

A descriptive study on people's participation in rural development

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ABSTRACT

Development is a long and complex evolutionary process. It is more a process of social change rather than merely generation and accumulation of economic resources. Development is a process of improving the well being of the people. It is about better living standard, better health, education and opening new opportunities for better life. In developing countries like India, approximate 70% of the population is living in villages and rural areas. Thus development of rural areas is the main focus of the central or state governments for overall national development. People's participation emerges along with the concept of development. People's participation means the direct involvement of citizens in the process of administrative decision-making, policy formulation and policy implementation. The present paper draws on some past studies that the people's participation is as important in development, particularly, in rural development as the other resources like money, material and machines. Participatory approach should be made a mass movement involving the active voluntary participation of the local people in developmental programmes.

Key Words : People's participation, Development, Rural Development

INTRODUCTION

The post World war-II (1939-45) period has witnessed the collapse of, colonial power and rise of new independent nations. With the attainment of independence, these newly emerged nations were facing the challenge of development, national integration and economic well-being. "Development" was the central theme of the politics in these developing nations. Development is not a static concept. Fred W. Riggs defines 'development' as a function a political system involving increased ability to shape and reshape their environment. In other words 'development' is a process of planned growth in the direction of modernity or nation building and socio-economic progress involving substantial differentiation and co-ordination. Development signifies growth or change for betterment. In brief it is a process of improving the well being of the people. It is also about raising the standard of living, improving education and health of the people and also opening out new opportunities for a richer and varied life.

The development process in a developing country will acquire full meaning if the citizens not only associate themselves with planning development programmes but also participate fully in their

implementation. Citizens' participation has come to mean the direct involvement of people in the process of administrative decision making, policy formulation and implementation. People's participation involves the deliberate and systematic mobilization of people around issues and problems of common concern.

People's participation in development process in a developing country has several advantages. It enhances the interest of local people in imparting a new thrust to programmes of which they are beneficiaries. It increases confidence of the people so that they can assume responsibilities. Participation gives rise to the sharing of the feelings of local people with the authorities. It can be a remedy to check corruption. In developing countries, people's participation has been gaining momentum gradually.

Most of the developing countries, particularly India, are largely rural rooted. More than 70% of the Indian population is rural sheltered. The majority of the people continue to be deprived of finer aspects of life. Thus the situation calls for systematic planning and execution backed by committed socio-political-economic machinery with effective people's participation. Rural Development must focus on balanced development of both physical and social infrastructure, which in turn, will result in human development. The basic thrust of Indian Constitution is to carve out a civilized and highly evolved just socio-economic and political order. After the enactment of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Bill-1993, the weaker sections of the society have been given space.

Concept of people's participation :

People's Participation is not new to India. During national movement (Freedom Struggle) there was a wide spread people's participation. The directive principles of state policy are the articulated expression of people's aspiration in Indian Constitution. The Father of Nation, Mahatama Gandhi once said, "Power chafed by people is a true democracy." Consequently, people's participation is considered necessary in development process. The development process in developing country will acquire a full meaning if the citizens not only associate themselves with planning development programmes but also participate fully in their implementation.

People's participation means the direct involvement of citizens in the process of administrative decision-making, policy formulation and policy implementation. The UNRISD defines the concept of people's participation as the organized efforts to increase control over the resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control. People's participation involves the deliberate and systematic mobilization of citizen around problems of common concern.

Thus, participation covers every kind of action by which citizens take part in development administration. The scope of people's participation may be classified into three broad categories vis-(1) participation in policy making (2) participation in implementation and (3) participation in evaluating the plan or programme for development. The scope of people's participation may be confined to one or another aspect of development activity. It may increase or decrease over a period of time as the possibility of participating in the different aspects increases or decreases.

People's participation in policy making or planning of programmes or projects which are going to affect their interest must be necessary. It would be most important to satisfy minimum needs of the local population. Past studies have shown that the development programmes undertaken with community participation great success and cost-effective compared to that undertaken by Government where the community members become more speculators.

Implementation of development programmes and projects especially for cultural and social

programmes must involve community organizations. The members of the community should be encouraged to take part in the evaluation process by attending meetings and expressing their views. The opinions of the people cannot be ignored in plan evaluation. People's initiative and participation must be the key element in the whole process of development.

Rural development :

Development is a long and complex evolutionary process. It is more a process of social change rather than merely generation and accumulation of economic resources. Development is a process of improving the well being of the people. It is about better living standard, better health, education and opening new opportunities for better life. In developing countries like India, approximate 70% of the population is living in villages and rural areas. Thus development of rural areas is the main focus of the central or state governments for overall national development. Hence the term rural development emerges.

From the very beginning, after independence, the Community Development Programmes were initiated. When India became independent, a more vital approach brought forth attempts to build on earlier experiments and devise an administrative set up needed for a nationwide rural development programme. The main functions of the community development in India are: the promotion of social security and growth, the mobilization of public opinion and planning and implementation of development programmes. The main thrust of rural development programmes is an all round socio-economic transformation of rural areas. Since independence, a planned development strategy was adopted for development in successive five year plans. All planned documents have been focused on the common man, weaker and less privileged sections of society. Rural development has always been the core of Indian planning efforts. The rural development programmes started for developing the rural areas are: Community Development Programme (1952), National Extension Scheme (1953), Intensive Agricultural District Programme (1961) Integrated Rural Development Programme (1976), Jawahar Gram Samridh Yojna (1999), Indira Awas Yojna (1985-86) and so on other benevolent programmes.

People's participation and development :

People's participation in development has three dimensions, the fundamental role of people's participation development can be considered on analyzing these three dimensions:

People's participation in decision making or policy making:

Decision making is an important process in policy cycle. Local inhabitants which are to be affected by the policy should be acknowledged about the policy and should be involved in the process of analysis and choosing alternatives (for development). The local people should be given opportunity to express their views about their problems and their suggestions about solutions. People's participation in policy making can be sought particularly in the form of elected representations *i.e.* M.P.s, M.L.A.s, members of Zila Parshad, Block-Samiti and Gram-Panchayat and Gram-Sabha. At grass-root level the Village Panchayat or Gram Sabha should be given due weightage. Before the policy-makers reach at final decision, the views and suggestions from the community or area to be affected by the policy should be considered. This will certainly satisfy needs of the local rural people.

Participation in implementation:

It is a known fact that development programmes undertaken with community participation

have a greater chance of success compared to that undertaken by government where local rural people were mere spectators. Implementation of development programmes and projects especially for rural development should involve rural people. In the forward to the eighth plan 1992-97, Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao says, “The success of development programmes can be multiplied manifold if the people are whole-heartedly involved in its implementation.” Efficient implementation can be in the cases where interests of local people or society as a whole are incorporated in the policy. Rural people can help in implementation of programmes as: contribution of resources; like land material labour etc. and administration and coordination of activities of the programme. Thus, institutions such as Panchayati Raj, voluntary organizations, NGOs and co-operative societies must be strengthened in the interest of plan implementation. The NITI Ayog (2015) also stresses on seeking people’s participation in development.

People’s participation in policy evaluation:

The view of the people for whom the plan is executed, cannot be ignored in plan evaluation. The rural people should be encouraged to take part in the evaluation process by attending meetings, conferences and expressing their views. This is also a feed-back process and administration can seek the valuable opinions of the local public. This will help to find the reasons for failure of policy and suggests effective method for success of planning. The local people can suggest better solution of their problem than the outsider.

Obstacles in people’s participation :

Education and knowledge:

Education and knowledge play a vital role in development. The people of rural areas are generally not well informed about the schemes and policies of the government for development. Local people do not participate or they are reluctant to participate in the development programmes because they are unaware of the benefits of the schemes and their positive outcomes.

Effective leadership:

The local people should be educated about the benefits of the development projects. They should be positively motivated to co-operate with the government agencies to implement the programmes. The effective leadership can guide and motivate the rural people to participate in the development process.

Reluctant bureaucracy:

The rural people are less privileged, the bureaucrats are reluctant to share and listen to the villagers. They do not want to appreciate the views of the rural people. They feel themselves experts in problem solving. The reluctance on the part of bureaucracy is a major hurdle in popular participation.

Political will:

The will of political leaders should be considered important in achieving wholehearted participation in development programmes. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are the best examples for this. But in most of the states, the functions and powers of these institutions are vested in the State Governments and on the discretion of the government.

Suggestions for effective participation :

People centered development means to enhance their capabilities in terms of their skills, productivity and self reliance. Implementation of rural development programmes is a challenging job. The developmental agencies have to deal with the deprived, less privileged sections in the rural community. As far as the rural problems are concerned, the local people who are facing those are the most appropriate ones to find the solutions. So these people should be involved in formulating and implementation of rural development programmes. To achieve the effective participation of people, particularly, in rural areas is a difficult task.

1. Educate and enlighten people about the development process. They should be able to express their views freely.
2. Spontaneous support of the local leadership should be there to motivate people to take part in the processes. An effective leadership can do this.
3. Attitude of bureaucracy should be changed from regulatory approach to participatory. Administrators have to play crucial roles in promoting people's participation in rural development.
4. To achieve an effective participation, the rural development agencies should share the intended programme at early stage with the people to be affected. And their opinions should also be taken care of.

Conclusion :

Development has been the dominant theme of the international community, particularly in developing societies. In the contemporary world, alleviation of poverty, eradication of illiteracy and ignorance, preservation of human dignity and culture in rural areas have become issues of brainstorming for governments, economists, administrators and policy makers. In India, we have adopted planned development strategy. Since 1950, the government has been implementing rural development plans but could not get success up to mark. These programmes had been implemented in the authoritative environment with less or nil people's involvement. The concept of people's participation emerged as the need of the hour. People's participation should be encouraged to make the rural development programmes more effective. The local people must be enlightened and well informed about the benefits of the schemes for development. They should be motivated to co-operate with the authorities and vice-versa.

Participatory approach should be made a mass movement involving the active voluntary participation of the local people in developmental programmes. Government has to take a step ahead for this, by imparting special training to the employees of the development agencies. Suitable amendments have to be incorporated in the central and the state laws to make true local self government.

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