



Interplay of local governance and local-self-governance: Evidence of community participation from Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Community participation means some form of involvement of people, with similar needs and goals, in decisions affecting their lives. Community participation has been regarded as a positive force for change and authorization to development. Community participation draws on the vigor and eagerness that exists within communities to define what that community wants to do and how it wants to operate. Community participation is fundamentally required to achieve strong and sustainable development at the local level. Community participation requires going beyond dialogue to allow citizens to become an integral part of the decision making and action processes. This is not curbed to a response to initiatives or agendas set in motion by politicians and professionals. It reflects the need for the development of more active communities in their own right especially in relation to assessing needs and assets, agreeing on a vision, generating ideas and plans for action, enabling action monitoring and evaluation. The role and responsibility of the various parties in the community participation process must be examined in the light of the complexity of the situation in the context such as, local government, community based organisations, professionals, facilitator, financial institutions and NGOs based on regional and national organisations on a statutory and non-statutory level, service organisations. The vast majority of interactions between citizens and the state take place through local governance. It provides leadership for local areas and communities; democratic accountability for a wide range of public services; and is the key to effective partnership working at local level. Local governance is expected to provide more services, be innovative, and keep up with the increasingly sophisticated demands of an articulate populace who knows their rights (Bowman & Kearney, 1996). Local Governance provides a broad range of services to the public in the village, city and county, irrespective of their age, means, culture, religion or race. It is the primary vehicle of governance and public service at local level and provides these services on an all-inclusive basis in a defined geographic area. As a result of this level of service delivery, there is a responsibility and desirability at local government level to facilitate, enable and support the public to participate in sustainable decision making processes in those service areas that concern them. In order to realize the decentralized society, it is important to expand community self-governing whereby local residents can be involved in community development with their own will and responsibility. In this context, local self-governance emerged as the new paradigm of the development process. The present paper highlights the potential of community participation in unlocking community capacity, energy and creativity in a small village of Kashmir which experienced development and social mobility due to local self-governance at par with local governance. In this research work only some initial ideas are presented and should be considered work in progress. While concluding the paper few suggestions are given for development and mobility through participation at ground level.

KEYWORDS : Self-Local Governance, community participation, political apathy

Introduction:

The concept of participation varies with its application and definition. The way participation is defined also depends on the context in which it occurs. For some, it is a matter of principle; for others, practice and for rest others, an end in itself (World Bank, 1995). Indeed, there is merit in all these interpretations. Participation is a stereotype word like children use Lego pieces. Like Lego pieces the words fit arbitrarily together and support the most fanciful constructions. They have no content, but do serve a function. As these words are separate from any context, they are ideal for manipulative purposes (Rahnema, 1992). The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. But there has been little analysis of the content of citizen participation, its definition, and its relationship to social imperatives such as social structure, social interaction, and the social context where it takes place (Arnstein, 1969). Participation can be top-down or bottom-up, uniform or diverse, simple or complex, static or dynamic, controllable or uncontrollable, predictable or unpredictable. Often the term participation is modified with adjectives, resulting in terms such as community participation, citizen participation, people's participation, public participation, and popular participation. A distinction is made between popular participation and community participation—the former concerned with broad issues of social development, the latter with direct involvement in local affairs. Community participation as the process by which individuals, families, or communities assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and the community's development (Oakley and Marsden, 1987). In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and

execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits (Paul and Bamberger, 1986). In order to realize the decentralized society, it is important to expand community self-governing whereby local residents can be involved in community development with their own will and responsibility. The role and responsibility of the various parties in the community participation process must be examined in the light of the complexity of the situation in the context such as, local government, community based organisations, professionals, facilitator, financial institutions and NGOs based on regional and national organisations on a statutory and non-statutory level, service organisations. In this paper, I will highlight the role of two local governing institutions and offers a theoretical framework to model aspects of participation and provides a simple benchmark to consider the effects of community participation on development and social mobility of community. Second, this paper presents empirical evidence that illustrates the ambiguous effect of community participation.

Methodology:

Universe of study: The universe of study is district Budgam Within this district village Iskanderpora is chosen located in block Khag with total 392 families residing. The Iskanderpora village has population of 3301 of which 1733 are males while 1568 are females as per Population Census 2011. In Iskanderpora village population of children with age 0-6 is 620 which make up 18.78 percent of total population of village. Average Sex Ratio of Iskanderpora village is 905 which are higher than Jammu and Kashmir state average of 889. Child Sex Ratio for the Iskanderpora as per census is 676, lower than Jammu and Kashmir average of 862. Iskanderpora village has lower literacy rate compared to Jammu and Kashmir. In 2011, literacy rate of Iskanderpora village was 62.74 percent compared to 67.16

percent of Jammu and Kashmir. In Iskanderpora Male literacy stands at 74.54 percent while female literacy rate was 50.53 percent. As per constitution of India and Panchayat Raj Act, Iskanderpora village is administrated by Sarpanch (Head of Village) who is elected representative of village. The study is based on the observation both participatory as well as non-participatory.

Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total number of houses	392	-	-
Population	3301	1733	1568
Child(0-6)	620	370	250
Literacy (in percents)	62.74	74.54	50.53

Source: Census 2011

Objectives of study

- To highlight the role of local government in the development of village community structure,
- To analyse the response of community based organisations to the development of village,

Major findings of study

Local government response to village Iskanderpora:

The local government structure provides the framework of technical and administrative support within which sustainable development can take place. In the developing areas, these structures are generally in a parlous state, with the technical and managerial support systems practically non-existent. Their local support is weak due to the past political process, and the fact that a high percentage of the population is unable to afford even basic services. This does not detract from the fact that infrastructure provision and operation require some form of institutional framework, and local government is the appropriate medium for this. Accordingly such structures can be expected to become more prominent in the developing any area. This will occur through institutionalizing the delivery process evolving through projects, through mergers with local authorities from the developed world, and through specific institutional capacity building programmes. But the harsh reality in Iskanderpora village is reverse. The basic structure is absent or in dilapidated form. The school which was established in 1962 by the government is not yet upgraded and the building is very old and rough. Basic amenities like road, water and electricity are still in infancy. The local panchayat has not been able to perform any good move in any field. The works done through MGNREGA are done against laid principles of the very act. Whatever work has been done is highly politicized in which people having political patronage are busy in building their castles through MGNREGA and other government schemes neglecting the community as whole. This political alienation has lead people of the area to look for an alternative to the local government particularly in the field of education. Hence they opted for the community based development programme which is discussed in the following section of the paper.

Community based organisations (Self-reliance and Self- help Model) response to development of village:

Community based organisations (a sub-set of Non-Governmental Organizations: NGOs) provide the interest group input into the development process. The community based organisations have achieved considerable importance in the transition process in the village Iskanderpora. To appreciate the role of community based organisations such as Youth welfare forum and Civils in this village can be conceptualized as the matrix standing outside state structures and political parties, which embody different and special interests in the institutional arrangement and sustains the autonomy and to act in furtherance of their interests. In this study self- reliance and self- help model approach is applicable. It is evident from the above discussions that participation as it relates to development is a process that includes a set of activities and takes place through participation of people. The people of the area started a community run school-*Imamia Public school* which acts an

alternative for the students of the village to government school. The people of the area started to donate a fixed amount of 200 rupees from their salaries for the community school. The land for the construction of the school was donated by a person of the village free of the cost. People of area decided to donate all the charities of auspicious days to the up gradation of the school. With the donation from the people the village has developed a library of its own along with many posts of drinking water and lavatories. There is also a trust owned by the community which looks after the poor and weaker sections of the village. Thus the self reliance community based model has act as an alternative to the ailing bureaucracy and redundant political system of the valley.

Conclusion:

Local Government provides a broad range of services to the public in the village, city and county, irrespective of their age, means, culture, religion or race. It is the primary vehicle of governance and public service at local level and provides these services on an all-inclusive basis in a defined geographic area. As a result of this level of service delivery, there is a responsibility and desirability at local government level to facilitate, enable and support the public to participate in sustainable decision making processes in those service areas that concern them. The local government structure provides the framework of technical and administrative support within which sustainable development can take place. In the developing areas, these structures are generally in a parlous state, with the technical and managerial support systems practically non-existent. Their local support is weak due to the past political process, and the fact that a high percentage of the population is unable to afford even basic services But the reality from the ground in the village of *Iskanderpora* reveals a different story of how an bureaucratically and politically alienated village community has come up with an alternative to it by establishing community run school, library, trust, laboratories and many posts of safe drinking water. In this context, community participation emerged as the new paradigm of the development process. This village may act as a model to all those areas that are facing bureaucratic and political apathy for the self sustaining development with the help of community participation.

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