

Participatory people development

self-reliant over time. This would be achieved by initiating local savings, income generating activities and asset creation on the basis of consolidating the human, natural and financial resource base of the local community. Such an approach to poverty alleviation may be termed Participatory People Centered Development (PPCD). It provides basic necessities (drinking water, health, education) for the consolidation of human capital, and physical infrastructure (roads, gas, electricity, irrigation, etc.), and part of the savings for creating the basis for an income generating process. Through this process the community could not only enhance its consumption, but also create a savings pool which would constitute the financial dimension of an autonomous investable capacity for the community.

In short the fundamental premises of a Poverty Alleviation Strategy must be provision of basic needs, community participation, and community self-reliance through income generation activities and human resources develop.

The Strategic Objectives: The strategic objectives of the PPCD on the basis of these premises can be specified as follows:

1. Through participatory development at the grassroots level, the PPCD would decentralize economic decision making and thereby taking democracy to the people. Participation as subjects in the development process at the grassroots is the other side of the coin of political democracy.

2. It would introduce a process of participatory people centered development which would be part of a national development strategy of "moving on two fronts", i.e., while attempts would be made on the one hand to create a modern industrial base in Pakistan at the same time the PPCD would directly tackle

poverty. Initially, it will introduce a process both the rural and urban areas for provision of basic needs, employment, income generation, infrastructure development and capacity building. The latter would include establishment of industrial support centres for stimulating rapid rural industrialisation.

3. This process while being supported by, though not contained within a government initiative alone, could be initiated through a number of other actors as well who can assist in the mobilisation of human and natural resources at the local level and releasing the creativity of the people.

4. The PPCD in so far as it helps in consolidating the local community, and in involving them in a process of achieving prosperity through participation, would also be an instrument of national reconciliation and unity. This reconciliation would not only alleviate the rich poor conflict, but also help ameliorate ethnic tension, gender conflicts, youth alienation and Federal/Province divides.

1. People centered development strategies: Learning from innovative experiences in Pakistan and South Asia: In attempting to formulate a broad implementation strategy for poverty alleviation in Pakistan, several positive lessons exist from innovative micro-level development experiences, both in Pakistan and in other South Asian countries, which can guide such an implementation strategy. The questions addressed by such experiences are:

a). What have we learnt from micro-level grassroots development experiments that involved releasing the creativity of poor people, their participation, maximum use of local resources and the peoples knowledge system for alleviation of the worst forms of poverty of the poorest 50 per cent?

b). What role did Government Agencies, Banks, NGO's and donors play in providing a sensitive support system for the process?

c). What kind of "entry" points and instrumentalities helped in initiating, multiplying and sustaining the process?

While there have been several experiments in Pakistan and other South Asian countries, the following innovative experiments from the backdrop of this section:

1. The Agha Khan Rural Support Programme in Northern Areas.

2. The Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi.

3. The Baldia Home School Programme in Karachi.

4. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

5. The Small Farm Programme and production Credit for Rural Women in Nepal.

6. The Working Women's Forum and the WWF Credit Society in India.

South Korean Saemul-Undong-Movement (the new Community Movement), which under somewhat different socio-political circumstances attempt both a corrective and a complementary strategy to the dominant industrialisation strategy could have some relevance to PPCD as well.

All the South Asian experiments indicated above have some common characteristics and essential features which provide guidelines for an effective poverty alleviation strategy in the present historical context of Pakistan.

The essential features and common characteristics of these experiments are as follows:

In all the South Asian countries, the Governments through their five-year plans, through other policy pronouncements on the need for assistance to the poor, through enunciation of special poverty alleviating strategies, directives to the banks, development of the

administrative system to the local or village level organizations and some encouragement to NGO's have provided a framework and "political space" for the experiments to be initiated. They have also permitted the experiments to be carried on or even supported their expansion in a variety of ways. Thus, a political space was provided for the innovation, from which everyone could learn and change. Secondly, some of the traditional Government and credit institutions which had failed to implement conventional "integrated rural development projects" or "delivered" projects for the benefit of the poor, are now willing to provide the support system for alternative initiatives taken by NGO's and organisations of the poor at the village level. Thirdly, some Governments have shown willingness to support an umbrella Organisation whether an NGO or an autonomous or semi-autonomous body, to act as a support Organisation in the whole process and function with a great deal of flexibility in coordinating the large number of small scale activities and dialogues involved. In a sense, these organisations can be compared to a "hammock". Support organisations are designed to be flexible and to promote development in an equitable and sustainable manner in selected areas. They are also conceived, from the outset, to be self-liquidating organisations and able to work themselves out of location within a reasonable period of time, say 10-15 years. The aim is to leave in place local organisations and institutions capable of facilitating continued progress into the future. Where the Government machinery is unable to cope with a task of this magnitude or is ineffective, these new organisations perform the task of economic and social development by mobilizing, conscientising and organizing the poor themselves or sustainable economic and social development. Some coordination with Government programmes are however, required if the experiment is to go to scale with a reliable support system.

The intermediary institution, whether Government, Semi-Government, a Bank, Trade Union or an NGO, fulfilled the following basic interrelated functions: sensitization of the poor in a range of awareness creation, organisational matters and upgrading their knowledge base; the organisation of homogeneous groups of the poor at the village level to meet common needs and to provide or obtain services through collective action:

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the mobilization of savings to support the economic and social development activities, build assets and to serve as a collateral for collective borrowing to expand further; the introduction of new income earning activities and knowledge to enhance net incomes and assets; the development of strategies for the productive and sustainable use of the natural resources in the local area;

integrating the survival and social needs of the poor into the total process and not in a fragmented and sectoral manner and

ensuring that the real poor are the beneficiaries.

In performance of these functions there had been a great deal of detailed collaboration and exchange of information between Government organisations, the banks, academic institutions and the people's organisations. Joint studies did have the result of supporting programme management, coordination and to measure progress at the local level, with a great deal of participation and generation of new information. In the locations in which these innovative approaches have been tried out, there were several location specific features, which favoured the rapid implementation and effectiveness of the experimented programmes. These include the formerly isolated existence of the poor implying energy waiting to be released; the partial political and social vacuum which could be filled by the new type of poor peoples organisations; the implementing of NGO's commitment, as well as community and social orientation and the building on small initiatives taken over the previous years by various public and NGO groups in sectors such as education, environmental sanitation and health. There was also in many cases a tradition of cooperative activity and a high degree of homogeneity among the groups which were organized.

Further characteristics of the process that was set in motion, are:

The activities are implemented at two levels, by the catalytic intermediary itself functioning as an NGO and by village level organisations of the poor. Implementation is not by the traditional bureaucracy, but mainly by a new kind of people's organisation. The bureaucracy, if flexible provides additional support.

The open management style, the continuous dialogue at all levels, continuous participatory monitoring at the village level by the organisations of the poor and a responsive problem solving approach, which helps to take corrective actions as the process evolves.

The need for careful institution building and social infrastructure construction in the early phase, with production credit being gradually introduced as the process gets underway. The social infrastructure like health and nutrition has not been separated from the economic process. The process starts with group formation and awareness creation and establishing the fundamental conditions for survival, before sustainable economic and social activities can be initiated. A great deal of attention is necessary to details and the interlinkages of the several small activities — economic and social.

The village programmes, are planned from the bottom up starting with the poorest. Even the infrastructure projects are initiated by the organisations of the poor themselves. The essence of participation is that the priorities are set by the poor themselves as subjects in the process. This is in contrast to conventional projects where standard predetermined technical packages of improvements and infrastructure are offered to poor communities and even implemented on their behalf, perhaps with some consultation with the richer and more powerful elements in the community. The latter is purely an additive process, where "participation" "poor", etc., are added on as new objectives, to conventional top-down bureaucratic planning methods.

The process has been initiated with local savings and where necessary small grant funding, subsequently a blend of loans and grants from a variety of sources has formed the supplementary/complementary part of the financial plan for expansion and multiplication. In this way local capital formation and automation has been encouraged. This is quite different from either "charity" or decapitalising the subsistence peasantry.

An effective Poverty Alleviation Strategy for Pakistan and the new institution required for the process, would need to take these essential features and common characteristics into consideration.