

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT: ROLE OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Management of any programme requires the participation of various stakeholders for its success. Issues related to concept of environment and its management requires a careful understanding of resources, its management and steps for its sustainable development. Participation of community role in environmental management requires a local understanding of resources, problems and suitable mechanism to find the management of the problems. The paper looks into how community participation is an important agenda for environmental management programmes and by involving community the success can be achieved. Within the community the role of women has been very crucial in the success of the programme. The paper also looks into how grass root level development programmes have been successful in achieving targets and for attaining long term and sustainable development through community participation in environmental management the policy makers must also train more grass root level women workers with the suitable remuneration

Keywords: Community, Local Governance, Participation, Women

I INTRODUCTION

Environmental management involves the management of all components of the bio-physical environment, both living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic). This is due to the interconnectedness and network of relationships amongst all living species and their habitats. It also involves the relationships of various human facets, such as the social, cultural and economic environment with the bio-physical environment.

Over the last decade, management on usage of natural resources in a sustainable manner has become one of the priorities of government, policy makers and environmentalists etc. Due to unbridled industrial growth in last century huge impacts both positive as well negative has been realized, of which one major negative one is on the environment. The increasing focus placed on the environment globally, through multilateral norms, agreements and conventions, has shifted the responsibility from the governments (particularly the

national governments) as a 'provider' to a more consensus-based approach, where all stakeholders have a role to play, bringing to the table different resources during the different processes of environmental management.

1.1 How Participation Helps

Of particular significance has been the participation and role of the 'community' the primary stakeholder in these processes has become an important component of all environmental programmes and projects, both in terms of decision-making processes, and of creating an enabling environment for the community to have a say over aspects that affect their lives. In general in all development programmes of government local level participation has occupied an important position in project implementation. Otherwise also participation or decentralized governance is one of the cornerstones of Indian democracy and has equal benefits for policy makers, public servants and civil society. To highlight few:

- Participation helps government to make more appropriate decisions based on the local needs of people
- The more informed people are, or the more participation, the better they understand about government's strategy, budget and resource limitations.

The local needs are varying in various communities and thus creating a partnership between community and government helps in addressing the development needs and service delivery.

The present paper tries to look into the role of local community with specific focus on women in managing environmental programmes through sustainable use of natural resources and of disposing and keeping the generated wastes judiciously. It will look into the intersection between community participation, and environmental management, the dynamics of interrelationships of local community with the policy makers and environment. This will help in providing significant opportunities and challenges for sustainable development at the local level. The paper would also supplement few case studies from rural area where local community specifically women have helped in environmental management.

1.2 Key Issues in Community Participation which helps in Environmental Management

Community Participation (CP) is a process which involves people to participate in planning, implementing and managing their local environment. It is actually a readiness on the part of both local governments and the community to accept equal responsibilities and activities in managing their surroundings. It also means a commitment to bring to the table resources, skills and knowledge for this purpose, and a respect for the capabilities and capacities of all partners. It means that the value of each group's contribution is seen,

appreciated and used. It is an inclusive form of development in which the community's representatives as "partners" in decision-making, makes for successful community participation.

Community in general may be defined as a group of people coming together on the basis of a geographical area, a work place, even an idea or a theme/issue, or on the basis of gender/age. The shape and size of a community varies, and hence definitions of communities have also varied. Women forms and important of all communities and with the implementation of various women empowerment programs they have been the key beneficiaries as well as the targets for achieving development

There are **five key issues** which illustrate the importance of community participation and involvement for environmental management:

(1) **To understand the perception of community:** Any activity directly involving community requires one to understand the issues and perspectives from community perception. This helps in identifying the choices and preferences regarding the lifestyle at the local level which are made at the community, household and individual levels. In other words we also refer this as local needs of community which could have short-term and long-term impacts i.e. it gives a detail picture of utilization of local resources, its consumption and steps required for intervention of proper management. By understanding the quality of life and lifestyle issues in environmental management ensures that problems are tackled at its source, and long term benefits accrued .This also helps in ensuring the visualization and planning for smooth environmental managements both at locally as well as globally.

(2) **Involvement in decision making:** It is important to maintain subsidiarity of decision-making, since local, daily decisions need to be taken at the local and community levels, Community participation involves creation of forums where issues are discussed and implemented. These help in maintaining the scale of decisions and commitment is ensured and built at appropriate level. Local forums are the outcome of effective community participation where issues are discussed and suitably planned as well as implemented. The localized decisions making process is a reflection of community dynamics on awareness building, which need to be built into the core of an environmental management plan.

(3) **Commitment from localites:** Community participation is also one of the right way to have the clear commitment and complete involvement of local members in order to reach the desired goals and success in joint activities of environmental management programme. By bringing the community at a common platform in relation to environment is one of the launching steps in continuous process of awareness building and attitudinal change. By bridging the community to a platform it provides a rallying point that can build commitment and involvement from the community. Linking environmental problems, both local and global, to everyday lifestyles is critical in motivating communities and planning for action.

(4) **Optimum utilization of Resources:** Community participation pools resources and diverse skills and working strategies from within the community, creating pride and ownership of a programme or project. Within the homogeneity of a 'community' lies a broad diversity of resources that are prerequisites for the implementation of any plan or programme. Inherently, these have to be taken into account. By pooling resources and diverse skills enables a complex issue such as managing the local environment. It also enables creative brainstorming that identifies 'problems-behind-problems' and ensures 'solutions-for-solutions' – maximizing the benefits derived by a small resource base.

(5) **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Community participation will ensure that checking and corrective action through monitoring/evaluation can be done by and for the community itself. The local community can ensure close vigilance through community involvement by controlling its own actions, outputs i.e. mechanism of garbage disposal and its effects in terms of pollution and health hazards. By having the community's view on environmental management and its commitment, it would enable and facilitate the overall environmental management by close monitoring the environmental issues.

In conclusion, involving the community in local environmental management has been prescribed as a panacea for a whole lot of environmental ills – in some cases, to also avoid responsibilities and accountabilities of the concerned entities. Real positive impacts can be ensured through partnerships that respect the stakeholders involved, and the resources that they bring to the table, and to enable actions that each stakeholder is best suited to perform. Consensus-driven visions and goals are also important, to coordinate activities and to monitor and evaluate actions

II MECHANISM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Environmental management system provides a cohesive and comprehensive framework for a city or local government to identify significant aspects and manage its environment - both opportunities and risks - and to document, evaluate and communicate its environmental plans and programmes to local stakeholders.

To have a cohesive environmental management following important key principles are to be followed:

2.1. Development of strong Local government commitment

Local government commitment to improve environment performance and establish policies for management is very important for obtaining political support, developing policy, integrating into operational system, and showing environmental leadership. A strong commitment from the local government to be inclusive, develop political support, or show leadership will necessitate the involvement of the community. A prudent local government will involve the community in order to ensure broad

commitment from all residents of the city. This will also ensure acceptance and ownership of its policies and programmes with the community.

2.2 Planning and compliance

The local government plans and implements proactive programmes to identify and address environmental problems and corrects deficiencies in the local environment. These programmes also broadly aim to, for example, comply with environmental laws/regulations, prepare for natural and man-made emergencies, and prevent pollution and conserve resources.

This kind of planning includes the views of the community members in order to ensure its success and become effective which is mainly through participation like meetings, seminars, hearings etc.

2.3. Enabling systems

The local government develops and implements the necessary measures to enable various stakeholders to perform their tasks and implement their programmes/projects on the environment. These measures provide opportunities for learning, and support with standards, systems, and programmes. Information management, communication and documentation policies also create the necessary enabling environment.

System once enabled will help the stakeholders to perform effectively for environmental management. A well built management system and process helps an effective participation and management.

2.4. Performance and Accountability

The local government develops measures that addresses environmental performance of all stakeholders, and ensure complete accountability of their functions that help in building responsibility, authority and accountability amongst the community. Effective participation helps in outlining the benchmarks for performance standards in consultation with local units which in turn leads to transparent processes and accountability. The other way of looking this is the decentralized approach where all participants undertake their role to achieve the goals and

How does this facilitate community participation? It is essentially through effective community participation that good performance and accountability can be built. A decentralized approach where all actors play their role to achieve overall goals and objectives, works best when effective participation is linked to effective performance and accountability.

2.5. Measurement and Improvement

The local government develops and implements programmes to assess progress towards meeting its environmental goals and uses it to improve its environmental performance. This is done through the development of an evaluation programme or gathering and analyzing relevant data. It could also compare

its performance with other local governments, or incorporates continuous improvement of its policies, programmes and their impacts.

How does this facilitate community participation? Measurement and improvement of environmental management processes can be done to established indicators and parameters. But it is third party views, particularly coming from the community and its representatives that will lead to better performance and improvement. This can be generated through good community participation and involvement. [1]

III. ROLE OF WOMEN

Women have a key role to play in preserving the environment and natural resources, and in promoting sustainable development. For example, women still have the main responsibility for meeting household needs and are therefore a major force in determining consumption trends. As such, women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns.[2]

Women an important section of society serves a crucial role in environmental management and the implementation of its principles. Women view environment as the life support systems of humanity and the source of all life, that people are dependent on the environment. Women play multiple roles in the family, community, and in the protection and management of the natural resources. Their multifaceted roles lead to their multiple burdens. Their women's perspective on the connections of women and environment are linked to the domestic roles of women. Further, women's roles are directly affected by the state of environment because women are the main users of resources like water, forest resources and other land resources.

Involving women in protecting the environment would help societies develop the sense of responsibility which is required to maintain a balance between humans and the earth's resources, In general women have better awareness than men of the need to protect the environment for all humans. Motivating them to take part in protecting the environment and managing disasters would harness their enthusiasm for the effort. They would help develop the sense of responsibility all humans needed to maintain a good balance between humans and the earth's resources.

It was in the first World Conference on Women, 1975 (Mexico City), that the "women and environment" issue was brought into public consciousness and, it was only in the 1980s that governments and development agencies became actively aware of the need to consider gender issues in their environmental and natural resource management programmes. It was also realised later that the active participation of women and the integration of gender issues in environmental policies and actions are critical determinants for the implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), and the Millennium Development Goals. Yet discriminatory structures and attitudes continue to result in deeply entrenched patterns of gender inequality in these areas.[3][4]

Women form the vital part of Indian economy constituting one third of the national labour force. Although most women are considered to be marginal workers and are the major contributors to the survival of the family. Women are also considered to managing various agricultural activities, animal husbandry, livestock and in managing these things they are generally hooked towards the nature.

Various grass root level development programme focusing on women empowerment, economic empowerment, sanitation, environmental programmes have taken women as a means of change agents. They have been planned and implemented through a gendered lens and involves decision making and assigning proactive roles to women. The projects on women empowerment in various States have used the Self Help Group model for women empowerment in which various activities ranging from awareness building on social, legal, environmental issues have been undertaken successfully. Also the activities of women at the grass root level in creating transformation in society as well as bringing economic empowerment has been found. The formation of group, its building process, development brings a sense of integrity and sorority among its members where they feel collective to form particular tasks. Various SHGs across the country have been successful in combating some of the important environmental issues like watershed development programmes, Joint forest management, general environmental hygiene, vermicomposting, tree plantation etc. [5] [6]. Involvement of Anganwadis and ASHA as grass root worker has been very instrumental in implementing the programmes and making the women availing benefits and access to programmes

IV CONCLUSION

Role of women and community participation in environmental management cannot be undermined. Involvement of people in planning and democratic development has long been practiced and in various development programmes success is visible. However with the growing number of organization working at grass root level for involvement of people in villages for participating in development programmes has also led to the development of bureaucratization and politicization of panchayats and local governing bodies. In the coming years with more development projects specific to environment like Swachh Bharat, Clean Ganga would be coming up it would involve more people in developmental process. It would be important and challenging for policy makers to create more grass root level workers with suitable honorarium and incentives. Similar to anganwadis and asha workers who are all women, can be trained at grassroots level workers with financial incentives so that the gains which has been actually achieved by participation is sustained. Only participation without any remuneration may not work at broader level.

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