

**People's Participation for Integrated and Sustainable Development:
Experience of a Community Development
Pilot Project in Sri Lanka**

by

J.K.M.D. Chandrasiri

Abstract

People's participation, which has become a popular phenomenon in recent development interventions, is an essential ingredient in integrated and sustainable development. This paper presents the experiences of a community development pilot project implemented in the central hill country of Sri Lanka for developing a replicable mechanism to obtain participation of people for integrated and sustainable development. According to the study the organizational structure of establishing target group organizations under sub-committees of a single mother organization, seems to have become successful for the participation of different interest groups. However, differences were observed regarding people's participation in terms of its form, extent and the period of the project. At the early stages wrong attitudes resulted in weakening the participation of people in this project which aimed at self-help and self-reliance development. But various strategies utilized in later stage were successful not only for avoiding those weaknesses but also for mobilizing people. The sustainability of this development mechanism depended on the sustainability of a number of interdependant elements. These elements, namely organizational system, revolving fund and income earning activities were determined not only by micro factors but also by macro policies.

1.0 Introduction

Eliciting people's participation in development projects/programmes has become an important phenomena since early 1970s. From 1980s it has become a mandatory feature in most of the bilaterally and multilaterally aided projects (Manikutty, 1998). Participation as a key element in development is widely accepted and espoused in development programmes/projects of government and non governmental organizations at various stages.

Under the participatory development concept, people should be treated as 'subjects' under which they become the active partners for their own development instead of considering them as 'objects' under which they become the passive recipients of technology and other related benefits developed outside their realm of experience (Narayanasamy, 1981, p.104). Participation by people in the identification of their problems, seeking solu-

1981, p.104). Participation by people in the identification of their problems, seeking solutions (planning), taking initiatives and actions (implementation) to satisfy their felt needs (Tilakaratne, 1981, p.2) and reviewing the progress and effect of early initiatives and actions (monitoring and evaluations) in addition to motivation towards self-reliance and breaking away from dependencies are the essential components of the participatory development process.

The term sustainable development has been originally defined as the "Capacity to provide for the needs of the present without diminishing the options of the future generations" (W.C.E.D, 1987, and cited in Samad, S.A. and et.al 1995, p.3). In 1960s the definition of sustainable development primarily focussed on the preservation of the natural resource base although it was defined, later, in various dimensions such as ecological, technical, managerial, economic, social, human, cultural/ethnic and institutional. Socially, in order to fulfil the condition mentioned at the beginning it is imperative to address the problems of poverty, hunger and other forms of human deprivation. Otherwise a large portion of underprivileged in the society may damage the environment for their survival. So it has been argued that peoples initiative and participation would be crucial for a development project to be sustainable (Lin Na, 1995, p.255).

Then to obtain participation of people and also for the sustainability of any programme/project, integration¹ of various components and activities by incorporating the felt-needs of the people with that programme/project is a necessary thing (Reza, S.& et al, 1995, p.43). In order to ensure peoples participation for integrated and sustainable development various organizational mechanisms and strategies have to be developed for local people. They are expected to join together, present their views and ideas, take decisions, elect leaders and benefit equally from any inputs, materials and other services within a democratic environment where the characteristics such as justice, fairplay transparency and accountability are practiced.

The Model Villages for Integrated Rural Development (MVRD) project² implemented by the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI), between 1991-96, was an action research experiment that attempted to develop more participatory mechanisms and strategies at grassroot level for integrated and sustainable development.

The aim of this article is to highlight lessons of experience gained from the MVRD project to discuss problems encountered and to review the guidelines developed. It is ex-

1 Integrated Rural Development (IRD) is a new approach to rural development planning that came into existence at the end of 1970s and has become quite popular since then. This approach is justified because of the failure of sectoral approach to make an effective impact on rural poor. IRD "refers to a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach whereby series of activities that are complementary and mutually reinforcing are undertaken almost simultaneously" (Narayansmay, 1981, p.94) to find solutions for diverse issues centred especially on rural poor.

2 This project was sponsored by the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia and Pacific (CIRDAP) in Bangladesh by provision of financial support and necessary advisory guidelines. The same project was carried out simultaneously on pilot basis in 11 Asian countries.

pected that these components would be useful in the planning and implementation of similar community development projects associated with peoples participation for integrated and sustainable development.

2. The Model Villages for Integrated Rural Development (MVRD) Project

2.1 Goals and Objectives

The main goal of the MVRD project was to enhance income levels and standards of living of the people by alleviating poverty, and its short-term objective being to evolve a sustainable and replicable method/mechanism to obtain participation of communities for their own development.

The specific objectives of the MVRD project were:

- 1 Encourage community members to join together to take organized action in order to solve their common issues.
- 2 Promote community people to manage the available resources for deriving benefits in terms of fulfilling target group requirements and integrated development.
- 3 Promote income generating activities/self-employment by assuring low interest and less cumbersome credit procedures.
- 4 Examine the effectiveness of field workers (facilitators) intervention in self-reliance rural development programme and also to identify their characteristics more suitable to the position
- 5 Assure sustainability of participatory development initiatives in terms of their continuity when outside interventions are disconnected.

2.2 The Input

The Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), the sponsoring agency of the project allocated an equivalent to Rs.245,000 (according to the exchange rate in 1992) as seed money and also provided other financial and material benefits. The Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute, the implementing agency of the project provided financial and material benefits. In addition the inputs of the MVRD Project were services provided by government agencies and service institutions and money and labour donated by the village people. The expertise of the implementing agency, and the services of two field workers/facilitators were also utilized as inputs.

2.3 Activities and Output Targeted

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers planned to perform different activities with expectation of certain combined outputs. Those activities were:

- ☐ selection of villages and conducting of surveys.

- ☐ establishment of community organizations and sub-target groups in experimental villages through the process of creating awareness, changing attitudes and motivating people (output; established community organizations and sub target groups linked with the earlier)
- ☐ establishment of a revolving fund based on peoples savings (output; established village bank)
- ☐ provision advice and training for job-oriented skill development and encouragement community organizations for resource delivering and organized marketing (output; emerged self-employment and income earning activities)
- ☐ appointment of a suitable field worker and train him (output: trained facilitator in the village),
- ☐ setting up of an advisory committee of the area leaders and social workers (Output; established advisory committee comprising of area leaders).

2.4 Progress of the Activities

2.4.1 Selection of Villages

Four villages were selected for this project from a similar socio-economic environment with one of those as a control village. Panabokka, Akkaraseya and Pahalatambavita were selected as experimental villages, the first two being from the Kandy district and the third from the Kegalle district. The control village Wembliwatta also belongs to the Kandy district. Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita had come under another CIRDAP study too called CIPS II³.

All of those villages located in mountain slopes are less developed, compared to other adjoining villages. Except the Panabokka village, which is a traditional one, all others have emerged in abandoned tea estates acquired by the government for settlement of landless families from surrounding villages. The main asset of these families is the land in which they are residing now. In the project villages 61 percent and in the control village 74 percent families are living operating very small lands of less than half an acre or 0.2 hectares. A limited number of affluent families own comparatively larger size of lands and remained at the top of the social strata in these villages.

Employment-wise the majority of the villagers (about 70 percent in both categories of villages) are casual temporary labourers. About 14 percent are in government employment mainly in labour grades. Farming, animal husbandry, trading, masonry and carpentry are other occupations they are involved in. As much as 25 percent of households in project villages and 51 percent in control village were drawing incomes below the poverty line (Rs.8,400/- per annum). The poor levels of income and wealth of these families seems to influence the levels of education, health, sanitary facilities and household conditions.

3 CIPS stands for community information and planning system. This was also a participatory development project.

2.4.2 Establishing Community Organizations

Promotion of a community organization in each project village was the major activity of the project team in the initial period. None of the organizations in these villages qualified as a suitable village level mechanism for operating the MVRD Project. Hence the villagers in each village were encouraged to establish their own organization and to register it under the Co-operative Department as an agricultural and production co-operative society. A sufficient number of members, whose savings and shares operate in the form of a revolving credit fund, and also a proper organization with better book-keeping were some pre-requisites for such societies to be accepted for registration. At the initiation of the MVRD Project in two project villages i.e. Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita, there were already established community organizations operating along the same lines as initiated under CIPS Phase II. But these organizations were neither well organized nor registered. So they also had to be further strengthened to qualify for registration. Unlike in Panabokka these two organizations whose foundations had earlier been laid down got qualified for registration was the reason for showing much progress in community development work. After the formation of a community organization, members were encouraged to take group action to identify their common issues and resources (through a survey) and to prepare a plan of action to mobilize those resources.

2.4.3 Strategies Utilized in Mobilizing Community Members

Several methods were used to elicit the active participation of community members. At the initial stage an attempt was made to change attitudes and to create an awareness among the people on the value of self-reliance development through co-operative meetings, household dialogue, group meetings and at training programs. In later stages field workers were engaged in motivating backward people by visiting their houses. Encouragement of community organizations to get directly involved in providing common facilities such as construction of roads, which the majority of the people have seen as a felt need, is another important strategy used at the beginning. These had positive results. Accompanying members of one co-operative society to demonstrate the successful results of self-help development in another project village and creating a forum to exchange views and ideas between the two groups was another strategy followed.

2.4.4 Formation of Sub-committees and Target Groups

Within the main organization in each village, sub committees were formed to undertake some specific tasks or to act on specific target groups. These sub-committees were initiated to activities such as planning production, organization of credit and social welfare activities. A suitable environment was created for the formulation of target group organizations under these sub committees. In all villages, Children's Development Societies emerged. Youth Development and Sports Clubs and Women's Development Societies emerged in each of the two villages. These organizations were encouraged to take relevant actions for the benefit of their members.

2.4.5 Establishment of the Revolving Fund

Encouragement of community members to raise funds based on their own savings and utilize it for credit at concessionary rates for emergency and production purposes was a major attempt of the MVRD Project. The rules and regulations regarding credit disbursement and selection of beneficiaries were stipulated by co-operative organizations with the consent of their members, subject to the procedures of the Co-operative Department.

The CIRDAP seed money was released to the revolving fund of the village co-operative societies to be managed by community members themselves. The release of seed money was delayed until each society showed financial management capability and also until their members got accustomed to take and give back credit. Villages which had come under CIPS II and had acquired similar fund raising experience qualified earlier for release of seed money.

2.4.6 Income Generating Activities

The community members of the cooperative organizations were encouraged to commence income generating activities, suited to their environment. When they decided the type of activities they are going to start, necessary skills were given by arranging a number of training sessions. Even after starting income generating projects, especial training and advisory programmes like cattle farming was also arranged by the research team. The village co-operatives provided credit facilities by utilizing CIRDAP seed money to commence income generating projects. During the project period, 87 project loans valued at Rs.427,500 were disbursed among 87 members (of whom 66 were males). From these 77 projects have been started. The most popular of these projects were cattle and goat farming, retail shops and trading and cultivations of crops.

Performance of this component was depended on the success of income generating projects which were also a pre-requirement for repayment of loans. Except Panabokka, in other two villages, they became a failure due to poor servicing facilities, thereby restricting further expansion of credit and income earning projects.

2.4.7 Appointment of Field Workers

A long period was required for community cooperatives to qualify for registration and the researchers did not intensify the community level interventions until the cooperatives are registered. As such the appointment of field workers was not considered necessary at the beginning. But in Pahalatambavita village a volunteer joined from adjoining village to act as a facilitator. His involvement brought good results to that village especially with regard to establishing links with village and service institutions. Two graduates were appointed as permanent field workers three years after the initiation of the project. Before that the progress of the project was slow.

2.4.8 Setting up an Advisory Committee

Non-availability of suitable persons in these and adjoining villages and strong political biases of the local level committees, discouraged the setting up of advisory committees in each village.

3. Impact of the Project

The activities performed and the impact of the MVRD project in each village is discussed below:

3.1 Forum for Discussion of Problems and Issues

The formation of community organizations provided a forum of homogeneous groups for discussion of problems and issues and their solutions. The construction of new roads (more than one Km. long) both in Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita and repairing of existing roads in Panabokka were undertaken mainly through collective work. The opening up of these villages resulted in more and frequent travel among the villages and promoted better agricultural extension and social welfare services such as a primary school at Pahalatambavita and electricity supply to the Akkaraseya village. A noteworthy feature of collective work was that almost all families participated by donating their labour irrespective of whether they were members of the cooperative society.

3.2 Participation of Different Levels and Stages

Participation of village people was at different levels in each village in different stages of the project was an important feature in the community organization strategy. In the early period of the project in both Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita, majority of the village households actively participated in project meetings, to plan and implement savings programmes, and income generating activities. It was observed that in the later stages, the performance of credit recovery and income generating activities was declining.

3.3 Children's Organizations

As far as separate target groups, which were promoted as sub groups under main cooperative, the children's organizations, especially in Panabokka have shown much progress. The Children's society has become a forum where actions were initiated for children's betterment with the advice of the adults. Their weekly meetings helped to develop their personality and capabilities in various skills such as dancing, singing and debating. They were involved in saving money which also developed their savings habit. In Panabokka they were involved in establishing a village library for children (for this they raised funds) which is managed by themselves. This developed their reading habit and knowledge. Impressed by their progress, the Provincial Council donated Rs.75,000 to improve it.

3.4 Sports

The sports club established in two villages was effective in developing sports ac-

tivities such as volleyball and cricket. These were helpful in promoting in better health and cooperation.

3.5 Revolving Fund

The establishment of the Revolving Fund in each village was effective in promoting savings among community members. For example, the people of Akkaraseeya were able to develop their common fund to the level of Rs.15,000 within a two year period. This amount consisted of their savings and interest charged for loans. This fund was like a village bank and was managed by villagers themselves. It provided emergency credit at concessional rate (2 percent to 5 percent per month), which was made available within few minutes. This was a blessing for the people who used to obtain emergency loans at an interest rate of over 15 percent per month. During the project period over 200 such loans (to the value of Rs.117,000) have been disbursed. The money from revolving funds was utilized to provide investment credit especially after CIRDAP seed money was combined with those. These were provided at an interest rate between 10 percent to 14 percent per year. Almost 87 project loans to the value of Rs.427,500 have been disbursed during the project period. The value of amount disbursed for project loans was twice compared with the amount given by CIRDAP for that purpose.

In the later period of the project, revolving funds did not develop as earlier, especially in Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita villages due to poor repayment of loans, which was also connected to the failure of income earning projects. It was the reverse in Panabokka, where repayment was successful due to the better organization of production and credit sub-committee which encouraged people not only to do investments in viable activities, but also to repay loans under its close supervision and advice.

3.6 Training for Income Earning Projects

The training provided from time to time by the project were useful in commencing income earning projects. Training on organic farming was very useful especially for women for their home gardening. After this training they developed their home gardens to the level which was able to provide home requirements of vegetables.

Though project promoted income earning projects most of them were unsuccessful especially in Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita villages where there were no extension services and marketing facilities due to their isolation. The failure of income earning projects was a cause for defaulting of their production loans. However, availability of comparatively better marketing and extension facilities was a reason for the success of goat rearing and dairy farming projects in Panabokka. Some limited projects like production of tea buds and trading have been successful in other two villages which provided an income for their day today living.

3.7 The Role of Catalysts

The appointment of two Field Workers to work in project villages as catalysts in a later stage of the project (at the end of 1994) gave better results. For example, their inter-

vention and dedicated hard work was sufficient to attract more people to join the community cooperatives. Especially in the Panabokka village, number of members in the cooperative organization increased by 100 percent after the field worker's visit. In 1994 there were 34 members in the cooperative organization of that village and it increased to 68 in 1995. The emergence of different sub-target group organizations in project villages was the major achievement of the catalysts.

The different type of sub/target group organizations formed in each village is under mentioned. All of them have been formed in 1995.

Village	Sub/Target group organization
Panabokka	i. Children's Development Society ii. Youth Development and Sports Club
Akkaraseeya	i. Women's Development Society ii. Children's Development Society ii. Sports Club
Pahalatambavita	i. Children's Development Society ii. Women's Development Society

3.8 Alleviation of Poverty

As far as the achievements of objectives of the project are concerned, the main goal, alleviation of poverty, has been successful only to a limited extent by reducing it in project village from 24.8 percent in 1991 to 15.4 percent in 1996. This has been more progressive in the control village indicating the reduction rate of its poverty from 51.2 percent from early project period (in 1991) to 33.4 percent in the end project period (in 1996). The improvement in income levels in project villages was due not only to the MVRD Project, but also to other projects of government and NGO's in both categories of villages.

As most of the income earning activities were not successful, the MVRD Project could not provide the opportunity for an effective number of beneficiaries to earn a satisfactory income in other villages, except at Panabokka. But the project loans directly or indirectly have been utilized by many people for construction of houses and other activities. For example a substantial number of beneficiaries have used loan money for buying housing materials such as tiles and metal sheets and other household items such as furnitures.

Achievement of some specific objectives of the study such as promotion of peoples participation in group actions to solve their common issues depended on one or more of these factors such as the progress in the operation of cooperative organization, revolving fund and income earning projects. When one or more of these elements were seen at satisfactory level peoples participation was also satisfactory.

The other short term objective of the project namely evolving of a sustainable and

replicable method/mechanism to obtain participation of community people for their own development has not been successful, but important elements of such a method have been developed which will be further discussed in the following section.

4. Lessons of Experience and Guidelines Developed

4.1 Income Earning Projects - Limited success

According to the findings of the MVRD project, the success of a participatory development mechanism is based on the sustainability of a number of elements which interact with each other. In this case the relevant elements have been the income earning activities, revolving fund and the organizational system. Under this study the failure of many income earning activities in two project villages (Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita) has caused for the poor repayment of loan instalments, and emerged as a reason for breaking down the sustainability of revolving funds in those villages. For example out of 33 income earning projects commenced at Akkaraseeya village 26 have been failure. At Pahalatambavita village 10 out of 13 such projects have been unsuccessful. The same keep the village people away from participating in cooperative organization meetings and other related activities resultantly making a failure of their successful operation. In one project village, Panabokka, where there were many sustainable income earning activities, the repayment of loan instalments has also acted as a factor for improving the sustainability of revolving fund simultaneously improving the strength of the cooperative organization.

As revealed by the project, the success of promoting grassroot income earning activities were determined by a number of factors such as entrepreneurial capabilities and availability of other services and facilities such as marketing, and extension. This indicated that provision of credit alone would not be sufficient to promote sustainable income earning activities or making an economic advancement, unless taking a number of inter-related actions by pursuing a holistic approach. When Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita villages are compared with Panabokka, the latter has some income earning activities like cattle farming which was successful due to the availability of extension and other services and assurance of marketing facilities for fresh milk. Milk collected by the Milk Cooperative Society of the region was the most popular product of the villages.

4.2 Levels and Extent of Peoples Participation

As far as the peoples participation for integrated development is concerned, the organizational structure of the project consisted of vertical and horizontal expansion; formation of sub-target groups under sub-committees of a single mother organization, appeared to be a better system to mobilize different target groups and resources for fulfilling various requirements of people.

More detailed information is available regarding the form, extent and stage of participation of people with the MVRD project. In general throughout the whole period of the project participation of people was not so much satisfactory. The extent of people's

participation varied depending on the stage as well as the location of the project. For example in Akkaraseya and Pahalatambavita villages it was better in early period of the project (before 1995) and weaker in the latter period (in and after 1995). But it was reverse in Panabokka village. This type of people's participation was caused by a number of factors:

One major factor for the above situation was negative attitudes of the people on programmes aimed at self help and self-reliant development. The behaviour of the people in the project area indicate that they were initially heavily dependent on government agencies and on non governmental organizations in the recent past. Especially after the introduction of liberalized economic policies, non governmental organizations mushroomed in the rural sector actively involved in various development activities. Granting of a lot of inputs and material in various forms emerged as an important feature of many of the development projects carried out by them. Even under guise of self-reliant and self-help development, these organizations by providing substantial free inputs shaped the peoples mentality to depend on others than depending on themselves and giving a wrong interpretation of concepts such as "self reliance", "self-help" and "development projects".

4.3 Environment of Dependency

In this environment of dependency village people become used to viewing development projects as mechanisms for the distribution of money, material and services. This was clearly demonstrated by the behaviour of the people in MVRD project villages at the introduction of the project. The initial meetings held in each project village to introduce the project were attended by the majority of village people and gradual reduction of this later (for example on the occasions conducting the village baseline surveys; establishing the cooperative organizations as well as savings schemes) revealed that their objective of coming to such meetings have not been realized. When people understood that MVRD was not a project like the other projects which provided immediate benefits for the people, the attendance became poor. This can be further demonstrated in Panabokka village, where it was very difficult to find a fairly sufficient number of people to actively participate in the MVRD project until one and half years passed since it was introduced, as initially people expected material benefits to be doled out to them.

4.4 Janasaviya Programme

The response of the people to the MVRD project on the introduction of the Janasaviya Poverty Alleviation Programme into all three villages and the Change Agent Programme of the Ministry of Rural Development into Panabokka village clearly indicates the people's behaviour. Both of these programme were based on self-help and self-reliance development with their ultimate aim of empowering people. As in the MVRD project in these projects too, the people were to be involved in fund raising, collective work and income-earning activities. But the Janasaviya provided much attractive benefits⁴. In order to be entitled for those benefits, involvement in savings, collective work and investing on

⁴ Under Janasaviya Rs.1458/- worth of payment was given for each family for a two year period for the purpose of consumption until yielding an income from their investment activities under programme.

income earning activities were obligatory. Therefore, in the periods Janasaviya was implemented people turned towards that but just after it was stopped, they returned to join the MVRD project.

4.5 Peoples Participation in Rural Infrastructure Development

Under the project the extent of people's participation do not always indicate the type of participants and extent of their involvement by the official figures. For example in all the project villages the participation of people was much satisfactory on the occasions to fulfill some necessary requirements of the villagers including roads, schools and electricity. Accordingly in the Sramadana campaigns (labour donation campaigns) organized for construction of roads or schools, almost all the villagers participated irrespective of their membership in the village cooperative society and other sub-target group organizations set up under the MVRD project.

The extent of people participation in the project vary according to the activities of the project. For example majority of the people participated as beneficiaries while very few participated in designing the project and in decision making. The extent of people's participation in planning and decision making varied according to the level of education in each village. For example in Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita two villages with low educational levels, the majority of people has provided the opportunity for a small group of people to dominate in planning and decision making regarding the development of the village, despite the fact that they were members of the MVRD project cooperative society. But in Panabokka village where people's educational levels were comparatively higher, participation of people in planning and decision making was more satisfactory.

However, under the project organization of community members and their collective strength seems to have been a powerful factor in the development of common requirements of the village such as roads, bridges and culverts especially on the occasions when these development activities could be completed by using their own resources such as labour. Further, group actions seems to have been promoted people's accessibility to common social welfare measures of the government such as health and education.

This project provided useful guidelines regarding the mobilization of village people and also special target groups. An example is the handing over of sports materials to a group of children in Panabokka which led to the emergence of a sports club with a large number of children being its members. This proved a good strategy even in other project villages later to mobilize children and youngsters. The formation of children's welfare organizations and provision of various services to upgrade their knowledge (organizing free tuition classes to teach English as well as other subjects) and skills were also effective in winning the adults especially in Panabokka village to the MVRD project. After this action a large number of parents who benefited from project activities became dedicated members of the MVRD project cooperative society.

4.6 Revolving Fund Credit System

The project has provided very useful guidelines on the operation of the revolving fund credit system. Accordingly seed money or other funds should not be handed over to the village until the people establish a revolving fund using their own savings and credit discipline is inculcated among members. Otherwise, they feel credit obtained from outside funds as aid need not be repaid.

The functions of the sub-committee for production and credit especially in the Panabokka village have shown positive results in the management of the village level credit system. Control of credit to non trustworthy people, credit for non viable activities, assuring of credit funds for the planned activities; in addition to encourage credit receivers to repay loans were considered important. These functions were performed through activities such as pre and post reviews of credit and income generation activities, monitoring of credit repayment by each individual in front of all members at the village cooperative meetings. After introduction of this credit management system there were no defaulters recorded. Those who had obtained credit for unviable activities and also for non productive activities have initiated repayment of monthly instalments after the operation of above committee.

Encouraging repayment, just after obtaining credit, instead of waiting until a new income earning activity brings an income, is a very important guideline especially for a credit fund for the poor. This is a vital procedure from different aspects viz. (I) It provides an opportunity to release more credit in the early stages beneficial to more people; (ii) Because of this the borrowers does not need to take an additional action to repay a loan; (iii) This allows a borrower to save a sufficient amount earned from his income earning activity.

4.7 Facilitators/Catalysts

The study showed the value and usefulness of facilitators in the project. The active involvement of experienced and capable persons as facilitators can do much to promote self-reliant development of rural communities. In Pahalatambavita village where the educational standard is very low with no qualified people to maintain contacts with the outside institutions the facilitator played a valuable role. Under this situation linking of one experienced, mature and capable person of the adjoining village with the Pahalatambavita could obtain positive results. He managed to link outside government as well as non-government agencies with the village co-operative and arrange for their services to be brought to the village. Under his guidance and coordination, the village obtained a school, road facilities and other services provided by various institutions, such as subsidized fertilizer and coconut sappling.

Appointment of qualified graduates as facilitators even though in the latter stage of the project have shown much progress in the project in various aspects. They could strengthen cooperative organizations of the project by linking many people who were away from it earlier. They were free to use activities such as holding of classes free of charge to school children in order to win the support of their parents. They had the opportunity to mobilize sub-target groups and to establish their own organizations. .

5. The Problems Faced

There were different types of problems encountered in the process of implementing the MVRD project. Among the internal problems negative attitudes of the people on the MVRD type of outside development interventions and resultant delay in involvement in activities such as savings, obtaining credit from the savings fund and its recovery. There were others such as lack of people with sufficient standard of education and poor leadership capabilities and skills. Due to this in Akkaraseeya and Pahalatambavita the same group of people had to bear the leadership in the cooperative even though there was resentment to the same group of leaders holding on to leadership positions.

The factions and conflicts based on kinship, party politics or rival groups became a frequent problem that broke down the social cohesion in the project villages and affected the strength and functioning of project cooperative societies. This was a widespread feature during national, provincial council or local government elections.

The inherent issues in service organizations in the area such as lack of staff and other necessary resources became a severe burden to the success of project activities. For example due to the lack of staff and non availability of a vehicle in the veterinary services office in the area people in Akkaraseeya who started animal husbandry activities could not obtain extension services and guidance at the time needed. Similarly the services of the Department of Cooperative Development could not be obtained satisfactorily for auditing and financial management activities of the Project Cooperative Societies.

The project was confronted with some effects of macro policies. The MVRD project was a micro-level attempt to develop a community by placing on emphasis on organizational strategies and mobilization of people. But it had to face the existing macro-economic environment especially regarding finding a market for products generated by the project. The prices of some products like cow milk and eggs were determined by the national policies. For example with regard cow milk generally the prices at national level is determined on the basis of price agreed by milk collecting multinational companies to pay for local farmers. A small number of milk farmers in MVRD project villages who produced a small quantity could do nothing to get increased prices. Regarding other products like goat meat the problem was similar. Nothing could be done to change in marketing channels or their prices.

6. Conclusion

Obtaining of people's participation is an imperative to make development integrated and sustainable. The major thrust of the Model Villages for Rural Development Programme (MVRD) has been to develop a replicable mechanism to obtain participation of diverse groups of people in a community for a well organized common development programme designed for integrated and sustainable development.

This article attempted to highlight the lessons of experience of the MVRD project.

The analysis revealed that the organizational structure developed under the project, which consist of vertical and horizontal expansion; formation of sub-target groups under sub-committees of single mother organization i.e be a satisfactory system to mobilize different target groups and resources for the development of communities. But the project has further revealed that the sustainability of the whole development mechanism evolved under it, is based on the sustainability of a number of elements that comprises of income earning activities, revolving fund and organizational system which are interdependant. As the sustainability of each of these elements is determined not only by micro level conditions but also the macro level factors, it indicates the need to change macro policies to suit micro conditions in order to make possible this type of participatory development efforts sustainable.

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