Chapter – VI

Re-conceptualizing the community and participation:

The failure of the earlier rural development strategies, their inability to percolate to the poor, and the exacerbation of development differentials and in the delivery of services and sustainability, had drawn increasing attention to the problem of community participation in rural development. Thus, community participation has emerged as a distinct priority area of policy, research and practice in rural development. The crucial questions relating to community participation are who are the participants in development programs? why do they participate? and what are the factors affecting that participation?

The present study has been taken up these questions to analyze the structure and process of community participation in rural development with special reference to rural water supply, sanitation and health promotional programs. More specifically, it sought to explore the nature and extent of awareness and involvement among community. The study was confined to analysis of community participation in selected districts of Karnataka with different development indicators. One district located at the top 5 levels and the other located at the bottom 5 districts. A multi stage stratified sampling design was employed in the study. The selection of the districts, taluks and villages were based on ranking of development indicators as described in the second chapter. This micro level study was conducted in two taluks in each district namely Deodurg and Sindhanur in Raichur district, Sullia, and Puthur in Dakshina...
Kannada district. In all 141 respondents representing a cross section of population drawn from fourteen villages, besides 33 Government officials, 36 People representatives and 12 Non Government Organization officials in selected taluks were interviewed.

**Community as a construct:**

The objectification of the community in the modernity project has been a constant subject either in the sociological studies or in the field of development. Not much attention has been given to the fact that the individual citizen that constituted these initiatives, who has been part and parcel of a given community. When we say a given community it only means that the individual undergoes a process of socialization that orients ones future possibilities. It is here that the enlightened individual can ply an important role in community development process.

Among the various Government programs education, health and economic services of Govt. have been considered to ascertain the level of awareness of respondents on various programs extended to the studied villages. This was in view of the role these programs play in deciding the status of the people in their community.

The study found that the level of awareness and utilization are correlated. It was found that the awareness level, not only corresponds with the existence of a facility at the village but also its wider application in the beneficiary's life. Because of this Anganwadi and Primary schools are most known when compared to the facilities like higher education centers and Gramin Banks. The existence of a facility should be made known to all to make sure that it is properly and adequately utilized. However, as earlier discussed, the degree of utilization of a facility depends much upon factors like, awareness, accessibility and acceptance.
The study found that most of the respondents had come to know about the Government programs through the information disseminated by fellow villagers. Second place was shared by the Grama sabha. It was noted in a study\textsuperscript{22} in Andhra Pradesh that program awareness in general was low among scheduled castes. A study\textsuperscript{23} in Dharmapuri District of Tamil Nadu had also observed that scheduled castes had less awareness of Gramasabha and rural development programs. It seen from the above that regarding the conduct of Grama Sabha, the position has not changed much in the last 25 years.

The process of dissemination of information could be well accomplished by educating the villagers' interalia by, extensive utilization of Grama sabha. It was found that impact of other Media services has been very poor. Hence, various channels are to be employed in awareness creation programs. Most importantly the Grama Sabha has to be better utilized for it has advantages of establishing one to one communication and participatory approach.

The analysis of nature of involvement of community in rural development programs and in the Grama Sabha found that 56.7\% did not participate in Government programs. The level of participation has to be greatly improved. It is also found that non-participation is not due to lack of interest but due to ignorance about the government programs. Major contributing factor for the ignorance was found to be illiteracy prevailing in the area and lack of proper information. The program benefits have always been desired to be optimum. Towards this direction, most importantly, participation of community is desired. Adapting a right approach to enlighten the rural masses about the objectives of the development programs and their utility would definitely enthuse them to take part in such programs.

\textsuperscript{22} Seshadri, K Political Linkages and Rural Development, New Delhi, National 1976: 192
\textsuperscript{23} Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Structure and Intervention, the author, 1980: 92
The desired goals of people participation in Government program are to identify needs, planning process, and awareness building, community mobilization, program implementation and cost sharing.

The importance of Grama Sabha towards this, cannot be undermined. Grama Sabhas are to be held purposefully at all villages and at regular intervals with people actively taking part in the deliberations. Grama sabha are the grass root level forums where there will be scope for the villagers to express opinions regarding their needs. However, it was found that the purpose is reduced to preparing the list of beneficiaries under Government programs targeted at individuals and deciding village fairs, festivals and rituals. All should know the purpose of Grama Sabha. Present status is only 52% of the households participated in it. As the villagers can suggest various measures for their own development, more participation is desired in Grama Sabha. Active participation in discussions by the community attending the Grama Sabha is desired to fulfill its objectives, as issues are not to be decided on numerical strength of those who said yes, but discussions have to be broad based.

The perception of people about Government programs and peoples’ Government is not satisfactory. There is a need to make every villager responsive to the purpose of Grama Sabha. This forum at the village level is to be strengthened by not mere attendance but active participation of villagers.

The general perception is that the Government is saddled with lack of funds, lack of human concern, lack of qualified persons, prevalence of corruption, red tapism, lack of commitment, lack of urge to mobilize people involvement, etc. The degree of accrual benefits of Government programs to beneficiaries was found to vary from district to district. The number of households that have not
received the benefits are more in Raichur district. In DK district, Ambedkar houses, Ashraya houses, IAY, NGY, SGSY are major benefits received by the sample households. They are mostly individual beneficiaries oriented. It was found that the illiterates are more among non beneficiaries. It is pertinent to note that similar finding was reported in Satara District of Maharashtra24 and another in Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh25. A study of the implementation of IRDP in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh concluded that illiteracy was high among non beneficiaries in comparison to beneficiaries 26. In the current study it is seen that 72.41% are non-participants among illiterates, among literates they were 50.60%. In Raichur district, Bank loans and other community infrastructure and benefits like, Bhagya jyothi, housing, are perceived as benefits availed from Government. A comparison lends itself to a conclusion that the respondents of DK do not consider the community projects as benefits. People of Raichur district have found the government’s obligation being fulfilled as the benefits passed on to them. The percentage of utilization of Government benefits is found to be unequal, perhaps due to local situations and lack of publicity.

O and M occupies an important place in programs such as water supply where the system requires constant upkeep. As users, people should own more responsibility. The O and M, is perceived by many as the responsibility of the Grama Panchayat and ZP. A few know that it is the responsibility of the people. A sizeable group does not know whose responsibility it is to ensure proper O&M.

24 Hanovar et.al, An economic assessment of Poverty Eradication and Rural unemployment alleviation programmes and their prospects, Madras institute for financial management and research, 1984: 145)  
26 Shivaiah etal, Field level implementation of Rural development Projects with special reference to IRDP Hyderabad, NIRD 1984: 259)
O and M are the basic responsibility of people and not government. Government can create facilities but putting it to proper use is the community responsibility. The level of awareness is hardly encouraging as seen from the study that 95% here not aware of the O and M.

The responsibility to meet the present O and M cost is not clear to the community as was found by the study showing that people have kept themselves at a distance from their required role-play. Only 5% were found to be aware of the overall cost. This calls for proper awareness creation among the community.

Meetings held for planning the current water supply system are few. It has a direct bearing on dissemination of information and enlisting of community participation. The results of low-level participation could be seen in the programme planning and implementation. Just 35% were found to have participated in the work of preparing the detailed work plan; site location, raising contribution, technology options, problem solving and awareness building revealing that the community has not played its role adequately in the planning exercise. Not all are involved in the process. Even those participated did so at various levels and not fully indicating inadequacy in level of involvement. The planning is carried out for people; their involvement in the exercise is essential. They should feel that the works undertaken are their own works and for their own use. This comes through concerted efforts of education.

The attendance by the functionaries is also of utmost importance. From the data it is seen that few key leaders, a few people and GO representatives attended. The programs suffer when there is no coordinated effort from all those concerned with the development activity.
Meetings venue, time and date has to be publicized extensively. Intimation given 2 to 4 days in advance will fail to enlist participation. The general principle governing such meetings is that notice has to be given at least 7 days in advance. This should be adhered to written information, common announcement /appeal, personal contact, through elected representatives, and informal village representatives are the means through which circulation of information about meetings are given. This needs to be streamlined to ensure that information is reached out to every villager.

The meetings are to be held in evenings or at convenient time as the villagers who are busy in the agricultural/other occupations times are not inconvenienced. This would increase the attendance in meetings greatly.

Meeting records are to be maintained properly, for, they serve as a useful reference of what happened in the meeting and what transformed the face of the village. Many a time the whole of Grama Sabha would be unwieldy to take up any job. At the most they can authorize certain action and form sub-committees. Sub committees should be representative and chosen by the community.

NGOs have established a 'close contact' with people. People find that, there is 'no corruption' with them and they are 'service minded'. Attributes of service mindedness were found in GO where there is no NGO presence, but to a lower degree. People are in favor of NGOs. The Government departments should mould their implementation methodology. More importantly there is need to promote informal community groups as well as strengthen the NGO structure assigning them enough responsibilities after due appraisal of their performance and
capabilities. The Government attitude towards the NGOs should become more flexible.

The implementing agencies/organizations are under public and NGO sectors. Whenever good NGOs are present, they are preferred. GOs are preferred when inevitable. NGOs presence is too small to reckon with. There is a need for encouraging NGOs with professional approach. The informal SHG structure aims at economic development of community. There is federation of SHGs most often formed by bringing together SHGs. They have been following well-established and clearly defined meeting practices. Widening their objectives as informal groups interested in participating in village development programs would afford much support from the Government programs implementation. Implementation of SGSY as group activity through self-help groups can be seen as an example of collective enterprise.

The initiative for water supply systems is mostly from Government. The experience of independent India is that facilities created by Government have been left to the fate of destiny. Only a participatory system of creating infrastructure can induce an element of ownership among the selected group.

It is necessary to consult the villagers irrespective of whether the work is undertaken by the Government or by NGO. They should be allowed to make choice in so far as creating a facility affecting their life.

The participation has to be increased through publicity awareness and involvement. The community should feel that the works undertaken are their works and are for their use only.
There is no uniformity in payment of tariff. The tariff payment makes the community responsive as one who pays for a service becomes entitled to certain rights. This streamlines any infirmity in the system by making concerned accountable. Therefore appropriate steps are to be taken to educate people and step up tariff collection.

As far as the frequency of tariff payment by the households it was found that there is no fixed frequency, majority of people is ignorant and some are least bothered. Hence there is a need to fix definite frequency for and creation of proper awareness among the people about regular payment of tariff.

With regard to the mode of contribution 85% of households have not at all contributed towards water supply system. The principle reasons are poverty, and presumption that it is the responsibility of Government. These factors are to be taken into account as issues to be tackled at program formulation, implementation and O&M level. There is a need to insist for contribution from the people to the appropriate level of affordability for bringing about a feeling of belongingness.

The village environment lacks sanitation facility. As these are breeding grounds for insects and diseases, they need to be filled on priority.

The study found that about 71% of the households do not have latrine facility. Open defecation is not cause for several epidemic diseases like gastroenteritis, enteric fever as also for worm infestations. It augurs well to create facility in all households. People who have created the facility in their houses are utilizing them. However there is a decline in construction of latrines in the last 2 years, which is a matter of concern.
Among those who have constructed latrines, many have done it by self-contribution and Government help. People should be encouraged to have the facility and Government should help them towards this.

Approximately, about 78% of the latrines constructed are single pit type latrines and 22% are in 2 pits system. Single pit system seems to be quite popular in view of availability of space and comparatively low cost of construction. About 91% of households needed the latrines for protection from diseases, for good health and privacy. This attitude purse provided ample scope for further promoting the cause as it is further promoting the cause, as it is easier to deal with the situation by comparative visual demonstration of advantages.

During the study it was found that among sample respondents 69% of the households let it to the roads, 18% into the kitchen garden, and 11% into the soak pits. Those who let it on road did not have drainage facility or they were not mindful of its effect.

The solid waste is dumped by roadside 45.39%, at public land 6.38% and deposited at compost pits 9.93%. Showing that those who deposited it in compost pits are few. About 75% of households have no drainage at all, 10.64% have open drainage and 14% have soak pits. The state of drainage is not good. The existing drainage system provided by Grampanchayaths is not in satisfactory working condition. This was representative of the situation prevailing in the village atmosphere.

The health services are yet to cover rural areas to a great extent. There is need for creating awareness among the rural folk about personal health, hygiene and programs and services implemented for improving the same. Health service, unlike sanitation, demands a lower degree of community participation. It is personnel and needs education at personnel level. Immunization programs like
pulse polio are exceptions. All other areas call for more participation in community projects and better utilization of facilities.

It is well settled that the emphasis of people representative structures has been on community participation in policy formulation and development by adopting a bottom up approach. Grama Sabhas, therefore are seen as grassroots level platforms for arranging and conducting meetings, collating the opinions of community, conveying them to the authorities placed above in the hierarchy, constantly monitoring the program implementation. It is also their responsibility to ensure that the bureaucratic machinery responds to the aspirations of the policy makers. Grama Sabha should be held frequently. Grama Sabha requires involvement to the GOs/NGOs and hence it is necessary that comprehensive meeting schedules are drawn for the whole year in advance.

Impact of the Grama Sabha is found to be only on some decisions and not on all. This would then put the whole Grama Sabha concept under cloud. Questions will remain- why then there should be a Grama Sabha, which is perceived to serve as a tool in village development. The decisions are to be taken in the meetings on consensus and such decisions are to be considered carefully.

The majority opinion of PRs indicates that there is positive approach towards Grama Sabha attendance. But compared with people's version, the PRs opinion is found to suffer from inadequate earnestness. It is also worthwhile to note that many PRs consider that villages are ignorant of importance of Grama Sabha.

Attendance of women in Grama Sabha is generally not consistent. Proper awareness is to be created among the women folk for regular attendance as their active participation has wide ranging implications on decision making. People representatives have suggested that all government departments should do well to educate the people about and involve them in Government programs. Many
feel that Grama panchayats should provide information to and bring awareness in the people other suggestions include Grama Sabha should fight for the rights the meetings should not be convened at inconvenient time every one should come together there should be transparency and democratic behavior. These suggestions are worthy of consideration by the Government agencies and people as well. As PRs act as link between Government and people, it should be their endeavor to ensure that adequate pressure is built on Government machinery for due compliance.

The decisions concerning development program are taken at various levels such as Grama Sabha, local MLA/MP/Minister, Government or one or more of these. As this is democratic set up both the bureaucrats and the people representatives in their different capacities have been endowed with various powers of administration with the sole objective of ensuring development. Each one in the hierarchy has to play a vital role and discharge the powers delegated to them with utmost concern so as to fulfill the objectives of their existence. This is possible if correct decisions are taken at appropriate levels

There are problems in the involvement of community in the development programs. These relate to lack of interest among the community in the development programs, paucity of funds, non-cooperation of people, social barriers, political differences, non-cooperation of the officials.

Problems are plenty. The community, the people representatives and the Government departments should cooperate with each other and solve the problems at appropriate levels. Negotiations, compromises, consultation with others, instruction, right approach for speedy acceptances are some of the ways for solving problems concerning community involvement. Important machinery that should not be lost sight of is NGOs. They are have equally appreciated by PRs and people. They are capable of bridging the communications as well as
knowledge gaps. They are to be accepted as strategies partners in development. They should also, on their side expand this reach Government and NGOs should work in tandem.

The study tried to find out details of the type of training imparted, venue, content, duration, methodology, and perception of participants regarding the usefulness of training. It is found that:

About 28% of PRs have undergone one or more of the following Trainings: Grameena Abhivrudhi training, a one day training at TPS, training in administration, program implementation and strengthening Grampanchayaths and training in rural development at Mysore.

The contents of the training relate to the conduct of meeting, Grampanchayath administration, knowing about the problems of the people and Rural development. The duration ranged from one day to 7 days. The methodology adopted was through lecture, visual aids, field training and demonstration. Training has helped PRs to gain more knowledge, learn how to conduct meetings, identify the problems and solve them. People representatives are by and large satisfied with the training.

Suitable training will go a long way in preparing people representatives to efficiently play their role. Periodical training with an amount of insistence for participation will enable them to lead community by right path in their pursuit of ensuring benefits of several programs/schemes undertaken by the Government.

The discussions hither to can be summed up as under: it is seen that the PRA, RRA and CNAA are not pressed into practice in spite of laying such a big emphasis on rural development. The lessons of community development programmes have not led to attitudinal changes. The rural community still is
unable to make preferences, owing to lack of awareness. The Government machinery and PRs have great task of ensuring flow of development unto the target mass. The development perception is undergoing changes and PRs are recognizing the role of NGOs in total change. NGOs have been able to reach out to people but their spread is too restricted. With policy support, collaborative approach and strategic alliance from Government they could fill the gap that exists in the development atmosphere. The area to be addressed is involvement of community in all development activities concerned with them, which ensure full participation, and paves way for a bottom up approach. Decision making at Grama Sabha that is well attended by all functionaries and people would make it transparent. Community, by such participatory approaches, would change into self reliant, vibrant informal organization, build its capacity and emerge as responsible set up for self help and growth towards autonomous individuals in the community.

As we have seen above community participation means a dialogue process about the needs in particular localized context. It over comes the historical burden of the Whiteman to civilize the natives.