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RISING TOGETHER: A PARTICIPATORY PATH TO RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Email

tuhaniakhtar212@gmail.com

¹Tuhani Akhtar*, ¹Nancy Zomuanpuui and ¹Arvind Singh Rao

¹College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences,
Central Agricultural University Imphal, Umiam Meghalaya,
India

Amidst the hustle and bustle of modern life, the quiet persistence of poverty serves as a stark reminder that progress is meaningful only when it is shared by all. Poverty is a global concern which needs to be addressed as it reaches far beyond the geographical boundaries touching the lives of individuals across continents. Poverty has an impact on every part of the world, from small towns to large cities, and this interconnectedness highlights the need for collaborative efforts and a united front in the pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive future for everyone.

Participatory Approach for Poverty Reduction

Participatory frameworks, approaches and methods allows the rural people to become active stakeholders and ensure that rural poverty interventions better respond to their needs and interests. To involve the stakeholders, stakeholder analysis is carried out where the main stakeholders are identified. A targeting strategy identifies the specific stakeholders for participation in the policy-making. Target groups may include any vulnerable people or groups like women, youth, resource-poor households, ethnic minorities etc. who may be the beneficiaries of any policy or programme.

A participatory framework acts as an instrument that promotes the inclusion of marginalized populations in the decisions and actions that impact their lives. It will provide the poor to become active participant and exercise control over their own livelihoods, boosting their awareness and self confidence. Through participatory framework, it ensures an effective and sustainable poverty reduction policies and will ultimately empower the poor. Some key issues affecting the participatory frameworks are such as politics & power balance, governance, accountability and scale. Politics and power balance implies the power disparities from the home to the national level which prohibits the inclusion of vulnerable

people. Governance plays a major role in creating an conducive institutional space where the rural poor can participate, preventing the elite capture. Accountability means the ability of the rural poor to hold policymakers and programme administrators accountable and the scale refers to the extent of participation, ranging from local to regional and national levels.

Also, participatory research is crucial for designing effective participatory interventions to reduce poverty. Participatory research will provide new insights into rural poverty and allows individual to gain ownership of data about their lives. It promotes a collaborative and inclusive approach to understand and address complex issues. Some common participatory research approaches are Rapid rural appraisal (RRA), Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and Participatory research action (PAR).

Some other participatory methods include digital storytelling, participatory mapping, participatory photography and videography, focus group discussions etc.

RRA	PRA	PAR
First collaborative and Time-efficient approach	Emphasizes community involvement in gathering data.	Experimentation and action
Data is collected from the target group but analysed by outsiders.	Local people have ownership of process and end products.	Action and reflection with participants engaging in the research process to address real world problems.

There are several benefits of using participatory research methods such as it encourages local people to take ownership of the interventions, develops local capacity, acknowledges stakeholders’ concerns, develops appropriate technologies and so on.

Rural people participate in participatory method and other aspects of reducing rural poverty both individually and through organizations. Rural people can collaborate with different rural organizations or agencies, such as Cooperatives and producer organizations (POs), Market-based associations, social movements etc. Cooperatives acts as an autonomous association of people who unites voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs. Producer organizations are formal or informal associations created by and for their member. Market based associations comprises of category of rural organizations such as trader associations and commodity associations. Social movement is a collective action taken

by a group of problem to raise any issue or for opposing any ideas or to tackle social problems.

Collaborating with rural organizations will empower the marginalized people, provide access and control over the natural resources, ensures access to markets, assets, information and knowledge and also increases political capital. For collaboration, different strategies can be adopted such as Public-private partnerships, partnerships with research institutions, multistakeholder partnerships etc.

For engaging rural people in the decision making for participatory rural poverty reduction policies or programmes, it becomes necessary to improve the skills and knowledge of rural people through capacity development.

According to OECD, Capacity development is the ‘process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time’. Since capacity building equips people with the information and skill they need to obtain a sustainable livelihoods, it is essential for reducing poverty. Building stronger communities promotes self-sufficiency and increases the capacity of rural poor. Each stakeholder has different needs and so requires specific types of services. All these varying needs of different stakeholders are interdependent.

Therefore, capacity development strategies should be tailor-made which ensures that different needs of the stakeholders are being met.

Capacity development services are provided by public sector (Govt., NGOs, donors etc.), private sector (companies, distributors etc.), Producer organizations. Trainings, mentoring and coaching, advisory services, multistakeholder platforms and consultative fora are some of the common methods which can be used individually or by combining with each other for capacity development.

Empowering rural communities to overcome poverty necessitates addressing a set of challenges in delivering effective capacity development. The challenges are lack of awareness about target audience’s conditions, lack of sensitivity to local stakeholder’s timing, top-down decision-making approach and so on.

Conclusion

Adopting a participatory approach in decision-making for policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction is imperative. By involving diverse stakeholders, including those directly affected by these initiatives, policy makers can tap into a wealth of local knowledge and firsthand experiences. This inclusivity not only fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment within communities but also ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and sustainable. A Participatory framework promotes transparency and accountability, fostering a collaborative environment that is crucial for the success of poverty reduction efforts. Therefore, promoting a participatory approach ensures better effectiveness and responsiveness of policies and programmes, contributing to more meaningful and lasting impacts on the journey towards alleviating poverty.

Reference

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