

Participation in Watershed Management Projects

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Harvested water being used for irrigation



Water being conveyed from a natural source



Multi-Utility water points



Renovated pond

What is participation?

- **Participation can have different connotations**
 - Often authors mention different degrees of participation.
 - Ultimately, it depends on the objective of the participation process and for whom it is intended.
 - In the words of Oakley and Marsden (1984, p88), “ meaningful participation is concerned with achieving power: that is the power to influence the decisions that affects one’s livelihood”.
- **In this training module, participation is seen as active involvement of people at the grass roots in all aspects of IWM in order to empower marginal groups.**
 - Participation should not be coerced or manipulated.
 - It involves a complex process (it is not easy).

Why is participation important ?

- Empirical research shows that participation in decision-making and implementation of a project is essential for sustainability.
- Participation through participatory methods can uncover previously unheard voices.
- This can ensure the involvement of disadvantaged groups, provided they are able to participate.
- It provides knowledge of and confidence in local people, overriding orthodox imposition by outsiders and elite.
- It can lead to shared understanding
- It can help in conflict resolution, even in complex and changing situations.
- It can provide people with ownership.
- This can result in the commitment of the community to its watershed management programme.

Various ways through which people participate

- Attending meetings called to discuss matters relating to the design, implementation monitoring and evaluation of NRM.
- Contributing money, labour in the project activities of common interest.
- Seeking new knowledge and information and sharing it with other members of the community as well with project authorities.
- Following the rules and regulations set by the community/ organization in consultation with local people.
- Adoption of technologies and practices recommended by the project authorities.
- Abstaining from doing any harms or damage to the common property or assets created as a result of participatory efforts.
- Influencing directly or indirectly the design, direction and implementation of the project.

Various forms of participations

Formal Vs Informal participation

Formal participation is provided for by byelaws of organization interested in seeking the people's participation or by legislation and administration informal the programme officials on their own initiation seek participation and it is not required officially.

Individual Vs Representative participation

Individual participation is always direct. People are invited in their individual capacities. Where-as in representative participation people participate in decision making through representatives who may be directed or elected or nominated by the people. In this case the participation is indirect.

Consultation

In this the programme authorities seek the opinion of the target group to design, implement and monitor the projects.

Co-operation

It means the process by which the local people participate in projects through the co-option of their representatives on the Joint Management Committees.

Participatory Approaches- the benefits

Making participation an integral part of management can lead to positive impacts in terms of processes and outputs	The consequences of not including participation in Natural resource Management
1. The inclusion of existing locally based knowledge and technique can lead to more effective outcomes.	Failures to protect the resources because of a lack of support from local people, who perceive it as irrelevant to their to their experiences
2. It can lead to development of more durable and sustainable solutions by identifying a broad range of concerns	Communities are not motivated to contribute towards success

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3. It can lead to a sense of ownership and responsibility making it easier to mobilize local support	Objectives not clearly understood by local communities that are excluded from the development process, resulting in low management impact.
4. Local concerns can be addressed leading to broader social and economic benefits distributed in a more equitable manner.	Lack of co-operation between individuals and agencies can result in management dysfunctions.
5. Transferring power can contribute to community development and meet broader social objectives	Failure results in further degradation of the resources and a worse quality of life for local people.

Costs of Participation

- Using existing patterns of local power and organization can reinforce existing inequities rather than stimulate desired system change (Kolawoli, 1982). It favor local elitist, already better off.
- The main obstacles to participation however, are the difficulty of implementing it in practice. It takes additional time and resources to mobilize less developed Communities.
- The difficulty of sustaining collective action over the long term, where contributions are obviously costly and benefits are both hard to measure and dispersed over time and space deepens the pessimism about the likelihood of success.

Determinants of participation

There are many factors that affect stakeholder's participation in watershed management programmes (Korten, 1983; CIRDAP, 1984; Mishra et al, 1984; CANARI, 1998; Pretty and Hine, 1999).

- **Resource Specific:** If resource is the central point i.e. means of survival for a particular community, people will participate only when their basic needs are fulfilled directly and immediately

User Community Specific:

A number of socio-cultural characteristics including beliefs and values of the communities of resource users affect their participation in NRM programmes.

- (a) Awareness: Sometimes local people do not participate simply because they are not aware about the seriousness of the problem.**
- (b) Socio-economic structures: Homogeneity and heterogeneity of a community in terms of caste, class, assets, and income are important determinants of people's participation.**
- © Organization and Leadership: Availability of good local leadership is essential for organizing people, mobilizing their resources, nurturing and sustaining the organization.**

(d)Economic Status: Real participation occurs among the equals only. Very- very poor people cannot afford to spend time and energy and money on participation if the benefits from such participation are low, delayed and uncertain.

(e)Prejudices against women: Women are very closely associated with the use or misuse of natural resources- they should not be discouraged from participation in meetings, by forming separate groups.

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Agency Specific Factors

(a) Locus of decision making: All decisions should be taken in consultation with local people in village itself and not in govt. offices on their own at organizational level.

(b) Devolution of Financial and Administrative powers: Centralization of financial and administrative powers is a characteristic feature of govt. departments/organization.

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(c) Attitudes, Values and Skills of Agency personnel: should be positive. Sometimes they expect the local people to accept whatever is offered to them and not to raise any questions, complaints and suggestions.

(d) Personnel policies: For enlisting and sustaining people participation, availability of sufficiently long time perseverance and commitment to the ideology of participatory development, besides the values and skills are required on the part of the agency personnel.

Policy Implications

Participatory and collaborative management does not occur in a vacuum. There has to be a policy environment that is conducive to the development. This requires sound understanding of the requirements for effective resource management, which can only come through an ongoing process of policy research and analysis.