
UNIT 14 PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the concept of development planning and administration;
- Define and describe the concept of participation and participatory approaches;
- Understand the organisational implications of participatory approaches; and
- Analyse the people's participation in district planning and various methods of capacity building.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of development planning has been analysed in the earlier Units also. But in order to analyse the participatory approaches to development, planning, we shall be making a brief reference to development planning before discussing the participatory approaches and methods such as workshop based methods, community based methods, methods for stakeholder consultation and methods for social analysis. The participatory approaches demand that the organisation should be open to innovations. The core principles of participatory approaches like a systematic learning process, seeking diverse perspectives, content specific and facilitating external agents with key responsibility resting with local people will be presented in a tabular form with their implications in an organisation.

14.2 KEY CONCEPTS

14.2.1 Development Planning and Administration

Development Planning aims at optimal utilisation of resources – social and capital. It captured the imagination of academicians and policy makers in 1930s. When the world was reeling under the pressure of Great Depression, the Soviet Union was reaping the benefits of planning. In the post Second World War era, most of the newly emerged countries were influenced by Marxist socialism and adopted planning as an approach for development, with dominant central

features. Polish Marxist economist Oscar Lange recognised the relevance of planning in the socialist economy, even though he discussed its magnitude and the temporality of its constitution. He argued that during the first stages of a transition to socialism, the plan should be extremely centralised, with a strong political component, in order to solve the initial tensions of the transition.

In the early years of planning, sophisticated models were developed and extensively applied in plan formulation, especially in India. In the first two decades of the planning in India, it was taken for granted that all would accept the rationale of the plans. Shortfalls in the achievement of objectives were seen as difficulties of implementation. The development policy was designed as technocratically correct and failures were seen as those of social and political constraints and implementation. It has been considered that the primary failure in several developing countries, including India, has been in implementation.

Since the 'development' decades of 1960s and 1970s proved frustrating and disappointing for most countries of the world, academicians started questioning the central hypothesis that regular development planning is an effective, non-violent alternative path to development with social justice.

Progressive disillusionment with the two prevalent development paradigms—centrally planned socialism and market driven capitalism – made it imperative to look for inclusive structures of social, economic and political power, that could overcome inequalities, so glaring in the context of developing countries, and fundamentally shift the basis of social power. The problem was that the benefits could not reach the target groups. Quite often people could not relate themselves with the plans made for their benefits, as the plans actually could not meet their needs. Reason could be found in the belief that expert development planners could assess the needs at the root level.

It attracted the attention of academicians and development planners equally. The third option was "bottom-up" development planning. The impetus for the growth of this model came from the success of certain experiments carried out in mid 1970s in many of the developing countries. For example, in India, Joint Forest Management strategy to protect and regenerate the forests with the active involvement of local people and local institutions proved to be immensely successful. Their participation was effected at all levels, from planning to implementing and monitoring to sharing.

The 'bottom-up' development planning is a political and social philosophy without denying that there are obvious risks in a political system, which leans heavily on professional intermediaries between people and their elected representatives. It is in this context that decentralisation was favoured. It can be defined as a process of transferring responsibilities and resources from the decision-making top towards intermediate or base levels. Every act of decentralisation implies a circulation and redistribution of power.

Defining the relationship between the decentralised entity and the central government is of utmost importance because if it is over-regulated, paternalism and re-centralisation may follow and if left to itself, it may provoke atomisation and uneven regional development. Assuming that decentralised entities can incorporate new horizontal inter-relationships, the vertical relation with the central government is necessary as a means of securing the efficiency of certain specified services like institutional development. The vertical relation can also be

used by the decentralised entity to affect national decisions and make them reflect the particular interests that it represents.

Operationalising bottom-up planning approach requires building up of viable root level institutions and intermediary institutions to support these local institutions. Viability in turn requires adequate functions and commensurate authority to discharge these functions. As the approach seeks people's participation in development planning, these institutions with local representation become sine-qua-non. The focus on participation is to address the needs of the people, which can be articulated by them only. For example, in India 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts are intended to rejuvenate and revitalise local government system, with powers to take decisions on local development policies. They have also opened up the scope for people's participation.

14.2.2 Participation

The concept of good governance demands that government must not only be representative but also responsive and where people would have a substantive role to participate in decision-making and implementation. Participation has been regarded as "generally devoting the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well being" (Cohen and Up Hoff, 1980). Another scholar has defined participation as, "in the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits" (Paul, 1987). These definitions imply that 'community participation is the process in which individuals and families assume responsibilities for their own development'. World Bank defines participation in development as a process of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies and strategies and in the analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities. Participation is the key to sustainable development initiatives, since it will lead to:

- Building on existing potentials and capacities;
- A greater sense of ownership on the part of the stakeholders;
- Increased commitment to the objectives and outcomes;
- Longer term social sustainability;
- Increased self-help capacities; and
- Stronger and more democratic institutions and partnerships.

To have an effective participation, addressing following four questions becomes prerequisite:

i. Who is participating?

Participation in development is seen as an organised effort within institutions and organisations to increase stakeholders' access and control over resources and related decision-making that contributes to sustainable livelihoods. Project impact is not the exclusive domain of the beneficiary. A truly participatory process embraces all stakeholders including minor stakeholders, even the people, who oppose the plan or the project, in order to arrive at the best solution. The stakeholders can range from households, community based interest groups, and socio-economic groups within communities, to local governments, public and private sector institutions, operating at national, regional and/or local levels to

provide basic infrastructure, national policy makers, international and national donor institutions, as well as Civil Society Organisations.

Participation is furthermore viewed as an interactive process involving the continuous re-adjustment of relationships between different stakeholders in a society in order to increase their control and influence over development initiatives that affect their lives.

ii. How is participation occurring?

This refers to the qualitative dimensions of participation, which involves answering the questions- what is the motivation behind the participation? what are the difficulties in the process and how are they being overcome? and is it decreasing dependence and encouraging responsibility?

There are various levels or degrees of participation ranging from simple consultation to joint decision-making to self-management by stakeholders themselves. The specific degree of participation of different stakeholders is determined through a negotiation process.

iii. Participation occurring – at what stages?

The true spirit of participation can be achieved only when the people are involved right from the beginning. In all the successful experiments, people were involved in all the four stages of participation:

- Participation in identifying the needs;
- Participation in programme design like programme objectives, benefits and costs, location, etc.;
- Participation in implementation; and
- Participation in sharing.

iv. How is participation facilitated?

Participatory approaches, methods, tools, activities and related changes in attitudes can facilitate a more equitable and demand driven participatory development process. In order to institutionalise participation and ensure that collective action does continue, it is essential that the capacities of the stakeholders, in particular local institutional arrangements be strengthened. In this respect an appropriate capacity building strategy is required to integrate relevant horizontal and vertical linkages. Role of governments and donor agencies is of crucial importance in this regard.

Participation should also be thought of as a political act it enables voices to be heard and in doing so, changes power relationships. It promotes accountability and transparency. Though, it costs more in terms of time and money, in longer term it increases impact. Plans that reflect local knowledge and priorities are more likely to be sustainable because they are relevant and acceptable to beneficiaries. On a more philosophical note, participation is a human right- it holds that individuals, local communities and local governments have the fundamental right to be involved in the planning process that affects their future.

14.3 PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Participation is a means to achieve the objective of formulation of realistic plans, which addresses the needs of the people of the area. In case of its efficacy, it has the potential to speed up the implementation and consequently in delivering goods and services economically. Towards this end, in the past one and half decades a lot of methods and techniques have been developed and applied world over, which have proved to be effective. Many methods being used worldwide have in-built mechanism of participation of stakeholders. Quite often more than one method is applied while planning and implementing. While some are used at the preparatory stage, others are applied in consequent stages. The challenge is to involve the right mix of stakeholders at the right time, using the most appropriate method. Stakeholders groups that should be consulted include: donors, national and local governments, line agencies and research/extension agencies; NGOs, grass-root organisations and private sector organisations; independent thinkers/activists; staff from other ongoing projects; and, most importantly, potential or actual beneficiaries. A truly participatory approach embraces all stakeholders - even the opposition - in order to arrive at the best solution. Minor stakeholders should not be left out of the process as they can seriously affect the implementation of a project, with unintended or unforeseen effects on impact. Support of legitimate organisation/representation ensures greater participation, without which the results of the participatory process can be questioned. Some widely used methods are mentioned below:

(1) Workshop-Based Methods

Quite often workshops are held where stakeholders are engaged in collaborative decision-making. At times 'action-planning workshops', are conducted to bring stakeholders together to design development projects. The purpose behind such endeavours is to begin and sustain stakeholders' collaboration and foster a 'learning by doing' atmosphere, which in longer term is supposed to enable communities and groups to plan for themselves on their own. In such workshops, a trained facilitator, who has diverse knowledge and expertise, guides stakeholders through a series of activities to build consensus. Some common types of workshops are: -

(a) *Appreciation-Influence Control (AIC)*

A workshop-based technique encourages the stakeholders to consider the social, political and cultural factors along with technical and economic aspects that influence a given project or policy. AIC helps the participants in identifying a common purpose and pursuing that purpose collaboratively. It also encourages the stakeholders to realise the relevance of the purpose and creates an enabling forum. Activities in these workshops focus on building appreciation through listening, influence through dialogue and control through action.

(b) *Objectives-Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP)*

This methodology originated in Germany and the actual term is 'Zielorientierte Projektplanung', which translated in English is known as 'Objectives – Oriented Project Planning'. It is a project planning and management method that encourages participatory planning and analysis throughout the project cycle with a series of stakeholder workshops. In this technique stakeholders come together in a series of workshops to set priorities and plan for implementation and monitoring. The main output of ZOPP workshops is a project-planning matrix built by stakeholders, on

the basis of consensus, to provide in-depth analysis of project objectives, outputs, and activities. The matrix is central to ZOPP based project work because the process of building it relies on repeated, collaborative stakeholder input. While preparing the matrix attention is paid to five important issues:

- (i) *Participation Analysis* – taking stock of the range of stakeholder identities, interests, biases, expectations, and concerns;
- (ii) *Problems* – often the problems are identified, grouped, and prioritised and their causes and effects are brought to light, by making the “problem-tree”, which are to be addressed by the project;
- (iii) *Objectives* – in a corresponding objectives tree, the desired solutions are articulated, clustered and prioritised;
- (iv) *Alternatives* – a project strategy is created by understanding the range of means for meeting objectives; and
- (v) *Assumptions* – conditions, necessary for successful transformation of problems into secured objectives, are systematically examined and arranged in the Matrix.

The matrix, thus, answers the following questions:

- why does the project aim for this overall goal?
- what is the purpose of the project?
- how will the project achieve the objectives?
- what external factors are important?
- how the necessary data will be obtained? and
- what will be the project cost? etc.

(c) Team UP

Team Up builds on ZOPP, but emphasises team building. In this approach, a computer software package is used to guide stakeholders through team-oriented research, project design, planning, implementation and evaluation. It enables teams to undertake participatory, objectives-oriented planning and action, while fostering a “learning by doing” atmosphere.

Advantages of Workshop Based Methods

All the three approaches help producing a visual matrix of project plan for which stakeholders establish rules. The processes encourage “social learning” and promote ownership, which help in implementation more effectively as stakeholders develop working relationship during project planning.

Safeguards

Workshops are intended to involve all stakeholders in the plan. Care needs to be taken that all of them feel comfortable and participate effectively. This is also necessary, as some less experienced members may not voice their concerns, which might reflect on the plan itself. Measures should be taken that concerns of all the people are addressed in the project or plan. To ensure maximum participation, the location of the workshop should be accessible to all local stakeholders. Most importantly, the completed matrices should not be considered unchangeable.

(2) Community Based Methods

In this approach, government centres and boardrooms undertake participatory work with local communities. On the other hand, Task Managers and project staff works with trained facilitators to draw on local knowledge. Thereafter begins the collaborative decision-making. In such settings, local people are the experts, whereas outsiders are facilitators of the techniques and are there to learn. These techniques aim at energising people, tapping local knowledge and leading to clear priorities or action plans. Two such techniques are:

(a) *Participatory Rural Appraisal*

Most widely used approach, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), has captured the imagination of all development planners. Many believe that PRA has evolved out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). Good PRA activities empower. They are different each time. They improvise and innovate. However, there are examples, where a lot of activities labelled as PRA are routinised and wooden, and at worst exploit and disillusion poor people who participated. PRA is a label given to a growing family of participatory approaches and methods that emphasise local knowledge and enable local people to do their own appraisal, analysis, and planning. There are three terms, which we should be acquainted with:

- (i) *RRA* – RRA originally stood for Rapid Rural Appraisal, but its approach and methods are also used in urban and other contexts;
- (ii) *PRA* – PRA originally stood for Participatory Rural Appraisal, but its applications are in many contexts besides rural and good practice is far more than just appraisal; and
- (iii) *PLA* – PLA stands for Participatory Learning and Action. As a term, it is often used interchangeably with PRA.

RRA is about finding out. It is data collecting, with the analysis done mainly by experts. There are some methods, which are typically RRA methods like observation, semi-structured interviews, transects, etc., whereas participatory mapping, diagramming, using the ground in various ways, making comparisons etc., often in small groups are typically PRA/PLA methods. However, the methods can be used in all the three with certain precautions.

Good PRA is about empowering, by enabling others to do their own appraisal, analysis, planning and action, to own the outcome and to share the knowledge. The target group could be local rural or urban people, women, men or old people, or members of an organisation or group.

For RRA, the University of Khon Kaen in Thailand was a major source of innovation and inspiration in the 1980s. The term PRA was used early on in Kenya and India around 1988 and 1989. Some of the early PRA in Kenya was linked with the production of Village Resource Management plans and some with Rapid Catchments Analysis. In India and Nepal from 1989 onwards, there was an accelerated development and spread of PRA with many innovations and applications. Parallel development took place in other countries as well, with lateral sharing and an explosion of creativity and diversity. Three common elements found, all over world, in a PRA approach is:

- (i) *Self-Aware Responsibility* – individual responsibility and judgement exercised by facilitators, with self-critical awareness, embracing error;

- (ii) *Equity and empowerment* – a commitment to equity, empowering those who are marginalised, excluded, and deprived, often specially women; and
- (iii) *Diversity* – recognition and celebration of diversity.

As PRA is about innovation, so other features too can be added to the list. Inventiveness and improvisation, which are part of PRA, are helping people in different parts of the world, in developing their own varieties of approach and method. In the past decade, PRA has expanded and spread:

- From appraisal and analysis to planning, action and monitoring and evaluation; and
 - from rural to urban;
- from field applications to applications in organisations;
 - from a few sectors and domains to many;
 - from NGOs to Government Departments and Universities;
 - from a few countries to many; and
 - from methods to professional and institutional change;
- from behaviour and attitudes to personal change;
 - from action to policy influence; and
 - from practice to theory.
- PRA entails shifts of emphasis from:
 - dominating to empowering;
 - closed to open;
 - individual to group;
 - verbal to visual; and
 - measuring to comparing, ranking and scoring.

(b) SARAR (Self-esteem, Associative Strengths, Resourcefulness, Action Planning, and Responsibility)

This participatory approach is geared specifically to the training of local trainers/facilitators. It builds on local knowledge and strengthens local capacity to assess, prioritise, plan, create, organise, and evaluate. It promotes five attributes – self-esteem, associative strengths, resourcefulness, action planning, and responsibility. SARAR's purpose is to:

- (i) Provide a multisectoral, multilevel approach to team building through training;
- (ii) Encourage participants to learn from local experience rather than from external experts; and
- (iii) Empower people at the community and agency levels to initiate action.

Advantages of Community Based Methods

A commendable aspect of these methods is that they enable participation regardless of literacy level. The approach is based on interactive and often visual tools. As the emphasis in the process is on drawing everyday experiences, it

demystifies research and planning processes and instils a sense of empowerment in the participants and makes them feel that their contributions are valued.

Safeguards

Mere labelling an activity as PRA or SARAR cannot result in desired outcomes. Similarly, PRA or training alone does not provide local communities with decision-making authority or input into project management. These features must be built into the project. These techniques have the potential to generate positive energy, but they can equally quickly subside if it is not channelled into actual tasks and programmes. There is need to involve trained facilitator to guide and synthesise these exercises.

(3) Methods for Stakeholder Consultation

There are the techniques that focus on listening and consultation among a range of stakeholders' groups. Mainly, two techniques are popular and have proved effective. These are:

(a) Beneficiary Assessment (BA)

BA is a systematic investigation of the perceptions of beneficiaries and other stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are heard and incorporated into project and policy formulation. The approach focuses on:

- (i) Undertaking systematic listening to give voice to poor and other hard-to-reach beneficiaries, thereby highlighting constraints to beneficiary participation, and
- (ii) Obtaining feedback on development interventions. BA has been and is being used in many countries in both projects and participatory poverty assessment.

(b) Systematic Client Consultation (SCC)

SCC refers to a group of methods that are used to improve communication among direct and indirect beneficiaries, stakeholders of the projects being planned, government agencies, service providers and donors to make projects and policies more demand driven. SCC aims at:

- (i) Undertaking systematic listening to clients' attitudes and preferences;
- (ii) Devising a process for continuous communication; and
- (iii) Acting on the findings by incorporating client feedback into project design and procedures.

So, SCC is a set of related techniques intended to obtain client feedback and to make development interventions more responsive.

Advantages of Stakeholders Consultation

Both BA and SCC thrust upon lengthier, repeated, and more meaningful interactions amongst stakeholders through systematic listening and consultation. They strengthen bottom up planning approach, as they are field based, requiring project or programme managers or their representatives to reach communities and become more aware of the realities of the field.

Safeguards

Mere consultation with the stakeholders does not lead to increase capacity or facilitation of client participation in decision-making or action. The effectiveness of these techniques rests with the ability of the managers and their representatives to translate clients needs and demands into operationally meaningful terms and activities.

(4) Methods for Social Analysis

Social Analysis assumes importance in planning in the light of the fact that social factors and social impacts, including gender issues, need to be central part of all development planning and action. The methods for Social Analysis incorporate participation and social analysis into the project design process. These methods are also applied in a country's economic and sector work to establish a broad framework for participation and identify priority areas for social analysis. Such methods evolved in response to the need to pay systematic attention to certain issues often overlooked by development planners. Two widely used methods are:

(a) Social Assessment (SA)

SA attempts at systematic investigation of the social processes and factors that affect development impacts and results. The objectives of SA are to:

- (i) Identify key stakeholders and establish the appropriate framework for their participation;
- (ii) Ensure appropriateness and acceptability of the project objectives and incentives for change for the beneficiaries;
- (iii) Assess social impacts and risks; and
- (iv) Minimise or mitigate adverse impacts.

(b) Gender Analysis (GA)

GA focuses on documenting and analysing the differences in gender roles, activities, needs, and opportunities in a given context by disaggregating quantitative data by gender. It has been established through GA that women are neither a homogenous group nor gender attributes immutable, that different roles and learned behaviour of men and women based on gender attributes vary across culture, class, ethnicity, income, education and time.

Advantages of Social Analysis

Social Analysis methods initiate process for building information into plans and plans into action. Systematic analysis identifies the communities' need perception and steps up ways to communicate this back to implementing agencies. Flexibility in these methods helps design to be consistent with project or policy components and goals.

Safeguards

Care must be taken during data collection and analysis that focus is not diverted from priority issues and it does not turn out to be general data collection exercise, which may not be necessarily tied to project or policy concerns. It would be better if experienced local consultants were involved in the exercise, which in longer run would build up capacity for actionable social analysis.

SOCIAL INVENTION

Social Analysis facilitates ‘Social Learning’ that stakeholders generate and internalise during the participatory planning and/or implementation of a development activity. “Social Invention” follows the Social Learning. In this approach, the stakeholders invent the new practices and institutional arrangements they are willing to adopt. In the process, they individually and collectively develop insight and understanding of the new behaviours required to attain the objectives they set.

Advantages of this approach are that it reduces the need for the transfer of expert learning from one group of stakeholders to another. Also, quite often-local people create the most important parts of the project.

14.4 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

The organisations in the process need to have the flexibility and should be open to innovations. In fact, the World Bank has specific guidelines, which direct its staff to inculcate the same spirit of participation, within, while working in the field. Some organisational implications of the approaches are given in the following table.

Table 14.1
Some Organisational Implications of Participatory Approaches

Core Principles of Participatory Approaches	Organisational Implications
A systemic learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Value the learning process by creating time, and equipping staff with skills, to reflect on each new experience. · Develop system for efficient and effective sharing between staff members. · Allow staff members to make mistakes without punishment. · Encourage learning at different levels in the organisation through monitoring, learning experiences and changes in attitude and work practice.
Seeking diverse perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Equip staff with skills to value sees and analyse different social groups/individuals. · Accept only fieldwork/plans that have sought and incorporated diverse perspectives.
Content specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Allow enough time to refine the basic framework of any policy or procedure to each geographic area/level at which staff operate. · Ensure that staff incentives recognise heterogeneity between field sites. · Reward staff for site-specific innovations.

<p>Group inquiry process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Equip staff with skills to facilitate group discussions and encourage analysis, including conflict resolution skills. · Equip staff with skills to recognise local power relations and how these influence group-based discussions.
<p>Facilitating external agents with key responsibility resting with local people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Equip staff with awareness and skills to take a listening and encouraging role, rather than an implementing role.
<p>Leading to sustained learning and action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensure that staff emphasises the motivation of local people and others involved acting independently of external support agency. · Field staff to focus on building local planning capacity that can operate independently of external support.

14.5 CAPACITY BUILDING

Building the “participatory” capacity of stakeholders as well as officials involved in the planning exercise can significantly reduce costs. Training should be cascaded and include local staff and institutions. All the agencies involved in the process also need to commit to this aspect through their own capacity building efforts. There are various modes available to affect this, like advocacy, consultation, leverage, etc. Orientation programmes, training courses and periodic consultation should be offered at all levels. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can play an important role in this endeavour. They can be effective, and can be gauged from the example of Institute for Development Studies, which has promoted PRA networks consisting of local based practitioners in forty countries. World Alliance for Citizens Participation is a global movement of 100 CSOs endeavouring to catalyse more participatory relationships between civil society, government actors and donors.

Capacity building of the poor to involve them in planning requires special efforts. The poor, usually, are viewed as beneficiaries- recipients of services, resources and development interventions. But studies have proved that the more poor people are involved in the planning and decision-making process, the more likely they are to own a development intervention, contribute to it and sustain it. To reach the stage where their voices are heard, external agencies may have to provide community organising, training and one-way flows of resources in the initial phases. But once, when as a result of earlier activities, they become owners and managers of their assets and activities, they can be roped in the participatory processes.

14.6 PARTICIPATORY DISTRICT PLANNING

The district is universally accepted as a planning unit in almost all developing countries because of its intermediate position between the nation, region and local units of administration. In a multi level planning system, it is appropriately placed to focus on participatory planning approach. “The decentralised planning framework is explicitly meant to facilitate deregulation of authority, deconcentration, devolution of powers, privatisation, people’s participation, decentralised and deconcentrated growth model. The system of operation is a

two-way - top down and bottom-up - continuous and cyclic operation with constant inputs at various levels of interactions (Routray, 1991).

Various techniques are employed in the formulation of district development plan. The selection and application of techniques are directly dependent on the nature of planning problem, quality and quantity of data available, the people involved in planning exercise and the environment. Routray recommends the following techniques as a kit for district planners:

1. Field survey techniques and data collection methods;
2. Participatory rapid rural appraisal;
3. Techniques for problem and potential analyses;
4. Population projection techniques;
5. Techniques for sectoral analyses;
6. Spatial analytical techniques covering point, area and network problems;
7. Mapping principles and techniques;
8. Computer aided data processing and GIS techniques; and
9. Project planning techniques (identification, rationalisation and proposal development).

Apparently, there are different approaches to identify and rationalise projects for the people at local level. The objective is that the projects should provide solution to the identified problems, take advantage of the local potential and capacities, and existing policy framework. In almost all of the South Asian countries, District Planning is currently underway, though they vary in forms and contents. Whereas in India, it has a constitutional status, it is an executive body in Bangladesh.

Even Bhutan, which is a very small country, has an effective system. We take the example of Bhutan to see how the process of participation has been started there and future scope of increased application of participatory approaches. Bhutan has made rapid strides in decentralising process. Planned development started in Bhutan only in 1961. In 1974, the King started the process of decentralisation. Politically, the process was aimed at encouraging people to participate in the planning and implementation of development activities in their areas.

The district level fora - District Development Committee (DYT) - were set up in each district to facilitate dialogues between the elected representatives of the people and district civil servants. Membership of the DYT includes the dzongda (civil administration of a district), heads of various sectors in the district administration, chimis (representative of the people in the National Assembly of the district), gups and manguaps (literally father of the village community). The size of DYT ranges from 20 to 60 depending on the size of the district. The dzongda is the chairman of the DYT.

Primary function of the DYT is coordination of development activities in the district. Secondly, elected members of the DYT have used the forum to articulate the local needs and interests for public services and goods based on the specific socio-economic realities of the locality and community's choice.

By 1981, the King, involved people successfully in the decision-making process, particularly in the formulation of development plans. Since 1981, when the Vth

Five Year Plan of Bhutan was launched, individual plans were drawn up for every district, which were forwarded to central agencies in Thimpu. With an active role in development planning, the DYT's have collectively become a source of grassroots legitimating social and economic change.

Further decentralisation in planning was facilitated in 1991, when the King instituted Dzongkha Development Committee (GYT) in every gewog (block). This took the decision-making process to the village level and ensured greater people's participation. Today GYT's generate a sense of control, ownership and responsibility for the planning and maintenance of collective local resources, as one of the functions of GYT's is to identify and prioritise areas of development activities. They are also expected to ensure participation of gewog people in planning, decision-making process and implementation of planned programmes and review achievement of plans. Participation was quite evident during the formulation of VIIth Plan in early 1991. The King, the heads of the agencies and other planning officials attended public meetings held in every district, in which DYT and GYT members were also present. In these large meetings, the people voiced their views on what should be planned in their districts. This consultative process ensured the relevance of the plan to people's needs. Heeded by the Government, these suggestions became the basis of a district plan. After the draft district plans were prepared, public meetings were held once again in every district, presided by the King. In these meetings, the draft plans were discussed and endorsed. Each district plan was eventually finalised in these meetings, which were later integrated in the national plan.

Thus, through the institutional innovations like GYT's and DYT's, planning is done on wide consensus. These participatory fora also create an awareness of the macro resource constraints of the country and new policy orientations. Most importantly, these institutions enable the people's own needs and expectations to influence the course of social and economic change and thus to do things, to a significant degree, according to their choice.

Many participatory approaches have been applied in Bhutan since then, including PRA and which have been quite successful too.

14.7 ACTIVITY

1. Prepare a list of organisational implications of participatory approaches in your area.
2. Prepare a plan, for capacity building of the poor to involve them in planning.
3. Suggest the best methods to eliminate:
 - Disparity in distributional pattern and allocation of resources;
 - Inequality in access to various facilities and services;
 - Possessive use of public facilities; and
 - Rampant corruption associated with operation of nexus at various levels.

14.8 CONCLUSION

When we analyse the existing institutions, we find that the past efforts have suffered from inadequacy of grass roots level institutions and the absence of intermediate institutions needed to support them. There is another aspect of development planning and that is the institutional mechanism to support

participatory approaches. As a matter of fact, sufficient efforts have not been made at the policy level for developing adequate institutional support. For example, District Planning Committees in India (74th Amendment Act) were not formed till the year 2001, despite constitutional status bestowed upon them almost nine years back (Annual Report 2001-2002, Ministry of Rural Development, GoI). Even where these Committees have been formed, they are virtually defunct, except in a few states. It is of importance to mention that legitimacy of any organisation involved in the development planning process ensures greater and effective participation.

Admittedly, participatory approaches are relatively new and have mostly evolved in 1990s, and any development concept faces very different constraints and opportunities when it is new, unproven and unaccepted, compared with when it is long established and widely accepted. Development planning is process oriented, as are the participatory approaches. So to be supportive of these approaches, the emphasis should be on establishing viable community based institutions with full legal, administrative and technical support of, but no undue intervention by the state machinery. These institutions should be empowered to enable planning by the people whom they belong to. In South Asian region attempts have been made to build such institutions, but effective power is yet to be devolved upon them to make them vibrant people's institutions.

14.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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