

Social Mechanism for Inducing Stakeholder's Participation in Forest Resources Management

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The concept of people's participation:

People's participation is, however, not a new idea in India. In fact, it emerged long ago in the vision and actions of Tagore and Gandhi. Rural masses as development actors were the central feature of their rural reconstruction programmes (Santhanam, 1982).

Karl Deutsch (1969) considered participation as a technique for setting goals, choosing priorities and deciding on the kind of resources to commit to achieve goal attainment.

Moulik (1978) was of the opinion that "participation in development process implies stimulating individuals to take the initiative and mobilizing people to work for overall societal development".

Cohen and Uphoff (1980) describe participation as "generally denoting the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well-being, e.g. their income, security or self-esteem".

According to Banki (1981), "People's participation is a dynamic group process in which all members of a group contribute to the attainment of group objectives, share the benefits from group activities, exchange information and experience of common interest, and follow the rules, regulations and other decisions made by the group".

Mishra (1984) stated that in broadly speaking participation is understood as the "involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions, which enhance their well-being".

Bagdi (1997) defined people's participation as "concerted efforts by a group of local participants for achieving common goals and sharing benefits.

People's participation at the time of preparing a watershed development programme is very much needed to take decisions because the programme should be according to the basic needs of local people. The programme should meet the basic needs of the majority of the local people like supply of drinking water, fodder for cattle and fuel for kitchen. The watershed development programmes are made for local people; hence the local people should take interest and participate in implementation of programme by contributing labour and

money in construction of soil and water conservation structures on their field and common land. Participation in maintenance is required because without protection and care by the local people the programme will not be successful. The involvement of local people in evaluation of programme is also necessary, so that it may provide points to be considered for improvement in future programme planning.

Types of people's participation:

Types or forms of people's participation in resources conservation programmes can be divided into the following:

i) Participation as material:

The local people having good socio-economic status and farm resources can participate more by providing help of their materials, equipments, machines and implements during construction of different soil and water conservation (SWC) structures in watershed development area.

ii) Participation as money:

Farmers can also contribute money in the form of participation in construction of different SWC structures on their own land or on community land. So that the farmers will take care and protect the structures, because their money is involved in construction of soil and water conservation structures.

iii) Participation as labour:

Poor farmers, who are unable to participate in the form of money, they can participate by contributing their labour work in construction of resources conservation structures on their own land as well as on community/Panchayat land also.

iv) Participation as guidance:

The old and experienced local farmers of the village can also participate in the planning and designing of soil and water conservation programmes by suggesting their ideas and past experiences. The suggestions of experienced people's in the form of feedback is good to be included in the planning of SWC programme, that will provide more benefits to the local participants from the SWC programme. Local farmers can also provide their local techniques to carry out different SWC works in rural development programme.

People's participation in SWC programme stages:

People's participation in natural resources conservation programme through watershed management is utmost important at different stages viz.; i) programme planning, ii) programme implementation, iii) programme maintenance and iv) programme evaluation. It is a collective and cooperative effort by the local people for sharing common benefits.

i) People's participation in programme planning:

People's participation at the time of preparing a watershed development programme is very much needed to take decisions because the programme should be according to the basic needs of local people. The programme should meet the basic needs of the majority of the local people like supply of drinking water, fodder for cattle and fuel for kitchen. The local people are the ultimate beneficiary of any programme. Therefore, the programme should be for the people, by the people and of the people.

ii) People's participation in programme implementation:

The watershed development programmes are made for local people, hence the local people should take interest and participate in implementation of programme by contributing labour and money in construction of soil and water conservation structures on their field and common land/Panchayat land.

iii) People's participation in programme maintenance:

Participation in maintenance is required because without protection and care of soil and water conservation structures on their land as well as on community land by the local people the programme will not be successful. The local people should maintain and repair the damaged and breached structures by their own money and labour contribution.

iv) People's participation in programme evaluation:

The involvement of local people in evaluation of soil and water conservation programme is also necessary, so that it may provide points to be considered for improvement in future programme planning; implementation and maintenance stages.

Social Mechanism Criteria for Inducing Stakeholder's Participation in Resources Management on Watershed Basis:

The following criteria for appropriate participatory approach are suggested on the basis of the findings and discussion of a research study conducted by the author in the Antisar watershed of Kapdwanj Taluka in Kheda district of Gujarat:

1. Middle age and young age rural male and female farmers should be given priority in such soil and water conservation development programmes on watershed basis.
2. Efforts should be made to increase the social participation of rural female farmers. They should be encouraged to be members of village level organizations or take up any position in the panchayat. Such assignments will motivate them for more frequent contacts to local organization and participation in meetings.
3. Approach of collective farming on watershed basis may be adopted for sustainable agricultural production.
4. Farmers should be motivated to maintain adequate farm power viz. implements, machines etc. they are helpful in the soil and water conservation works.
5. Efforts should be made so that the farmers may develop in their character risk taking ability. It may help them to adopt new soil and water conservation technologies and derive maximum benefits from them with increase in agriculture production, fertility of land and increase in income on long term basis.
6. Skill oriented training programme should be organised by experts at village level for both male and female farmers, during watershed development programme. Such programmes will improve their knowledge regarding improved soil and water conservation technologies.
7. Bottom-up approach should be adopted in soil and water conservation programme on watershed basis. It means that the soil and water conservation programme should be developed by the rural farmers, for the farmers and of the farmers.
8. Need based programme: The basic needs of the rural farmers' viz., fuel, fodder and food should be taken care of through the planning of the SWC programme. It encourages among local farmers for more favourable attitude towards the SWC programmes.
9. Low cost soil and water conservation technologies that may suit most to marginal and small land holdings should be disseminated to farmers for easy adoption.

10. Planning meetings of watershed development committee members, Users groups and Self-help groups should be organized on regular basis to plan the watershed development activities systematically.
11. Local village leader should be identified. They have good influence over local farmers. A leader should properly appraise the soil and water conservation programme to the people of his village and organize watershed development programmes through committees for action. He would form a team of young and skilled farmers and lead them into action.
12. People of villages should be motivated for participation in the SWC programme. They may be encouraged to contribute their own labour, money, implements and materials in construction of soil and water conservation structures during implementation stage of the programme.
13. Farmers have tendency to be dependent more on the government or project implementing agency. Therefore, they should be taught to become self-reliant. They may receive guidance and technical assistance from government and project implementing agencies. But development of watershed programme has to be through their participation in labour and monetary contribution.
14. Attempts should be made through an agency like watershed development society so that the male and female farmers become aware and alert about their rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities in matters of repair and maintain of the soil and water conservation practices adopted on watershed basis. Such attempts ensure proper care of SWC structures even after the project is accomplished by PIA.
15. The farmers should be motivated for proper maintenance and repair of SWC structures by contributing their own labour and money. It would go in the interest of sustainable agricultural production.

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