



UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Several attempts have been made in India for regeneration and afforestation by forming cooperatives, women groups, community organisations of village level by government and non-government agencies. There are several success stories.

Participatory Style of Development

The last four decades of the previous century has been a period of unprecedented change in economic, social and political life of the developing world. Most of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, geographically located south of the globe got political freedom from their surveillance. With this started the development strategies based on modernisation, often considered synonymous of westernisation. Economic growth was the essential and most important tool. Industrialisation and transfer of technology were corollaries of the same phenomenon. Development was perceived as a functionally dependent variable on economic growth interpreted in terms of increased Gross National Product, average life expectancy, unit of consumed energy, availability of services etc. In spite of spectacular achievement in these areas, the social scientists during the 1970s could show that this sort of development has not only betrayed the hopes

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of the majority of the people living in this portion of the world, rather it has marginalised them and worsened their living condition. It has broken the traditional societies without providing them any meaningful and alternative solution. It is pro-rich and created differential benefit, mostly utilised by local elites. The disillusionment with development posed the question among the academicians and personnels engaged in governments, international aid agencies, say FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNIFEM, WHO, OXFAM, Christian Aid, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), War on Want, etc. It was argued that the human factor was ignored in the development programmes. The rural people, hitherto considered to be an obstacle for development, must become the focal point of any development policy, planning, programmes and implementation. With this started the era of participatory style of development, though as a concept it has been advocated long back by Tagore and Gandhi (Midgley, 1986, p. 18) and as a practice the root lies in early 1950 in the form of community work.

Defining Participation

Participation has many dimensions: Process of political democracy, trade unions and co-operative activities as organisations, communities contact with environment. Different actors interpret it differently. The following four definitions will give a wide range of the interpretation of participation basically in developmental works.

- Participation is considered as a voluntary contribution by the people in one or another of the public programmes supposed to contribute to national development, but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the programme or criticising its contents (Economic Commission for Latin America, 1973).
- With regard to rural development participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in benefits of development programme and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977).
- Participation is concerned with organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979).
- Community participation (is) an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of development project with a

view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Paul, 1987).

The above statements are neither mutually exclusive nor it suggests that participation promoted by development agents must lie either in one definition or the other (Oakley, P., 1991, p. 7). However, collectively, they capture the essence of debates on participation. Statement (i) sees participation as an input or contribution to enhance the efficiency of delivery mechanism of a project and in return the beneficiary may get economic benefits. Statement (ii) has been widely used by International Aid Agencies and governments and talks about the activities around a development project namely, decision making, implementation, benefit sharing and evaluation as the key elements in the process of participation. NGOs approach to participation lies around definition (iii), definition (iv) has emerged as a result of a review of participation in World Bank supported projects. It is an umbrella type definition, which covers all the activities under the purview of participation.

Participation may also be described as both a means to an end, and an end in itself (Oakley and Marsden, D., 1984). It may be argued that participation as a means is static, passive and ultimately about control by management. In this form, participation is used to harness existing physical, economic and social resources of rural people in order to achieve the pre-determined goals and objectives of a programme. Often government agencies see the participation as the means to improve the delivery system in a project.

Participation as an end is a process which unfolds over time. Here, the purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of rural people to involve themselves in the developmental programmes. Such a process may not have predetermined objective, rather at the end of the project the community participation would be a permanent feature of the developmental programme. It aims at empowering the people. Participation as an end is an active and dynamic process which enables rural people to play an increasing role in development activities.

Cohen and Uphoff (1977), Midgeley, et al. (1986) and Paul (1987) have brought clarity to the interpretation of participation. Cohen and Uphoff have related participation to development projects and suggested key stages in the process of participation i.e., planning, implementation, benefits sharing and evaluation. This analysis is used in projects for rural developments in which all the four stages of participation are promoted.

Participation in Social Forestry Programme

Participation in forestry-development is a new phenomenon. It started with social forestry projects in India and aims at activating the involvement of people to grow trees to meet their requirement of fodder, fuel and small timber on their own land or on community land, thus reducing the pressure on natural forests. In addition to afforestation programme, it has extension service to educate people about the forestry development. Social forestry differs from the traditional forestry in the sense that it emphasises more on the importance of people's participation. While the main thrust of traditional forestry has been perceived by people as management by control.

Manhoney (1987, p. 5) has compared the Social Forestry and Traditional Forestry as follows:

Social Forestry	Traditional Forestry
Stimulating, offering guidance and suggestions, imparting techniques and carrying out training for the general public.	Supervising a work force
Private ownership of trees.	Government ownership of forests.
Multi-purpose production of forest, fodder, shade, fuelwood and poles.	Timber production.
A varied and unpredictable work programme.	A planned and structured work programme.
Much contact with the public.	Limited contact with the public.
Bringing trees to the public.	Keeping people out of the forests.

As could be seen from this, in traditional forestry manager's job is to supervise a work-force to carry out planned and structured programme with limited people's contact and most of the time keeping them away as forests are state owned property. On the other hand, the social forestry have social contents. It stimulates people, offer them guidance hand suggestions and imparts techniques for growing green trees on their own land or community land, manage the plantation till harvesting and make marketing arrangements after meeting their requirement of fodder, fuel, small timber and other bio-mass needs.

In Karnataka, to promote people's participation in social-forestry project the following strategies were adopted.

- To employ motivators whose task was to work with people in developing social forestry activity.
- Free distribution of seedlings as incentive to encourage local participation for adoption of tree growing on the private land.
- The use of demonstration plots as the basic means to show and to teach the practices of forestry.
- Sharing of produce from the plantations (woodlots) raised on Government revenue land, community land, etc.
- Creating awareness about social forestry programmes through publicity propaganda.

There has been critical analysis of these approaches and processes. In many cases the practice of planning and management of community forestry have hardly fulfilled the conditions of preplanting stage (Sen and Das, 1987, p. 4-5). Selection of site and choice of species are done by the local forest officials. The common lands are offered by village panchayat often with no or half information to its members for planting activities by forest department. After three or four years of establishing the plantation, it is handed over back to the panchayat. Till then, villagers' participation remains as wage earners by working for the plantation or a passive spectator. He has hardly any role in decision making.

Sen and Das (1987) suggest that the biggest problem is to create a "participative environment". U. Bannerjee, I.F.S. (1989, p. 23) attributes this to the 15 decades of conventional forest management and practices where managers get satisfied with achievement of physical targets of planting programmes. For example, if a target of raising 100 ha. of farm forestry plantation was set and achieved by a forester, he considers to have achieved 100% success without bothering about who was benefitted or where the other objectives of the programme were achieved.

Formation of Groups for Promoting Participation in Forestry

Cernea (1990, p. 3-8) argues that people's behaviour towards trees in forests is usually forgotten in designing the afforestation programme. Human kind, has continued the practice of gathering fuelwood from the naturally grown forests though it has moved out of the gathering and hunting period of civilization long

ago in almost all aspects of life. In rural areas of Asia and Africa people cut the natural forests to meet their fuelwood requirement without planting them and depend on regeneration of trees. He argues that social innovations have to be fostered to involve large groups of people in the conservation and better management of existing forests and to stimulate the people for the systematic planting of trees for fuel and fodder. It means that the innovations have to be adopted by groups in a collective way. The social pre-requisite for this is the organised user groups are informed about the purpose of systematic management and plantation of trees and consciously perceive that it is in their best interests to act purposively in a co-ordinated manner. As a result the group would develop leadership structures and internal norms and procedures capable to organize and manage its members and to overcome conflicts and deviant behaviour. The common position of many people as direct users of certain resources is a social condition that often turns itself spontaneously, and can certainly be turned deliberately, into a powerful motivating and organizing force for producing the needed resource.

Cernea advocates that the basic sociological principle is to create a clear link between a well defined small group and a well defined tract of forest land that is to be protected or planted. In addition, the group members must clearly see a correlation between their contribution and the returns they get. He also points that authority and benefits must be restricted to the members of the group and not left open to the free riders.

Several attempts have been made in India for regeneration and afforestation of degraded forest tracts by forming co-operatives, women group, community organisation at village level by government and non-government agencies. Few attempts are described below.

Forest Co-operative and Association (Kolar Study)

In India the tree growers societies are being formed on the pattern used by the well known Anand Dairy Co-operatives. The co-operatives set up by Anand Dairy for Milk production has been quite successful in forming groups of landless and poor people for the production of milk.

The Anand success has led to the formation of 'National Tree Grower' Co-operative Federation Limited (NTGCF) in India. The NTGCF is an apex organization registered under the multi-state Co-operative Societies Act, 1984. The NTGCF is implementing the pilot project on the Tree Growers Co-operative in 5 states namely, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The pilot project in Karnataka was initiated in January 1989, in Kolar District. The main objective of the Tree Growers' Co-operative project is the regeneration of degraded common lands through the organization of village level Tree Growers' Co-operative Societies.

The pilot project in Kolar district started with Muddenhalli area. There are 144 families. All were encouraged and organised by project manager to form a co-operative society to grow trees on adjacent barren land. The extent of land is 20 hectare and it is degraded revenue land. The project manager Narayanswamy says that they had to struggle a lot to get the allotment of the land from the Government. Once the land was allotted to tree grower society, he contacted the local forest officers for providing seedlings and technical assistance. The saplings were planted. The area is covered with trees and grass production has increased. Farmers are adopting stall feeding for their cattle. With this initial success the number of societies are increasing in Kolar district. At present there are 23 registered TGCS with a total of 2507 farmers as its members. These members actively participate in all the management aspects of their TGCS and work towards maintaining a self-sustainable co-operative structure.

Afforestation by Women's Group (Bankura Rising Spirit with Growing Trees)

Cernea suggests that reasonably sized women's groups that induce mutual help and co-operation can be an effective social organization for planting trees which they can use later on as fire wood. In many developing countries women are direct users and gatherers of fuel wood, there is every reason to believe that they can be induced to organize in a group. The Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), a Delhi based research organization has acted as a catalyst to organise the women of Jhilimilli, in Bankura district of West Bengal. Jhilimilli is a small village in Bankura district. It is surrounded by rolling hills, degraded land and water resources. In earlier days, the area had thick mixed forest of sal, neem, kendu. The impoverishment of Santhal tribe increased with the disappearance of forests which was their natural habitat and the life supporting system. There was few opportunities for wage labour in this part of the district. Therefore, people of the region had to depend on migration to private farms in neighbouring Hoogly (200 kms) and Burdwan (150 kms), Government's organizing employment programmes together generate about 3 weeks' work for rural workers per year.

In this background CWDS representing registered the women of Bankura as members of Gramin Mahila Sramik Unayan Samiti (GMSUS) and formed one organization for each village. The villagers denoted barren private land for raising

plantation. The local Forest Ranger provided the saplings of arjan and asan. The men cleared the land, women planted saplings. With the help and guidance from CWDS, the samitis were able to get financial assistance from Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of West Bengal to meet the cost of raising and maintaining plantation. To protect plantation, women formed groups among themselves with a leader to keep watch and ward. As the plants grew, spirit grew. Since the plants were raised with their involvement, the villagers felt that the future of these plants depended on them and on the decisions they make together (Nalini Singh, 1988).

Arjan and asan are the host plants of the tassar silk worm. Rearing of tassar cocoons in these forest area is a traditional occupation. Therefore, 24 months rearing of silk work started. Women organised a job sharing roster for 3 crops reared from July to January. Afterwards the samitis diversified to other income generating activities like making of sal leaf plates, grass ropes, trading in mahua seeds and so on. Their migration has stopped. The women can survive because they have created employment for themselves by expanding the production base of the local economy, by afforesting the barren land.

Regenerating Forests through Community Protection (Arabari Experiment)

West Bengal forest department's attempt has clearly shown that when communities are empowered and successfully organized to protect degraded forest, regeneration can take place rapidly. The success of participatory forest management from Arabari is highly reported. Cernea (1990, p. 58) calls it as "Arabari Experiment". Cernea (1990, p. 58) calls it as "Arabari Experiment". The involvement of communities in West Bengal is the result of an experiment conducted in Arabari forest track of Midnapore district by three researchers led by A.K. Banerjee which started in 1972. The research team got the support from the Forest Department and designed an action-research experiment.

Vast area of Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests of the southern lateritic tracts of West Bengal have been virtually unproductive because of commercial exploitation, unregulated fuel wood collection by poverty stricken people and grazing by cattle. Till the Arabari experiment started in 1972, the stumps left in the area had thrown up shoots every year which local people used to cut down and sell in the nearby market for subsistence. Attempts to protect forest by regulatory measures created tension between the local people and the foresters. Therefore, the experiment focussed on generating sustained productive employment for the people by:

1. Providing employment to the people by engaging them in planting of open patches.
2. Entrusting protection responsibility to villagers by forming Forest Protection Committees.
3. Allowing them to share the usufructs, grass, twigs etc.
4. Making an arrangement for sharing of the final harvest.

Once, the biomass need and employment of the people were taken care of, they started protecting the forest area and the tension between forest officials and villagers were eased out.

The Arabari experiment could prove beyond doubt that degraded natural sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest can be regenerated from the existing root stock (Mark Poffenberger, 1990, p.10). Out of many shoots coming, the promising two may be allowed to grow (by cutting the other shoots). Within 10 years they got the share out of the harvest. Therefore, villagers were compensated for the loss which they suffered due to closure of the forest track. In Arabari, value of timber and fuelwood rose from nothing to Rs. 12,600,000 in 1986, though the expenditure was of the order of Rs. 1,000,000 during 14 years.

This success led the foresters of West Bengal to apply in other areas. At present there are about 1,266 forest protection committees (FPCs) covering an area of 1,52,000 ha. in Western circle comprising the forests of Midanapore, Bankura and Purulia district.

NGOs Approach to Forestry-Development

Doshi Gram Swarajya Mandal's (DGSM) Effort

8.1. Over the past two decades NGOs have engaged themselves in promoting development. There is a general belief that NGOs see participation as distinctive process and develop it without the constraints of time and target. NGOs are value driven and have worked in remote areas, where Government infrastructure is not very dynamic. Their flexible role puts them in advantageous stage to involve people in participatory style of development. This conclusion is supported by Cernea's study (1988) on NGOs and particularly their role in promoting grass root development. In forestry development there are few cases in India of which the efforts made by Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal in Gopeshwar is worth mentioning.

The DGSM is a voluntary organisation founded by Sri Chandi Prasad Bhat in 1964 at Gopeswar, District Chamoli, Garhwal of Uttar Pradesh. The first work of the organisation was to stop tree felling by Industries by the agitational approach during 1973-74 which is well known as 'Chipko' movement (Anil Agrawal and Sunitha Narayan, 1990). Around 1976, DGSM held a month long tree planting camp. Though the survival rate was poor, the tree planting exercise helped DGSM workers and students to learn about it. A land slide near Pabhi village made the villagers aware about the consequences of growing ecological crisis; this led to the dialogue between the villagers and workers of DGSM. The Mandal then organised a village level institution Mahila-Mangal-Dals consisting of a woman of each house-hold in the village. This Dal takes up the work of planting trees and other related operations including distribution of grass and fodder among the villagers. The forum of the Mahila Mangal Dal provides the women of these villages an opportunity to get together, discuss their problems, seek their solutions and assert their priorities. In 1982, the DGSM received a grant from the Government to take up Garauganga watershed development project. Under the project, DGSM has funds to assist 27 villages covering an area of 100 sq. km ranging from 3500 to 7500 feet to take regeneration of degraded land by providing effective protection by construction of stone wall and afforestation. In addition to organising eco-development camps and construction of wall, steps were taken for the promotion of wood saving fuel technologies like efficient stoves and biomass plant. By 1985, 16 km of stone wall had been built up in these high mountains.

There are several other success stories. These stories do not suggest a single methodology or approach to make participation successful, rather their review shows how the participatory practices have been attempted in different situations of forest management. However, the above success stories have some common points for the participation of the people. People come forward to participate if they are given a chance to define their own goals and priorities. Their knowledge and skill is recognised. The development agent acts as facilitator and friend and the method adopted by them is flexible with problem solving approach.