



Critical Challenges: Rebuilding Community Through Social Capital In Watershed Management

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ABSTRACT:- Social capital has a long intellectual history in the Social Sciences. We have looked at the concept of ‘Social Capital’ which is of crucial importance today. In the history of Social sciences, the discourse, debate and deliberation on social capital remains an area of intense discussion. Bourdieu (1986), Putnam (1995), Coleman (1984) and Fukuyama (2004) have looked at social capital from various perspectives. The notion of social capital has gained popularity during the last decade within community development literature as well (Gant, 2001; Krishna 2002, Perkins et.al 2002; Flores and Rello 2003; Pretty, 2004; Rale 2004; Iyer et.al 2005; Hanna et.al 2009). Putnam’s perspective of social capital transforms it from a social process that benefits individual and groups to an entity that benefits society and community. Through myriad of experiences individuals learn to trust each other and this bond is spread throughout society. It leads to participation, social networking and neighbourhood relations.

The present paper is based on our field experiences in Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, India. The field work has been carried out in watershed area and it enables us to see how members of different social classes, castes and gender have engaged with one another in everyday context and suggests that through this they may gain a more rounded appreciation of each other’s attitude.

Drawing on the empirical literature and our field experience we have outlined a conceptual framework incorporating the central findings from research at both the community and institutional level in Hosadurga Taluk, and policy implications for poverty reduction programs. We conclude by arguing that a significant virtue of the idea and discourse of social capital is that it helps to bridge divides among academicians, practitioners, and policymakers.

Keywords:- Social Capital, Participation, Social Networking, Community Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Water – Elixir of Life

Water concerns in South Asia are critical, varied and complex. Except Bhutan and Nepal, all countries in this region share smaller per capita water availability than the world average (Babel and Wahid, 2008). It is in this context that Watershed Management can play a crucial role.

In many developing countries and in India almost two thirds of the agricultural land and rural population are found in rainfed areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Today we are in the midst of a serious crisis. Intensive cultivation has reduced the productivity of land and opportunities for further agricultural growth is being exhausted. Water scarcity and resource degradation have become areas of crucial concern.

Initially watershed management was viewed in isolation from the socio-economic context and this did not bring about the desired result. In the past few years, however, a new watershed approach has evolved which maintains people’s livelihood at the heart of the debate on watershed development. Today watershed management approach can be regarded as - a vehicle for socio-economic transformation and livelihood security especially in drought prone areas.

Over the decades, therefore watershed management in India has been transformed from a purely soil and water conservation technology to a comprehensive programme for promoting sustainable rural development in India. The complex nature of Watershed Development and Management calls for a comprehensive understanding of the conditions acceptable and ecologically sustainable in the long-run.

Recognizing the crucial significance of watershed management, Government of India has given priority to watershed development in rain-fed areas in the country for sustainable management of land and water in various regions. Wani, *et. al.* (2003a) has shown positive relation between watershed and enhanced productivity in rain-fed areas. Not only does it provide an opportunity to maintain self-sufficiency in food while sustaining water resources, it doubles the productivity in rain-fed areas. Therefore, the need for sustainable use of water resources and sustainable development.

Water scarcity

Recognizing the problem of inequity, especially in distribution and access of water is important for understanding the process of watershed management. Problems of governance and how water resources are managed at different institutional levels is of paramount importance. Departure from the traditional top-down approach to decentralized community watershed management initiatives is a key to sustainable management (Ahmed, 2005). Power hierarchy in access to water was a part of traditional India and still continues to be so. Given the hierarchical nature of Indian society development today is perceived as essential for Socio-economic transformation and equitable sharing of water is a major concern.

Development today is perceived as essential for socio-economic transformation through participatory approach. It is in this context that the partnership between State and NGO assumes pivotal significance (Satya Murthy, 2001). How far and to what extent the partnership could bring about equity and social justice is a major concern.

Watershed guidelines today provide a definite design for participatory approach and livelihood dimensions have been introduced to address the concerns of the marginalized. Several watershed based programmes have taken shape and Karnataka has been in the forefront of introducing innovative approaches by incorporating rural livelihood concerns into the programme.

Relationships and interactions in societies determine the dynamics within communities and social groups. People live in communities and these relations shape their everyday life and interaction. Relations individually and at the community level play a major role in modern societies.

Social Capital - Missing link in development

Social capital may be explained as community action undertaken by social actors to further a Group's collective interest. Bourdieu (1983), Krishna (2001, 2002) and Coleman (1988) have been pioneers in evolving the social capital paradigm. Putnam (1993, 2000) however has been accepted more widely. Putnam's perspective of social capital transforms social capital from a social process that benefits individual and groups to an entity that benefits society. It is through the myriad of experiences that individuals learn to trust each other and this bond is spread throughout society. It leads to participation, social networking and neighbourhood relations.

The objective of this paper is to outline how social capital is defined and how social capital is distributed among the communities in Naigere and how a focus on relationships can relate to capacity building through community participation. Using examples from Naigere Village, Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, we would see how social relations are perceived and how they lead to trust between individuals and communities.

Social capital as a concept refers to the networking of interaction between social relations, individuals and groups expressed by norms of trust and reciprocity. The quality of social relation and social capital is of paramount importance. Collective action is possible when individuals join together to deal with problems they face in common and achieve positive outcomes. Social capital, may therefore be a resource for collective action. For example, networks of trusting and reciprocal relationships develop among community members leading to positive relationships.

Knowledge of social capital enhances the potential to design viable alternatives in developing sustainable communities (Lin, 2001 and Krishna, 2002). It has been proposed as the 'missing link' in

development and many regard it as central for community participation, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability (Jones, 2005). On the other hand, McCool and Martin (1994) argue that those members of a community having a strong organic attachment to their social group hold strong opinions and are more aware. Hence they are more anxious about the pros and cons of development in their areas.

II. SOCIAL CAPITAL AS PREREQUISITE FOR COLLECTIVE CAPABILITIES

Analyzing different definitions by Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (1993), one can conclude that social capital is mainly not about “what you know but who you know”, and hence refers to the “norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, p.266). It constitutes “the glue that holds societies together” (Serageldin, 1996, p.196, quoted in Serageldin and Grootaert, 2000, p.44). This paper broadly defines social capital as the set of social relations and networks enabling the villagers to form and sustain self-help groups.

Social capital is an essential prerequisite for collective action. First, it is central for collaborative action as it leads to trust and reciprocity among the villagers. Secondly, it helps the villagers to achieve goals and alternative courses of action. Thirdly, social capital allows access to information and thereby coordination of activities. It also increases the negotiative power of villagers and encourages them to take part in local decision making.

Within the last decade social capital has increasingly become a focus for policy, practice and research within community planning and development literature. Yet, it is a relatively new concept in the field of Watershed Management studies. The notion of social capital has gained popularity during the last decade within community development literature (Grant 2001; Lin 2001; Krishna 2002, Perkins *et.al.* 2002; Flores & Rello 2003; Pretty 2003; Rohe 2004; Vidal 2004; Iyer, *et.al* 2005; Bridger & Alter 2006; Hanna *et.al.* 2009; Vermaak, 2009).

III. CHANGING COMMUNITY

There is however ambiguity about the meaning of the term community. Yet it remains one of the most common points of reference not only among various social scientists but among politicians, policy makers and general public. Like most concepts in Social Sciences, community does not fit into a neat package. Community is essentially a social construct, a model of understanding reality (Tonnies, 1887, Weber, 2010).

Etzioni (1995) accepts the loss of traditional values but wants to reverse the value. He identifies a network of reciprocal obligation and care as the central feature of obligations. It is a place in which people know and care for one another.

As a statement of aspirations there is little to quarrel with Francis and Henderson’s (1992) definition of the purpose of community work as ‘helping people to work together in their community, to grow in confidence and competence, in order to tackle their priorities’. It puts community members firmly to the centre and allows them to determine aims and objects.

Our evidence drawn from Naigere Village community studies enable us to see how members of different social classes and castes today are engaged with one another in everyday contexts and suggests that through this sometimes they may gain a more rounded appreciation of one others attitude. By emphasizing the needs of viewing social capital as a resource for community development it reproduces new forms of capital. These actions lead to increased social capital of shared values, beliefs, trust, feelings and perceptions of support and consequently participation.

In Naigere village, Hosadurga Taluk social capital is proportionately high and well entrenched. Consequently, the villagers have the required self confidence in engaging in community collaboration. They also believe that other members will follow suit (Pretty, 2003). When a community is characterized by distrust or conflict, cooperative activities are unlikely to emerge. To increase trust reciprocity is needed, which refers to simultaneously exchanged goods and knowledge. Reciprocity develops sustainable obligations between people which lead to mutually agreed upon drivers of behaviour, i.e. norms and rules of society. As can be seen, four interconnected features of social capital are listed as essential; relations of trust, reciprocity and exchanges, common rules and norms, and connectedness in networks and groups (Pretty, 2003).

Despite the active global policies there has been a very little documentation of state NGO relationship. Academic studies, Field reports and data are scarce. This is necessary in view of the fact that today the ideas of

NGO are being promoted by AID Agencies, World Bank and Governments. The overarching question we will try to address is that whether and to what extent NGO state relationships are feasible and pragmatic in furthering social development and empowering the marginalized. How has the relationship been translated in the field of development in general and watershed participation in Karnataka. The participatory approach advocates partnership of communities, NGOs and includes the role of state institutions. Major problem today is creating access and equity for the marginalized.

IV. NAIGERE – BEFORE AND AFTER

The impetus for self help initiatives was initially provided by Sr. Levenis D'souza of NGO-Nisarga. Using social welfare and wellbeing as a supportive ideology, building on the social capital of the villagers she was able to mobilize the villagers.

Being a drought prone area distress migration was prevalent. The community was extremely patriarchal, High level of illiteracy prevailed among women, School dropout rate was high. Domestic violence was a regular occurrence. The area lacked basic infrastructure such as sewage system, water supply and basic services such as Health, sanitation, and hygiene. The individual capabilities were limited as there were dropouts.

Gender discrimination – during the interview women recalled their lost childhood in terms of days spent helping their mothers collecting water, looking after siblings, unlike their brothers. The watershed project has made a visible impact on the life of the women. Women now have space. Their participation in public life has increased. Leadership has emerged among poor women. Women have contested the Gram Panchayat elections and twenty four of them have won the Gram Panchayat elections and won in Taluk Panchayat.

The watershed programme brought about tremendous change in the village of Naigere. Vast areas within the village have been brought into the coverage of the watershed programme.

Watershed programme - The challenges of the nature to utilize and preserve the water resources at disposal for the benefit of present and future generations. Seeing the difficulties that farmers face, priority is given for watershed programs and rain water harvesting structures. This has resulted in utilizing the rain water in agricultural activities and even for household purposes.

Today women have fewer restrictions in the public domain. Women are making time to attend SHG meetings and are able to negotiate with men, leaders and public officials.

Women like men are not a homogeneous category. Identities intersect with other forms of Social stratification such as class, caste, identity gender. Selling milk to private dairies has emerged as a major occupation of all groups of women and they are earning income on their own. Women's lifestyle reflects change. Today women of all groups own mobiles and TV. Aspiration of mothers to send the girl child to school today has increased. A girl child is prized today and gender ratio has improved in the village.

V. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY NETWORKING

Successful Self Help Groups

In Basker's (2005) view KAWAD Watershed Project has addressed gender equity especially for social disadvantaged women in a holistic manner through self help groups. There has been a remarkable improvement in the livelihood of the marginalized which includes mostly women and particularly those belonging to the SCs/STs/OBCs, Minorities, Widows and the socially and economically excluded. The study theorizes gender and discusses the KAWAD experiences in the field.

Enhanced organizational ability among women's self-help groups has increased participation in Public institutions and has paved the way for greater gender equality. The report by Antrix Corporation on federation of Self Help Groups – Initiatives towards Women Empowerment – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (Antrix Corporation, ISRO, Bangalore – May 2007) brings out efforts of a successful attempt to federate the Self Help group of Sujala Project of Kanavisiddegeri sub watershed of Haveri District. Spoorthy, the Field NGO (FNGO) under the leadership of a woman, is responsible for bringing all the Ninety Nine Self Help Groups together. It is focused on empowering women economically and socially, giving them voice and choice and provide them with an opportunity to become effective players. Case studies illustrating the achievements, impact and transformation are briefly outlined.

VI. PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS WAS A MAJOR STRATEGY OF NISARGA

Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been formed and it is based on the need assessment. Community based organizations for women (SHGs) are promoted throughout Naigere Village by Nisarga. To build the capacity of the groups trainings are organized regularly on topics like concept of SHG, book writing, Linkages to Banks and government Departments, Leadership, Gender sensitization, Health Hygiene and Sanitation, Value addition to food preparation and nutritious food intake. Women are sensitized to Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), Income Generating Activities (IGA), Panchayat Raj Institutions, Right to Information Act, Environment Protection and Promotion.

Different forms of Social Capital have played different roles in Naigere. Bonding ties with neighbours have acted as safety nets and have lead to the emergence of Self Help Groups in Naigere. Women have found strength in their groups, in doing things collectively. Collective mobilization for building of collective wellbeing is witnessed. Bridging with people from different network provides linkages with Institutions and system like Banks and promotes economic empowerment. It has enabled them to undertake various Entrepreneurship Development Programmes and Income generating Activities. Vocational training is given for tailoring, doll making, food products preparation, leaf plate making, surf, phenol and soap making, value addition and nutrition preparation and broom polishing. For these programmes linkages have been established with NABARD.

In order to improve the livelihood and monetary independence of men and women, entrepreneurial endeavours are being increasingly accepted as an imperative. It also acts as an important source of value addition in the creation of jobs. NISARGA has targeted the unemployed and have come up with various strategies to address them. A number of policy interventions have been formulated and variously implemented.

Youth are the backbone of any society. It is interesting to note that there are Youth Self Help Groups. In order to empower them efforts have been made to ensure economic independence through capacity building training and skill development training. All this leads to self-dignity, self-respect and empowerment. Career counseling is also offered. Every year summer camps are organized. At present there are 14 Youth clubs which are functioning well.

The NGO provides support to children without childhood. Children club has been established and it is a common phenomenon in the villages in Hosadurga Taluk that children dropout from schools due to poverty and for taking care of the siblings, grazing of livestock etc. As a result they land up in bonded labour and child labour.

Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)–NABARD has launched a scheme for the promotion of JLGs in order to develop effective credit products for small/marginal/tenant farmers, oral lessees and sharecroppers, and entrepreneurs engaged in various non-farm activities.

A comprehensive study that can be used at a grassroots level for design, implementation and evaluation of development interventions. While there is much debate at the theoretical level as to what empowerment comprises and how it best can be achieved, there has been little primary research at the grassroots level to contribute to an understanding of what empowerment means in everyday terms and how NGO Government interventions takes place. Thus, it appears that there is not enough research done in assessing the impact of development projects and NGO State collaboration on the process of empowerment of target individuals or groups.

Nisarga and government departments have created an enabling environment for development is reflected in Naigere Village. The collaboration between government, NGO and Aid agencies have brought about tremendous changes in the village scenario. Healthy and Hygienic environment make the people live with self-respect. In this regard the awareness and sensitization programmes for CBOs, school children, Grama Sabhas and Grama Panchayath, theme camps on Malaria, HIV/AIDS initiatives are important and Water borne diseases. Clean and safe drinking water, tree plantation, construction of toilets and smokeless chulas, installation of non-formal energies (Solar system) is organized. To make the community involved in implementation of these programmes periodic Shramadhana, human and animal health checkup camps are organized.

VII. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ARTICULATION OF DEMAND

Villagers in Naigere have brought about changes by first reflecting critically on their current status, perceiving a better life and taking action to achieve this aspired life. NGO has been the catalyst of change today this process is linked to the Freirian concept of conscientization. Freire calls for the “awakening of the critical consciousness” of the poor to express their social discontent, think critically about their problems and actively resolve these problems (Freire, 2000, pp.36, 75-81). Acts of agency, such as self-help, thus result from a process of self-scrutiny by urging them to initiate projects to enhance their living conditions.

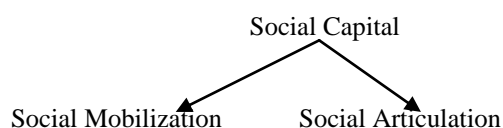
Social capital creates an enabling framework for articulation of demands. Despite decades of planned development the village still lacks basic health facilities. Even a primary health centre does not exist in the village Naigere. This adversely affects the wellbeing of men; women and children for getting medical and health check-up facilities. The villages in Naigere identify shortage of basic health care centres as a serious issue. Poverty stricken villagers do not have any access to health care due to poor finances, distances and expensive transportation. Due to such inconveniences establishing a clinic is an immediate priority. They also lack private vehicles and ambulances to transport sick people.

Ramegowda says that hospitals come to be the custodians of the lives of the rural citizens. Villages are prone to illness facing hazards like hunger, heavy manual work, extreme drought condition, and lack of housing, water and sanitation. Frequent outbreak of diseases of malaria, Chicken gunya are rampant in the village. Lack of local health care facilities is an important problem. It is indeed a sad state of affairs that after years of independence these facilities have not reached a large number of people.

Essentially the village has Animal health camp, but no medical support for men, women and children. When people fall ill, they must travel several kilometres as they may not be located near the hospital. To meet medical expenses, the family may sell some property or livestock to enable the sick person to be sent to the hospital. A doctor runs a private clinic, but residents say he charges fees too high for them to afford. The villagers are often dependent on village quacks.

Naigere village has no high school for their children and children have to travel about five kilometres to attend school, which they consider too far. The poor people in Naigere village say that it is tough for their wards to avail education at the nearest school as it is not easy to commute. Generally teachers are reluctant to go to rural areas in most part of the country and this is reflected in the quality of education.

Transportation is the nerve centre to connect people to various activities. That there is no bus stop in Naigere village makes commuting difficult. Women have been organizing protests for having a medical centre and a bus stop in the village for a long time. This has been possible because of the networking among themselves. However, Government has not given any heed to their demand.



This paper therefore explores the role of social capital in community development by focusing on Naigere. Social capital as a useful resource, facilitates social interaction, promotes mutual support, cooperation and thus improves participants’ livelihood through income generation, better community governance and capacity building. An important observation is that social capital yields superior outcome if it is used in line with the local conditions of a given society. The findings suggest lessons for policy planners, donor agencies, development practitioners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to use social capital as a resource in order to achieve sustainable community development.

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