services: such as safe drinking water, environmental sanitation, women’s empowerment programmes. Non-formal education and adult literacy is also emphasised in ICDS.

Areas for Community Participation

As mentioned above, ICDS is one of the largest development initiatives of the Government of India, which is being run with the participation of people. Some of the in-built strategies for community participation in the programme are as follows:

- Identification of vulnerable groups and their follow-up
- Linking of vulnerable groups e.g. women with other development programmes (DWCRA, IRDP, thrift & credit schemes etc.)
- Setting up of Village Co-ordination Committees to monitor activities of Anganwadi centres.
- Volunteer arrangements to involve children from scattered hamlets in the programme.
- Nutrition and health education sessions especially for women and adolescent girls.
- Ensuring that oral rehydration solution (ORS) is available in the village.
- Converging sectoral services at the Anganwadi centres.
- Local mobilisation of resources towards the running of the Anganwadi centre.
- Community-based monitoring using a simple checklist and community growth chart for nutrition status monitoring.

The project implementation process is also indicative of the scope for community participation in the programme. During the ‘pre-project’ phase for example, project officers along with other staff members concentrate on educating the people about the programme and resultant benefits to them. This exercise is done first at an individual level, then at a group (small group) level and then with the village as a whole. Project staff with the help of local people identify Anganwadi workers, the helpers and the location of the Anganwadi Centres. ICDS places a lot of emphasis on appointing Anganwadi Workers from the same village, the idea being that the Anganwadi Worker will be accepted by the community.

Similarly, during the ‘start-up’ phase, village mapping is done by the villagers. A village survey is done by the Worker with the help of the intended beneficiaries. It is also emphasised that villagers - through panchayats - should provide a low-cost functional building for housing the Anganwadi Centre.

For conducting non-formal, pre-school sessions at Anganwadi Centre the village community usually contributes locally available material for making toys. Local artisans and craftsmen provide wooden blocks and other items which can be used for pre-school activity. Youth groups and members of Mahila Mandals help in conducting pre-school activities like story telling, reciting nursery rhymes, action songs, games etc.

In situations where supplementary food provided in ICDS schemes sometimes gets disrupted because of the non-timely supply of items, women’s groups have often provided food to the Anganwadi. In the absence of Anganwadi Workers, the womenfolk prepare food...
Factors Influencing Community Participation in ICDS

Rapport building
Project functionaries have observed that it is important to be friendly and mingle well with local people. A shy worker would find it difficult to visit homes and approach people, particularly panchayat presidents for help.

Commitment of Anganwadi Workers
Often the workers have to demonstrate their own involvement in the Programme by setting an example of good conduct or contributing tangible resources for the advancement of the programme.

Community’s level of maturity
The extent to which a community is used to cooperating and acting jointly for problems of common concern is also an important factor influencing community participation in programmes like ICDS. Presence of an active housing society for example, has been instrumental in mobilising local support for building Anganwadi Centres.

Community’s perception of the programme
If people are aware about the programme and appreciate its usefulness, then their inclination to participate increases.

Monitoring
Where monitoring activities are combined with training interventions these are found to strengthen the community participation process.

Transfers
In the context of the community participation, the time spent by project officers in a single area before being transferred elsewhere, is too short for any one individual to make more than a dent in the process. Ensuring continuity of measures initiated by one officer is thus important.

Response of officials
Avoiding delay is imperative, for it is likely to dampen the enthusiasm and support of the community, which can adversely affect the credibility of the functionaries among the people.

Participation, Poverty and Social Exclusion in the North and South

John Gaventa

The rapid growth and acceptance of the concept of participation has been a key feature of development in the 1990s. While during the 1970s and 1980s, 'participation' was more the discourse of grassroots organisations or NGO's, this decade has seen the concept being embraced at the institutional and governmental level. The World Bank has launched 18 Flagship participation projects internationally. An Interagency Group on Participation has been established to promote participation amongst aid agencies. The UNDP is incorporating participation as a critical path for poverty alleviation. Encouraged by aid organisations, national governments are being urged to decentralise and to democratise through strengthening community participation and planning at the local and regional levels.

The institutionalisation of participation offers the possibility of taking grassroots participation to a larger scale, of being a powerful vehicle for democratisation and the strengthening of the civil society, and for mobilising new energy and resources for overcoming poverty. Yet, the dangers of misuse are also present. The institutionalisation of participation at a policy level can lead to co-option of grassroots efforts, bureaucratisation and standardisation of the approach through top-down methods, and poor quality experiences that will taint participatory efforts in the future (Blackburn, forthcoming).

While policies in support of participation enjoy a new currency, the approach has been around for a long time. In particular, we can learn a great deal about the use of participation to address poverty and social exclusion by looking at how the concept has been used in the North, where policies to promote participation for community development and poverty alleviation have been tried for several decades.

This article first discusses the links between the concepts of participation and social exclusion. Then, turning to the context of the United States, it presents a short history of three government programmes that have attempted to use participation to address poverty and social exclusion. Finally, it concludes with themes which emerge from this history and which may be relevant for the South, as participation is increasingly used as an institutionalised strategy for addressing poverty.

Participation and Social Exclusion

Within the literature on participation, a distinction is often made between participation as an end in itself, or as a means to an end. A similar distinction may be helpful as we link the concept of participation to that of social exclusion.

First, we can understand the lack of participation in itself as a form of social exclusion. In his paper, Arjan de Haan (1997) discusses several definitions of social exclusion, including social exclusion as 'the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live.' In this sense, participation or inclusion is a goal to be achieved in and of itself, as a response to the problem of exclusion.

Secondly, however, we often find in the literature that participation is also a means of overcoming other problems of exclusion. Participation is seen as a vehicle to enable the excluded to act more effectively to address the problems which they face. Thus, the unemployed may be organised to participate in strategies for overcoming unemployment or for job creation; youth organisations may be encouraged to participate on issues affecting youth; immigrants or minorities may develop participatory strategies for addressing racism or cultural exclusion, etc.

In the first sense, participation may be seen as an antidote to the problem of exclusion and is more an end in itself. In the second sense, participation is seen as a means of engaging the socially excluded in broader solutions to the issues and problems in their lives. In either sense, participation and social exclusion are important concepts to discuss together, in both the North and the South.

If we are concerned with participation as a strategy for dealing with social exclusion, we must quickly confront the issue of how participation can be taken to a larger scale. The challenge that is before us now is how to build upon the successes of participatory development that have occurred at the micro and local levels - to incorporate participation into the development and implementation of national policies and in large scale institutions. Such efforts have long been tried in the North, especially in the United States.
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the North

While we often think of poverty in the ‘South’ and wealth in the ‘North’, these distinctions are increasingly misleading. While the North clearly is a place of relative wealth, it also contains within it large scale poverty and increasing inequality. With growing inequality in industrialised countries, the movement of jobs and industry to newly industrialised regions of the South, increasing issues of access to basic services such as health care for the poor in many countries, and the globalisation of goods, services and information, the traditional distinctions between North and South need to be re-examined. We must recognise that there are ‘Souths within the ‘North’, just as there may be ‘Norths within the ‘South’.

The parallels and connections between North and South (Maxwell, 1997) have particular impact on issues of poverty and social exclusion, especially those concerning the link between inequality and participation. The level of income inequality in the US for example, is higher than in many other countries, including many in the South.

Moreover, for whatever reason, socio-economic status (defined more broadly than income) is also more likely to affect social and political participation in the US than in many other countries. Over 25 years ago, Verba and Nie (1972) found, for instance, that socio-economic status was a better predictor of participation in the US than in many countries in the North, such as the UK, Netherlands and Germany, but also than in countries in the South such as Mexico and Nigeria. More recently, Robert Putnam (1995) has written of the decline of social capital and civic engagement in the US, at the same time that the US is promoting a vibrant civil society as a condition for newly emerging democracies in other parts of the world.

So we face a paradox of participation in the North. In countries that globally have the most, there is high inequality between the haves and have nots. And, for the have nots who might need to participate the most to change their socio-economic situations, there are low levels of participation (Verba and Nie, p.150). It is perhaps for this reason that social policy in the United States over the last thirty years has included a series of programmes that have used participation - with differing meanings and strategies - to address poverty and social exclusion. These include:

- Participation as Community Action - 1960’s
- Participation through Regional Planning and Integration - 1970’s and 1980’s
- Participation as Partnership and Collaboration - 1990s

In 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act, widely known as the War on Poverty legislation was passed by the US senate. A cornerstone of the Act was the community action clause, which mandated that there should be ‘maximum feasible participation of the poor’ in anti-poverty efforts. It directed local communities to designate public or private non-profit agencies as grant receiving agencies, and to use those funds to develop employment opportunities and to improve local living conditions. Community Action Programs (CAPs) were formed, involving poor people and their organisations, often with the help of young, educated organisers who had enlisted in the War on Poverty efforts. Across the country in a few short months, there was an outpouring of community mobilisation and action.

Such a blossoming of poor peoples’ organisations and voice, especially when supported by funds from the federal government, also provoked an outcry from the local elites in city halls and country councils. Conflicting interpretations over how much participation was either ‘maximum’ or ‘feasible’ quickly emerged. Some argued it was possible producing ongoing struggles over board composition and representation, to encourage citizen participation, not to turn over control of the program to them, nor to bypass local political structures.

By 1966, two years after passage of the historic legislation, the federal government had beat a hasty retreat. An amendment to the Act put funding for community action under the authority of state or local governments and determined participation by the poor to mean one-third representation of poor peo-
ple themselves, one-third from government, and one-third from other business and civic sectors.

**Participation as Regional Integration**
For all practical purposes, most of the 14 million poor in our poverty areas are on the outside of the market economy...they are on the outside looking in, and they need our help'. The People Left Behind, President's Commission on Rural Poverty, 1967.

The 1960's socio-economic maps of the United States revealed enormous 'pockets of poverty' in rural areas, regions viewed as being 'socially excluded' in the sense that they were outside of the nation's social and economic mainstream. Of these, three regions stood out most clearly: the Appalachian Region, Alabama and the Arkansas delta.

In the Appalachian Region, a special development agency, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was launched. The commission invested most of its funds on infrastructure, following a model parallel to the 'modernisation' approach in other parts of the world. Through the development of regional infrastructure, the commission believed Appalachia would 'take off' and become 'integrated' into the national economy, overcoming the regional exclusion and poverty of previous decades.

From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the ARC strategy seemed to 'work.' Industries, often from the industrialised northern US, migrated South in search of cheaper labour, resources, and a more favourable 'business climate.' The gains, however, were short lived. The 1980s were marked by decline for many residents, including a widening gap between their incomes and that of other more affluent parts of America. The crisis was no longer of impoverished rural pockets of poverty 'on the outside looking in'; it appeared much more to be of the mainstream economy itself.

What had happened? One factor lies in an economic restructuring that was national and international in scope. During the 1970's and 1980's, agricultural and industrial America was transformed into a service and finance economy. Millions of jobs were lost as plants shut down or moved, many to overseas locations. Such economic restructuring had particular impact on the rural poor, who saw themselves underbid by newly industrialising parts of the world, but were not able to compete for new jobs or industries with the more affluent and educated regions in their own country.

By the end of 1980's, it was clear that the regional integration solution to poverty was not working, especially in the context of a changing global economy. At the same time, during the 1970's and 1980's, community-based efforts at development, many of which were spawned in the 1960's, had continued to grow and demonstrate results, at least on a small scale. As in the other parts of the world, attention began to turn to forming new partnerships between government and civil society, rather than to traditional market mechanisms, as a path for change.

**Participation as Partnership and Collaboration**
The road to economic opportunity and community development starts with broad participation by all segments of the community. The residents themselves, however, are the most important element of revitalisation. President's Community Empowerment Board, 1994.

One of the hall marks of the Clinton administration has been the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) program, the most comprehensive federal program of the 1990's to focus on relieving seven distresses in rural and urban areas. Launched in 1993, the programme provides $2.5 billion in tax incentives and $1 billion in block grants to revitalise 95 distressed urban and rural communities.

The principles of the EZ/EC programme are similar to many which are now being articulated in international approaches to community development. First, the programme gives significant new emphasis to the role of citizen participation in the planning and development process by promoting involvement and partnerships among all sectors of a community. Secondly, it adopts a comprehensive approach to development by linking the principles of economic opportunity and sustainable community development into a broad vision of change and revitalisation.

While much can be learned from the implementation of this programme, two points pertaining to participation stand out. First, as in the War on Poverty, given a chance to participate in development, people did so in enormous numbers. Widely diverse groups were involved in the planning process, including women, minorities and low-income people. In addition to racial, gender and class diversity, the planning process represented community-based organisations, government, private business, labour unions, educators, health care officials, media and other community stakeholders.
Secondly, however, while participation was high in the initial 'visioning' process, it has been difficult to maintain it in the implementation process. After encouraging local communities to go through a very hurried planning process, with promise for quick action, long delays then occurred as the government agencies attempted to devise new ways to process applications or allocate and disperse funds. Then, once money began to flow, communities often found the traditional power holders stepping in to take charge and serious conflicts emerged over goals, governance and implementation, as in the War on Poverty. In other places, however, these conflicts have been less pervasive and new initiatives have taken root very quickly, involving new coalitions of civil society organisations, local government and the private sector.

Key Themes for Development
What does this brief history of participation policy in poverty programmes in the United States suggest about the current debates on participation and policy in international development? A number of key themes emerge which are relevant and perhaps instructive.

Participation policy matters
While in some quarters there may be scepticism about attempts of government or large scale agencies to legislate or mandate participation, the experience in the United States is that participation policy matters. Strong legislation in the War on Poverty and in the latest Empowerment Zone programme helped to legitimate and to galvanise large scale action at the grassroots level. Opportunities for participation, when built into the national policy, made a difference to those who participated locally. The capacity, energy and momentum created at the grassroots often continued, even after the formal policies changed or failed.

Who participates matters
Broadening the base of participation is not only important in its own right, but it affects the development agenda. When there was broader based participation in the 1960s and 1990s, we saw very different definitions of what was important for development than in the more top-down and market oriented versions of the 1970s and 1980s. Visions of development which emerged in the community-based planning process in the Empowerment Zone programme reflected much broader concerns with issues of participation, capacity building, cultural awareness, empowerment, etc. and not only the more traditional agenda of economic and infrastructure development.

The definition of participation matters
Attempts to institutionalise participation have also led to conceptual debates about what we actually mean by participation. As the War on Poverty debates on what was meant by 'maximum feasible participation' illustrated, it is important to have as much clarity as possible on the levels and types of participation intended.

Participation and power
As participation moves 'up' the scale to include concepts like citizen control over resources or self-mobilisation of groups which have previously been inactive, then we can expect it to encounter resistance from the traditional power holders. The history of these programmes in the US suggests that increased participation by the have-nots will be perceived as threatening to those who have traditionally been the dominant decision-makers. Also, that simply mandating or legislating participation from the top is not enough to sustain it. Ongoing intervention is needed from the top to help ensure its implementation and to help intermediary elites to understand or accept the new participation.

The importance of prior social capital
In both the War on Poverty and the Empowerment Zone programmes, communities which are historically poor by measures of economic and human capital revealed strong resources of social capital in the planning and visioning process. Given an opportunity to participate with others, they were able to do so, building upon networks, relationships and levels of trust that may have been built over decades. Where there is a history of conflict or 'vertical' social capital, participation in large scale formal endeavours is more difficult to accomplish or to sustain.

The importance of institutional capacity
A major obstacle in the implementation of the EZ/EC program has been the conflict among the various levels of government, and turf conflicts within agencies responsible for implementation of programmes. This has led to delays, confusion and often conflicting procedures, and mixed signals and advice to the local-
ties. Also important has been the lack of skills, knowledge and attitudes amongst agency staff about how to work in a more participatory fashion, especially where goals and projects are set by the community, rather than given to them by government. New and more flexible institutional procedures and new skills and attitudes on the part of the government staff and officials are important for participatory policies to work effectively at the community level.

Participation may not be enough!

Clearly, policies to promote participatory approaches for dealing with poverty and social exclusion are also affected by broader forces and must be linked to other policies for change as well. Much more work is needed to understand the relationship of grassroots participation to other large issues like globalisation of the economy, racial, ethnic and religious movements, the overhaul of social welfare policies, governance and decentralisation policies, to name a few.

Conclusion

This article has suggested that policies and experiences with participation as a strategy for countering poverty and social exclusion in the North may be relevant to the current debates on how to institutionalise participation in development in the South. It has argued that there are many parallels and themes to be explored and it will take much further research to do so adequately.

If we are to use participation as an antidote to exclusion, then we must first start with involvement of the ‘excluded’ themselves in a definition of their own needs and issues and in development of their own strategies and capacities for change. Much work is needed, using the advances made by PRA and other participatory research methods, to learn from and to document the perceptions of the socially excluded about the barriers to full inclusion in society.

However, to play the role of developing and supporting local participation, large scale institutions must themselves adopt approaches to work that are more catalysing and facilitating, rather than directive and imposing. For large institutions to support increased and higher quality participation in more places means more than focusing on communities, it also means changing the institutions themselves. Whereas large institutions like governments have an advantage of scale over local groups, they have the disadvantage in that they are usually not very participatory. Institutions tend to work on standardised, bureaucratic procedures which often inhibit more flexible, innovative practices. People who have worked in large institutions for many years bring sets of attitudes and behaviours which may have served them well in a more traditional “blueprint” approach to development but which will have to be adapted in order to be supportive of more participatory and inclusive approaches. (See Chambers, 1996).

The institutional challenge is not only how to make single institutions more participatory through internal change, but also how to develop more collaboration and linkages between and among organisations which historically may not have worked together. In an age of globalisation, local communities cannot necessarily solve poverty at the local level - they must build links with other communities, and with the government, employers, donors and other institutions.

The greater the extent to which these more inclusive cross sectoral forms of working are developed, the more effectively are the issues of social exclusion likely to be addressed.

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Dr. John Gaventa is a fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This article has been abridged from a lengthier paper prepared for the IILS/ILO project on ‘Overcoming Social Exclusion: the ILO Contribution’.
A Glimpse of Decentralised Governance in Uganda
Shagun Mehrotra

The Republic of Uganda

Uganda, a country situated in the Eastern part of Africa, has been plagued by civil unrest, political instability and acute poverty. A British colony from 1900 to 1962, the decolonisation movement in the 1960's led to it's independence from the British. Dr Milton Obote became the first Prime Minister of the Independent Republic with Kabaka Mutesa II as the first President. Uganda presently has a population of 18,592,000, a literacy rate of 38%, per capita GNP of $ 190 and a per capita external debt of $187.

Post Independence Scenario (1962-1997)

Milton Obote's regime resulted in a highly centralised State with the bureaucrats and politicians having total control of all resources. This was legitimised by the Local Administration Act of 1967. In 1971, Obote was overthrown in a bloody coup by Idi Amin. Amin unleashed a reign of terror in the country and in 1972 he ordered the expulsion of the Asian community (primarily of Indian origin), who were forced to flee, leaving everything behind. In 1979, the opposition party, Ugandan National Liberation Front, along with the neighbouring country Tanzania, overthrew Amin. The Front's rule ended in a short span of time with Milton Obote's Uganda People's Congress winning the elections and coming back to power in 1980. Dissatisfaction with Obote's regime led to a guerrilla war waged by the National Resistance Army (NRA), the military wing of the National Resistance Movement (NRM). In 1985, Obote was overthrown in a coup led by General Bazilio Olara Okello who was subsequently ousted by the NRM leader Yoweri Museveni. Yoweri Museveni assumed presidency on January 30th 1986. Museveni reigned for 10 years following which in 1996 he was re-elected by more than 75% of the electorate.

Decentralisation Policy

In contrast to the previous regimes, the new government (NRM) pledged Constitutional Governance and decentralised reforms and sought to construct the State on more liberal lines. The 1967 Local Governments Act was replaced by the 1993 Local Councils Statute, the 1995 Constitution and the most recent 1997 Local Governments Act which were adopted to foster the process of decentralisation and devolution of power and resources to the local level.

Local Councils Statute, 1993

The Statute establishing Local Councils was adopted by the Parliament in 1993. Full decentralisation entailed transfer of decision making power and resources to districts, bringing political and administrative control over services to the point where they are actually delivered, thereby improving accountability effectively and efficiently. It also aimed at promoting people's feelings of ownership of programmes executed in their localities, allowed for development of organisational structures tailored to local circumstances and improved...
financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between payment of taxes and provision of services.

Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995

On 8th October, 1995, the Constitution of Uganda was adopted upholding the principles of decentralisation and people's participation. The Constitution states that "the state shall be based on democratic principles which empower and encourage all citizens at all levels in their governance." Prior to framing the Constitution, the Government initiated a process by way of which people's ideas would be reflected in the Constitution. Through the local councils, all individuals were encouraged to write memorandums expressing their views on how they would like the country to be governed. On the basis of these memorandums a draft copy was prepared, followed by several public debates. After two years of such debates and discourse, the new Constitution was framed. The opening chapter of this Constitution states that people shall express their will and consent on how to be governed and who shall govern them and that all power belongs to the people who shall practice sovereignty in accordance with the Constitution.

Local Government Act, 1997

In 1997, the Local Government Act was passed, decentralising power to the people through local councils. People were given the opportunity to sit together and deliberate on matters which concern them, set priorities and formulate plans. Starting from the villages to the districts, local councils were formed at all levels. One third of the membership of each local government council is reserved for women and elections are held every four years. Local Council I is formed at the village level, where every person in the village is a member of the local council. All those above the age of 18 select the Executive Committee who is responsible for looking into various areas of development at that level. People can solve and sort out their disputes through local courts. Civil cases which do not require much investigation are heard by the Chairperson of Local Council Committee. The local councils can also make by-laws to safeguard the interests of the community but these must be in line with the Constitution and other laws which govern the country. All the members of the Local Council Committees within the parish (the second unit of administration) meet to form Local Council II. They together appoint an executive committee with nine members. Likewise local councils III, IV and V, are formed at the sub-county, county and district levels respectively. In order to enable decentralised functioning, finances have been devolved to all the levels of local government: 5% of the revenue to the county; 65% to the sub-county; 5% to the parish; and 25% to the village.

Shagun Mebrotra is a Programme Associate in the Centre of Participation and Governance, PRIA. This note was written during a two week exposure programme to visit NGOs in Kenya and Uganda, sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation. Representatives from 12 commonwealth countries participated in the programme.

ANNOUNCING

Second Regional Inter-Professional Dialogue on Participatory Research and Participatory Development for social work educators of the southern region region organised by PRIA in association with ASSWI from 18th - 20th of December, 1997 in Chennai. For further details, contact the Programme Co-ordinator, Participatory Development / Participatory Research Unit, PRIA. Tel.:698 1908; Fax : 698 0183 Participation in Development - A workshop for the staff of multilateral and bilateral agencies and international NGOs to be held at the Institute of Development Studies from the 15th -19th December, 1997. For further information contact IDS at the University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, UK. Fax: 01273 621202

Participation & Governance Vol.4 No.11 November 1997
Panchayati Raj: An Analysis of Emerging Patterns
Manoj Kumar Rai

The Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act, 1992, has accorded statutory status to Panchayati Raj in India. The Act ensures a three-tier structure at district, intermediate and village levels. The mandatory provisions of the Act include a periodic panchayat election under the supervision of State Election Commissions and a finance commission in every state to find out ways and means to increase finances for local bodies in that state. The Act provides for reservation of one-third of seats for women in all positions of the three tiers, reservation of seats for SC/ST populations, establishment of a Gram Sabha for enhancing community participation in their own development and a list of subjects earmarked under 11th Schedule of the Constitution. The Act specifically and explicitly made certain provisions mandatory and a few others were left to the discretion of the state, as each state has some distinct characteristic or problem. All the states in the country, barring those excluded from its purview, have enacted the legislation to be in conformity with the amendment.

Today, there are over 2,17,300 village panchayats existing in 22 States and three Union Territories, covering 96% of about 5.79 hundred thousand villages and nearly the whole of the rural population. The composition and average population per Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) varies across states. Moreover, there has been an increasing trend to empower PRIs to undertake development programmes aimed at alleviation of poverty besides the usual civic and welfare functions. Though all the states have complied with the conditionality of incorporating amendments in their statutes, certain 'teething problems' are being experienced in implementing these amendments. In practice, very little has been done to empower the PRIs. Panchayati Raj resources and capability still fall short of rising requirements.

In 1993, PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) and the NCRSOs (Network of Regional Support Organisations) planned to intervene in this regard. On an experimental and pilot basis some initiatives were undertaken. The review of these activities showed very encouraging, relevant and valid results. So, the Joint Action Programme on Panchayati Raj (Multi-Sectoral Strategic Intervention) was initiated by PRIA and NCRSOs in mid 1995, in nine states (Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) of the country. The strategic rationale for this intervention to strengthen local self-governance, is to enhance the potential for people's participation in people-centred and people-controlled development. The intervention has a multiplier effect, as it involves targeting three strata of identified groups. The first stratum consists of persons from PRIA and NCRSOs, who work with the second stratum. The persons from local VAs (Voluntary Agencies) belong to this second stratum. The third stratum (local VAs) closely interact with third stratum on a regular basis. Programme components include: 1. Orientation, Training and Educational Support 2. Preparation and Dissemination of Educational Material 3. Micro-planning or Bottom-up planning 4. Research and Documentation 5. Influencing the Government.

Research and documentation is one of the important components of the programme. Over two years, a number of systematic case studies and surveys have been conducted. Case studies on functioning of 195 Gram Sabhas and about 200 Gram Panchayats from six states namely Gujarat, Kerala, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, M.P. and U.P. have been prepared. More than 100 women headed panchayats from these states have been intensively studied. In addition to these and
other specific studies conducted in different ‘intervened’ states, one major survey has been recently conducted during February-May, 1997. A total of 908 gram panchayat members, including 325 women GP members from the states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were interviewed using an uniformly structured questionnaire to elicit information on more than 150 (PRI related) variables of interest. Similarly, VA members from different states have been surveyed to compare intervened VA members with the non-intervened ones on a number of indicators.

On the basis of these studies and the survey data, the present article attempts to elucidate the impacts of the said intervention. Besides PRI members in general, the intervention has focused on the functioning of gram panchayats and gram sabhas and active participation of women and other marginalised sections in the political process of the Panchayati Raj. In this regard, an attempt has been made to describe some existing as well as emerging patterns related to gram sabha, gram panchayat and the women panchayat. Regarding the ‘quantified impact’ of the ongoing intervention, we do recognise that the exercise attempted here has several limitations. The measures discussed here are only an approximation of the reality. Moreover, the intra-state inequities are often glaring and the order of such inequities may differ from state to state. As such, ‘average figures’ for a whole state may not reflect the true picture. These possibilities are fully recognised.

Innovations and Impact

To date, the multi-sectoral strategic intervention has covered a population of about 30 lakh persons and more than ten thousand village panchayat members residing in 650 village panchayats of 110 districts in the nine aforementioned states. A variety of methods are being employed to make the intervention effective. As the intervention follows a ‘learning by doing’ approach, it encourages experimentation, providing a number of opportunities for innovations (in addition to conventional methods) in strengthening Panchayats across the country. Some of them have been described briefly.

With respect to training or orientation programmes and production of learning materials for PRI members, participatory methodologies were effectively employed. Participatory approaches take into account the actual requirements of the panchayats. In contrast to the conventional training methods, participatory training ensures a two-way interaction between trainers and trainees. Local human, material and intellectual resources are employed to train and orient local people. Similarly in the case of village-planning, a bottom-up approach referred to as micro-planning, is followed where the community is mobilised to participate (from beginning to end) in panchayat level planning. The planning process includes steps like identification of problems, prioritisation, problem analysis, preparation of an action plan, allocating responsibilities etc.

Considering the large and inaccessible areas of a few states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and in some hilly areas like Himachal Pradesh, it is a stupendous task to cover each and every panchayat. This leads to information ‘gaps’ among inaccessible panchayats. To bridge these gaps, Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs) have been established at block or regional levels. Presently, these PRCs are involved in collection, compilation and dissemination of region specific information with regard to PRI through printed newsletters, organising regular meetings in their own regions for sharing news, views and information. PRCs provide a common forum for PRI members to share their experiences. This is also an opportunity for information dissemination and emphasised intervention of women and adolescent girls PRI.

In some states, groups of adolescent girls have been formed and named Kishori Panchayats. The objective of forming Kishori Panchayats is to create an awareness amongst the adolescent girls regarding Panchayati Raj. These girls enjoy relatively more so.
cial freedom to learn. Being close to their parents, they have proved to be effective trainers to their close relatives. Presently, Kishori Panchayats in states like Bihar are engaged in mobilising and motivating women to attend group meetings and take part in Panchayat activities.

Regarding the impact of innovative intervention, experiences and studies have shown that the said intervention has made a discernible impact on its target groups, namely, the Gram Panchayat members and the members of the local voluntary agencies. The general awareness about PRI among masses especially among women, dalits and other weaker sections of society have been enhanced notably. PRIs have become an issue of common interest. The people in intervened areas have developed a sense of solidarity with Panchayati Raj and in many places, have identified some issues for collective action. The hitherto non-functional committees (or sanitis) of village panchayats have been activated. The specialised participatory training imparted to Gram Panchayat members has helped them to develop technical and managerial skills. Also, it appears that governmental apathy towards PRIs is lessening.

To assess the impact quantitatively, the intra-state comparison of intervened and non-intervened PRI- as well as VA-members have been made. Both intervened and non-intervened members from Kerala, M.P. and U.P. were asked a set of questions related to the Panchayati Raj Act, to assess their awareness level on a scale of 0 to 25. The mean awareness scores for intervened and non-intervened members from every state were then calculated. In terms of percentage, the average awareness level of an intervened Keralite gram panchayat members is 89%. The same for the non-intervened member from Kerala is 65%. On an average awareness level of an intervened GP member from U.P. and M.P. is 35% as against 24% of non-intervened members. These differences in mean scores of intervened and non-intervened Gram Panchayat members were tested by using ANOVA (Analysis of variance) method. It has been found that in each state (i.e. Kerala, M.P. and U.P.), the intervened PRI members’ mean awareness score is significantly ($P = 0.0001$) higher than the same scores for non-intervened members. The differences in mean scores have been found to be statistically significant for the awareness scores for each tier of PRI. It shows that the awareness generation programme undertaken under the said intervention has been effective in enhancing the awareness level of its target population. Similarly, using statistical non-parametric Mann-Whitney U- Wilcoxon Rank Sum W Test, in case of VA members from the states of M.P. and Kerala, it has been found that mean awareness scores of intervened VA-members are significantly ($P = 0.0000$) higher than that of non-intervened members. This implies that even in case of VA members, the intervention has paid rich dividends. This intervention is sustainable because it has created a team (VA members) of more aware trainers at the regional level. The more aware VA members work with greater efficiency with PRI members to strengthen Panchayati Raj in their respective areas of operation.

GP members from Kerala and M.P. were asked about the number of gram panchayat meetings attended and initiated over the past year. Taking into account the memory bias, (as constant for both intervened and non-intervened PRI-members) it has been found that average number of GP meetings attended as well as initiated (12 and 9 respectively) by intervened members are significantly ($P = 0.0384$ and $P = 0.0318$ respectively) higher than those attended and initiated (10 and 6 respectively) by non-intervened members. This proves that the intervention has played a very constructive role in motivating panchayat members to initiate (and attend) regular gram panchayat meetings. This fact has been substantiated by other (case) studies also. In intervened areas, it has been found that gram panchayat and (non-formal) gram sabha meetings are held more regularly.

Gram Sabha

Article 243A in the Constitution Act states that the Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and functions at the village level as the Legislature of a state may by

[Image: "Base of Panchayati Raj"]

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law, provide. However, various State legislations have maintained an ambivalent attitude towards this body. The Gram Sabha is supposed to act as a ‘watchdog’ of Gram Panchayat, ensuring the transparency and accountability of the latter. It is also expected to be the body which provides inputs, priorities and long-term perspectives to the elected Gram Panchayat for sustainable and equitable development of the village community. A vibrant, aware and vigilant Gram Sabha is an essential pre-requisite for the effectiveness of local self-governing institutions.

In actual practice, Gram Sabhas are not functioning properly. The formality of convening Gram Sabha meetings as per the norms of each state (minimum 2 meetings per year) have been fulfilled in majority of the situations under study. However, in the vast majority of these Gram Sabha meetings, the minimum required quorum as prescribed by each state was rarely fulfilled. Furthermore, in nearly one-third of the cases under study, records of Gram Sabha meetings were completed even when the meeting was not held or the quorum for holding a meeting was not completed.

With the exception of Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, it is to be noted that the recommendations of the Gram Sabha do not have any statutory binding on the Gram Panchayat concerned. Generally, the panchayat may not be willing to go against the popular will. Because of an absence of understanding about its role in the minds of both Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat members, Gram Sabha meetings do not serve the purpose of either establishing village priorities and overall policy framework for Gram Panchayat or regular monitoring and accountability of the resources and the decisions of the Gram Panchayat. However, during the field observations and studies, it has been found that in areas where the chairpersons and members of Gram Panchayats have consulted members of Gram Sabha in advance and discussed with them the problems of the village on a regular basis, the Gram Sabha functioning has improved.

Gram Panchayat

Gram Panchayats are designated as the first tier of self-governing institutions. As per Article 243G of the Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Gram Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to play a significant role in economic development and social justice at the village level. Gram Panchayats are expected to develop comprehensive village level plans. They are expected to make a plan for utilization of resources available from the state and national governments and mobilize their own resources in communities towards effective self-governance.

From the aforementioned studies, it has been found that nearly 80% of all Gram Panchayats conduct regular meetings as per norms laid down in different states. Nearly 75% of all Gram Panchayat members regularly attended these meetings. While in majority of cases, Sarpanch or Pradhans of Gram Panchayat chair the meetings, the participation of members of weaker sections and women in Gram Panchayat meetings has been rather uneven. Except in the state of Kerala, it was commonly observed that the agenda and dates of meeting of Gram Panchayats are often fixed or proposed by block or district government functionaries, as opposed to the Gram Panchayat itself.

A significantly low level of awareness among Panchayat members is mainly caused by poor literacy rates in rural areas and a lack of prior political experience. The absence of clear guidelines on devolution of power and authority to Gram Panchayats makes the situation worse. Most Gram Panchayats wait for instructions from government functionaries or higher level bodies, and narrowly define their role as mere implementors of schemes handed down from the above.

It has also been found that major issues discussed in GP meetings relate to the schemes and programmes of the government (IRDP, JRY etc). Gram Panchayats rarely take up issues related to conflicts and disputes in the village, land and natural resources issues or comprehensive village planning. Various village panchayat sub-committees included in the State legislation (Social Justice, Amenities, Production, Executive Committee etc.) are non-functional in more than 90% of the panchayats under study. There is no clarity about the objective and composition of these committees and no effort has been made to make them operational.

Women Panches

Before the enactment of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, the participation of women in PRIs was
marginal. According to the 1982 statistics of NIRD, Hyderabad, out of 2,12,248 Gram Panchayats, only 506 (that is, 0.23 percent) women sarpanches were elected. The amendment and the consequent PRI elections in different states have brought women into the political process for the first time. Now more than 70,000 Gram Panchayats are headed by women PRI. There are about eight thousand women Gram Panchayat members actively participating in the affairs of their respective panchayats.

Data from states of Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh revealed that the majority of women Gram Panchayat members belong to the age group of 20-40 years. A very high percentage (90-95%) of elected women representatives have no prior political experience and have been elected for the first time. Intra-state and intracaste comparisons of elected representatives from M.P and U.P. imply that the women representatives belong to relatively richer families than their male counterparts from the same caste.

With the exception of Kerala, the literacy level of elected women representatives is very low. In less developed states like U.P. and M.P., more than 60% of elected women representatives are either illiterate or neo-literates. Out of these elected women representatives, a very large percentage (80-85%) of them received family support during election. Most of these women members continue to get family support in their post-election panchayat work. The nature of ‘support’ inevitably varies from situation to situation and in a few cases (proxy or distant-panchayats) it may mean ‘control’, that is, control of the family over women representatives.

According to the 1991 census, male and female literacy rates were 63.86% and 39.42% respectively. These figures cast a shadow over the process of democratic decentralisation. It is feared that due to illiteracy, women may not have the desirable success in participating in development. The need of the hour therefore, is to generate awareness among them about their enhanced rights and responsibilities.

Findings from the field suggest that intervention measures like short training courses and learning materials are very effective in creating motivation and awareness. From U.P. and M.P., 483 male GP members (314 intervened and 169 non-intervened) and 264 female GP members (172 intervened and 92 non-intervened) were interviewed to assess their awareness (about the PRI-Act) level on a scale of 0 to 25. Treating data on non-intervened members as the base-line data for intervened ones, it has been found that the relative change in awareness level of women (after receiving training) is 72% as against a mere 33% in the case of males. This shows that being more sensitive and sincere to learning, the women gram panchayat members have ‘picked-up’ better. In a very short period, women members have improved their awareness levels and are at par to their male counterparts, despite the fact that these women had started at a much lower level of awareness to begin with.

Analysis of various case studies from states of M.P., Haryana, Kerala, Gujarat, U.P. and Himachal Pradesh, reveals that effective or ineffective leadership is not the result of any one factor, but a combination of various socio-economic and political factors. Lack of education, social and family barriers and pre-occupation with household duties prevent women from participating in the political process. Against this background, if one were to look at the status of women’s leadership in panchayats, the results are indeed heartening. The community members see women as more sensitive to their problems and more likely to encourage discussions for conflict resolutions in the community in contrast to male leaders. It has been found that Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat meetings in panchayats headed by women, are convened regularly. In such meetings, the participation of marginalised and weaker sections are relatively higher. Moreover, the

Women’s Leadership: "Future of Panchayati Raj"

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focus on social issues in such meetings is more evident. Women members have gradually begun to assert themselves. They are emerging from the shadows of male dominance (to shoulder the burden along with men) in strengthening local self-governance.

Concluding Comments

Gone are the days when most women were nominated and only a few were elected members. Cowed down by male dominance and gender inequality they merely signed or placed a thumb impression on the meeting attendance register while sitting in their homes. The very fact that women in such large numbers have a say in local self-government is heartening. Given the opportunities, they have proved to be committed, task oriented and effective leaders. As most of the women in panchayats have been elected for the first time with little or no prior knowledge of the functioning of PRIs, the statutory empowerment of women will become a reality and relevant only when they are given adequate planned, systematic and sustainable training in the responsibilities, duties and rights which devolve on them as elected representatives.

A proper orientation about their roles and functions needs to be given to members of the Gram Panchayats in general and their chair-persons in particular. There is an imperative need to instil in the minds of these representatives that the responsibilities should be taken by the people and not given by the government officials. In this connection, specific orientation of all government officials, most importantly of the Panchayat Secretaries, is necessary to ensure that women are fully empowered. Constitutional provision at the national and state level needs to make the effective functioning of Gram Sabha mandatory. The Gram Sabha must be a strong body capable of uniting all forces at grassroots level.

Special intervention should be made at enabling the PRIs to function effectively. Wherever possible, regular support to PRIs should be extended through the local Voluntary Agencies and other interested individuals and groups. The multi-sectoral strategic intervention undertaken by PRIA and NCRSOS is a noteworthy example. This intervention has significantly enhanced the awareness level as well as capacities of the targeted PRI members. Moreover, it has created a team of trainers at the regional level which can provide, on a sustainable basis, regular support to PRI representatives. The learning materials and innovative means employed by the intervention programmes have played a significant role in strengthening the Panchayati Raj. This intervention has definitely proved to be sustainable, effective and valid.

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In Search of Roots - Learnings from “Re-Visiting Participation”
C. Upendranadh

Personal narrations form an important source of knowledge as they reflect interpretations and re-interpretations of information and provide a unique personal perspective. This note is my personal reflection, on some of my own learnings from a training workshop organised by PRIA, during 1st-12th September, 1997 at New Delhi.

Learning 1

Two important approaches to participation are Participatory Research (PR) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PR has its roots in the critical learning and conscientisation theories and practices of Paulo Friere which emphasise the value of collective action and reflection. Proponents of PR approach the issue of participation through strategies for community mobilisation and emancipation.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a conceptual and development tool has come into existence with philosophical underpinnings from the above approach and a pragmatic outlook in bringing people’s knowledge to the centre stage. PRA includes a set of tools and methods which enable local people to bring out their own information and analyse this to solve their problems. In PRA, the critical issue is the role reversal between outsiders and insiders and behavioural and attitudinal change, both at the individual and organisational level.

Learning 2

Power in society is exercised through knowledge. The culture of silence associated with powerlessness is essentially related to the subordination of people’s knowledge. The paradigm shift associated with participation, essentially means providing space for articulation of popular knowledge, practice and analysis. This helps the powerless to exercise control over their lives.

Research can play an important role in this process. The dominant modes of research are information extractive and they do not see any role of the ‘subject’ in generation and analysis of information. Conventional researchers do not provide any feedback to the subject or initiate any action to improve their situation. The knowledge generated in this manner is positivist in nature. Positivist knowledge analyses their problems of the poor on their behalf and explains the powerlessness based on the understanding and analysis provided by the dominant knowledge system.

In contrast, PR and PRA maintain that the processes of knowledge generation should be a joint inquiry between the outsiders and insiders. A research process of this nature is educative, liberative and allows the poor to critically reflect on their situation. This also helps in identifying potential areas in which action can be taken (by the poor with the support of facilitators).

Learning 3

The debate on participation as a ‘means’ or as an ‘end’ reveals the contradictions development agencies face in facilitating participation. Dominant thinking on development (influenced by economics) on the one hand, views participation as a rational choice for project effectiveness and impact. Alternative perspectives on the other hand, emphasise the long-term outcomes associated with the participation such as empowerment of the poor. Naturally, in such diverse contexts, the approaches for facilitating participation will vary.

For the World Bank, participation involves stakeholder participation in an activity to make it more effective. This view of participation does not take recognition of unequal distribution of power within so-
society and the role of participation in reversing power relations. In contrast, some UN agencies and NGOs explicitly recognise the role reversal and power reversal processes associated with participation. The latter view of participation enables development practitioners to identify and address broader structural causes for non-participation.

Learning 4

Attitudes and behaviour of outsiders is important.

Participation is closely linked to attitudes and behaviour of individuals and organisations who promote this concept. Attitudes and behavioural traits are also closely related to the issue of dominant knowledge. Certain commonly held beliefs such as villagers being ignorant or experts ‘knowing it all’, are stumbling blocks in facilitating participatory processes. It is essential for outsiders to develop respect for popular knowledge and acknowledge the capacities of the poor to analyse and prioritise their problems and needs and to ‘hand over the stick’ to the locals.

Learning 5

Participation - ‘scaling up’ and ‘scaling out’ dilemmas.

The dilemma that many development agencies face is how to increase the scale of participation while deepening its authenticity. While PRA offers tremendous potential to practice participation on a large scale, there are also dangers involved in this. In countries like India, democracy as a system of governance enables people to participate. International agencies like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other UN agencies (and conferences) have provided an enabling environment for participation in large-scale projects that they started supporting. At the same time, not all organisations and departments are serious enough to affect changes at an organisational level, for implementation of participatory approaches in field contexts.

To increase participation on a large scale, some important issues are quality, inter-institutional procedures and connections across the institutions. Scaling-up is again linked to strategies for personal and institutional change. It is important to know when not to scale up. The need to learn from pilot implementations before scaling-up is also necessary.

Learning 6

In a project framework, participation is necessary at all stages: example participatory monitoring and evaluation.

This is a critical issue because the definition, diversity and context of participation will change from organisation to organisation and creating standards is fraught with danger. In a project framework, processes such as monitoring are also seen as subjective and difficult to quantify. Participatory monitoring and monitoring of participation are two different things and the approaches will vary in these two. In Project M&E, outputs and outcomes are usually in terms of standardised indicators and measures. This is not the case in PM&E. Here, there is a need to identify and develop indicators along with primary stakeholders in order to undertake monitoring and evaluation. In conventional M&E it is the perspective of outsiders that takes predominance and in PM&E it is that of the primary stakeholders (and may be intermediary ones) that is important. PM&E is a learning process for the organisation.

Monitoring participation involves evaluating all the processes in a project cycle. This means, to analyse and verify whether the processes of decision making at all stages of the project cycle are participatory. Here again, the definition and the approach would depending on the context and the perspective of stakeholders (whose perspective counts?).

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Second Regional Inter-Professional Dialogue on Participatory Research and Participatory Development for Social Work Educators of Western Region. Organised by MASWE, ASSWI and PRIA. July 7-9, 1997, Pune.

In keeping with its mission "to promote people-centred, holistic and comprehensive evolution of society, characterised by freedom, justice, equity and sustainability", two and a half years ago PRIA had initiated a process of dialogue with the Schools of Social Work in India in collaboration with ASSWI and MASWE (Maharashtra Association of Social Work Educators).

The above mentioned workshop, aimed to understand and assess the implications of Participatory Development and Participatory Research in social work education and practice and to make efforts to incorporate the same in the social work curriculum. It provided opportunities for eighteen social work educators from the western region, renowned academicians and experienced practitioners of PD and PR to collect on a common platform. Lectures, group discussions and field visits provided an enabling and learning environment for the three day proceedings.

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A seminar on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in India was organised by PRIA and the Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations (NCRSOs) on the 30th of August, 1997. The purpose of this seminar was to share with a wider audience the lessons learnt from the work in progress vis-a-vis the strengthening of PRIs. Three papers were presented:

- Rhetoric or Reality - Women's Participation and Leadership in Gram Panchayats
- Local Self Governance - Myth or Reality of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha
- Innovations and Impact - An Analysis of the Work of Voluntary Agencies and Support Organisations under the Panchayati Raj Programme.

The Seminar was chaired by Dr. N C Saxena, Secretary, Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment, Government of India.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion and suggestions from the audience which consisted of like minded individuals from the voluntary sector as well as government officials.

The closing address was delivered by Dr. N. C. Saxena. He complimented PRIA and the NCRSO's on their work and recommended that the experiences be brought out in the form of a book. He said that non-governmental agencies play an important role in identifying and strengthening alternative sources of information and knowledge to empower PRIs. He emphasised the need for a collaboration between the Government and Voluntary Organisations for strengthening the Panchayats. Similar workshops could be organised by the NCRSOs in their respective states. Dr. Saxena also felt it is necessary to do more studies on various issues and problems of the Panchayats and share the results and findings with the Government.

Dr. Rajesh Tandon in his concluding remarks said that PRIA and the NCRSOs are committed to the cause of strengthening PRIs and that they are ready for the long and arduous journey ahead in this process.

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PRIA and the Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations (NCRSOs) are jointly involved in
an initiative to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in nine states of India. The intervention programme commenced in August, 1995, and two years of intensive work on strengthening the grassroots culminated in a two day workshop held at PRIA in August 27-28, 1997. The joint intervention consisted of mainly five main activities - a) Training and orientation, b) Preparation and dissemination of educational materials, c) Micro-planning, d) Research and documentation and e) Influencing the Government.

In July 1997, this joint intervention was evaluated. The evaluation team drew attention to the importance of systematic research and documentation as an important component of the interventions. It was thus decided to share our "work in progress" with a wider body of organisations, institutions and individuals working on similar issues.

On August 27th and 28th, the rich experience gathered by us in the course of the two years was shared with like minded individuals in the form of papers and discussions. In all, there were 60 participants in this workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were:
- to obtain critical feedback on the research findings,
- suggestions on significant areas for future research and
- to share experiences and information on innovations made by voluntary organisations vis-à-vis their role in strengthening PRIs.

Five sessions were conducted over two days. On the first day, the first session was chaired by Dr. George Mathew. The two papers presented in this session were:

- Gram Sabha - reality and trends.
- Functioning of Gram Panchayat.

The afternoon session was on women's leadership and was chaired by Dr. Yogesh Kumar, Samarthan, Bhopal. The two papers presented in this session were

- Women in Gram Panchayats - study on their status.
- Women leadership in Gram Panchayats - issues and concerns.

On the second day, the third session was chaired by Dr. L C Jain. In this session, the two papers presented were:

- Innovative approaches of voluntary organisations in strengthening PRIs.
- Multi-sectoral strategic intervention - a study on its impact.

Other than these, two presentations, highlighting experiences on strengthening the grassroots was made by participants from Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi and SEARCH, Bangalore.

The fourth session took place began in the afternoon on the second day, with a presentation on "Innovations in Citizens Research" by Dr. John Gaventa, from Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. The two day workshop came to a close with a discussion on future research priorities vis-à-vis the research that will be undertaken by PRIA and NCRSOs for strengthening PRIs.


While the importance accorded to people's participation in the theory and practice of development is steadily increasing, adequate opportunities for professionals to update themselves on concepts and methods do not exist. The above course was organised to

- provide opportunities to study and articulate emerging debates and issues related to participation, participatory research and participatory development;
- build up professional expertise to link and in corporate participatory principles, concepts and methods in the work context.

A total of 23 participant from NGOs, government and donor agencies, joined the course. The faculty included Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Executive Director, PRIA, Dr. John Gaventa, Fellow on Participatory Methods for Development at Institute for Development
Studies, University of Sussex and Vimala Ramachandran, Development Consultant, with an expertise in women development issues, currently working in the Indian Institute for Health Management Research, Jaipur.

The course explored the evolution of the concept of participation in development and traced its linkages to issues of power and knowledge. Topics such as participation at the level of projects and policies, its upscaling, institutionalisation and monitoring were also debated and discussed.

Lectures, case studies, group discussions, group exercises, along with extensive reading assisted the learning process. The highlight of the course was the preparation of two thematic papers on participation by the participants.

Fifth Training Workshop on Participatory Development (PD). Organised by PRIA, September 15-19, 1997, PRIA, Delhi

People's participation in large scale development programmes and projects, as well as in small field based programmes and projects is a thrust area for many development agencies. In order to initiate and enforce the understanding and practice of 'participation' in development programmes, a series of training workshops have been organised by PRIA - November '95, May '97, August '96 and November '96. The above workshop was the fifth of its kind.

The workshop was open to personnel in-charge of project implementation and supervision from government and semi-government organisations and bilateral and multi-lateral organisations. The content and methodology was designed to create and strengthen conceptual and theoretical understanding of PD and to understand different methods or processes to translate the PD approach into practice. Seventeen participants from nine organisations participated.

Participants from Revisiting Participation - Advanced Course for Development Professionals
Books


The enactment of the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution, better known as the Panchayati Raj Act, was a milestone in Indian politics vis-à-vis entry of women in the political process through reservation (1/3rd). Recognising the need to study and document the status of women representatives in Panchayats, this book details the findings of a comprehensive study of the status of women members in District Karnal of Haryana.

Viewing reservation as a means to an end, not an end in itself, the study is an inquiry into the empowerment of women vis-à-vis reservation. The main objectives cited are: documenting profiles of elected women representatives; interaction of women members with other agencies e.g. training institutes; and highlighting some key areas of concern along with some recommendations. A sample size of 10% of women elected to all the different positions in the three tiers has been taken from six blocks of District Karnal.

Starting with an overview of Panchayati Raj in Haryana, the book moves on to provide an account of the socio-economic and political profile of the elected members taking selective indicators of age, educational status, work status and political involvement of the family members or relatives. Throwing some light on the pre-election processes, the next chapter explains how women decided to contest elections, the role of their family members in their contesting, their own involvement with the community etc. Findings on the members level of awareness and knowledge about Panchayati Raj and related issues suggest that women representatives have no clarity about the rationale for reservation. Knowledge about functions of PRI is limited to traditional functions. Women lack knowledge of financial powers of panchayat.

Titled “Working Under Panchayati Raj”, the following chapter describes the kind of activities undertaken by the respondents in their official capacity and some of the problems they face. Reiterating the need for training these members, the study takes into account the preferences of the women representatives which include duration of training, number of training programmes, venue, need for escort, travel expenses etc. Apart from the two State training Institutes namely State Community Development Training Centre (SCDTC), Haryana Institute of Rural Development (HIRD) and PRIA, an NGO, a limited number of organisations are involved in training.

In order to provide readers with a feel of the views expressed by the women members, “They Speak and We Listen”, describes the sentiments of women elected representatives, the perception of their family members, their views on reservation etc.

The last chapter lists out several useful suggestions and recommendations for strengthening the functioning of women panchayat members. Some of these are awareness generation and information dissemination in the pre and post election period, functional literacy, women should be encouraged to take up the post of the panchayat secretary, increase in financial position of PRI's, rotation of seats reserved for women only after two consecutive terms etc. The book ends with 18 case studies of women representatives in different positions in the three tiers of the local government.

Shagun Mohanty

MARG
125, Shahpur Jat
New Delhi - 110 049
pages: 405; price: Rs. 400

The Emancipated Women-Folk of Uttarakhand
A joint presentation of Himalayan Action Research Centre and Society for Participatory Research In Asia, 1997.

“...An important lesson to women in all the villages - they are neither alone nor are they weak. With determination and self confidence they can cross all hurdles and solve any problem, be it protecting the forests or providing social security to women.”

This is the theme of “The Emancipated Women-Folk of Uttarakhand”, a book based on the life and courage of some of the women of Uttarakhand. Whether it is the story of Gaura Devi and her immense contribution to the success of “Chipko Movement” or Veer Vadhu, the bold woman of Garhwal who killed an Afghan to save her honour or that of Bachendri Pal, the first Indian woman to scale Mt. Everest; what stands out is the courage, enthusiasm and commitment of these women to struggle for social change.

In all, the book covers the lives and struggles of ten outstanding women of Uttarakhand. Each story is complete in itself and a testimony to the indomitable courage and unity of women. It is hoped that these stories will provide direction and inspiration to women and men struggling with issues of social change and reconstruction in other parts of the country. Sheeba Choudhury

HARC
744, Indira Nagar, Phase II, P.O. New Forest,
Debre Dham 248 006
pages: 84

This discussion paper provides the reader with a good analysis of the term 'governance'. The paper has interestingly tried to elaborate the relationship between the private sector, civil society and the State in attempting a definition of governance.

The basic underlying theme in this paper is 'sustainable human development', and discussions and debates concerning good governance are also included. While trying to define governance, the paper has emphasised the need for a greater understanding of the 'term' and has also recognised the need for official development assistance agencies to find ways to incorporate concepts of good governance into the design and implementation of their development activities.

The paper is organised into four chapters which detail out a broad concept of the nature of governance, focusing not just on the State but also on the private sector and civil society. The first two chapters have defined 'sound governance' as a sub-set of governance, wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to critical needs of society. It also acknowledges that the relationships between the government, the private sector and civil society are essential for creating a strong enabling environment for sustainable human development.

Chapter three then examines the dramatic changes in economic, political and social systems (environmental degradation, economic globalisation, religious and ethnic tensions), that have created implications for good governance. The key issues of building capacities for governance in relation to the challenges posed by demands of poverty alleviation, gender equality, environmental protection and job creation have been dealt with in the last chapter.

The book is recommended for researchers, students and those working on issues of local self governance.

Archana Dhar

In recent decades, several participatory and action research approaches have evolved and been practiced in areas as diverse as adult and distance education, social science research, management etc. This book is one of the most comprehensive statements on the similarities and distinctions between these.

The author, a participatory researcher, through a review of over 1000 published and unpublished sources and experiences of teaching and practicing PR, has critically analyzed four main approaches. These are: participatory research in community development; action research in organizations; action research in schools; and farmers' participatory research. The analysis covers the origins of each approach, its main components, underlying assumptions and practical or methodological guidelines. Detailed case studies presented at the end of each chapter capture the value of applying participation and action research approaches in the context of social change.

While these approaches differ in their philosophical, epistemological and professional orientations, they overlap on certain themes. Power is a central element of the participatory approaches described. Participatory and action researchers promote shifts of power in order that the specific needs and aspirations of traditionally less-powerful groups are addressed. Knowledge and knowledge generation is also another important element of participatory approaches.

The book also includes discussions on: Participation, democracy, power and control; Participation, power and control of the research process; Theories of social change in relation to the focus of research and the nature of change and implications for practice.

Daniel Selener
Apartado Postal 17-08-8494
Quito, Ecuador
South America
pages: 484


This work is the result of the author's conviction that equity of knowledge between local communities and formal forestry scholars is the key to successful forestry initiatives.

Natural resources management and conservation efforts are at crossroads today. On the one hand, the sustainability of essential ecological processes and life support systems in the wilderness is being threatened, and on the other, the security and livelihood of the people living in and around forests and protected areas is at stake. It is in this context that the ethnoreferreri approach must be understood and practiced.

The approach, as described by the author, is essentially a "continued practice of creation, conservation, management and use of forest resources through customary ways". Unlike 'participatory forestry' of 'joint forestry management' initiatives which are constituted under enabling legal resolution by Governments; it has evolved from local knowledge on forests and attempts to recast mainstream approaches to forest development. In practical terms, it involves linking local knowledge to the policies, institutions and livelihood base which determine the survival and sustainability of forests and forest dwellers.

The book includes a variety of illustrations on ethnoreferreri - particularly from Udaipur and Kota districts in Western India along with some general discussions on this approach, its relevance and limitations. It is recommended for policy makers, administrators, voluntary organizations and all those interested in issues of ecology, forestry and wildlife management.

The Aryas' Book Center
Hospital Road
Udaipur - 313001
pages: 91; price: Rs. 295; $20

Manuals


Systematization is a continuous process of participatory reflection on a project's processes and results, undertaken by both project staff and participants. This systematic analysis generates lessons which are fed back to improve the project, thus strengthening the learning and organizational capacities of development organizations. The project experiences are documented and can be shared with other organizations.

This practical workbook provides an understanding of
the concept of systematization; as well as guidelines for planning the systematization process, and for conducting follow-up and evaluation activities to improve project processes and results. It also includes tools for implementing the systematization process. The workbook contents include:

Section 1 : What is systematization?
Section 2 : Objectives of systematization
Section 3 : Planning of systematization
Section 4 : What to systematize: areas of analysis
Section 5 : Sharing lessons learnt
Section 6 : Toolbox

This workbook will be useful for staff of non-government organisations, grassroots and citizen organisations and government agencies, as it enables one to understand the operating processes of projects. Instead of measuring results of projects, it suggests a methodology to develop a more comprehensive understanding of its processes as well with the active participation of the beneficiaries. It is thus a valuable tool to document, evaluate, learn from and improve development projects.

Sobini Paul

IIRR
Apartado Postal 17-08-8494
Quito, Ecuador, South America
pages: 107, price: US$ 20

Reports

Community Mobilisation and Participation in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Maya Pinto and Rajesh Tandon, PRIA, 1997.

DPEP is the Government of India's most recent and extensive intervention in the area of primary education development. It was launched in 1993-94 in seven states and has subsequently been expanded to 12 states, covering a total of 63 districts around the country.

The above mentioned study is an investigation into the status, dynamics and potential of community mobilisation and participation in accomplishing the programme objectives. The study was carried out in the seven DPEP I states viz.: Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. In particular, it focussed on analysing the formation, membership and functioning of 'village education committees' or VECs, intended to be the anchor for sustaining community participation in primary education at the village level. The linkages between VECs and other village-level groups like panchayats, Mother-Teacher Councils, Parent Teacher Associations etc. was also an area of investigation.

Findings suggest that vibrant and active VECs supported by regular activities for wider community mobilisation can become the most crucial actors in accomplishing the programme objectives. While formation and orientation of VECs has been carried out in all sample districts, regular and sustained capacity building of VECs as a whole has been much less common. Active encouragement for women's participation and leadership in VECs also needs to be provided.

The study was conducted for Educational Consultants India Ltd. (EdCIL). Researchers from PRIA, Sahayi (Kerala), SAMARTHAN (Bhopal) along with other consultants were involved.


In 1995, the Government of Manipur set up a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. B.K. Roy Burman to advise on matters related to equity, democratic ethos, social harmony, ecological matters and sustainable development. The above mentioned report of the committee was submitted to State Assembly in July, 1997. The report calls attention to the fact that the pluralistic character of Manipur society is being assailed by hegemonic forces and recommends the establishment of institutional arrangements for the protection and promotion of human rights. The need for an integrated approach to human rights, self-governance and equitable sharing of resources are also discussed.

In particular the Committee has recommended the Assam and Manipur Armed Forces Special Power Act be made un-operative. Recommendations emerging from an enquiry into the Manipur Land Reforms Act (1960) and suggestions made by the Bhuria Committee Report are also detailed in the report.

Another important recommendation of the Committee concerns the setting up of team of eminent citizens for a comprehensive evaluation of the problems of North East India. The idea is to create a congenial environment for dialogue between the political leadership and different citizen groups.
PRIA

The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is an independent, non-profit, non-government organisation registered in 1982 under the Society Registration Act 1860. PRIA is based at New Delhi, India.

Over the last fifteen years PRIA has promoted people-centred development initiatives within the perspective of participatory research. Strengthening popular knowledge, demystifying dominant concepts and promoting experiential learning, have been the basis of supporting empowerment of the poor and the approved in PRIA's work. Through field studies and documentation, workshops and training programmes, networking and enabling linkage, PRIA has facilitated the strengthening of capacities within grass roots groups, voluntary agencies, NGOs and other formations.

As the cherished mission, PRIA endeavors to promote people centred, holistic and comprehensive evolution of society characterised by Freedom, Justice, Equity and Sustainability, by

- creating opportunities of sharing, analysing and learning among formations of the Civil Society (in particular, people's organisations and NGOs);
- engaging in independent and critical analysis of societal trends and issues, development policies and programmes; and
- enabling dialogue across diverse perspectives, sectors and institutions.

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