

**PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS
IUCN PAKISTAN EXPERIENCE
WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REHABILITATION IN NWFP AND PUNJAB (ERNP)**

Key highlights of the participatory planning initiatives

1 Contextual background

- ERNP is a government project and PC 1's (government planning document) requirement is to undertake participatory planning (PP) As written in the document " Guidance also needs to be sought from the PC-1s of the three sub-projects as to the objectives of the project. The overall objective, as laid down in PC-1 is to "design and implement, based on a community participatory approach, a sustainable programme of natural resource management and socio-economic development". Consequently, social organization provides the linchpin for all sector activities. While seeking to address NRM issues, therefore, communities' views will always have to be kept in view.
- Presence of IUCN, a constant pushing factor to ensure implementation of PP as it was the responsibility of IUCN to ensure development of Village Development Plans (VDPs) as a part of its social organization strategy.

According to the Financing Agreement between European Commission (EC) and Government of Pakistan (GOP), "IUCNP will act as a link institution, supporting local communities, Government line departments and agencies involved in the project, also providing technical expertise, training, networking, monitoring and evaluation within the framework of the project." The staffing and establishment in Islamabad of a Resource Unit (RU) was one major responsibility of IUCN. "The RU will be responsible for the design and management of the project's natural resource management and social organization strategy and approach and provide technical support to the Field Teams".

2 Operational details of the PP initiative

- A taskforce comprising of representatives from all three sub-sites (geographical area where project is operational) of the project was formed to develop initial guidelines for the development of VDP.
- Meetings were held with the representatives of various organization and projects, which are using PP as an important planning tool in there work. Their documents were also reviewed to learn from their experiences.

- A two days consultative workshop was organized to finalize the guidelines. Representatives from all the partners of the project attended the workshop and contributed to refine the guidelines according to a situation in the respective project site.
- Trainings were organized for the staff to understand PRA approach, concept of VDP and its implementation process. It was mandated that senior management members (including the government official) would also attend the workshop. The objective was to ensure their regular support to the field teams and clarity of their own understanding of the process.
- Initiation of VDP process as pilot in three villages in each sub- Project. As a part of the training it was decided that teams should prepare one VDP spending three to four days in the field with the local people. The objective was to see how this process would work in practice.
- VDP guidelines were further refined based on field experience.
- Regular feedback session and self-monitoring of the process by the teams and the senior staff is a regular activity.
- A small Networking was formed comprising of representatives from donor organizations and government. The objective was to initiate the process of advocating to donors for providing financial support to local institutions for the implementation of their village development plans. A workshop was organized for the donor agencies and government officials to share the concept and process of VDP. Representatives from the local institutions were there to present their VDPs and to share their experience of developing VDPs.

3 Assisting and Resisting factors

Assisting factors

- Presence of IUCN to ensure development of participatory village development plan (PVDP).
- Institutional arrangement with a clear policy to ensure local people's involvement in the management of natural resources together with the methodological tool of PVDP.
- Local institutional building process and people's commitment to organize themselves created an enabling environment for PVDP.
- Regular programme to develop and enhance participatory skill (this covers different types of skills such as leadership ,managerial, communication, interpersonal, etc.) amongst all concerned.

Resisting factors

- Absence of a strong and determined political will at the central authority (senior management) of the project including donor organization in enforcing the implementation of PVDP process.
- Limited financial resources at the local level to implement local activities.

- Dole out approach of government.
- Target oriented (logical frame work) approach of the government. PC1 document on the one hand was supporting the idea of PVDP however on the other hand because of fixed targets & timeframe hinders participatory planning process.
- Unnecessary conflict between IUCN and government officials because of their different motivations, own interests and power dynamics.
- Lack of realization about the importance of PVDP process amongst partners.
- Either lack of understanding and some time not willing to understand about participatory approach (in this case PRA).
- Misuse of the term participation and emphasises on community involvement in the meetings rather than facilitating their involvement in the analysis of their own situation and decision making processes.

4 Breakthroughs and accomplishments

- Initiation of process to develop village plans in approximately 600 villages.
- Recognition by the government (at least by those departments who were directly or indirectly involved in the process) the value of PVDP and its link with the sustainability issue.
- Involvement of various donors in the process and recognition of importance of the process to support local institutions to actively take part in their own development process.
- It was established that there is a relationship of poverty with people's livelihood and natural resources management issues.
- Cracks in the conventional paradigms of development especially in the thinking of government officials.
- It was once again substantially proved that rural women and in many cases less educated or not formally educated can positively contribute in the development process.

5 Lessons learnt

Participatory Planning as a method

- Government, civil society organization, private sector, and financial support organizations needs to work in collaboration with each other for strengthening participatory planning process.
- Enabling macro level Policies are essential to facilitate micro processes for the support of participatory planning.
- Equitable and accountable local institutions are essential for participatory planning.
- It is necessary to have relevant skills amongst all partners such as government officials, civil society organizations and communities.

- Participatory planning process is successful if supported by local and external resource mobilization.

Participatory planning its impact

- Participatory planning can increase the empowerment of community-based organization (men and women). However, one negative side of the participatory planning is that If not checked properly participatory planning can provide an opportunity for local elites or local politician to extend their power base.
- There is a possibility of shift in the development paradigms especially in the context of upward accountability to outward accountability and centralized, uniformed, top down service deliver to devolved, diverse and localized service delivery.

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Preconditions

- Participatory planning should not be seen as one off activity. It should be taken as a continuous process.
- Participatory planning without participatory budgeting is a superficial exercise.
- Good political knowledge amongst community based organizations (CBO) and citizens is crucial for participatory planning process. CBO should be well organized and should have knowledge about legal provisions so that they can make claims on local power holders, should be accountable to there members and well integrated across levels.
- Capacity building of all concerned in the participatory planning process is a major challenge.

Contextual background

Environmental Rehabilitation in NWFP and Punjab (ERNP) is a seven years programme (1996- 2003) funded by EU, Government of Pakistan and Communities and executed by the Government of NWFP, Dep. Of Forestry, Fisheries, wildlife and the Murree- Kahuta Development Authority (Punjab). The project is implemented in cooperation with The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and Agriconsulting Spa (Italy) provides specific technical assistance.

Overarching goal of the project is to halt and reverse ongoing process of environmental degradation. To achieve this goal following are the key objectives of the ERNP project:

Local capacities for sustainable resource management and utilization are developed.

The process of degradation of the watershed land and natural resources is interrupted.

Local communities adopt sustainable land use practices, and

The process of ensuring a balance between economic growth and the preservation of natural resources is established.

In line with National Conservation strategy (NCS) the programme methodology is based on the use of integrated measures of rehabilitation of natural resources and sustainable socio- economic development. Thus the fundamental approach is the full involvement of local populations in the management of resources on which they depend.

Project Areas

Upland Rehabilitation and Development Project for Murree, Kahuta and Kotli Sattian Tehsils (MKKS)

The Murree, Kahuta and Kotli Sattian Tehsils of Rawalpindi District are located in the eastern reaches of the outer low mountains of the western Himalayan range between 32 ° 6' and 34 ° 1' north latitudes and 72° 47' and 73 ° 42' east longitudes. This subproject area is bounded in the east by river Jhelum, in north-west by NWFP and in the south by the sub-mountainous areas of Rawalpindi and Gujar Khan, Tehsils. The subproject area is about 183,400 ha.

Natural Resource Conservation Project (NRCP) in Galiat

Galiat tract in Abbottabad district lies between 33 °55' and 34 °20' north latitudes and stretches from 73 ° 20' to 73 °30' in east longitudes. The area is about 40 km

in length and 16 km in breadth (about 101,200 ha) with ranges of hills running in the north east and north western direction of Abbotabad town, the headquarter of Hazara Civil Division. The well-known hill resort of Murree lies in the south-east and Mansehra lies towards the north of these gales. Important places include Thandiani, Biran Gali, Bara Gali, Bagnotar, Kalabagh, Nathia Gali, Donga Gali, Kuza Gali, Ayubia, Khaira Gali and Barian.

Dir-Kohistan Upland Rehabilitation and Development Project (DKP)

Dir-Kohistan uplands, lying between 35°10' and 35°50' north latitudes and 71°45' to 72°030' east longitudes approximately, make the watersheds of Panjkora river. The river Panjkora has derived its name from its five tributaries namely Gawaldai Khwar, Kumrat Khwar, Jhandrai Khwar, Biar Khwar and Dogdarra Khwar. The area, generally known as Dir-Kohistan, is bounded by the Hindu Kush range on the north and north-west and by the Torwal and Gabral range on the east. On the south of it lies the Dodbaghar, extending towards Bataraihar on its south west. Below Dir, Panjkora river is also known as Dir River. Other important tributaries include Rishkun Khwar, Kurmai Khuwar, Shilkai Khuwar, Junkai Khuwar, Shahur Khuwar and Shiringal Khwar.

The length of Dir valley is about 130 km and has an area of about 166,500 ha. From Dodbah in the south of Sheringal, the area is relatively open, which then, narrows down up to Kalkot. However, Doydarra and Gawaldai streams on the right and Biar on the left bank make fairly open and long valleys, which have a big population scattered in large number of hamlets. From Kalkot onwards in the north, the valley again widens and culminates in open pastures both towards Jandrai Khwar and Kumrat Khwar. These open pastures with picturesque scenes and snow-clad peaks are also found at the ends of Dok Darra, Gawaldai Darra and Biar Darra.

Components of the project

There are four main components of the project to achieve its goal and objectives. Those are natural resource management, social resource development, human resource development and infrastructure & sectoral intervention.

Although all the four components are equally important for the project as well as for the participatory planning process however, in order to explain contextual, structural and methodological issues of participatory planning, focus here would be on social resources.

The social resources are generally meant to include human beings and potentials in relation with human beings such as culture, values and traditions. It also contains structures, systems such as political, livelihood, various capitals etc.

One of the challenging tasks for the project was to design and implement policies and strategies that promote sustainable management of natural resources. It was equally important to create a conducive environment for equitable partnership among all partners of the project especially with local communities.

Problems in the area

General problems in the area include pollution of land, air and water; diminishing natural capital; soil erosion; and loss of biodiversity. Further, poverty, income inequality and growing levels of malnourishment are presenting fundamental challenges in economic development of people. Overlaying these problems is the need for better governance, broad participation and innovation in managing the development process.

Implementation strategy

Strategies, general guidelines and principles for the implementation of ERNP have been established based on the ideas taken from Government's planning documents (PC1) as well as from the National Conservation Strategy (NCS). The Strategies were designed to facilitate the process of better governance, people's participation in the decision-making and to ensure innovative experiments for managing the development process.

ERNP's strategy to mobilize social resources for the management of natural resources has two major components i.e. social organization, and participatory planning at the village level.

It has been observed that there is a tremendous willingness amongst the people to help themselves. However, they need social guidance to achieve it. This includes facilitating the process of establishing or strengthening local institutional building processes and assessment of people's perceptions about their needs and addressing those needs through institutional channels that they value.

PARTICIPATORY VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PVDP)

PVDP is a tool to facilitate local communities for the development and implementation of their area development plans for improving the quality of their life and sustainable management of natural resources.

Objectives of the PVDP:

- To develop collective action plan for the sustainable natural resource management and socio- economic development of communities.
- To develop ownership of project activities amongst local people in the project area.

- To establish linkages between various stakeholders including communities through local institutions (community organisations COs and Area organisations VOs).
- To enhance local capacities in planning and management of forests other natural resources and development projects.
- To facilitate the process of empowering communities to take decision for their own development.

Principles for PVDP:

The PVDP approach should be based on the following principles, which are believed to contribute to sustainable development:

- Participatory approach
- Community organisation (local institutional building)
- Integrated development approach
- Agreed and equitable distribution of resources, concessions and obligations
- Gender specific

Description of the PVDP Process:

i) Formation of planning team

The PVDP process is a set of (flexible) procedures that structure the co-operation of the projects/ program and communities in order to facilitate them in the development and implementation of sustainable area development plans. The process is not a one person's job, but is facilitated by a planning team in a specific village or watershed over a distinct period of time. Planning team should be comprised of members representing all concerned stakeholders. The team should have members representing both genders.

ii) Orientation and training for all partners:

- Development of a common understanding and clarification of the objectives of a PVDP.
- Development of a common understanding on the process for developing a PVDP.
- Development of a tentative time frame for the completion of the process.
- Assigning responsibilities to every member of the planning team.
- Developing team contract to maintain team spirit throughout the PVDP development process.

iii) Development of a checklist

- A brain storming session should be organised involving communities for identifying issues and themes to be covered in the PVDP process. Issues and

- themes should cover social, economic, political, cultural and environmental aspects of development.
- Broader topics or framework of inquiry should be identified.
- Discussion should be held to clarify what the project to offer to the communities, and how sustainability for the plans and projects can be achieved.

iv) Meeting with the communities

Planning team should meet with the representatives of local organizations of both men and women to explain what the PVDPs are and the process for developing these plans.

v) Field work

a) Reflection and analysis

Meetings with the representatives of local organization should be held to discuss the process of PVDP and the role of community.

b) Finalisation of activities

It involves a general body meeting, where planning team and representatives of local organizations should be present. Based on the results of reflection and analysis phase, mutually agreed activity plan should be developed.

c) Roles and responsibilities

A mutually agreed plan should identify roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, the timeframe, various sources of financial resources; and the linkages required.

vi) Documentation of plan and signing off by the project and social organisation

After completing the first four steps, it is necessary to document the process. The draft should be shared with representatives of various interest groups such as women, Projects/ Program staff, representatives of local organizations, representatives of government departments, etc.

vii) Monitoring and Evaluation

Planning of activities only make sense if the implementation process will be monitored and checked appropriately. For a regular monitoring of the plan preparation process and implementation, planning team in consultation with local organizations have to define and set indicators and help the local organizations to self monitor its own progress and performance. The time frame for monitoring the implementation of a plan and its impact should be mutually agreed with the representatives of local organizations.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION/ MOBILIZATION

Community organization may be defined as " the process and structures through which members of a community are, or become, organized to participate in the development process" (Goldbury, 1985).

When viewed as a process, community organization is a sequence of steps whereby members of a community come together on their own initiative or that of others. As a structure it refers to a group of community members that work together for common goals.

Objectives of social organization

The objectives of social organization are to fill the institutional vacuum at the local level through facilitating the process of establishing and fostering a network of community based organizations, for sustainable management of resources social, financial and natural; and for alleviating poverty. These organizations will be responsible for:

- a) Identifying, designing, implementing, maintaining and operating projects and programs that they desire;
- b) Improving the quality of their community and its environment;
- c) Collectively management and control of resources;
- d) Ensuring community participation, accountability and management;
- e) Ensuring that communities develop their own capacity to utilize the available facilities and services.

What is important in social organization process?

Facilitating the process to empower communities through :

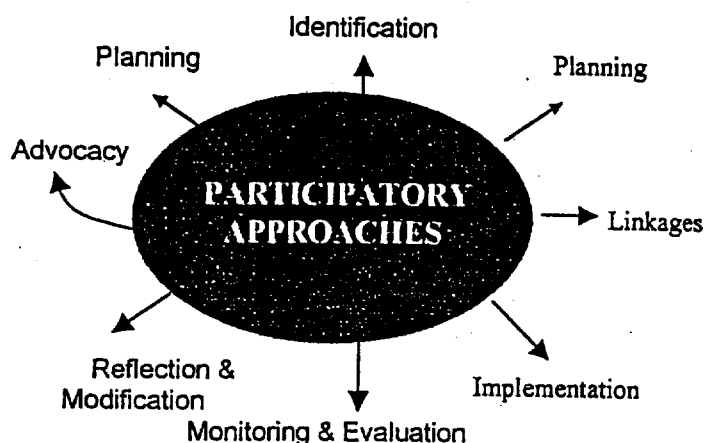
- Empowerment of communities to actively take part in their own development.
- Enhancement of local capacities to manage natural resources and development process.
- Awareness about socio-economic and environmental issues.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGHOUT PROJECT CYCLE

Guiding Principles

- Participation
- Identifying Stakeholders
- Willingness of All Stakeholders
- Participatory Planning and Decision Making
- Learning from the Communities
- Facilitating Women's Participation
- Financial Intermediation
- The Enabling Environment: Legal Issues
- Equity And Accountability
- Sustainability or phase out of external agencies

PROJECT CYCLE



Implementation Process

There are four important methodological and process related mechanism of social organization strategy, which are to :

- Facilitate the process of establishing equitable and accountable local organizations,
- Provide support mechanism at the project level for the staff directly responsible to interact with the local people and to the community organizations till the time they (organizations) feel the need for it,
- Facilitate local organizations in establishing linkages and relationships with various agencies such as NGOs, government departments, private sector etc, human resource development, and
- Facilitate local people to mobilize financial resources utilizing internal and external sources.

Phases of social organization

The process of social organization involves various phases and each phase was meant to move towards implementation of participatory planning.

Community mobilisation and initial activities with local people

In this phase the task is to build confidence, trust and rappo with the local peoples (both men and women). Project team members regularly visit the area to

talk about the objectives of the project and to conduct dialogue with the community to understand local peoples perceptions about their natural, social, political, human and produced capitals and relationship with their livelihood systems. During this phase team also initiate the dialogue about participatory development planning and role of local people in it.

Team building and developing common understanding amongst the staff about the social organization work and participatory planning is an essential activity during this phase.

Social Organisation and initiation of PVDP process

In this phase, the main task is to discuss with the people and support them to design structures, systems and policies for the local organization and through using PRA approach initiate local analysis of their realities.

Finalization of plan and development of action plan with clear roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders

In this phase, the main activity is reflection on overall analysis done by the communities and development of action plan. This activity facilitates all the concerned stakeholders to understand people's priorities for their development and accordingly identify roles and responsibilities for the implementation of plan.