

Service Delivery versus Popular Participation and Extension

Deepak Tamang

Objectives

- To highlight the framework and concepts of participatory people-first development rather than the top-down service-delivery approach
- To advocate a participatory approach to designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating development so that by capturing the commitment, ownership, and popular participation of the community it becomes more effective and sustainable

How does the service-delivery approach compare to the people-centered participation approach?

Development efforts in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were based on a top-down service-delivery approach. Fuelled by the success of the American-aided Marshall Plan in Europe, and the Soviet system of Five Year Plans, this service-delivery approach was used in many developing nations. Emphasis was placed on a centralised delivery system based on the efficacy of civil servants as agents of development. Scientific and rational planning was its hallmark. The 'answer' to many of the world's ills, it was believed, lay with bureaucrats, technocrats, administrators, and extension agents. This approach is now largely discredited since the trickle-down effect expected never took place.

Important factors for failure at the 'systemic level' were the lack of reward and punishment for development agents, lack of adequate resources, and lack of transparency and accountability. Also there was a lack of political will on the part of leaders and governments. At the community level, the people did not feel involved and, therefore, never took up the development projects as their own. Responsiveness, responsibility, and ownership were lacking. Sustainability factors, such as process, institutions, and finances, were not strengthened at the community level since this model believed largely in delivery from the top. It often did not consider a community's perspectives, their aspira-

tions, needs, problems, and solutions. As a result of such failures, many thinkers and practitioners began to question the appropriateness of this growth-centred model.

Can GDP be considered a measure of welfare?

Some people feel that the purely economic-based gross domestic product (GDP) can be used as a measure of human welfare. However, many seriously question whether this is an appropriate measure of development and human well-being. Many argue that GDP figures do not encompass the total well-being of a people—including human happiness or the quality of life. Lack of equity, equality, distributive justice, human rights, women's rights, child rights, ethnic and minority rights, and the gap between rich and poor are seen as serious flaws in the measurement of development and economic progress under the growth model of development based on patronage and service delivery. Hence, some development researchers are experimenting with the concept of human indices such as happiness and honesty. Development thinkers such as Kamala Bhasin have come to advocate a measure of gross domestic happiness (GDH) and gross domestic integrity (GDI) as more accurate and revealing than the mere use of GDP as a measure of a society's well-being and welfare.

Popular participation or bottom-up approach

The concept of popular participation in development (Figure 1) has gained credence and currency in the last decade or so largely due to the failure of the 'trickle-down' growth model of development. This approach, also called bottom-up planning, people-first, or popular participation, is based on a myriad of philosophical concepts. They are sociocultural, religious, and economic. It believes that economic theories alone cannot explain fully the concept of popular participation, since these theories, whether they are 'market' or 'Marxist', limit themselves to the phenomenon of wealth and poverty in the material sense.

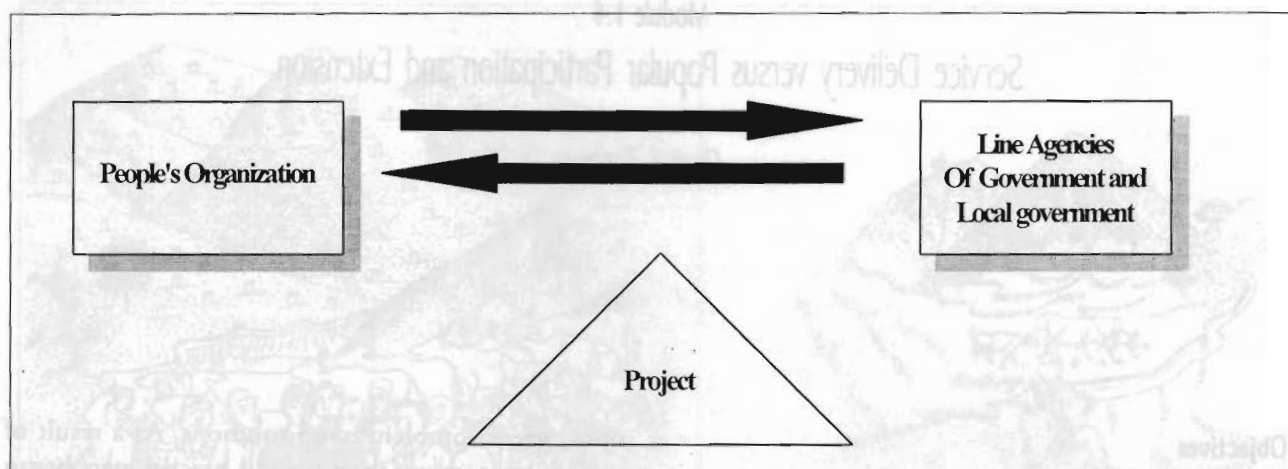


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Development Project

The popular participation approach believes in empowering the community and individuals. Confucius the Chinese philosopher is believed to have taught his followers an early principle of popular participation and empowerment. He said, 'I hear and I am informed; I see and I understand; I do and I finally know what it is all about.' This laconic truth is still relevant today especially when we discuss issues such as participation and sustainable development. The teachings of Lord Buddha also have many principles of popular participation. Above all he taught compassion and empathy towards the people and that we should learn from one another the goodness of human beings. He taught us to live, learn, and unlearn from one another and to carry on meaningful dialogue in order to help one another.

What is the context of development and popular participation?

Many people nowadays are talking about sustainable development and alternative development models using traditional wisdom and respect for indigenous knowledge and technology and the sanctity of nature. In the past fifty years or more, development has been equated with economic growth. The growth-centred model pursues centrally planned and controlled regimes and structures. Resources are concentrated in infrastructural development, industrialisation, and establishment of formal government institutions. One principle assumed by this model is that the fruits of development will trickle down to the poor, thus lifting them from poverty and inequality. However, this phenomenon has not taken place. The trickle-down model has had the opposite result. The rich have grown richer and the poor poorer. This has prompted universal outcry and re-examination of this model. The need for an alternative based on addressing the well-being of the people first is needed.

Genesis of the popular participation approach

The genesis of the popular participation approach came from civil society and civil movements in Asia and elsewhere. The Gandhian *Sarvodaya Shramdana* movement in Sri Lanka is one example of a successful people-first movement in Asia. Through this movement, leadership in civil society was able to reach millions of Sri Lankans, motivating, organizing, mobilising, and promoting sustainable local development. Many NGOs followed *Sarvodaya's* example and even the state now works closely with the movement. The core philosophy of *Sarvodaya* and many other successful social movements is to appeal to the innate good sense of the people. Thus voluntary participation, charity, solidarity, patriotism, empowerment, and cultural 'mores' play important roles in such popular participation. Charismatic leadership and the ensuring of honesty and integrity as well as discipline are important core values. Systemic elements are devolution of roles and responsibilities, accountability, and transparency and decision-making at the local level by both men and women. Following these quintessential principles, many in the state and civil society have been able to replicate successful popular participation elsewhere in Asia.

Are there successful examples of the people-first approach? How was it done?

In Taiwan, popular participation has been most successful in the agricultural sector. It started as a state-sponsored initiative where the government provided impetus to academic and farmers' associations to work together. Land reform, secure tenancy, redistribution of productive assets, and making farmers' groups autonomous were the hallmarks. The government line agency functions as a facilitator and resource centre by promoting and preserving indigenous knowledge and tech-

nology. Millions of farmers are organized into cooperatives. The farmers' production and marketing group functions as the dynamic nucleus of the farmers' association. It interacts with the market, government, and local farmers. It provides technology and know-how, and it also ensures that goods are produced, packaged, and marketed efficiently securing a fair farm-gate price for farmers. The farmers' groups actually employ the agronomist and extension officers. This model mobilises the target group and empowers them to solve their own problems. Hundreds of thousands of farmers' associations have been able to ensure accountability and transparency and create financial, operational, and institutional sustainability.

Bangladesh is a pioneer in the people-based development model. NGOs are in the forefront of development. Notable NGOs with almost country-wide or regional outreach are BRAC and Grameen Bank. There are also many NGOs in India and a few in Pakistan, and these include parastatals such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme initiatives that have had an effective impact on the lives of the rural poor by applying the bottom-up approach to development.

In South East Asia, what began as a small nucleus of academics, agricultural extensionists, and development workers in 1974 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is now a major people-first movement spanning Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. The movement is called the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (DHRRA). Its aim is to improve the quality of life of Asian rural farmers and their families. Its philosophy is the primacy of the farmers and their dignity, knowledge, and wisdom. Its core values are respect for nature, natural farming, and sustainable development, and its approach is called the 'rootedness' of the development programme in the community based on agrarian reform and rural development through human development. It is based on bottom-up planning and programming. The efficacy of this approach is now manifested through a dozen rural development movements and north-south co-operation within Asia through a process called the 'Dialogue of Life' and farmer-to-farmer exposure dialogue and action programmes (EDAP). The work of this movement is being carried out by the Thai DHRRA in Thailand, MasDHRRA in Malaysia, InDHRRA in Indonesia, PhilDHRRA and CenDHRRA in the Philippines, KoDHRRA in South Korea, ChinDHRRA in Taiwan, and JaDHRRA in Japan; CamDHRRA in Cambodia, VietDHRRA in Vietnam, and NeDHRRA in Nepal are the new siblings of this movement.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the state, market and civil society?

Human society has developed various social structures so that its members can live secure and dignified lives. These structures are the state sector, civil society, and the market sector. In the developed north, the state, civil society, and the market sector are fairly evenly balanced. They countervail one another to a greater or lesser degree to provide society with security and well-being socioeconomically and psychologically. In the developing south, the picture is not so well balanced: either the state or the market sector plays a dominant role. The state sector is dominant in centrally planned economies and in countries such as Nepal. The market is dominant in the so-called tiger economies of South East Asia. Civil society, with desired features such as autonomy, accountability, self-governance, and devolution of decision-making, is just emerging in countries such as Nepal. It is important, however, that the civil society is promoted. It is imperative for development practitioners to be mindful of the roles and responsibilities of the state, the market, and civil society. Each has its own comparative advantages (Figure 2)

The comparative advantages of the state are that it is inherently big and powerful and has wide coverage. It is a leader in science and technology and has adequate human resources. It has administrators, managers, and civil servants. It has huge financial and natural resources. It makes and shapes policies and legislation. It is also the essence of governance at the local level where development takes place. The market sector creates jobs, incomes, goods, and services. It has financial and human resources. It is also a leader in science and technology and can invest in research and development. It can provide government and civil society with financial, technical, and scientific resources. Civil society is equally indispensable as it represents the common person. It is an association of guilds, professions, trade unions, doctors, lawyers, students, men and women, and media. It also has institutions and organizations such as NGOs and CBOs. Ideally, civil society, especially through NGOs and CBOs, is the voice of the people. NGOs and CBOs are close to the people, flexible, innovative, efficient, and cost effective at their best.

What are the future directions?

Advocacy for popular participation through civil society is etched firmly in the minds of development practitioners. This has been possible because thinkers, both Asian and western, have articulated well the roles and responsibilities of the state, the market, and the NGO sector and articu-

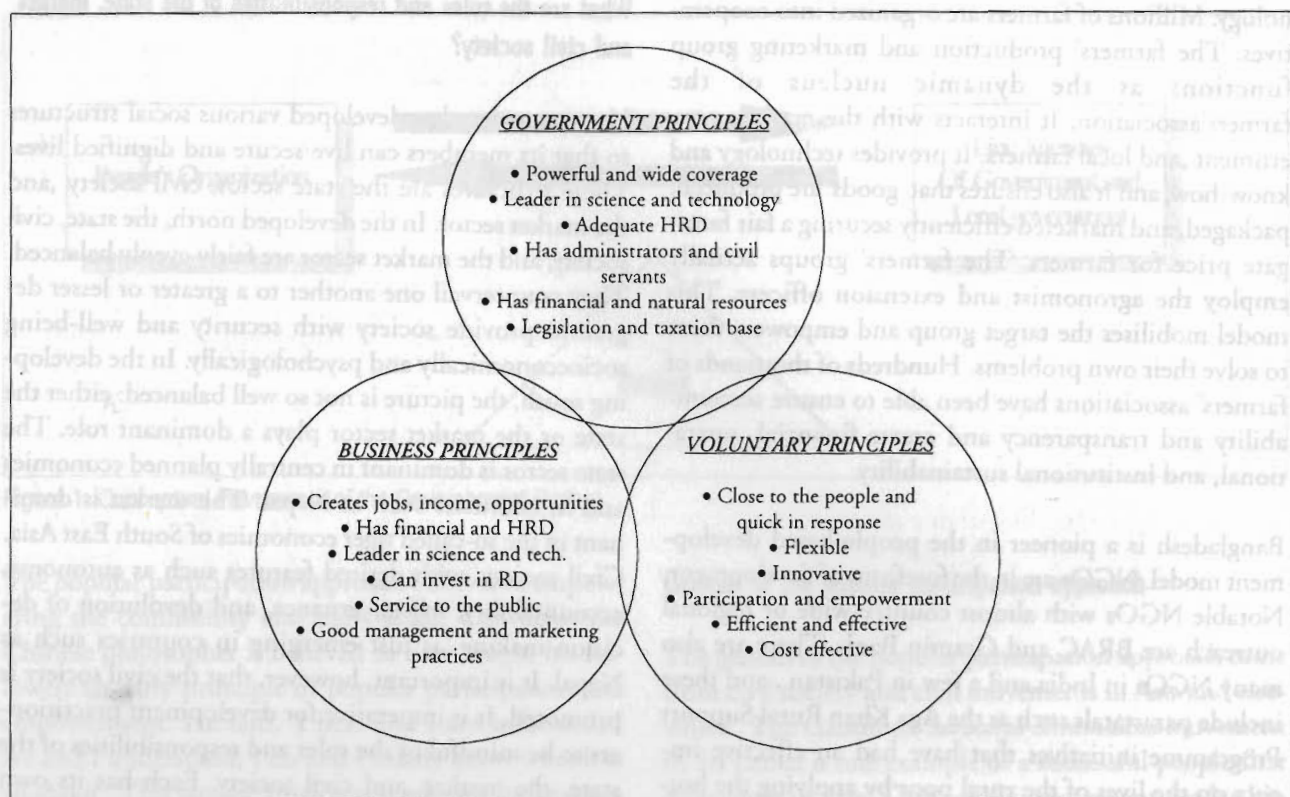


Figure 2: The State, The Market and Civil Society and Their Comparative Strengths

lated them persuasively. Thus, according to Alan Fowler, the development strategy to be aimed at is sustainable development based on accountable self-governance.

Development and extension strategy

Alan Fowler (1997) suggests a useful framework (Figure 3). It is a schematic presentation in which NGOs operate at both micro- and macro-levels. At the micro-level, NGO activities are material services, social services, financial services, capacity building, process facilitation, mediation and reconciliation. This is synthesised as empowerment of communities and individuals, strengthening of local institutions, and sustained improvements in the physical and environmental well-being of communities. The role of NGOs is primarily related to mobilising and strengthening civil society.

What are the essential steps in popular participation?

Participatory approaches fall within two broad frameworks. The first one is the project management design. The second one is the community mobilisation and community development framework. In both these approaches the conviction that local people can help themselves together with outsiders is the guiding principle. The Rural Reconstruction Movement in The Philippines articulates its principles and processes through a

series of diagrams and schematic flow charts (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

Participation broadly means the ability of people at the grass roots to take decisions, implement projects and processes, derive benefits from them and evaluate the process of participation and implementation itself. This involves setting and prioritising activities, contributing and enhancing inputs, and shaping outputs, outcomes/effects, and future impacts. In doing this there is a dynamic action and reflection process that takes place between the grass roots' community and outsiders such as project personnel. Ideally such a process takes place at three levels: the programme or sectoral level in the headquarters of a project; the project and team level; and the community and people's level.

The IIRI/RRP framework leads us through five steps of community participation. They are preparation, mobilisation, initial people's project, integration and expansion, and separation. The first two steps can be termed community mobilisation. This takes time, skills, trust, creativity, persistence and energy to accomplish well. It requires plenty of human input but often involves no physical, monetary, or material inputs. The next three steps can be termed community development. This phase requires human, physical, material, mental, and monetary inputs.

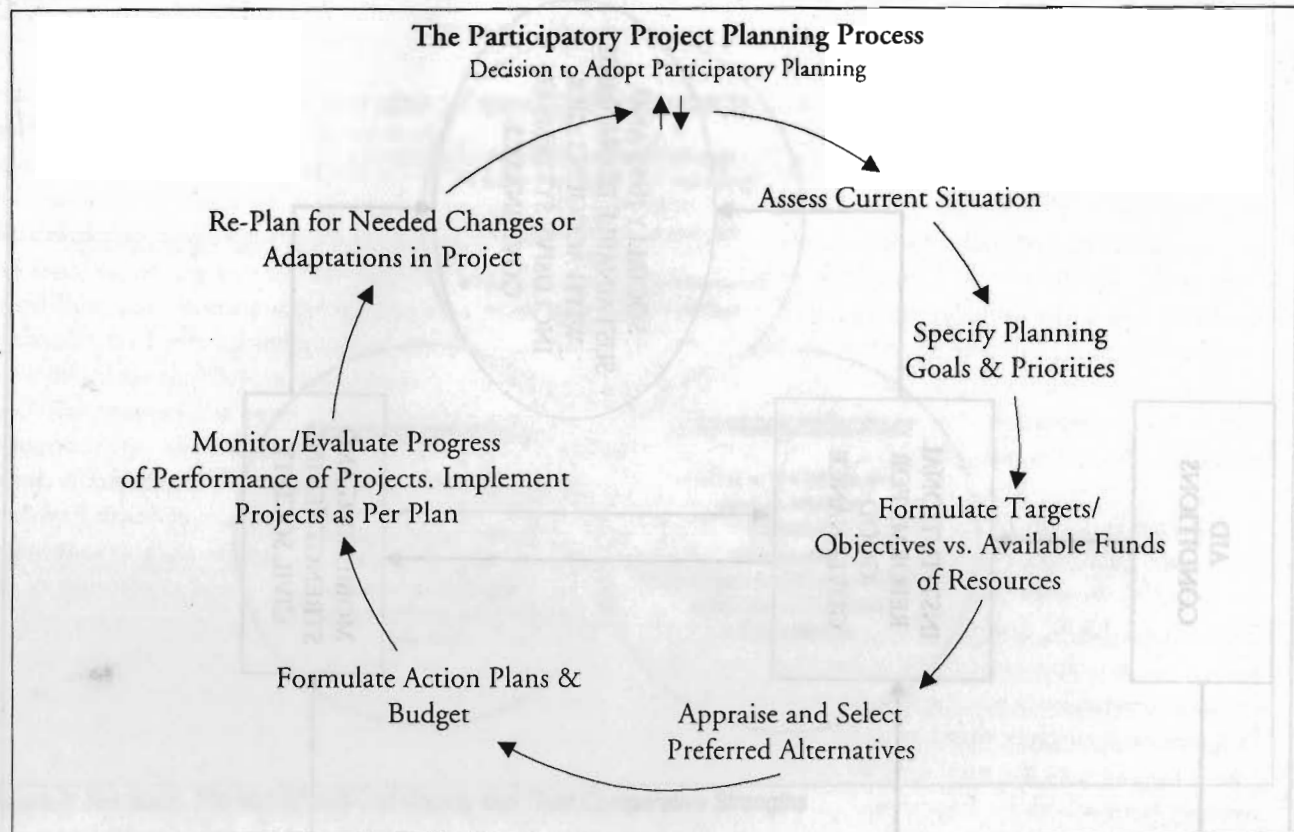


Figure 4: Participatory Project Planning Process

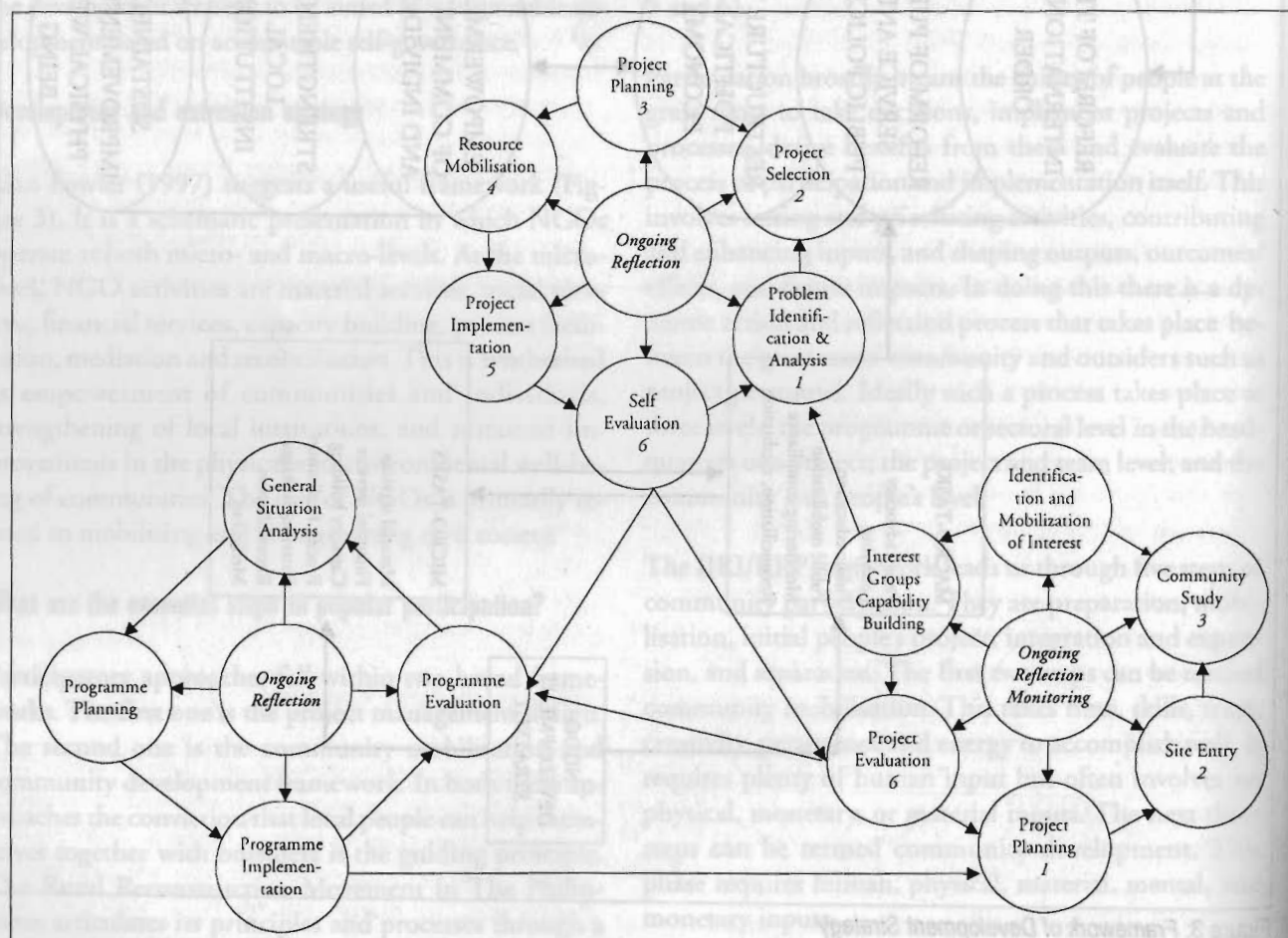


Figure 5: Rural Reconstruction Programme Management Cycle

O U T S I D E					I N S I D E R S				
I PREPARATION		II MOBILISATION		III INITIAL PEOPLE'S PROJ		IV INTEGRATION & EXPANSION		V SEPARATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings of Facilitators • Clarifying Roles and Objectives • Visiting Community • Planning Strategy • Resource Inventory 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry and Immersion • Rapport Building • Learning • Community Study • Awareness Building • Validating Issues • Organising 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating • Training • Providing Inputs • Linking with Resources • Group Capability Building 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Strengthening • Facilitating Linkages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phasing Out • Consulting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Coping • Community On-going Efforts • Accept/Reject Projects 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Knowledge • Identifying Issues • Coming Together 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's Project • Identifying Problems • Selecting Project • Planning • Implementing • Self-Evaluation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Project Cycle • Leading • Expanding • Federating • Acquiring • Linking • Benefitting • Evaluating 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating Projects • Facilitating • Controlling • Pressuring • Influencing Other Communities • Reflecting • Adjusting 	
GENERAL SIT. ANALYSIS		BASELINE		MONITORING		PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION		RETURN EVALUATION	

Figure 6: Phases and Roles in a Community Reconstruction Project

Summarising the popular participation approach

The popular participation approach reinforces efforts towards people-first development. It calls for concrete actions at the micro-level that empower people and their institutions at the community level. It is accomplished through bottom-up empowering and an incremental self-reliant process model as opposed to a top-down service-delivery extension model. Its root is the conviction that local people are knowledgeable and can help themselves together with help from outsiders.

The Asian NGDO Consortium's organizational development model, developed in the 1990s, is based on a holistic systems' approach to enhancing and empowering the institutions of the people at the community level. Popularly called the *Chakra* Model, signifying a wheel of learning and energy points, this systems' approach encompasses three important concepts called systems, strategy, and sustainability. It comes in a well-articulated package that addresses:

- the core values of people's institutions such as vision, mission, values, and organizational culture;
- various systems and functional management areas such as governance, leadership and management styles, human development, financial management, conflict resolutions, information and communication, monitoring and evaluation, and project planning;
- the strategy by looking at the long-term prospects for people's institutions and helping to analyse their

internal and external environment through a strength, weakness, opportunities' and constraints' (SWOC) framework; and

- sustainability issues such as process sustainability, institutional sustainability, programme sustainability, and financial sustainability.

Hopefully, the ideas introduced here on participatory development will encourage trainers and project personnel to put into practice some of the guiding principles of popular participation and empowerment. International NGOs and national NGOs have a wealth of information and experience on participatory planning and project management. Trainers are encouraged to liaise with such institutions and practitioners at the local and national levels.

References and further reading (not necessarily cited in the text)

AIT/NGDO Management Development Program and AIT/Asian NGDO Consortium, 1998. *NGDO Management Development Training Manual*. Bangkok: AIT.

AsiaDHRRA, 1996. 'The AsiaDHRRA Declaration, Jog Jakarta, Indonesia 1996'. In *NGOs in the Age of Globalisation: Analysis and Strategies*.

AsiaDHRRA, 1998. Strategic Planning Workshop Handouts, 23- 28 February 1998. Lagos de Sol, Luzon, the Philippines.

AsiaDHRRA/ChinDHRRA, 1997. Exposure Workshop on Economic Initiatives for Asian Farmers. June/

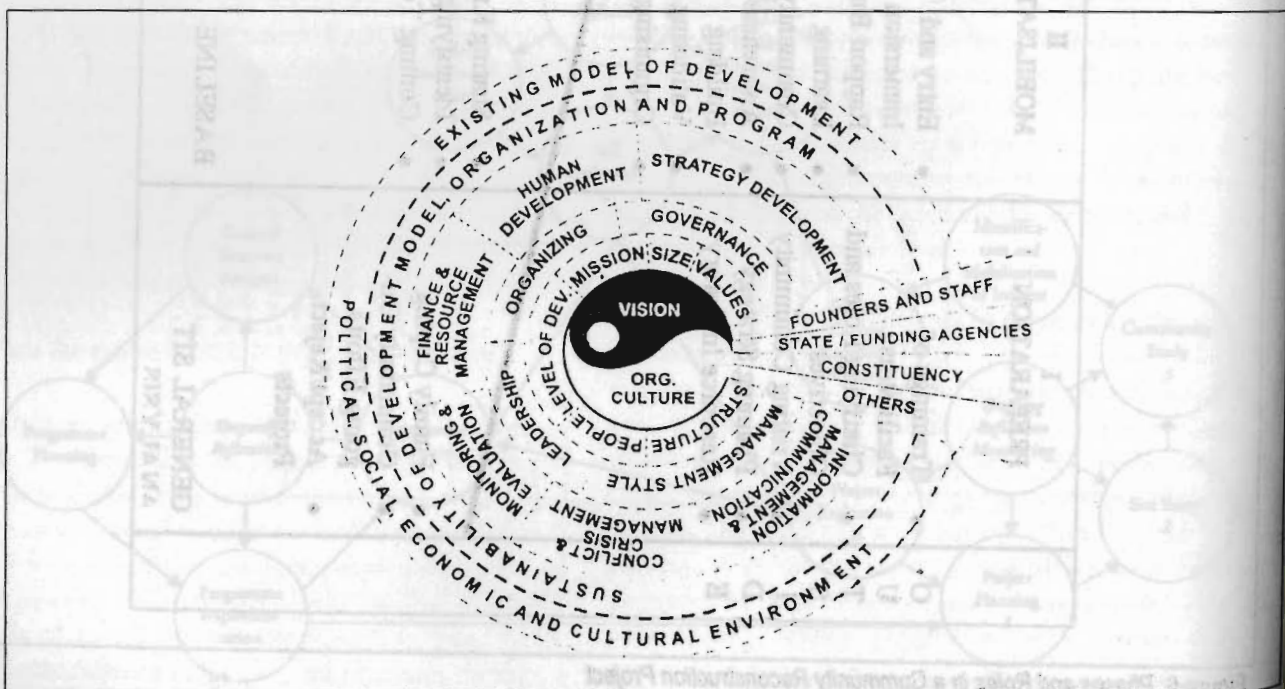


Figure 7: Chakra Organizational Development Model

July 1997. AsiaDHRRA/ChinDHRRA, Taipei, Taiwan.

Fowler, Alan, 1997. *Striking the Balance*. INTRAC/Oxford, London: Earthscan Publications Limited.

International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), 1994. 'International Course on Rural Development Management, August, 1994'. The Philippines: Dimension of Participation and Integration: An Overview. International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Silang, Cavite.

Korten, D., 1990. *Getting to the 21st Century*. Oxford: Kumarian Press.

Rietbergen-McCracken, J. and Narayan, D., 1997. *Participatory Tools and Techniques: A Resources Kit for Par-*

ticipation and Social Assessment. Washington DC: The World Bank, Policy and Resettlement Division, Environmental Department.

Smilie, I., 1997. *The Alms Bazaar*. Oxford: Kumrian Press.

Tamang, D. and Rademacher, A., 1993. *Democracy, Development and NGOs*. Nepal: Search-Nepal.

Tamang, D., 1995. 'An Overview of Drought and Desertification in Nepal'. Search-Nepal Paper presented to Convention to Combat Desertification (UN/CCD), Geneva. Brussel: Bureau for European Environment.

United Nations, 1994. *The Convention to Combatting Desertification (CCD)*. Geneva: UN.