

Participatory Development –  
Putting people at the center of  
the development process

# Introduction

- Needs of people have been ignored.
- Implications of policies on individuals, households and communities have not been considered.
- Seers (1969) – development was about improving the quality of peoples livelihoods – this can be achieved by the reduction of three key variables – poverty, unemployment and inequality.
- There is also a need for the true fulfilment of human potential and improvements in the quality of life.
- Self reliance should be another important goal of development plans. (oil crisis highlighted this).

# Introduction (contd)

- Development strategies must fulfil basic human needs such as nutrition, water, sanitation, health and education which are interlinked and a holistic approach needs to be taken by planners.
- All too often, 'people' and 'communities' are perceived as homogenous and passive, rather than diverse and dynamic entities.
- Requirement of specific knowledge and skills have been ignored for a broad based approach

# Population and resources

- Population growth and its relationship to food and other vital natural resources paints a 'gloom and doom' picture
- Others note that population growth is the 'engine of development'
- Malthus (1798) vs Boserup (1965)
  - Population grows more rapidly than food supply, suggested 'preventative' and 'positive' checks on population growth.
  - Population growth can act as a key factor in generating innovation and intensification of traditional food production systems without degrading the resource base.
- Brundtland Report (1987) Environmental issues (global warming and climate change) discussed and Sustainable Development concept emerged
- MDGs (2015) and SDGs (2030)

# Where do the world's people live?

- 1999 – 6 billion, 2015 – 7.3 billion, 2025 – 8.1 billion (UN, 2013)
- Whereas population density varies widely, China and India most populated. 60% of the world's population lives in the Asian region
- However, the data is often unreliable and hampers planning

# Household development cycle

- Size and composition may constantly change leading to changes over time in the ratio between workers and dependents
- At different stages of the cycle, pressure may be placed due to disposable income and nutritional intake; often the very young and very old are the most vulnerable
- Different pressures and responsibilities also exist within the household. Age and gender differentiation in household labour inputs and expenditure patterns has long been appreciated
- The gender of the household member who directly benefits from development policy interventions may be relevant to the intra-household distribution of wealth and resources, enhancing and securing female incomes makes sound policy sense (Kabeer 1992)

# Mainstreaming gender concerns

- Beijing Platform for Action 1995 signed by many governments showed their commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women
- ‘The reorganisation, improvement, evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making’ (Council of Europe, 1998)
- Gender mainstreaming is very complex in implementation
- The contributions of women to household income and welfare need to be much better understood

# Children

- Roles and needs of children and youth in households needs to be better understood
- Costs and benefits of having children and especially the vital contribution they make to the welfare of the households in poor countries receives little attention (fetching water and firewood, scaring birds from the fields, processing foods and selling items in the informal sector)
- Child labour is often seen in the West as the unacceptable face of third world poverty, yet in many societies it is considered entirely normal that children work (Ansell, 2005)

# What is participation?

- The action of partaking, having or forming part of the substance, quality, or nature of something or person
- The fact or condition of sharing in common (with others or with each other); association as partners partnership, fellowship; profit sharing
- The active involvement of members of a community or organization in decisions which affect their lives and work

Oxford Dictionary

- 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
- Organised effort within institutions and organisations to increase stakeholder access and control over resources and related decision making that contributes to sustainable livelihoods

# In development projects....

- With regard to rural development ... participation included peoples involvement in decision making processes, in implementing programs, sharing in the benefits of the program, and involvement in the efforts to evaluate programs (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977)
- Community participation is an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a 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)

- Participation can be defined as a process through which stakeholders shape and share control over development initiatives. Stakeholders are constituencies who are affected by a particular policy and who have the power to help it or obstruct it.

World Bank, 2007

# Levels of participation

- Passive participation – beneficiaries essentially welcome the proposal and support them but are generally cautious (and even suspicious) in relation to project management
- Increasing involvement – beneficiaries begin to develop more trust in the project and more contact with its activities and staff; they may also begin to take on some responsibilities
- These levels can be conceptualized as information sharing, consultation, collaboration, joint decision-making, and empowerment.

- Active participation – beneficiaries play the role of active partners in the project's implementation and development and assume increasing responsibility
- Ownership/ Empowerment – beneficiaries are both willing and able to sustain and further develop the initiatives begun by the project

# What is participatory development?

- “Participatory development is a process which involves citizens actively and in all decisions that influence their lives” (BMZ, 2002)
- Participatory development stands for partnership which is built upon the bases of dialogue among the various actors, during which the agenda is jointly set, and local views and indigenous knowledge are deliberately sought and respected.
- This implies negotiation rather than the dominance of an externally set project agenda. Thus people become actors instead of being beneficiaries (OECD 1994)

- Whichever definition we use, the process of participatory development is fundamentally about power
- The less powerful must struggle for increased power over their lives
- Unstructured and unmanaged participation may lead to disharmony and confusion. It is important to recognize that limits and trade-offs are inherent to participation. The more groups that are brought into development programs, the more complex managing participation becomes. Initiating participation, adding new sets of actors, and moving from information sharing to consultation, or to joint decision-making, can pose significant challenges.

# Why participatory development?

- Failure of past development programs to improve the quality of lives of the people the program was basically designed for

# Previous development approaches vs. participatory development

- Expert knowledge vs local knowledge
- Top down vs bottom up
- Recipients of development treated as passive or conservative vs treated as the center, active and seeing situation from their point of view

# Critique of participatory development

- Costs time and money
- May lead to unintended consequences
- No guaranteed impact upon the end-product
- Losing time for 'talking'
- Destabilization of social organization
- Danger of shifting the burden to the poor

# Outcome of participatory development

- Presence of local people in decision making, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- People come through the process with newly acquired skill and a sense of being in control
- Consultation and participation of stakeholders in the development process boosts the effectiveness of development programs

## Example: The Benefits of Community Participation

Having the community participate in the family planning program has many benefits; some of these are discussed below.

Benefits of Community Participation	How Benefits are Achieved
Increased commitment to family planning	When residents of a community actively participate in making decisions about family planning, people gain a better understanding of the health and economic benefits of family planning and thus increase their commitment to strengthening and expanding the program to reach a wider population.
Additional program resources	In addition to offering some of their time, community members often bring financial and material resources to the program. Existing stores or buildings may be offered to the program to be used on a shared basis at little or no cost.
Increased client motivation	Communities that take an active interest in the progress of a family planning program will develop improved approaches to motivating non-users to use contraceptives such as having citizen role models advocate for and promote responsible family planning practices.
More rapid program expansion	Working with community volunteers can help the family planning staff of governmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reach more clients and expand program coverage.

Benefits of Community Participation	How Benefits are Achieved
Motivates government to include family planning in health services	In cases where family planning programs are not yet accepted as a part of government services, community participation can be an important source of pressure to get the government to recognize the need for family planning services.
Better solutions to service delivery problems.	Involving the community in the program can lead to a greater awareness of service delivery problems and often members of the community can suggest appropriate and effective solutions.
More consistent demand for family planning	Meeting regularly to discuss family planning issues and program operations and to make decisions about how to carry out activities is important to building a feeling of community ownership of the program.
More effective planning and management	Involving the community in the program can lead to more effective planning, management, and use of resources for the whole community-based program.
Creates a bridge to other populations	Members of the community can serve as a bridge to segments of the community that may be hard to reach through formal program channels