MONITORING PARTICIPATION IN THE DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (DPEP) IN MADHYA PRADESH

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Abstract: The following resource is an assessment of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in Madhya Pradesh. DPEP was the Madhya Pradesh government’s most extensive intervention in the area of primary education in the 1990s. It was a unique intervention in the sector of primary education as the funds for the project were transferred from the state project office to the district level implementation agency. The endeavour was also unique as it tried to focus on decentralisation and community participation to increase student enrolment in the primary schools being run in the districts. An interesting component of the project looked at universalisation of education. The timeline of the project was for 7 years (it started in 1994-95) and it aimed to cover 19 districts in the first phase and 15 districts in the second phase.

Samarthan assessed community involvement in the project. The assessment in this report critically looks at the aspect of ‘participation’ and how it was integrated within the project strategy and implementation. The report assesses the programme and its implementation on the basis of community participation and the level of decision making by the community based organisation/movement component of the project.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Context of the Project
The programme, quite unlike previous centrally sponsored initiatives, evolved an interesting approach to primary education with programme assistance being channelled through the State Project Office to district level implementation agencies. The specific focus was to target educationally backward districts with strategies to involve the disadvantaged, women and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs). These features have earned DPEP the distinction of being the first experiment of its kind in the social development sector of the country, where decentralisation and community participation were being put into practice on a large scale.
**Problem Area and Project Goals**

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is classified as among the most educationally backward states in India. The state’s physical and social character, although rich in many aspects, has also hampered much of its development. This is especially true in education. Vast social and geographic diversity, remoteness, social taboos and customs have impeded the growth of the state in a number of sectors. The following points reflect these trends.

1. A baseline survey assessment study conducted by NCERT in 1994 showed that 93 per cent and 74 per cent of schools in MP were unable to achieve an average score of 40 per cent in mathematics and language respectively.
2. The rural female literacy stands at 10 per cent, much lower than the national average of 30 per cent (1991 Census).
3. The Fifth All India Educational Survey, 1991, reflected that in MP, 35 per cent schools had a single teacher, while another 34 per cent had only two teachers.
4. The National Sample Survey (1989) showed that children do not attend school or are learning too little, because of boredom, fear and/or the unattractive environment of the schools.

In order to bring about a change in the above scenario, concerted efforts were made to address the various challenges affecting the status of education in the state. More important, the political will to raise the state’s educational standards was gaining momentum. Thus education, both adult and primary, became a priority issue for the state. The emphasis was on a dual approach whereby both adult as well as primary education would be addressed simultaneously.

DPEP focused attention on the needs of primary education and on evolving strategies for universalising primary education. The project goals include:

1. Universal enrolment raising the current enrolment to 120 per cent.
2. Universal retention bringing the dropout rate down to 5 per cent.
3. Universal achievement raising the current levels of learning by 25 per cent.
4. Specific focus on girls and children belonging to the ST category.

The strategies for improving enrolment and retention in the DPEP were:

1. Community mobilisation through awareness generation camps and encouraging community participation.
2. Improving access to primary education by identifying needs for additional facilities such as new primary schools and alternative schools.
3. Improving physical infrastructure.
4. Developing supportive services such as *Shishu Shiksha Kendras*.
5. Improving quality through focus on pedagogic reform. This was undertaken by stressing on a minimum level of learning (MLL) based curriculum, teaching-learning materials, and teacher’s training.
6. Strategic focus on increasing attendance of girls and children of tribal communities. This was to be done through the development of Information Education Communication (IEC) materials encouraging the community to take interest in sending their children, especially girls, to school, linkages with panchayats and Village Education Committees (VECs), synergising with Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) for mobilising women, monitoring the programme through desegregated data specifying girls’ participation in each programme component, flexible models of education that can have a school time determined by the girl child’s convenience, and gender sensitisation.

7. Improving management by establishing management structures and systems through Education Management Information System (EMIS), monitoring and supervision. A specific focus on encouraging participation in management through a participatory approach in data collection such as Lok Sampark Abhyan (LSA), which used PRA principles in data collection.

8. Training of personnel involved in programme implementation.

9. IEC through advertisement campaigns.

**Project Overview, including Stage of Project Cycle or Policy Development**

DPEP as a major intervention for the Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) was sanctioned for MP in December 1994 with a time perspective of seven years and a project cover of 19 districts in the first phase and 15 in the next phase.

The districts in Phase I were:
Betul; Raisen; Raigarh; Raigarh; Sehore; Bilaspur; Sarguja; Guna; Dhar; Rajnandgaon; Rewa; Satna; Shahdol; Sidhi; Chattarpur; Panna; Tikamgarh; Mandsaur; Ratlam.

The districts in Phase II included:
Bastar; Bhind; Damoh; Datia; Dewas; Jhabua; Khandwa; Khargone; Mandla; Morena; Raipur; Seoni; Shajapur; Shivpuri; Vidisha

The total funding for DPEP was Rs. 945 crores. The project reflects a shift from the programmes that had been undertaken earlier. The major difference perceived in the plan outlay for DPEP as compared to other educational schemes included:

1. Decentralised planning with the district as the unit of planning.
2. Participatory management through the active involvement of community and teachers.
3. Specific focus on children living in circumstances of social and/or economic deprivation.
4. Flexibility and innovation.
5. Decentralised participatory planning.
6. Large scale community mobilisation.
The project, since its inception in 1994-95, was started with a focus on twin concerns, community participation and technical interventions. A three pronged strategy was adopted for the planning stage of the project.

- Participatory micro planning
- Baseline studies
- Training of district planning teams in project preparation

A detailed comprehensive micro planning designated as Lok Sampark Abhyan (Community Outreach Campaign) was conducted in 1996-97. This provided the base for the perspective plans of the districts. The Community Outreach Campaign aimed at:

1. Assessing the current educational facilities.
2. Assessing the total number of children in the age group 5-14 years and their current educational status.
3. Assessing the literacy status of the adult members of the family.
4. Assessing non-educational resources that may have bearing on education such as drinking water, approach roads, etc.

The methodology used included surveys, PRA, panchayat orientation, and creation of *prerak samahoes* or catalyst groups consisting of active community members who would facilitate the Lok Sampark Abhyan.

The outcome of the Lok Sampark Abhyan process was:

1. Creation of a data base.
2. Assessment of current educational priorities.
3. Community mobilisation.

The strategies for achieving the programme goals evolved from the issues that emerged from the Lok Sampark Abhyan and other baseline studies. These emergent issues can be broadly classified under:

**Category-I (Educational)**
- Educational facilities
- Teaching and learning process
- Educational management and training

**Category-II (Non Educational)**
- Social attitudes and behaviour
- Economic development
- Minimum basic development of infrastructure such as water supply, health services etc.
The DPEP plan parameters addressed all the issues under Category I and some under Category II.

1. Improving Enrolment and Retention through providing educational facilities within easy reach especially for difficult-to-access habitations.
2. New Primary Schools
3. Alternative schools: Alternate schools have been proposed under DPEP to bring in children who are not able to participate in formal schooling for a variety of reasons such as dwelling in remote inaccessible areas, being engaged in household activities, working for wages, migration, etc.
4. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) is the other alternative schooling intervention. EGS is an innovative alternative strategy for universalising primary education particularly in backward rural areas which have no educational facility. A significant feature of the EGS is that it is based on community demand and provides an education facility within a given time frame of 90 days of receiving the community’s demand. A demanding community is the premise of EGS. EGS evolved on the basis of recent experiences, especially the success of alternative schools, which signified that local persons with basic educational qualifications could be used effectively as teachers through training. Also the community comes forth in a big way to support the local school.

EGS is operative in rural areas where the community raises a demand for a schooling facility for its children and there are at least 40 children and there is no schooling facility within one kilometre of that habitation. In sparsely inhabited areas, the number of children could be 25.

EGS was implemented through the panchayat system, because it combines statutory authority with popular participation. The gram sabha receives the demand from the community. The community in its demand indicates the names and number of children for whom the facility is demanded, and it also proposes the name of a teacher. The gram panchayat submits the demand with its recommendation to the janpad panchayat. The janpad panchayat acknowledges and registers the demand, indicating the date of receipt. The EGS becomes operational within three months of the receipt of demand. A receipt was also given to the community by the gram panchayat. During this time the janpad panchayat would examine the proposal and if found feasible would allot the required resources to the gram panchayat towards salary for the shiksha karmi. The teaching-learning material would be supplied by the Education Department. The gram panchayat was to be responsible for keeping the janpad panchayat informed about the functioning of the EGS.

The monitoring study of DPEP in Rajgarh revealed that while EGS is quite functional, problems in the form of political pressures and involvement of a few dominant groups in the community tend to hinder its smooth functioning. Further, the physical space for such schools is provided by the community themselves.
Discussions with the community revealed a high demand for a building for such schools.

5. Civil work with specific emphasis on the school building and class rooms with the objective of making the classroom a place for learning rather than a place for teaching. This strategy has included building classrooms and school buildings, a teachers training centre at the block level and its maintenance.

6. Child care centres: Pre-primary child care centres were started for children in the age group 3-6 years. In the beginning stages of the project, the plan stated that child care centres would only be opened in non-ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) blocks (the state government’s ICDS is already undertaking similar activities). However, as ICDS expanded to all the districts and blocks of MP, DPEP decided not to open any more centres and to continue with the maintenance of the centres that it had already opened in the previous years, until they were ready to be handed over to the ICDS programme. To address caring of children below three years, a scheme called the Jhoolaghar scheme (day creche) has been introduced in one block of every DPEP district.

7. Askhar Dham or temporary residential centres have been opened for children of families involved in continuous seasonal migration to nearby areas.

8. Community mobilisation is a significant intervention in DPEP, intensified by:
   • Mobilising panchayats
   • Setting up VECs and activating them
   • Recurrent training of teachers and government functionaries
   • Organising educational fairs
   • Family to family contact

Besides increasing the motivation of children as well as parents towards primary education, the plan outlay emphasised improving the quality of elementary education by:
   • Developing institutional capacity
   • Curriculum reform
   • Development of new teaching material
   • Teacher training
   • Academic monitoring

DPEP’s special focus is on girls’ education. To assist the state government in directing the project’s efforts towards increasing girls’ education, an independent autonomous society was registered in 1995, named the Madhya Pradesh Mahila Samakhya Society. The society’s staff members work in three districts – Rajgarh, Mandsaur and Raisen, chosen for their low female literacy rates. They help in mobilising the community, setting up groups and getting women to analyse and articulate their concerns. This implies that the plan outlay for the project had taken into account the need to establish a functional plan directed towards educating girls and young women.
The other major focus of the project is concerning *tribal education*. Out of the 19 DPEP districts, five districts have a large percentage of ST population and three districts have pockets of tribal concentration. The project specifically ensures project benefits to tribal areas through standard project interventions. Budgetary allocations were made for conducting research studies on informal learning patterns among tribal children. Interventions were made for the development of a Bridge Language Inventory (BLI) to assist tribal teachers in the use of the local dialect to communicate with tribal students. Efforts were also made to adapt teaching learning materials in the local tribal dialect. Further, on a cost sharing basis between DPEP and the Tribal Welfare Department, tribal hostels or *ashram shalas* were opened in the tribal dominant districts of DPEP.

The project was also directed towards integrating *children with disabilities* into the education system. Children with various disabilities were identified by involving VECs and/or panchayat members.

2. MONITORING OF PARTICIPATION IN WORLD BANK AIDED PROJECTS

Priority on participation within World Bank aided projects has been growing since the last couple of years. One of the reasons has been the growing pressure of voluntary groups on the World Bank to practice participation in the programmes being sponsored by the Bank. There has been a special thrust on the clear identification of primary stakeholders and the involvement of primary stakeholders in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

A need was thus felt to monitor and generate authentic data on participation in the projects initiated by the World Bank especially after 1995. It was realised that development mechanisms at the global level always involve the communities, the government, the aid agency (in this case the World Bank) and civil society. Until recently, the primary stakeholders, especially the community, were neither identified nor taken into consideration in most development projects. Similarly, voluntary efforts, although present for decades, were never acknowledged, or were merely seen as an appendage to any intervention. These agencies of change were not visualised as important stakeholders and contenders to development initiatives. Documentation of the success of strategies with focus on participation highlights the importance of these actors in the development framework.

Therefore, while tripartite negotiation mechanisms involving communities, government and the World Bank are important, the role of NGOs and other voluntary groups who work towards advocacy and building pressure groups need specific acknowledgement and should be seen as important to any development intervention.
In order to gauge the levels of participation in World Bank funded projects, certain mechanisms have been identified by which participation can be monitored or gauged. These mechanisms include:

1. **Information sharing mechanisms**
   a. Translation into local languages and dissemination
   b. Informational workshops, trainings and presentations

2. **Consultative mechanisms**
   a. Consultative meetings
   b. Field visits and interviews

3. **Joint assessment mechanisms**
   a. Participatory assessments and evaluations
   b. Beneficiary assessment

4. **Shared decision making mechanism**
   a. Participatory planning techniques
   b. Meetings to resolve conflicts, seek agreements, engender ownership

5. **Collaborative mechanisms**
   a. Formation of joint committees with stakeholder representatives
   b. Formation of joint working groups, task forces
   c. Joint work with user groups and other stakeholder groups

6. **Empowering mechanisms**
   a. Capacity building of stakeholder organisations
   b. Strengthening the financial and legal status of stakeholder organisations
   c. Handover and self-management by stakeholders
   d. Support for new, spontaneous initiatives by stakeholders

While the first three mechanisms promote learning and enable potential stakeholders to actively participate, the last three mechanisms provide opportunities for stakeholders to influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources.

The internal trend during the designing of the DPEP project and others implied that World Bank projects had started to emphasise the wider application of shared decision making as well as collaborative and empowering mechanisms. The need to monitor World Bank aided development projects kept a critical view of the mechanisms through which World Bank aided projects were being implemented and whether participation (as defined above) was being met.

3. **PARTICIPATION: EXPECTED ROLE IN THE PROJECT**

**Importance of Participation in the Project**

DPEP’s main focus was to decentralise and encourage the participation of primary stakeholders in every aspect of the programme’s functioning. As stated earlier, the
programme is seen as the first experiment of its kind in the social development sector, where decentralisation and community participation were being put into practice on a very large scale.

The plan outlay clearly delineated the importance of participation in each aspect of programme implementation. It stated, “The planning process of DPEP since its inception has been based on the twin concerns of community participation and technical insight. Thus the basic planning methodology has been one that seeks to bring together community perception and experience with technical skills.”

The strategy of community participation in the DPEP was based on mobilisation accompanied with training. The first step towards participatory planning was by creating a positive environment among the community. This was operationalized through:

- Large scale awareness generation campaigns (Lok Sampark Abhyan)
- School Chalo Abhiyan
- Synergy with TLCs

Besides, the programme aimed to build linkages with panchayats, the decentralised institutions of self-governance. Further, the programme encouraged community involvement through the creation of VECs, which perform the functions of:

- Facilitation and mobilisation
- Supervision
- Attitudinal
- School maintenance

The programme was taken as a ‘laboratory’ intervention to determine the extent and type of, participation initiated. The programme outlined the involvement of the community as primary stakeholders in various aspects of the programme’s functioning. It emphasised the community’s active role in improving enrolment, building an enabling environment for education, and sustaining basic education. This vision was envisaged through the creation of structures such as VECs and using panchayats as centres that monitor and implement DPEP activities. These local level institutions representing the community were visualised as permanent bodies at the village level, controlled by the community themselves. Further, a number of schemes such as the EGS, based solely on community demand and implemented through the panchayat system, signify important strides in the planning towards popular participation in development.

The decentralisation process in DPEP involved the creation of structures at the district, block and village level. The district level in particular envisaged:

- Establishing local community groups such as VECs for the maintenance of schools and mobilisation activities.
- Linkages with the panchayat for institutionalising the processes.
- Building linkages with NGOs/CBOs in implementing various activities especially in mobilisation.
- Building streamlined information base (EMIS) for quick and relevant information flow from village to the District Project Office (DPO)/State Project Office (SPO).
- The plan for 1997-98 focuses on gender equity. Programmes such as Women’s Education Campaign have begun recently.
- The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS).

**Important Stakeholders in the Project**

An evaluation study conducted in the first phase of the monitoring programme in 1997 undertook a detailed assessment of the status, dynamics and potential of community mobilisation and the participation of VECs in accomplishing DPEP’s goal. The study had as its sample four districts in the state of MP. The study highlighted the important stakeholders in the programme’s functioning, especially in terms of influence and importance. Important trends are given below.

The DPEP target of increased enrolment, retention and achieving primary education involves a number of stakeholders in different modes of involvement and stakes in the overall objective of the programme. The stakeholders can be divided into:

- Primary stakeholders
- Secondary stakeholders
- Tertiary stakeholders

Primary stakeholders include children, especially girls, the village community, teachers, anganwadi workers and panchayats. Secondary stakeholders include project holders, DIET, and NGOs. Tertiary stakeholders are represented by the bureaucracy, the World Bank, and the district administration. All the stakeholders have different levels of importance and influencing capacities in the programme. The plan outlay for DPEP clearly targeted the programme benefits at the community, especially parents, and children, who thus form the primary stakeholders in the programme’s functioning. The other stakeholders are to be viewed from the perspective of the primary stakeholders. To gauge the levels of participation of the various stakeholders, it is important to analyse the degree of importance and influence that each of the stakeholders possess vis-à-vis the programme. Given below is a diagrammatic representation of the importance/influence matrix of the stakeholders.
As the diagram above depicts, the various stakeholders in the programme’s functioning have their degrees of importance and influence. The primary stakeholders and the main target group being parents and children, the circles of importance and influence as reflected in the plan outlay state the degree of participation and decision making in various phases of the programme’s functioning. The community is viewed as an important receiver of project benefits and they play an important role in influencing the programme’s functioning. However while this is true, it can also be gauged that a stakeholder’s matrix of influence and importance would vary through time. This interplay of the influence/importance matrix is shown below.
In this matrix of analysis, the community, especially parents of school going children, and children, especially girls, have maximum influence and importance in project planning, implementation and impact.

The district administration, teachers, the World Bank, bureaucracy, the project’s training cell and NGOs while having an important stake in influencing the functioning of the project reflect less importance in the intervention as a whole.

Village level workers such as anganwadi workers, health workers, etc, reflect high importance vis-à-vis the project objectives; they however did not have much influence in the project’s functioning.

Finally, categories including parents without school going children, seasonal migrants, etc, reflect low importance as also low influence in the programme functioning. Such groups do not have much interest in the programme’s functioning; therefore their stakes remain low.

The above analysis of the various stakeholders and their degree of importance would in the coming pages be compared with the existing scenario in the project area. A clear understanding would thus be gauged as to participation, degrees of participation, decision making, conflicts, oppositions and support in the programme.

4. METHODOLOGY FOR PARTICIPATION MONITORING

The monitoring of participation in DPEP has been a two phased programme. The objective of the first phase (1997) was to maximise the understanding of the process and context of
community mobilisation and participation of VECs in DPEP. Data collection and analysis
were carried out in four districts, namely, Dhar, Raisen, Raigarh and Rajgarh. A combination
of semi-structured interviews, group discussions and PRA were used for gathering data. Where
necessary, case studies were developed to support and substantiate the findings. An
in-depth study of 32 VECs from four districts provided the basic source of primary data about
the institutional aspects of community participation in DPEP. A number of persons were met
during the study. These included:

- Primary stakeholders (village community, children, teachers, male and female
  members)
- VEC members (male and female)
- Village community
- Panchayat representatives
- Staff of DIET
- Block coordinators
- Janpad panchayats members
- Master trainers
- Chief Executive Officer of the district
- Block Resource Centre Coordinators (male and female)
- Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (male and female)
- District Project Coordinator
- Assistant Project Coordinator
- Collector
- Mission Director
- Project Director
- Deputy Manager (Training)

The findings from the first phase were presented in the form of a report to the State Project
Office.

The second phase involved selecting a sample for intensive monitoring of the programme.
Two districts were chosen for the sample, namely, Rajgarh and Raigarh. The reasons for
choosing these two samples include:

- Selecting a tribal (Raigarh) and non-tribal district (Rajgarh)
- Proximity to the State Project Office (Rajgarh)

Rajgarh was chosen as the first sample for the study. Field visits were made in May and June
1998. A total of 14 villages were visited. Of these, eight villages were visited during the first
phase of monitoring. A number of persons were met with during the study. These included:

- VEC members (male and female)
Village community
Teachers (male and female)
Children
S. Balwadi teachers
Panchayat members (male and female)
Block heads
Cluster heads
Sahyoginis
District Project Officer
Gender Coordinator
Media Officer
Zilla Panchayat President
Master Trainers
Staff of DIET (male and female)
Janpad members
Collector

The methodology to gauge information included focus group interviews and discussions, meetings and observation. An attempt was made to interview and meet with both men as well as women in each of the categories.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Community Mobilisation as an Important Ingredient to Initiate Participation
The programme, stressing the need for an active role by the community in the various aspects of the programme’s functioning, envisaged effective community mobilisation strategies. Community mobilisation has mainly been identified for:

- Creating an enabling environment.
- Motivating parents to send their children, especially girls, to school.
- Building an effective linkage between community and education structures in the village, such as primary schools, balwadis, anganwadis, alternate schools, etc.

The DPEP programme at the start itself stressed the need for community involvement, to be perceived by the project functionaries, as a major and focused input. The planning phase of the project involved activities that encouraged the participation of the local community. Thus, the participatory monitoring exercises referred to as the Lok Sampark Abhyam had been planned to mobilise and involve village community members in conceptualising how the programme would be implemented. All districts were covered in this exercise. However, in 1997 the study undertaken in four districts reflects that in most of the districts, the community had not been completely involved in the process. Mainly panchayat representatives and more
influential people such as teachers and sarpanches were involved. There was limited involvement of women. Despite this, the Lok Sampark Abhyan has however been able to mobilise and popularise community members towards a greater interest in educational activities.

What emerged was the fact that the objectives of undertaking the Lok Sampark Abhyan were not clear to the project team, especially at the block level. Consequently, even the representatives of the community, especially panchayat members and school teachers, did not reflect clarity as to why the Lok Sampark Abhyan had been undertaken. This became a matter of concern.

In this regard it is important to note that in the four districts under study, the TLC was one of the important activities that led to community participation. In the TLC, from the selection of volunteers to popularising and propagating the need for literacy, the community had been deeply involved. The TLC has played an important role in mobilising the community in DPEP. Successful cases of the TLC in Raisen and Raigarh substantiate this point. Effective awareness methods such as kala jathas and other communication strategies provided a good start for DPEP.

This implies that while DPEP is a programme that has carved a shift from the earlier programmes by stressing the need for community participation and empowerment, the various cases studied reflect that many of the earlier programmes have been important support mechanisms in DPEP to achieve the desired objectives of community mobilisation and participation.

Village Education Committees (VECs)
The VECs forms a very important structure within the project to ensure effective participation of the village community in the functioning of the programme. The plan out lay had taken appreciable strides in ensuring that the local community, parents, teachers, representatives of the panchayats and other local bodies were represented in the making of the VEC.

However, the study of the eight VECs in four districts reflects that the objectives of creating an institutional base for promulgating education, especially primary education, is yet to be met.

While the VECs have been formed in most villages, the norms for their formation have not been followed in many cases. This becomes an important area of concern as the study reflects that the membership of women in the committee was very low. This is also true with regard to the membership of parents in the VEC. Further, according to the given norms, there are a number of members representing the block and political groups. In the actual functioning, very few members attend the monthly/bi-monthly meetings of the VECs. Thus the presence of a large number of members did not prove to be of much use in the functioning of the VEC.
Functions and Responsibilities of the VEC
- Facilitation
- Supervision
- Attitudinal
- School maintenance
- Mobilisation

The study reflects that VECs have played an important role in mobilising the village community. However, only one or two members (usually teachers, sometimes the sarpanch) were actively involved in the mobilisation process. Thus the study shows that while the committee has played an important role in mobilisation, it has been the initiative of only a few rather than the committee as a whole.

Supervisory functions of the VECs have only been in the area of monitoring of the contingency amount. Some interesting findings include monitoring of the attendance of teachers in Rajgarh district. On the whole, the VEC’s supervisory functions have not been clearly specified, which has led to confusion among the project authorities as well as VEC members.

The role of village level structures such as VECs in bringing about attitudinal change especially of parents in sending their children to school, the need for educating girls and young women, and increasing the participation of women has been in most cases low. While attempts to mobilise parents were conducted by some VECs, the other concerns have not been addressed. Moreover, the VEC’s mobilisation activities have been restricted to initiatives taken by one or two members.

One of the reasons for the low performance of VECs has been the lack of clarity of their functions both, by the VEC’s members and the project team. A lack of flexibility as to decision making and a centralised system of undertaking activities leading to only the teacher or the sarpanch taking initiatives has led to the VECs not being representative of community involvement, partnership and participation.

The study reflects that as village level institutions formed in order to undertake activities for increasing educational levels of the village, VECs are not well represented. One of the reasons is that there are very few women members in the committee. The committee is restricted to the dominant groups/individuals in the village. Further, as mobilisation activities have not been clearly defined, many of the functions of bringing in attitudinal change especially on girls’ education, have not been taken up by most of the VECs under study.

On a more positive note, VECs have played an important role in mobilising the community and popularising the importance of education amongst the community. However, as clear roles have not been demarcated for these village level institutions, the functions of the VEC have become restricted to monitoring the contingency amount that comes to the VEC.
**Relationship of VECs with Other Institutions**

Among the four districts surveyed, the study reflects that VECs in general have a good working relationship with gram panchayats. As the sarpanch is the president and panch members are members of the committee, the study gauged that panchayats do play an important role in the functioning of the VECs. However, at the same time the VEC’s links with the janpad and zilla panchayat are more or less non-existent.

Further, VEC interface with primary schools is very limited, and usually restricted to the use of the contingency amount. In most of the VECs under study, the teachers other than the school headmaster expressed ignorance about the functioning of the VEC.

As the study reflects, not all members of the VEC are functional. This is especially true of parent membership. To a large extent, membership of parents is more or less a formality. Thereby, the VEC’s relationship with parents is fairly limited.

The study also shows that no clear relationship has been established between the VEC and the project. The relationship usually depends more on individual interest rather than an institutional effort towards building linkages. Most VEC members are not aware who the officials at the block/cluster are. A number of VEC members complained that hardly any project officials are present during the meetings.

Thus the VEC’s collaborative mechanisms were found to be weak with a need for strengthening and intensifying the VEC’s linkages with various groups and organisations.

**Issues Regarding the Participation of Women**

The programme highlights the importance of focusing on increasing enrolment of young girls in primary schools. At the same time, it also stresses the involvement and participation of women in the process of the programme’s functioning.

The study shows that women have had a very limited role in the project’s functioning. In the VEC’s functioning, women’s participation has been fairly low. Decisions were usually taken by male teachers or the male sarpanch. Membership of women was more or less a formality. Interestingly, in some of the villages, the forming of mahila mandals helped in bringing women to the centre of DPEP activities. Thus, while the enrolment of girls increased due to increased mobilisation, the participation of women in decision making or in the activities of the VEC was observed to be fairly low.

**Capacity Building Interventions**

Capacity building is an important area of intervention in the programme, which needs to be analysed. However in this section, an analysis of the capacity building of primary stakeholders in particular will be undertaken. As the earlier sections reflect, the involvement of the primary stakeholders (parents of school going children, community in general, and children) is reflected in structures such as the VECs.
The study in 1997 reflected that a training programme had been organised for VEC members in 1996. The training programme was more a platform for information sharing. Since there was no follow-up, most members of the VEC did not seem to have gained much from the training workshop. Lack of follow-up and lack of focus on the process aspect were observed to be the major cause for the training programme not being effective. A favourable aspect observed was that VEC members themselves expressed the need for training in certain areas. Orientation of members to the programme’s functioning requires more intensive inputs.

6. REVIEW OF DPEP IN RAJGARH: A CASE OVER TIME

Findings of the Study Undertaken in 1997
District Rajgarh had been taken as a case district to undertake participatory monitoring of DPEP. The district was also part of the study in 1997. The findings of the monitoring undertaken in June 1998 are given below.

Stakeholders in the Project
The state plan outlay for DPEP posited the importance of community, especially the poorer sections of the community, parents of school going children, etc, as the primary stakeholders. Further, the plan perceived panchayat institutions, educated youth, teachers, etc, as playing a very important part in the project’s functioning. Their stake as influencing agents was perceived to be very high.

From the study conducted in 1997 in Rajgarh, the perceived stakeholders in the importance/influence matrix were the following:

![Stakeholder Matrix]

The perceived roles of various stakeholders in the programme’s functioning vis-à-vis the importance/influence matrix reveals that the Project Office at the district, the training
institution, the district administration especially the education department and the VECs, the training centre and DIET are perceived as important and also enjoy more influence in the project’s functioning. On the other hand, teachers, NGOs, panchayats, private school teachers and caste leaders while having a lot of influence in the project, reflect low importance in the functioning. It was observed that the influence of religious leaders as well as leaders from different communities/caste was fairly high during programme activity.

Parents, especially of school going children, who in the plan are expected to have both high importance and high influence, in reality were of high importance but were low in influencing the overall functioning of the programme. Their membership in the VEC was observed to be more of a formality. None of the parent members in the eight VECs surveyed was active nor were they aware about the functions or their roles as members of the VEC. Consequently their influence value towards the programme’s functioning was observed to be very low.

The fourth section highlighting the category of stakeholders who reflect both low importance and low influence include some of the disadvantaged community members such as women and other formal and non-formal groups.

Programme Functioning
The study revealed that community participation in DPEP’s functioning has led to:

- Schools being run on time and school timings being monitored by the VEC.
- Infrastructural needs such as black board, chalk, play material, etc, being received periodically.
- A fair sense of ownership amongst VEC members towards education in their village.
- Panchayats have begun to play some role in the functioning of DPEP.

However some important areas of concern reflected during the study include:

- Most of the project staff is not clear about the objectives, long term plans of forming VECs and encouraging community participation.
- Other than the headmaster, most teachers are not aware about the functioning of the VEC.
- This is true also of the community, especially women.

Capacity Building Interventions
Under DPEP in District Rajgarh, three training programmes had been organised. These included:

- One day orientation for VEC members at the block level.
- Two training programmes at the village and cluster level.
The first training programme held in 1996 was mainly on the roles and responsibilities of VECs. The second training programme held at the cluster level was of a similar nature. The study gauged that selected members of VECs received the training. However, it was observed that very few members remembered what was shared during the training programme.

The third training organised was conducted at the cluster level. Master trainers who had already been trained in various areas of the programme oriented VEC members about their roles and responsibilities.

The training programmes were observed to be more content driven with little focus on processes. Thus in most cases the method of sharing information was through lectures. As there had been no follow-up to the trainings organised, not much impact could be gauged of the training interventions. Nevertheless, holding such events has led to a sense of belonging amongst the VEC members. This is a positive development. However, intensive follow-up strategies would have been able to sustain these positive developments.

Findings of the Study Conducted in 1998
The VECs chosen for the monitoring study in 1997 were again taken up for study in May-June 1998. Along with those, three to four additional VECs were also taken up as a sample.

Stakeholders in the Project
An analysis of the various stakeholders in the project vis-à-vis their importance and influence revealed the following.

![Stakeholders Matrix]

The illustration above reflects that while the VECs and teachers continue to play an important role in the programme’s functioning and are perceived to be an important component in the programme, their level of influence is low. As compared to earlier, a drop has been observed as to the degree of influence enjoyed by teachers and the VEC.
In village Moily Kalan for example, while in 1997 the VEC was considered important and with influence in the functioning of the programme, a year later visits to the village revealed that the sarpanch does not attend the VEC meetings. Thereby members expressed dissatisfaction with the VEC’s functioning stating that the VEC could do nothing without the sarpanch’s (who is also president of the VEC) presence as he is required to sign all papers and documents. Teachers of the village complained that there was little they could do to influence the project authorities in the district, as nobody would listen to them. Meetings have thus become an irregular feature, the extra room for the school building is still not complete, teachers and the community by and large were dissatisfied with the functioning of the VEC and the programme as a whole.

In village Kalli Peeth, which was one of the villages taken up for study in 1997, the VEC had achieved very little within a gap of a year. In the previous year the study gauged that the VEC in Kalli Peeth attempted to provide support and monitor the school’s functioning. During the second phase, the members expressed disappointment as they stated that teachers did not come to school on time leading to low attendance of children. The members complained that meetings were not of much use as project officials rarely took part in their meetings and it was the District Office that took all the decisions. A feeling of helplessness was observed among the members.

However, some interesting attempts at involving the community were started which were showing results. Though such cases are few, they throw light on certain successful practices that were adopted in the programme.

- In village Kotari Kalan, the community contributed Rs. 22,000 for the construction of an additional room in the village’s primary school. Data reveals that the attendance of children belonging to Muslim families increased.
- In village Kunwar Kotari, the VEC collected money from the community for wire fencing in the village.
- During a VEC training in Eklera cluster, the Block Resource Coordinator decided to pay Rs. 10 as honorarium/travel allowance for the participants. However, the participants decided to donate this amount to their respective VECs.
- In Umari cluster, the programme provided Rs. 70,000 for one room of a school, but the VEC decided to renovate the complete school by contributing money, labour and other materials.
- In Choma cluster, VEC members donated the Rs 10 (provided as travelling allowance) for purchasing fans for their school.

While the above are only a few cases of success within the programme, on the whole the various components of the programme’s functioning, especially the activities and structures which encourage community participation were gauged as weak. The VECs as a representation of community involvement continued to lack power of decision making, role
clarity and responsibility. The project authorities in the district were not clear about the objectives of the VEC and the long term goals of the programme.

**Programme Functioning**

Since 1997 certain new developments in programme functioning were introduced in the district. Some important developments that took place include:

- The Block Resource Trainers and Master Trainers were provided trainings. A trainer team at the block level was formed to provide trainings to VEC members.
- Training of VECs was organised at the cluster level. All VEC members were trained. The training for VEC members held in January 1998 saw a turnout of 3086 out of 4046 VEC members (76 per cent). Members were provided with travelling allowance.
- Block Resource Centres were instructed to hold regular meetings of cluster coordinators.
- Community meetings were organised, especially in villages where the EGS had started.
- Teachers at the village level were asked to attend the cluster and block level meetings, which are held every month, regularly.
- A significant addition to the programme is the start of the EGS. The EGS is postulated as a scheme that would be provided only on community demand. As the plan outlay states, “A demanding community is the strongest premise for an EGS.” As the EGS would be implemented through the panchayat system, it combines statutory authority along with popular participation. The scheme required intensive monitoring in the initial months to gauge how far people’s participation was included in the scheme and the role of panchayats as a representative of the community in ensuring the functioning of the scheme.
- In order to intensively mobilise the agenda of increasing girls’ education, the DPEP plan outlay for 1997-98 had initiated a campaign called Women’s Education Campaign between 15 June and 20 August 1998. The objective of this campaign was to ensure girls and young women especially from the disadvantaged groups receive education. The campaign has just got underway and would also require close monitoring.
## 7. LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION BY STAKEHOLDERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Information sharing with Bank</th>
<th>Consultation with Stakeholder</th>
<th>Joint Assessment</th>
<th>Joint Planning and Decision Making</th>
<th>Collaboration and Joint Implementation</th>
<th>Empowerment and Capacity Building of PS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
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<td>WB, SPO, District admin.</td>
<td>SPO, WB</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
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<td>SPO, DPO</td>
<td>SPO, DPO</td>
<td>Integrating the data generated from LSA as a benchmark</td>
<td>Through LSA to some extent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCERT, 1997</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(SPO-State Project Office; PS-Primary Stakeholders; VEC-Village Education Committee; WB-World Bank; DPO-District Project Office; LSA-Lok Sampark Abhyan or Community Outreach Campaign)

An analysis of the process of project implementation reveals that the identification of the target group, how the project would be implemented, etc, involved four main stakeholders – the funding agency, the central government, the State Project Office and the district...
administration. There has been little or no involvement of primary stakeholders in this process.

Appraisal studies were conducted with the involvement of the State Project Office, the district administration, funding agency and the District Project Office. The designing of the project mainly involved the Government of India (GOI) DPEP Office and the State Project Office. The involvement of primary stakeholders was low.

As stated earlier, the planning process of DPEP since its inception was based on the twin concern of community participation and technical intervention. The main planning of the project was planned by the Central Office, New Delhi, the State Project Office and the District Project Office, the planning process was based on the information collected through participatory micro planning (Lok Sampark Abhyan) and baseline studies. Plans for the districts were made through collaborative and joint planning exercises with the community and VECs. The Lok Sampark Abhyan was an important medium for linking the project with the primary stakeholders and the village community in particular.

The implementation of the project involved a number of actors in varying degrees. This includes the State Project Office, the District Project Office, the community, VECs, other NGOs and government departments. While the implementation activities involved a number of stakeholders, the study observed that decision making usually was with the State Project Office or District Project Office. The primary stakeholders had very little decision making powers.

In order to ensure the proper implementation of project strategies, the project used the management information system as a basic strategy for monitoring. This included the collection of information to create a database and the generation of reports based on the database. Further the database was built through community involvement using the Lok Sampark Abhyan. The Lok Sampark Abhyan’s focus was towards information generation (by using and processing it in the District Project Office and State Project Office) and information dissemination (by taking it back to the village community, displaying the information through school maps, etc). The information gauged from the Lok Sampark Abhyan was used to measure progress against the benchmark data on a regular basis. In addition, quarterly reports with data on the implementation of the project like, in terms of physical progress and expenditure, are being submitted to the Government of India through the PMIS (project monitoring information system). One mid-term review was undertaken by SCERT in 1997. A number of appraisals and pre-appraisals including mission visits have been undertaken.
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The study team included:

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Glossary of Terms

Anganwadi: Pre-primary School
Balwadi: Creche
Janpad: Block
Lok Sampark Abhyan: Community Outreach Campaign
Panchayats: Institutions of Local Self Governance
Prerak Samhoes: Catalyst Groups
Sahayoginis: Women helpers in the Mahila Samakya Programme
School Chalo Abhyan: Let’s Go to School Campaign
Shishu Shiksha Kendra: Early Childhood Education Centres
Zilla: District