


Poverty, Development Project, and Methodology: Need to Change the Approach

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ABSTRACT

The institutes working to eradicate global poverty by supporting development projects should question their methodological approach. Global poverty figures are worrisome, and international institutes are struggling to arrange funds for their activities. It is time to reevaluate the term “sustainable growth,” and more focus should be given to “comparable growth.” Under it, project outcomes are measured against the provincial values, then after best national figures, and lastly with international best. The approach is to find measurable standards to establish the existing gap between the best benefits and project outcomes. Sustainable and poverty eradicating growth is only possible if outcomes are competitive locally, regionally, nationally, and at international level. The paper studies Chhattisgarh Irrigation Development Project (CIDP) and evaluates its results for methodological improvement. The emphasis is to devise a practical approach and focus on comparable growth and address shortcomings of development projects in general.

KEYWORDS

Agriculture, Asian Development Bank, Chhattisgarh Irrigation Development Project, Chhattisgarh Water Resource Department, Project Preparatory Technical Assistance, Water Users Association

1. INTRODUCTION

Chhattisgarh state in India can be labelled as a prosperous state in terms of natural resources but inhibited by poor people. Nature has bestowed numerous mineral resources along with fertile agricultural fields, a forest that covers 45.95% in a geographical area and a fair share of rainfall. In Chhattisgarh, 85% of the total basin area covered by the Rivers Mahanadi and Godavari. Population distribution record shows 49.45% of cultivators and 22% agriculture labourers. Out of 8.3 million strong workforces, 71% (5.9 million) depends on agriculture¹ and its related activities for survival, and their contribution under primary sector is 30.5% in Gross state's Net Domestic Product (2011). (The State of Agriculture in Chhattisgarh-Report submitted by Agro-Economic Research Centre for Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh -2014)

Chhattisgarh gross cropped area increased by 1648 thousand ha an increment of 58.01% (2011) in comparison to 2000-01, at the same time Net sown area is increased by 1415 thousand ha (43.80%).

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Total irrigation increased from 13.4 lakh ha in 2001 to 18.09 lakh ha in 2011 and still there is tremendous potential for further improvement.

Chhattisgarh is also known as the rice bowl of India as 69% of farmers are growing rice. Last decade saw some changes in cropping pattern as the production of soybean and sunflower crops is more than tripled.

During the project design phase, the utilization of irrigation potential is much lower than the national figure besides having a low yield in many crops with primitive agricultural practices prevailing in many areas. As per the study report,² there is an unutilized irrigation potential of 43.00 lakh ha that needs to be developed (1999-2000). In 2006, the village and district Jan Rapats³ (village & district-level People's report to the government agencies), reported half of the villages complained about the falling level of water and desperately wants agencies to address the problem.

Role of Government and International funds for poverty alleviation: Poverty is the core issue and needs to be addressed by every developing country and should get support from every institution working for human development. Asian Development Bank (ADB) aims to eradicate poverty through country focus approach and strategic implementation of schemes in the area of agriculture and rural development. For funding, ADB looks for geographical areas where poverty ratio is high, and implementation of the project will bring substantial change in the livelihood of the rural and poverty-ridden population, and state government is supportive and willing to implement institutional reforms necessary for the success of the project.

The Government of India is always supportive to schemes related to the rural and agricultural development and in every five-year plan agriculture sector is given priority over others as it engages a considerable percentage of the Indian population, schemes like NREGA later knows, and MGNREGA and PM Jan Dhan Yojana are few of the examples.

1.1 Literature Review

Research by development institutions and their contribution in the developing countries in the form of project finance offer extensive documentary evidence that can be used to prepare new means and methodologies for further strengthening development sector and improve the growth rate. A Project Preparatory Technical Assistance (PPTA) and a Project Completion Report (PCR) are the two source of empirical knowledge to evaluate any project. The study submitted to IFAD by IWMI, in 2011 provides an in-depth analysis of 24 projects where Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) was applied. It differentiates the level of success between the different cases, evaluating the impact and the project outcomes.

Dewan et al., 2014 in their paper, evaluate community-based Participatory Water Management (PWM) and argues that participative approach is not always the best approach as the project fails to deliver the desired result from the investment and unnecessary duplicates the institutional framework.

The gaps in participatory irrigation management in India highlighted by Mamta Sawain (2008) in her paper. Marothia D.K (2010) emphasis that natural resources management must be democratically decentralized to make it available for all, despite having differences in land ownership and economic means. Similarly, a report published by India Water Portal provides useful data on the availability of water resources in the Chhattisgarh state. In another study by Marothia et al. (2012) submitted to EU-State Partnership Programme (EU-SPP) on Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the state of Rajasthan, questions performance of WRM bodies. Kothapally watershed project reported by ICRISAT (2009), where water conservation measures backed by community participation under the watchful government monitoring institution is a successful case.

Impact over the gender mainstreaming, and related issues are taken from Gender Mainstreaming Case Study (2015) under CIDP, and in IFAD financed Tribal Development program(2014), and it examines the state achievement and found it is less than the expected but still able to make positive impact over community mobilization and women empowerment.

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