Social Dimensions of Community Participation in IRWS & ES Project: A Note

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"According to the World Health Organisation, 80 per cent of all the sickness and disease is due to the lack of safe drinking water and proper sanitation. India loses 180 crore person-hours due to these diseases" (UNICEF).

During the mid-1980s, development planners realised that people's participation was imperative for the success of any development project. These projects were addressed to the people who had to be the main actors of their own development. An Integrated Rural Water Supply and Environment Sanitation Project (IRWS & ES), sponsored by the World Bank, was one such programme that laid heavy emphasis on community participation.

The Government of Karnataka, with the financial assistance of the World Bank, initiated the IRWS & ES programmes in 1,200 villages spread across twelve districts. It entrusted the selected NGOs with the responsibility of involving the community in the planning and implementation of the project. A share of 30 per cent of the capital cost of Environmental Sanitation was to be borne by the people and was a unique feature of the project.

Apart from World Bank, many international agencies have been involved in the project and ACTIONAID is one among them. ACTIONAID has confined its involvement to only two districts viz., Raichur and Bellary. The project has been operational since 1992, and is currently in its second phase.

The main objective of ACTIONAID's involvement in the project was to learn from the experience and build up a model of community participation which would encompass participation in planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of drinking water and sanitation systems. The other objective was to build local capacities and self- confidence among the people to manage community resources and facilitate their access to external resources for development.

At present ACTIONAID's partners are covering a large areas of operation wth a broad

spectrum of villages in the region, understanding field problems has become a challenging task. To make our interventions more realistic and durable when faced with a diversity of field settings it is necessary for understanding the field problems involved. In this context, the present study offers many useful pointers for those agencies involved in the project.

This paper is based on the learnings from Phase I of ACTIONAID's experience in twenty-six villages of Raichur District. The project villages are broadly classified into three categories based on their performance (participation) such as "High, Middle, and Low" performing villages. The salient characteristics of these villages are discussed in the later sections.

The study addresses itself to the following set of three questions:

i) What are the characteristics of these villages/communities?

ii) Is there any association between these characteristics and the level of participation in the project? and,

iii) Can we use these characteristics to formulate strategies for better implementation?

I

The Region:

Raichur District is one of the most backward regions of Karnataka State. Popularly known as `Hyderabad Karnataka', this region was historically a part of the princely State of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Since many areas of this region were under the "jagirdari" system of land tenure it had been deprived of various development activities that were carried out in other areas of the State. Even today the ownership of land is highly skewed.

The agro-climatic conditions in this region have made it prone to perennial droughts, and there is scarcity of water in the district. Of the nine talukas in the district, only three talukas have canal irrigation, and, therefore, commercial agriculture. The rest of the talukas are under monsoon dependent agriculture.

Agriculture is the major economic activity in the district. Other activities include seasonal migration for wage labour weaving and trade. Sugarcane, paddy, groundnut and cotton are the main commercial crops grown in the irrigated tracts. Jowar, maize, "toor" dal and sunflower are grown under rain fed conditions.

The social composition of the district is quite interesting. The Lingayats are cultivators by occupation, and are the dominant caste in the district. This dominance is evident in their socio-economic position and numerical strength. The other important caste groups are the Kabberas, Kurubas, Bedars and Harijans.

Methodology:

When the project was initiated, it was assumed that the villagers would respond positively to the programme since there was a severe scarcity of potable water. ACTIONAID's experience in this context proved otherwise. The process of project implementation was quite complex. The villages were of a heterogenous nature both in terms of socio-economic and political characteristics. The responses of these villages to the project fluctuated widely. *There was Mustur, a "high performing" village in Gangavathi taluk at one end, and Matamari, a "low performing" village in Raichur taluk at the other end.* Why were there such differences? It is worthwhile to answer this question to understand the factors associated with poor responses to the project in a large number of villages, and to devise suitable strategies for the successful implementation of the project.

From the data available in the project archives, the proportion of contribution raised (against what had been agreed) by each village was taken as the index of community participation (30 per cent of the total capital cost of the Environmental Sanitation component was to be borne by people themselves). Based on this index, all village were classified into three categories : High, Medium and Low performing villages. The villages under each category were further categorised based on caste composition, occupation, the nature of leadership (Nagaraj 1991), and the level of irrigation. These factors played a crucial role in community participation, especially in the mobilisation of contributions. Social, occupational and leadership attributes were developed for each village based on the following propositions.

Social Attributes:

i) Upper Caste dominant (single caste >or=50 per cent)

ii) Scheduled Caste dominant(SCs/STs >or=50 per cent)

iii) Mixed caste villages (no single caste >30 per cent).

Occupational Attributes:

i) Cultivator villages (>50 per cent of large and medium farmers)

ii) Wage labourers and Small & Marginal farmer villages (>50 per cent)

iii) Artisan, business and service villages (>50 per cent).

Leadership Attributes:

i) Consensus villages where decisions are unanimous and leadership rests with one strong leader,

ii) Conflict villages where leadership is factional, affiliated to various political parties and, sometimes, caste based factions.

In terms of the extent of **irrigation** available, the villages were ranked as High, Medium and Low. A composite index of "Village Types" was arrived at using these four attributes.

Village Type and Performance Profile:

The three sets of villages viz., High Performing (HP), Medium Performing (MP) and Low Performing (LP) villages have been analysed here. Among the high performing villages, Mustur stood first with a contribution of 137.25 per cent, and Malkapur was at the bottom with a contribution of 54.17 per cent against the amount agreed (see Annexure Table 1). What common characteristics did these villages share?

High performing villages:

The data on village characteristics, and their performance in raising public contribution was quite revealing. It was clear that three-fourths of the high performing villages were of the single caste type. Numerically, these villages had a large concentration of upper castes, such as Lingayats, Devangas and Hadapads. They were more homogenous in terms of social composition, and enjoyed a higher social status in the community.

With regard to occupation, these villages had a higher concentration of large and medium farmers (one-half) with larger areas of land under commercial crops viz., sugarcane, cotton, paddy and groundnut. Business and weaving enterprises were the other occupational features (nearly one-third) of these villages. This showed that these villages had a market-oriented economy.

The availability of water for irrigation purposes was good in these villages. Barring one-fourth of the villages, the rest had high or medium irrigation facility.

The quality of leadership was also high in these villages which facilated a better response to the project. With regard to the mobilisation of community contribution, there had been a consensus in nearly two-thirds of the villages. All these factors combined had facilitated the better performance of these villages.

A clear pattern emerged from these village characteristics. There were two sets of factors associated with community participation, (i) critical and, (ii) mediating. Caste homogeneity, and the preponderance of market economies played a crucial role in community participation.

Leadership had played a facilitating role in the process of community participation. However, there were exceptions to this pattern where local circumstances had strongly influenced the level of participation. For instance, Mustur village is a diverse village in terms of caste composition and is, therefore, heterogenous. Kabberas, Lingayats and Kurabas are the numerically and socially prominent castes in the village. Contrary to the pattern, Mustur showed a very high degree of participation. What were its unique features?

Mustur village was submerged under the Tungabhadra floods in 1993. There was barely any intervention by the Government to rehabilitate them. People organised themselves, and made efforts to resolve their problems such as allocation of house sites, construction of new houses, etc. Forced by circumstances, they began to work like a "collective". They occupied waste lands belonging to the Government and cultivated them. So far, no land rights have been issued to them. They took up IRWS & ES Project and agreed to mobilise contributions, the reason being that the name of their village would appear in the official records which would be proof that their village existed. Contributions were rationalised at Rs.100/- per acre of landholding under cultivation. They sold off hundreds of old trees near the village, and deposited the money in the project's name. This was possible since there was consensus among the leaders and social groups.

Medium Performing Villages:

There were seven villages in this category. The analysis of these villages was more complicated because no clear-cut pattern emerged from the distribution (Annexure Table.2). There was a blend of community characteristics in this group. The social composition showed that nearly one-half of the villages was of the "single caste" type, and the remaining half was "diversified". There was only one village that had two equally dominant caste groups. In terms of occupation and economy, nearly one-half of the villages comprised small and marginal farmers, and wage workers. The remaining half had a large concentration of medium farmers. A similar trend was reflected in the nature of the economy of these villages also. Nearly, half of the villages had canal irrigation facilities, grew cash crops, and enjoyed a market- oriented economy. The rest of the villages was under dry land agriculture, and the economy was largely subsistent. These characteristics were peculiar to this category. The contributions mobilised in this category varied from 31.69 per cent in Hiremannapura to 46.84 per cent in Hirevankalakunta.

Two villages, **S.Hosur** and **Mattur,** were selected at random. People here were enthusiastic about contributing money towards the project. A few months after the motivation activities were initiated by an NGO, contributions increased substantially (37.81 per cent in S.Hosur). In S.Hosur, floods have been a problem over the years. Unlike Mustur, the Department of Revenue took some steps to rehabilitate the villagers. The notification regarding the shifting of the village came through when the project was half completed. Mobilisation of community contributions came to a standstill because people anticipated that at any moment their settlements would be moved and their contributions would be unutilized. The rehabilitation package included drinking water. In Mattur, despite the lack of canal irrigation facilities, the farmers have made the best use of ground water resources. They have sunk bore wells and taken up sericulture, which is a market oriented agro-husbandry. It has enough potential to increase the level of participation.

Low performing villages:

The profile of "low performing" villages was also quite informative. Against similar parameters, discussed above, these villages showed a different pattern altogether (Annexure Table 3). Nearly two-thirds of the villages in this category had a diverse caste background where no single caste was numerically dominant. There was a mix of various social groups and, therefore, caste heterogeneity was more conspicuous in these villages.

With regard to the pattern of occupation, these villages were predominantly made up of small and marginal farmers, and wage workers. Except for two villages, a majority of the villages in this category had been reeling under drought conditions. They faced severe scarcity of water, both for drinking and cultivation purposes. The farmers practised dryland cultivation and grew food crops. The landless labourers migrated seasonally to irrigated tracts for wage work. The situation in these villages clearly reflected the subsistent nature of the economy.

Leadership was an important factor in the mobilisation of the community and in eliciting participation. Unlike high performing villages, leadership in this category was more factional. Perhaps, the diverse caste composition of these villages could be a reason for the factions in the villages. Obviously, the lack of consensus among the social groups constrained the level of community participation in the project and resulted in low contributions.

Matamari is a representative village from this category and some of its qualitative features are worth mentioning here. It is a multi-caste and multi-religious village.
Lingayats, Christians and Muslims are the major social groups in the village. There are no consensus leaders in the village to lead the project. A few elders who had considerable influence on village affairs have moved into the background. This is attributed mainly to the factions, and the controversies arising out of factionalism. Issues such as community contribution, prevalence of flouride in water, and the role of community in the operation and management of the drinking water system have been distorted by these factions for their own political motives. Each of these has vested interest that have far-reaching consequence for the village polity.

The project had to pass through very complex and intricate processes, thus making community participation more difficult. For instance, one section felt that there was no fluoride in the village water while the others argued that there was a high incidence of fluoride and hence, the urgency for an alternate source. There was another section which held the opinion that there was "no need for community contribution" for the Water Supply Scheme, as the project envisaged that community contribution was needed only for Environmental Sanitation Component. Fortunately or unfortunately, bore wells had been sunk without raising 25 per cent of the contribution in this village. This was due to lack of proper communication among various agencies involved in the project. Such weaknesses in coordination added to the distortions in the people's perceptions about the project.

The experiences of villages such as Matamari are important for NGOs to understand the dynamics of village factions, and the power groups which influence community participation. Therefore, to devise suitable strategies it is necessary to understand the characteristics and the social processes of a village.

Demand for Potable Water:

Apart from community characteristics, it would be worthwhile to examine project specific factors, such as "the actual demand for water", which influence participation levels. The availability of potable water and the demand for it varies across the villages. This variable adds one more dimension to the analysis. To assess the demand for water, certain qualitative and quantitative parameters have to be considered. The availability and requirement of water

need to be assessed against these parameters.

According to technical experts the per capita requirement of water in rural areas is 55 litres per day on an average depending upon the source (public tap: 40 lit/day; private tap: 70 lit/day). There are also quality norms prescribed to classify water as "safe" or "potable". For Raichur region, which is a water scarcity area, water with a content of less than 1.5mg/lit of fluoride is considered "safe drinking water". With regard to "Total Dissolved Salts(TDS)", up to 1500mg/lit is treated as acceptable. Based on these parameters, community participation is seen as important for a better understanding of the process.

It was interesting to note that 80 per cent of the "High Performing Villages" came under the category of `0 to 14' lit. per capita of potable water, which was much lower than the minimum of 55 lit/person/day (Annexure Table.4). The proportion of villages under this category showed a declining trend from MPV (43 per cent) to LPV (22 per cent). Moving vertically down the Table, the trends were:

i) in HPV, the number of villages declined as the quantum of water availability increased;

ii) in MPV, the number of villages remained static as the water availability increased; and,

iii) in LPV, the number of villages increased with the rise on water availability.

This indicated that the low water availability villages had better participation, whereas the high water availability villages showed a lower participation. There was an inverse relationship between the availability of water and community participation.

III

Findings and Suggestions:

There was a close inter-relationship between the characteristics of a community and its response to the IRWS & ES Project in the villages of Raichur District. The villages that had

a single dominant social group, especially of the upper caste, showed better performance. They were successful in mobilising community contributions, which ranged from 59.45 per cent to 137.25 per cent. Apart from the social cohesion in these villages, a market-oriented economy and the preponderance of large and medium farmers contributed towards better performance in some villages and, in others, business and weaving enterprises. Also, consensus leadership has further facilitated the process of community participation.

The villages where the caste composition was diverse showed a dismal performance in the project. These villages practised dryland agriculture, and predominantly comprised of small and marginal farmers, and wage workers. These were backward villages. Contributions raised in these villages ranged from 10.03 per cent to 28.12 per cent. It was evident from their social composition that the community here was more heterogenous, and affiliated to various political ideologies. This led to factionalism which hampered the role of consensus in the decision making process.

It was striking that the villages under dryland agriculture responded poorly to the project rather than the irrigated villages. The situation was paradoxical, although there were valid reasons. In other words, "demand for water" per se was not sufficient to mobilise community participation, but there were other factors such as the nature of the economy and the social structure.

Also, there was a strong association between the quantity of potable water available in the village and its response to the IRWS & ES project. None of the High Performing Villages was under the category of 31-44 lit. of potable water. On the contrary, the largest proportion of of the Low Performing Villages (44 per cent) fell under this category.

In brief, the villages that had a single caste, a market -oriented economy, a consensus leadership, and scarcity of potable water exhibited greater community participation in the project.

Based on the findings of the study, the following strategies have been suggested to attract community participation:

i) After the selection of the villages, the concerned NGOs will conduct a base line survey to understand the structural characteristics of the villages, and classify them into operational categories;

ii) Caste, economy, leadership and the availability of water will be regarded as the important factors for villages to qualify as "low participation and high participation" villages;

iii) (a) For Low participation villages, which generally have diversity of caste, subsistent economy and factional leadership, special strategies have to be devised. For instance, cooptation of factional leaders into the local committees, with specific responsibilities and leadership roles, would go a long way in minimising differences. In situations where mobilisation of cash is a problem due to poverty, indirect ways of collecting contributions could be devised depending upon local situations (like manual labour, selling unused consumer items such as sugar from the ration shop, auctioning stones, sand/soils/tank silts, trees etc., banking upon salaried persons from the village, lucky dips, cultural programmes with entry fees and so on); and

(b) Deputation of more experienced extension staff to mobilise people, intensive campaigns, organisation of group meetings inviting concerned dignitaries and regularity in follow-up, would also be considered.

iv) One High Performing Village will be selected and developed as a model village for the project in the region. By establishing proper coordination with the different agencies, all the major components of the project can be completed at the earliest. This will be used as a demonstration village in the region. This will help in bringing about attitudinal changes among the villagers, and facilitate participation, because **"seeing is believing"**.

Reference:

Nagaraju, C.S. et.al, 1991. "Schooling of Rural Population: Organisational and Structural Determinants" Bangalore: ISEC, Unpublished.

ANNEXURE

Table 1. Community Contribution & Characteristics (HPV)

[Contributions raised are in per centages]

Name	caste	occpn.	leade r-ship	Irriga -tion	cont. agreed	cont. raised
1. Mustur	Divers	LMF	Consen	High	62,860	137.25
2.H.Sagar	Single	Weaver	Consen	Low	186001	132.26
3.A.N.Pur	Single	LMF	Consen	High	90749	114.35
4.Betageri	Divers	SMWW	Consen	Low	104149	71.79
5.Javalgera	Single	LMF	Consen	High	230369	64.84
6.Kinnal	Single	Weaver	Factn	Medium	197154	64.24
7.Kavital	Single	Bus/Ag	Factn	Medium	354480	61.14
8.Kalamala	Single	LMF	Factn	High	176942	59.45
9.Dotihal	-	-	-	-	95508	56.54
10.Malkapur	-	-	-	-	95988	54.17

{Divers=Diversified; LMF=Large and Medium Farmers; SMWW=Small and Marginal Farmers and Wage Workers; Bus/Ag=Business/Agri-business; Consen=Consensus; Factn=Factional}

Table 2. Community Contributions & Characteristics

[Contributions raised are in per centages]

V. Name	Caste	Occpn	Leader ship	Irriga tion	Cont. agreed	Cont. raised
H.V.Kunta	Single	SMWW	Factl	Low	109939	46.84
Ginigera	Divers	SMWW	Factl	Low	54825	45.60
P.Kallur	Divers	SMWW	Factl	Medm	3614	43.49
S.Hosur	Twocst	LMF	Consen	High	62420	37.81
Mattur	Single	LMF	Factl	Low	15300	37.01
Balaganur	Divers	LMF	Factl	High	24139	34.03
H.Mannapur	Single	SMWW	Factl	Low	76356	31.69

[Contributions raised are in per centages]

Table 3. Community Contribution & Characteristics (LPV)

Name	Caste	Occupn	Leade r-ship	Water avail	Cont. agreed	Cont. raised
1.Siddapur	Single	SMWW	Consen	High	312968	28.12
2.Mangalur	Divers	SMWW	Factn	Medium	161346	27.89
3.J.V.Pur	Divers	SMWW	Factn	Low	104160	27.84
4.Shivapur	SC/ST	LMF	-	High	136087	25.28
5.Talekana	Divers	SMWW	Factn	Low	43816	25.01
6.Mudhol	Single	SMWW	Factn	Low	273635	12.32
7.Matamari	Divers	-	Factn	Medium	104664	10.03
8.H.Mygeri	-	-	-	-	92356	10.86
9.Kesur	-	-	-	-	53250	18.78

[Contributions raised are in per centages]

Table.4 Villages across water availability/performance

[Figure are in per centages]

Water Available	High per villages	Med. per villages	Low per villages
0-14 Lit	80	43	22
15-30 Lit	20	28	33
31-45 Lit	0	28	44