CHAPTER EIGHT

USE OF PARTICIPATORY LEARNING AND MANAGEMENT (PLM) IN WB/ICDS: AN OBSERVATION
8.1. Introduction

This chapter is based on the direct observation carried out by the researcher in the field wherever possible without disturbing the routine. Photographs have also been taken.

People’s participation and participatory techniques have been increasingly emphasized in development projects. After decades of development planning and several Five-Year Plans, the government also started recognizing the significance of participatory techniques. The Eighth Five Year Plan emphasise that, “people’s initiatives and participation should be made a key element in the process of development instead of people being passive observers”.

Many development agencies, donor agencies and the non-governmental organizations quickly recognized the ‘might’ of participatory methods in their development projects. The core elements of participatory method are process orientation, bottom-up approach, and participatory tools and techniques. The gains of participatory techniques are: (i) local knowledge is respected and taken into account; (ii) local resources and energy are used; (iii) participation is enlisted; (iv) planning is done in a participatory manner and actions taken are more sustainable; (v) costs
are reduced as need based activities are carried out; (vi) centralization of power is reduced; (vii) weakness and strengths are perceived by the participants directly; (viii) data are collected, tabulated and analysed on the spot by the people; and (ix) problems are analysed and suitable solutions are worked out at the planning stage itself.

Participatory Approach has been introduced in WB - ICDS project recently as a step towards this. The block level supervisors working all over Tamil Nadu were imparted training in PLM methods. The project administration has instructed to conduct PLM techniques in their working situations. One of the objectives of the present study is to observe and analyse the use of PLM methods in WB- ICDS.

The fore-going analysis reveals the relevance, significance and advantage of participatory techniques in development projects. Of the nine PLM techniques in which the block level Supervisors were trained, only on the five techniques namely, social mapping, Venn diagram, Seasonal Calendar, preference ranking and Decision making matrix, their ability to practice the PLM technique was observed and presented in this chapter. In this chapter, the data and information collected on the field application of PLM techniques in the project are analysed. Five PLM methods imparted in the training were selected for observation in this study. Five cases are presented. One case for each exercise viz., social mapping, venn diagram, seasonal calendar, preference ranking and decision making matrix.
In presenting the cases, a brief account on each exercise is given first followed by presentation of cases and finally, inferences are drawn from cases. The cases are based on the direct observation in the field and interaction and interviewing by the researcher with the block level supervisors and village level workers of WB-ICDS and the villagers who participated in the participatory exercises.

8.2. **Case 1: Social Mapping Exercise**

Prior to conducting the exercise, the block level supervisors and village level field workers had an informal meeting with a group of villagers in Koppampatty village of Thuraiyur block, Trichy district. The objective of the meeting was to understand the general situation of the village and prepare for fieldwork. The objective of the Social mapping Technique was to gather background data about the village such as socio, economic and spatial data and the data vital for WB/CDS.

The researcher along with the staff had formed a team for conducting PLM exercise.

The team is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>R.Lakhsmi</td>
<td>CNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>M. Vijayalakhsmi</td>
<td>CNS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content writer</td>
<td>S. Saraswathi</td>
<td>CWO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process observer</td>
<td>M. Kondarmnal</td>
<td>CNW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate Keeper</td>
<td>S. Sathiya Babu</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
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The venue was an open place common to all the villagers. The time was around 5.00 p.m. The team and the villagers gathered in the place.

There was some initial hesitation among the members and the villagers. After facilitation, villagers started participating in drawing the map of their village. Social mapping enabled them to get a visual picture of the Spatial arrangement and the number of households in the village. The key informants corrected whenever the houses are wrongly placed. The social map that was drawn by the villagers of Koppampatty village is presented in figure 8.1 and 8.2.

Figure 8.1
Every one of those who assembled participated actively and enthusiastically in the whole exercise. Three key informants were giving information while two were drawing maps. Other noted down as to what was going on and spoke as and when the key informants could not give accurate information. After finishing the social map, the villages were thrilled to see and locate their houses in the map. At the end, they believed that they could draw the map of their village on their own. They expressed that it was a wonderful experience the village has ever had.

Social (resource) mapping of the village helped to appraise the details including village resources, access to services, institutions (e.g. school, health center, etc) and households with detailed social economic
characteristics (e.g., income, caste, religion etc.). The details such as households with pregnant women and children less than two years of age, adolescent girls, children with disabilities, participating and non-participating households in WB-ICDS, etc. could be collected using social map.

8.2.1. Learning Experience

® Mapping exercise, the visual presentation of information enables villagers to participate actively.
® People are resourceful as agency in our opinion.
® Social map could serve as a base for collecting vital information accurately on the spot within short duration.
® The mapping was a learning experience for the WB-ICDS staff as well as for the villagers,

8.3. Case 2: Venn Diagram

The second case was Venn Diagram. The Venn Diagram exercise was used to identify the major institutions in the village of K.Vahaikulam, Tiuchuli Block, Tuticorin District and the relationship between them.

The venue was the WB-ICDS center building located in the village. The block level supervisors of WB-ICDS programme, AWWs were the team members. The exercise started around 6.00 p.m. People, especially more number of women participated in the exercise.
The team is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>P. Chandra</td>
<td>CNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>S. Jeya Lakhsmi</td>
<td>CNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content writer</td>
<td>P. Renuga</td>
<td>CNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process observer</td>
<td>P. Banumathi</td>
<td>CNW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate Keeper</td>
<td>S. Shanthi</td>
<td>CNO</td>
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The villagers were able to identify the problems, institutions and individuals responsible for decisions in the community. Then, the team gave them different size circles cut in the cardboard. They could identify degrees of contact and the inter-linkages between them using different sizes of circles provided. The villagers had clarity in the purpose of giving different sizes of circles and how to show the inter-linkages between institutions.

They arranged the circles as follows:

- **Big circle**: Most important
- **Moderate circle**: Important
- **Small Circle**: Less important
- **No contact**: circle not touching the other one
- **Information flow between institutions**: circle touching each other
- **Some cooperation in decision making**: Overlapping each other a little
- **Considerable cooperation in decision making**: absolutely overlapping each other
The villagers were encouraged to draw their own diagrams. There was no interaction from any of the team members. The villagers enthusiastically participated throughout the exercise.

Using venn diagram the team could assess the following.

- Institutions and individuals serving the village community.
- **Community perception and prioritization of major institutions in the village.**
- The inter-linkages between the institutions in the village.
- Community perception of the existing availability of and access to the basic services in the village and WB-ICDS inter-linkages.
- Community perception and prioritization of WB-ICDS components.
- Community perception and prioritization of the work and work load of AWWS.

The photograph of the exercise conducted in the village is presented in figure 8.3 and 8.4

![Figure 8.3]
8.3.1. Learning Experience

- Community members are the right persons to assess the performance of external agencies.
- Even illiterate women could be key informants and they have analytical capacity.
- The role of an outsider should be a facilitator rather than provider.
- The knowledge of people would help in achieving the goals of the project.

Figure 8.4
8.4. CASE 3: SEASONAL CALENDAR

The third case was seasonal calendar exercise, which was conducted in Vannampatti village. This village is located in Thuraiyur Block of Trichy District.

The venue of the exercise was the WB-ICDS center of the village. The AWWs and the Block level of supervisors WB—ICDS programme of the Thuraiyur block were present. A team was formed among them for conducting the exercise. The people of neighbouring Nalavampattu village participated along with people of Vannampatty village.

They were facilitated to drew seasonal calender mainly to identify the diseases that occur in their village during the four seasons, namely, rainy season, winter* season, spring season and summer season. The process that was followed by the participants for drawing seasonal calendar map is as follows:

• Using a chart paper, they draw a 12-month calendar indicating four seasons.
• They obtained information from each other through discussions about the diseases that occur in the four seasons.
• They used bamboo sticks of different lengths to indicate the magnitude of different diseases during the four seasons.
• They pasted the sticks on the chart paper and in this way, they constructed seasonal calendar on the chart paper.

• They combined all seasonal patterns into one diagram to show correlation between different variables and tried to identify the problems/opportunity times within the year.

• They cross checked and refined the seasonal calendar throughout the exercise.

• They also analysed seasonal variations in the diseases.

• The seasonal calendar would certainly help prioritise programme interventions and rationalize the AWW's workload in relation to seasonal patterns.

• This would also help in refining training and communication inputs accordingly.

• This will enable to monitor 'high risk periods'.

Figure 8.5
8.4.1. Learning Experience

♦ It was learnt that villagers also have a calendar in their mind though not in a written form.

♦ People are aware of evils of various diseases and they have traditional healing practices.

The outcome of the entire exercise was photographed and is presented in figure 8.6.
8.5. Preference Ranking

The fourth case was preference ranking. It was drawn by the villagers of Chellappan Kandan Valasu Village, Anthiyur Block, Erode District.

This exercise was done to determine quickly the preferences of individual villagers and thus, to identify the priorities of the community. The prime aim of this exercise is to select which cereal(s) match(es) local conditions while determining supplementary food.

In this exercise, the team got an opportunity to prioritise people’s preference to various food grains like Atta, Rice, Jowar, Bajra, Wheat, Ragi and Rava. They were led to give their preference to each cereal in terms of its taste, local availability, vitamins/proteins, cost, as a snack and food to child.

- First, the villagers listed the food grains they knew.
- Asked each one of the participant to give his/her rank to each cereal, taking one criterion at a time, according to his/her opinion.
- In this way, they ranked 8 items of cereals.
- Tabulated the responses
According to the participants' preferences, Ragi got the first preference, Bajra got the 2nd rank, wheat got the third rank and Rice was their fourth favoured/preferred food grain (Figure 8.7)

8.5.1. Learning Experiences

- It was a learning experience for the WB/CDS staff that the locally available cereals and the cereals preferred by the local people can be used to prepare supplementary food.
- The team members realised that the villagers also have immense knowledge over cereals and their nutritional value and they are equal experts.
The fifth case was ‘Decision Matrix Ranking’ exercise, which was conducted in the village of Kootapuli village, Valliyur block, Kanniyakumari Distrit during our visit to the district. This exercise was conducted with a view to see whether the decision was taken by men or women on a number of issues like child birth, child rearing, children’s education, marriage, buying essential things for their home, household expenses, taking part in public functions and home functions, savings, buying dresses, gold ornaments, vehicles etc. To be more specific, the main aim was to assess gender differences, if any, in decision making.

- Those issues, which they felt are important to them, were chosen by the people themselves.
- They listed the important issues.
- They elicited the criteria by asking ‘what is good about each issue?’ What is bad about each issue? What else? (continued until no more replies).
- Listed all the criteria
- Turned the negative criteria into positive by giving positive words (e.g., Vulnerable to diseases’ becomes ‘resists diseases’).
- They drew up a matrix.
- For each criterion, asked who takes decision?
The outcome of the exercise as photographed is presented in Figure 8.8. The results show that on issues like child birth, marriage and children’s education, decisions were taken both by the husband and the wife. Issues like taking care of household expenses, earning income, buying things for home were considered as decisions of men. Women take decisions on matters like taking care of the child, taking care of the house, cooking and other household chores.

Figure 8.8