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**DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
IN
ASSESSING EMPOWERMENT**

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A drunk was looking for his keys late one night under a street lamp. A passer-by, trying to be helpful, asked him where he had dropped it. "Over there", answered the drunk, pointing to a dark corner. "Then why are you looking for it here?", the passer-by queried. "Because there's so much more light here", replied the drunk.

-ANON

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of externally induced social investments in the Third World, development projects continue to perform the "cutting edge" function. Indeed, the power of the project approach is so blinding that attempts at suggesting alternatives such as "learning process" approaches (Korten, 1980) "anti-projects" and "para-projects" (Uphoff, 1990) have either been rejected by mainstream development thinkers and practitioners or simply incorporated as a footnote in project planning manuals. So much so, the "projectisation" of most development work and its debilitating effects have led critics to debunk it as a pathological affliction- "projectitis"

However, it is often unclear whether adversaries of the project approach are assailing the rational-comprehensive planning model on which this approach is formulated (Rondinelli, 1983), or the manner in which it is interpreted and implemented. At any rate, no viable alternatives are available and the project approach is here to stay. Given this reality, the essay confines itself to the world of development projects. But the concept of "empowerment" is so intimately linked to exogenous factors like social and political structures that the artificial boundaries set by the project approach are constantly being pushed to their limits.

The first chapter looks at the concept of "empowerment" within the context of the larger debate on "community participation". Briefly tracing the emergence of community participation ideas and practice, an attempt is made to discuss the different interpretations available in the literature on this issue. It is clear that the definitions of these terms are very loose and primarily governed by the ideological lens of the author, with temporal and scale factors confounding the problem. However, both the modernisation and socialist views of community participation are found to be essentially instrumental in nature. The task of generating community participation is seen as an apolitical one. While it is mainly state-sponsored development initiatives that subscribe to this interpretation of community participation, many projects in the NGO sector are also based on a similar understanding.

The next chapter examines various perspectives on the concept of empowerment from such diverse sources as the Black movement in U.S., radical political philosophy, adult literacy writings, women's movements especially in the Third World, and general development literature. Based on the literature review and the writer's experience in working with indigenous NGOs in India, an analytical framework is presented to understand the concept of empowerment. Rather than attempting to define empowerment, seven key features of this concept are identified: its "process" nature, holistic approach, contextuality, the focus on marginalised groups, emphasis on strategic issues, democratic foundations, and psychological dimensions.

The third chapter concentrates on conventional monitoring and evaluation systems and the critique from various quarters. The dominant monitoring and evaluation paradigm rooted in positivist thought is found to have serious limitations in assessing social and political change. But

it is recognised that a shift from this paradigm cannot be expected in the near future and those interested in reforming current monitoring and evaluation practice in large development projects will have to create room for manoeuvre within the systems paradigm.

The fourth chapter makes out a case for developing an integrated framework for assessing empowerment within large development projects. It is suggested that the time is ripe for such an effort and that many individual studies have already been carried out in this area which could be brought together. A possible approach towards developing such a framework is outlined to assess empowerment at the group, and individual/household levels. The approach is supported by case studies of projects using similar methods at the field level. The study concludes with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed approach and some policy implications.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A Review

In the context of development projects, a discussion on the concept of "empowerment" is best carried out within the larger debate on "community participation". The first systematic enunciation of the idea of people's participation seems to have appeared in a modern variant of liberal democracy (Midgley et al, 1986). With respect to developing countries, it could be said that these basic ideas were transferred largely in the post-independence era (1950-65) in the form of co-operatives, and Community Development and Animation Rurale movements (Gow & Vansant, 1983).

The emergence of "Dependency" theory as a forceful indictment of the "Modernisation" paradigm and its obvious failure to tackle the problem of mass poverty strongly affirmed the need for the periphery and its populace to have a voice in their own development. The UNRISD "Popular Participation Project" provided the first formal definition of the concept. An almost natural sequel was the rise of the Basic Human Needs approach in the mid-1970s when the human being was placed firmly in the centre of the development debate. Popular participation acquired a sharp focus in the form of community participation within development projects - a belated realisation that the macro impacts of development are rooted in micro efforts at the grassroots. International organisations both within and outside the UN orbit were quick to endorse this thinking. The World Employment Conference under the aegis of the ILO in 1976, the launch of the "Participatory Organisations of the Rural Poor" programme in 1977, WHO's "Alma-Ata" declaration in 1978, and FAO's World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in 1979 followed by the "People's Participation Programme" are some significant landmarks which unequivocally supported the need to incorporate community participation in development projects (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). Indeed, by the mid-1970s, increasing community participation had become the conventional wisdom.

In order to get to grips with the concept of community participation, a proper understanding of its interpretations in practice becomes a prerequisite. Due to the loose manner in which the term is used, community participation can be defined only after co-ordinates such as time, scale and authorship are specified. The historical antecedents outlined in the earlier section have already shown how, by its very nature, community participation has a dynamic definition. Participation under Community Development essentially meant consultation whereas participation under a developmentalist perspective assumed a more comprehensive meaning. Further, the level at which community participation is being discussed is also critical in order to arrive at a definition. It could be a study of communities fully participating as coordinators of a process of endogenous national

development or village communities planning for local amenities. This takes us to the third axis of defining community participation, i.e. the authorship. FAO sees participation as a basic human right, UNICEF sees it as self-reliance and autonomy and Nyerere viewed it as a political process and a learning experience (Cernead., 1985; UNESCO, 1986; Oakley et al, 1991). Cohen & Uphoff (1980) therefore described participation not as a single phenomenon but a rubric, with the actual tactics varying, depending on a host of factors.

However, a decade or so after the value of community participation was recognised, the "cloud of rhetoric" surrounding it and the "pseudo participation" that is seen in practice (Uphoff, 1985) has invited sharp criticism even from observers who are generally in favour of people-centred development. This has led to a serious questioning of the interpretations of community participation and a realisation that the issue merits closer scrutiny.

Firstly, it is found that Third World governments in particular use the concept of community participation primarily to reduce their own responsibility for promoting development (Oakley et al, 1991). A more insidious dimension, especially in the case of newly independent developing countries, is that community participation is used as a tool to extend the control of national governments. This has been described as "manipulative participation" (Midgley et al, 1986), "behaviourist or conditioned participation", and "integrationist participation" for assimilation of frontier areas/ethnically diverse groups, etc. (UNESCO, 1986). Making political capital is often a hidden agenda behind promoting community participation (Moser, 1983). The case of the Ethiopian Peasant Associations is a classic example of coercive participation (Hall, 1986). The tendency to co-opt local leaders through community participation has also been highlighted. This is particularly true in cases where communities have been assumed to be homogeneous bodies and traditional elites (normally men) have taken a disproportionate share of the benefits (Bamberger, 1988 b).

Another unstated objective in promoting participation in many development projects is to obtain data, especially technical information, from the local population with the object of lowering implementation costs (Conyers, 1982). The "double-talk" of international development agencies, governments and, in some cases, even NGOs, casts serious doubt over the underlying motives behind encouraging community participation. While lip-service is paid to community participation, the conventional "project cycle-driven development" takes over in practice. It is not uncommon to find the participation-driven learning process approach to be in direct conflict with the efficiency-driven techno-bureaucratic model of the real world. "A strong case can be made for providing the much-needed assistance as simply and quickly as possible and not jeopardising projects with the difficulties and complexities of participation. Delivering aid efficiently is the overriding priority for donor agencies.....Participation is secondary and often not congruent with the political and organisational imperative of conventionally managed projects" (Finsterbusch & Wicklin, 1987: pp. 4-5).

The Instrumental View

Once the project proposals and reports are shorn of rhetoric, it becomes clear that the commonly held view of community participation is "instrumental" in nature, with all other objectives being largely incidental. This confirms the hypothesis that the idea of community participation was so

readily embraced because of the high failure rate of development projects and the hope that people's involvement was the missing ingredient (Gran, 1983). Participation is seen as a "means" to achieve economic "ends" which could lead to donor-funded projects becoming more successful (Moser, 1989 a). This form of participation has been characterised as participation for modernisation (Harland, 1987). Oakley Marsden (1984) have classified this interpretation of community participation as the "collaboration-input-sponsorship" type (where participation is treated as a manageable input), "community development" type (in social service programmes like health) or "organisational" type (with respect to formal organisations like cooperatives).

Sadly, the renewed interests in community participation in the context of Structural Adjustment Programmes, and lately the new-found respectability gained by NGOs in official aid circles, has not really changed this view of participation. A recent World Bank document on "The Social Dimensions of Adjustment" (SDA) project recommends "fostering the participation of the poor in socio-economic activity, in particular by promoting community-level initiatives aimed at small-scale, income generating activities and small-scale, social infrastructure" (Fleming, 1991: pp. 37).

Empirical studies examining the manner in which community participation is understood in the major donor agencies like USAID and the World Bank are quite illuminating. Reviewing the experience of over 40 World Bank projects, Paul (1987) found that 48% of them were interested in community participation in order to recover project costs from the community (in the form of labour, cash and maintenance) and an equal proportion had incorporated participation as an objective in order to increase project efficiency (timely beneficiary inputs leading to minimum delays and smooth delivery of services). Another 38% had community participation as a stated objective to enhance project effectiveness (to assess beneficiary need for demand generation and service utilisation). Only 20% of the projects had capacity building objectives but even these were primarily for post-construction, maintenance purposes in housing and irrigation projects. Only three projects (8%) had empowerment as an objective, of which two were run by NGOs and the third by a borrower government which had "adopted a development philosophy" in tune with this objective.

In one of the few statistical analyses of the contribution of beneficiary participation in project effectiveness, Finsterbusch and Wicklin (1987) used a systematic case review methodology in studying the project impact evaluation reports of 52 non-randomly sampled USAID projects within conventional input-output framework. Participation was interpreted as a group of 15 independent input variables (subjectively rated on a 7-point scale) and correlated (using Pearson product moment correlation) with over-all project effectiveness (also subjectively rated, using crude benefit-cost ratios). The instrumental view is very clear as project effectiveness, the end-objective of participation, was defined primarily in terms of physical outputs and other efficiency measures (ref. Annexure 1).

The case of the National Irrigation Administration in Philippines has been acclaimed as a turning point in the use of participatory management in large public systems. But even here, the emphasis appears to have been on instrumental participation. A key objective was tapping local knowledge for improving physical systems. Actually, 69 of the 70 field channels constructed in the participatory project area were found to be "carrying water in a satisfactory manner" a year after the construction

of the facilities compared with the non-participatory area where most new channels were erased by farmers soon after they were completed. Although leadership-building was included as a benefit, the purpose of setting up irrigators' associations was mainly operation and maintenance of the distribution system. Another significant benefit highlighted was that participatory projects recovered about 9.6% of construction costs charged to the farmers compared with less than 5% in the non-participatory areas (Bagadion and Korten, 1985).

The dominant view of community participation from a modernisation perspective is, therefore, that of a packaged "product" with primarily economic objectives such as cost-sharing. It is now known that cost-sharing is often a euphemism for extracting unpaid labour from women, based on distorted assumptions about the elasticity of women's time and, without any consideration for their triple (productive, reproductive and community management) role (Rogers, 1980). It is important to recognise that the "instrumental" view cuts across all streams of dominant ideological thought and that socialist regimes are also known to have used community participation to further "national development" and party-politics.

However, our interest is in "change-inducing" (UNESCO, 1986) or "authentic" community participation (Midgley et al, 1986) - where people's involvement is seen as an on-going process and an end in itself. This generally corresponds with the view of participation as an "empowering" process (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). But the definition of empowerment as any process where participation is viewed as the end is found to be of limited analytical value in itself. The next chapter, therefore, takes a closer look at the concept of "empowerment".

ON EMPOWERMENT

Perspectives

In order to arrive at a more precise understanding of the term "empowerment", an attempt is made to scan the different streams of literature that have dealt with this concept-the Black movement in the U.S., western community development literature, radical political philosophy, the women's movement (especially in the Third World), adult literacy work, and development literature in general.

A review of the literature reveals that the manner in which the term empowerment is bandied about is no less confusing than its genealogical predecessor-community participation. An early usage of the term empowerment can be found in the North American Black radicalism of the 1960s. However, in recent times the word is found in the most unexpected quarters. President Bush's newly constituted "Empowerment Task Force" shows that it has now been co-opted into official U.S. Government parlance (*The Economist*, April 1991). Not to be left behind, Bob Haas, ex-Peace Corps Volunteer and 95% owner of Levi Strauss, the leading jeans manufacturer, has enshrined "empowerment" of employees as a stated long-term objective of the company (*The Economist*, June 1991).

Writing in the North American context, Rappaport exclaims: "Empowerment is like obscenity; you have trouble defining it but you know it when you see it" (Rappaport, 1986; pp. 69). Indeed, empowerment is easy to "intuit" but complex to define. This is because the concept has components that are political and psychological and is used by a wide spectrum of people-psychologists, politicians, social workers, theologians, political scientists and sociologists. An empowered individual can critically analyse her/his social and political environment and enjoy a feeling of control and awareness. Empowerment is thus closely linked to self-esteem and perceived competence which could lead to pro-active behaviour and social change (ibid, 1986).

The concept of empowerment has been linked to the rise of populism and the call for return of power to people in the U.S. One view is that the empowerment ethos has actually fostered the growth of new populism, eg. pro-choice demonstrations. The quest for empowerment is seen to be tied up with the new consumer role in advanced capitalist society where choice is empowering, expansion of educational opportunities has created pressures from below and there is a general cry for devolution of powers to local communities (Riessman, 1986). Echoes of such thinking are also found in the Community Development movement in the U.K. (Craig et al, 1990). From a radical political philosophy perspective, West (1990) outlines the following principles of empowerment: groups must maintain constancy in their objectives, generalise the interests of its members, be efficient, develop explicit procedures and engage in networking.

Empowerment is often equated with gaining power and access to the resources necessary to earn a living. In the context of empowerment of Blacks in the U.S., "The Economist" wholeheartedly supports this view when it says, "...if empowerment means anything it is economic: empowerment to escape poverty" (the Economist, Vol. 318, No. 7700, pp. 23). However, this comes dangerously close to the economic objectives espoused by instrumental forms of community participation.

Broader definitions of empowerment need to be considered. Respecting diversity, local specificity, de-concentration of power and promotion of self-reliance is the empowering form of participation suggested by Pearse and Stiefel (1979). Paul (1987) states that empowerment implies "equitable sharing of power" thereby increasing the political awareness and strength of weaker groups and augmenting their influence over "the processes and outcomes of development". Using Talcott Parson's analysis of the "distributive" dimension of power (a "win-lose" situation) contrasted with the "generative" dimension of power (a positive sum game situation), Hulme and Turner suggest that empowerment in practice is always a mix of these two dimensions. Empowerment is viewed as "stimulating a process of social change that enables them (marginalised groups) to exert greater influence in local and national political arenas" (Hulme and Turner, 1990: pp.214) Chambers' (1983) analysis of the causes of poverty as a vicious circle of physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness (exploitation by the powerful groups who commandeer most of the benefits from development projects, absence of bargaining power for negotiation, inability to prevent violence and social injustice provides us with a definition of lack of empowerment.

Using the example of grassroots organisations in Bangladesh, John Clark has included issues like leadership-building, group organisation (especially savings clubs for women) and alliance-building, and developing a political strategy as some of the essential ingredients in what could be termed an empowerment strategy (Clark, 1991). Accord, an NGO working with marginalised tribal groups in Southern India, believes that the idea of empowerment refers to creating conditions where the poor have a real choice in occupation, education, housing, health, and especially in social relationships; "choice is the hallmark of the powerful" (Thekaekara, 1991).

A widely used interpretation of empowerment is based on the access to literacy. Literacy assumed a new meaning following The Experimental World Literacy Programme and the radical pedagogical movement of the 1970s inspired by Paulo Freire's work on the "conscientisation" model (Ramdas, 1990). While the "functional" school of literacy draws its strength from the cross-sectoral impact of literacy (Haddad et al, 1990), especially with respect to women (eg. the high correlation between women's literacy levels and infant mortality rates), the emancipatory view emphasises its potential for bringing about structural change (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Archer and Costello, 1990; Bown, 1990). This process has been variously called awareness-building, adult literacy, consciousness-raising, literacy training, non-formal education etc., and has formed the basis for popular education programmes in many socialist countries like Tanzania and Nicaragua, especially in the post-liberation phase. Kassam has underlined the liberating potential of literacy in giving the poor a voice, in gaining self-confidence, in becoming politically conscious and critically aware, and ultimately in becoming independent. "Literacy provides access to written knowledge - and knowledge is power. In a nutshell, literacy empowers" (Kassam, 1989; pp. 531).

From a public health perspective, it has been said that health care can be either people-empowering, by giving people greater control over factors that influence their health and their lives as well as a greater leverage over public institutions, or it can be people-disempowering, when it is used by authorities as an instrument of social control. Citing the example of oral rehydration therapy (where ORT packets are contrasted with home mixes), Werner argues that the empowerment factor should be a key consideration when evaluating the long term implications of any health care project (Werner, 1988). In the context of 'farmer first and last-based' farmer participatory agricultural research, Thrupp (1987) proposes that legitimising indigenous knowledge is empowering for resource-poor farmers. The rapid growth of environmentalism and the emergence of "primary environment care" (PEC) has led some authors to postulate that empowerment refers to securing access to natural resources, and sustainable management of these resources (Borrini ed., 1991).

The concept of empowerment owes a lot to women's movements and literature dealing with gender issues. In discussing the role of women farmers in Zambia, empowerment has been defined as "a process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination. This is a participatory process which begins at the levels of home and community. A women's movement of empowerment ultimately represents a challenge to the bureaucracy which is hierarchical, organised to impose decisions from the top down and is dominated by men anxious to preserve their power, both at home and in the larger society" (Keller & Mbewe, 1991; pp.76).

Acosta-Belen and Bose (1990) see empowerment as a battle for power against all factors which perpetuate the structural subordination of women and treat women as "the last colony" -the global capitalist system, cultural praxis, religion, education and other social institutions. Another view is that empowerment is the process of acquiring "real power" (from the state) over material resources and political structures (Boyd, 1989). Morgen and Bookman are of the opinion that "empowerment begins when they (poor women) change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness...recognise the systemic forces that oppress them and...act to change the conditions of their lives" (Morgan and Bookman, 1988; pp.4).

The contribution of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) to the discourse on empowerment deserves special mention. Following the strategy of "empowerment through organisation", DAWN has identified six prerequisites for empowerment viz. "resources (finance, knowledge, technology), skills training, and leadership on one side; and democratic process, dialogue, participation in policy and decision-making, and techniques for conflict resolution on the other" (Sen and Grown, 1988; pp.89).

The question that remains unanswered is whether empowerment is simply a new-fangled synonym for community participation? Clearly, this would depend on the manner in which these terms are used. The multiple and sometimes misleading interpretations of the term community participation has forced genuine protagonists of the concept of participation to search for a more appropriate word. It is also true that the term empowerment is increasingly being co-opted as a "development buzzword" and at the current rate will meet the same fate as community participation.

Project proposals containing the word empowerment are given more careful consideration by Northern donors, especially in the NGO sector. Notwithstanding the loose usage and even the abuse of these two terms, there appear to be some fundamental differences between them. In essence, while community participation moved the debate away from the modernisation-driven economic paradigm to a socially conscious view of development, empowerment has pushed the debate further into the realm of political economy by highlighting the "politics of participation".

The observation ties in quite well with Moser's classification of policy approaches to Third World women's issues, where she describes the empowerment approach to be quite distinct from the equity-oriented approach to Women In Development (WID). Moser emphasises that the "empowerment approach differs from the equity approach not only in its origins, but also in the causes, dynamics and structure of women's oppression it identifies, and in terms of the strategies it proposes to change the position of Third World women" (Moser, 1989b; pp. 1815). The empowerment approach is seen to have originated in Third World feminist writing and grassroots organisations, and the real goal of this approach is increasing self-reliance of women on their own terms, rather than relative to men.

Analytical Framework

A review of the different perspectives on empowerment provides a foundation on which the concept can be more closely analysed. Perhaps, the only clear signal one gets from the literature is that no single definition of the term can do it justice. However, from the literature review as well as the writer's experience in working with Indian NGOs at the field level, it is quite evident that there are some features that can be ascribed to the empowerment approach which might be generally valid. For analytical purposes, an attempt has been made to articulate these under eight non-hierarchical heads — all of which are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. Case studies of projects adopting an empowerment approach are used to root the discussion in practice.

i) Process: There is a general unanimity that empowerment does not refer to an end-of-project product or state that can be attained within defined time-frames. Instead, empowerment is best understood as a dynamic and on-going process which can only be located on a continuum. This is largely because empowerment is closely related to socio-political structures within the external environment that are themselves ever-changing.

ii) Holistic approach: Empowerment cannot be constrained by conventional notions of activities and sectors that are spread over the different stages of the project cycle. As it refers to an overall approach rather than a set of inputs, it is necessarily supra-sectoral (Marsden, 1989). The case of Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), a large NGO in Bangladesh, illustrates this very well. Having been set up as a creative health programme, GK is working today with poor communities through a whole range of economic, social and political activities, including group organisation, agriculture and income generation projects, education and integrated health care. But, all these activities are working synergistically towards the common aim of empowering the poor (Bhasin ed., 1985).

iii) Context-Specific: Empowerment can be defined only within the local social, cultural, economic, political and historical context. For example, in Accord's operational context, empowerment is intimately tied to the issue of tribal land alienation (Thekaekara, 1991). In another case, the

women from the Dasholi Mahila Mandal in the Chipko movement in India were empowered by the threat of destruction of their major source of livelihood- the forest -by external agents (Bhatt, 1987). Thus, a key feature of empowerment is that it is "particularistic" rather than "universalistic".

iv) Marginalised groups: Irrespective of the context, the empowerment approach is clearly focussed on marginalised groups whether they include urban or rural poor, women, the landless, untouchables (in India), ethnic minorities, the disabled, AIDS victims, etc. For example, Bhoomi Senain Maharashtra, India, works with marginalised "adivasis" (tribals), and another conscientisation effort in N.E, Brazil deals exclusively with women from an impoverished fishing community (deSilva et al, 1979; Hall, 1986). Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a leading Indian NGO, has selected poor women working in the urban informal sector as its target group (Bhasin ed., 1985).

v) Strategic vs. practical: To borrow Molyneux's (1981) classification, the empowerment approach is chiefly interested in strategic aspects-those which are aimed at attacking the fundamental causes of powerlessness. Empowerment implies redistribution of power (which could develop into a "generative" state) between the poor and rich, men and women, caste Hindus and untouchables, community organisations and external agencies (project managers, the state), etc. It is, therefore, inherently a political process. Development projects with empowerment objectives, consciously or otherwise, aspire to create conditions for incremental structural change from below. This is evident from the case study of CROSS, an Indian NGO clearly working with an empowerment approach. "Sangams" (groups) are formed not only to struggle for restructuring the ownership of the basic means of production (land) but also to strengthen the base of parliamentary democracy (Bhasin ed., 1985).

vi) Democratising: A key feature of the empowerment approach is community participation (as a means and an end) or, in a wider sense, democratisation. Clearly, no process that hinders full participation of the community at all levels can be empowering. The story of Shramik Sanghatana, working with landless labourers in Dhulia district, India, presents a compelling case in establishing that democracy and full participation are at the heart of any empowerment strategy (Paranjape et al, 1984). Since the empowerment approach uses political economy as its knowledge base, its view of the community and the household is based on the "cooperation-conflict" model. It respects diversity and is based on "the analysis of difference" - biological differences like age and sex and socially constructed differences such as gender, class, caste, ethnicity, etc. (Welbourn, 1991).

vii) Psychological construct: It is very important to note the psychological element in any analysis of the concept of empowerment. Especially at the level of the individual, empowerment is very much dependent on the perception that marginalised people have of themselves. But it is equally true at the collective level, where empowerment is as much a psychological as a political construct.

viii) Sustainability: It is widely believed that projects following an empowerment approach can build self-reliance and are therefore more sustainable, once external agents withdraw. This has been amply proved by the ILO's review of seven case studies in South and South East Asia (Rahman, 1984). Citing examples from several World Bank-funded projects like the Muda irrigation project

in Malaysia, Cernea postulates that the low sustainability of development projects is more often due to institutional/organisational factors than economic/technical factors. Grassroots organisations, an integral part of most empowerment strategies, are thus seen as critical elements in ensuring sustainability (Cernea, 1987). Honadle and Vansant (1985) identify capacity building, and thereby empowerment, as a prerequisite for sustainability of project benefits.

The case of Working Women's Forum (WWF), a South Indian NGO, confirms that sustainability is highly dependent on the adoption of the empowerment approach. Self-reliance has to be studied both in terms of ideas/decisions and resources. WWF encourages women's groups to design and manage their own projects and activities. The original fund of the Working Women's Cooperative Society (a membership organisation of poor urban women) provided by donor agencies trebled in size between 1981-85 and financial self-reliance has clearly helped in making the programme more sustainable (Azad, 1986).

Before we move on to a discussion on the assessment of empowerment, the broader issues of measuring the change have to be examined. The next chapter looks at conventional ideas on monitoring and evaluation and some alternative views.

MEASURING CHANGE

Conventional Monitoring and Evaluation

The impetus for ensuring that development projects are efficient, effective and, increasingly equitable comes from different constituencies - international donors (multilateral, bilateral and private), national governments, project implementing agencies, pressure groups like the media and advocacy lobbies, and occasionally from the "beneficiary" communities themselves. This demand has elevated the performance assessment or the monitoring and evaluation phase to acquire the status of an independent discipline in the conventional project cycle i.e. identification, design and pre-appraisal, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation-(Baum, 1982).

The conceptual basis for the idea of "Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E)" can be found in the Logical Framework Approach (Logframe); arguably, the most widely used project planning methodology to date. The project matrix in the Logframe is made up of inputs, activities, outputs, immediate objectives and development objectives (NORAD, 1989). Monitoring is defined as "the continuous or periodic surveillance of the implementation of a project" (ibid, pp. 88). Evaluations are considered as "independent assessments of the impact and relevance of the project, undertaken by external collaborators" (ibid, pp. 90). Casley and Lury see monitoring as the process of tracking inputs, outputs and initial effects - primarily a function of internal management. Evaluation is described as an ex-post study of the intended and unintended effects and impacts of a development project, based on a quasi-experimental design and primarily meant for an outside audience (Casley and Lury, 1982). Evaluations are also conducted to study the economic and financial efficiency of programmes (Murphy and Marchant, 1988). Monitoring and evaluation are, therefore, understood to be two distinct activities (in terms of time, scale, scope and object) which need to be treated separately.

However, the actual M&E is carried out not against objectives and inputs but indicators which are "specific (explicit) and objectively verifiable measures of changes or results brought about by an activity" (IFAD, 1985; pp.37). these indicators correspond to the level of inputs, outputs, effects and impacts; they signify performance standards and are distinct from targets and objectives. It must be added that the terms "variables" and "indicators" are used interchangeably but, occasionally, an indicator is defined as a derived ratio of variables. Table 3.1 attempts to present the M&E process in the Logframe scheme.

Table 3.1

M&E in the Logical Framework

Project Matrix Elect	Indicator	M & E
Inputs	Input Indicator	M
Activities	-	-
Outputs	Output Indicator	M
Short-term Objectives	Effect Indicator	M/E
Long-term Objectives	Impact Indicator	E

Project evaluations have been classified into different categories depending on the stage of the project during which the evaluation is conducted. Evaluations during the project's life cycle have been called on-going, formative and process evaluations. Evaluations carried out after the completion of the project have been described as ex-post, summative and impact evaluations. The project appraisal phase is also sometimes called ex-ante evaluation (ODA, 1988). Evaluations have also been classified with respect to the purpose of the investigation: a) project effectiveness vis-a-vis objectives; b) project efficiency viz. cost effectiveness, cost benefit analysis and; c) project impact (Cracknell ed., 1984).

The evolution of the field of M&E provides a valuable historical perspective for the rest of the discussion. Formal M&E mechanisms are said to have been set up in the UN system, for example only in early 1950s. The rapid growth in international development assistance in the 1970s saw the shoring up of M&E systems as the need for control and accountability increased (Ahmed and Bamberg 1989). Additionally, until the end of the 1970s, most projects concentrated on large-scale economic development and M&E efforts were focussed on physical inputs and outputs and financial expenditure against capital items. The failure of many development projects, the shrinking resource base, and the emergence of the Basic Needs movement (especially after the WCARRD, 1979), led to a new understanding that rural development is a complex "trial and error" process and that M&E of crude indicators of economic growth like per capita income alone were inadequate (IFAD, 1985).

With the new-found emphasis on distribution rather than growth, satisfaction of human needs rather than production, and development of human resources rather than technology, new management tools were put in place to supplement traditional economic project appraisal and evaluation techniques. Appraisal methods like Social Cost Benefit Analysis of public sector projects came into use (Dasgupta & Sen, 1972). Particular reference needs to be made to Environment/Social Impact Assessment, an "anticipatory research" methodology concentrating on ex-ante evaluation studies (Derman and Whiteford, eds., 1985; Hindmarsh et al, 1988).

The "Social Indicators Movement" also gained in strength in the 1970s and has now been institutionalised in several large international development agencies (Imboden, 1978). The World Bank, for example, now monitors "Social Indicators" which are meant to complement the annual publication of the "World Development Indicators" in the "World Development Report" (World Bank,

1988). The UNDP's contribution in compiling social indicators and constructing a composite state-of-arts "Human Development Index" on which countries of the South and North are ranked is quite unique (UNDP, 1991). The publication of the "Indicators of Sustainable Development" has added an ecological dimension to the growing collection of macro-level social indicators (Holmberg et al, 1991).

The World Bank's recruitment of a full-time sociologist in 1974 for the first time, the recognition of "human factors" in projects (1980) and "Policy Guidelines for forced resettlement" (1990), USAID's "Social Soundness Analysis" (1978), and the U.K. ODA's "Social factors in project work" (1982) could be classified in this genre for introducing "social" investigation checklists. However, though the struggle for integrating "social" knowledge into project planning continues to be waged in the corridors of most official aid agencies, the debate is largely confined to the project appraisal and design stage (Cernea, 1991; Hall, 1988).

In spite of the growing priority that is being attached by the major official aid agencies to community participation (even if it is of the instrumental kind), an area which has been grossly under-researched is the assessment of such work. The oft-quoted reason for this neglect is that the "process" nature of participatory elements in development projects defies quantification.

The "M&E Guiding Principles" book used widely in the UN system has a short section on the M&E of target group participation divided into quantitative and qualitative assessments. The quantitative indicators are once again focussed largely on efficiency issues (eg., frequency of member's attendance at formal organisation meetings, total man days of labour contributed by project group members to project activities, etc.) and a few equity indicators (eg., socio-economic composition of groups). The qualitative section is dismissed in a brief paragraph which states that topics like "organisational growth, leadership structure, project group activities and outputs and the institutional impact of these groups can be studied" (IFAD, 1985; pp. 53). An additional section is presented on WID which has a more substantial checklist of items to study the differential impact of development projects. On the whole, these issues are treated as "Special Topics" -an appendage to the main M&E system (ibid, 1985).

The Critique

The conventional M&E model has come under severe attack from different quarters. The major criticism has come from scholars and practitioners who have recognised the experimental nature of development projects and the need for traditional "blueprint approaches" to be replaced by a "learning process" approach, and rational-comprehensive planning and evaluation models to be substituted by adaptive planning and evaluation systems (Rondinelli, 1983; Chambers, 1983).

The example of monitoring growth in under-fives describes the linear and restricted perception of conventional M&E: concept (physical growth)-> variable (body weight)-> measuring instrument (weighing scale)-> units of measurement (kilograms). But the basic problem is that there are no truly standardised scales and measures available in social and behavioural sciences (Dixon et al, 1987). As Paul Streeten has commented: "The danger of social science research that attempts to emulate the 'hard' sciences is that it focuses on the measurable and neglects the rest. Some of the most

important obstacles to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of greater equality lie in areas in which measurement is still very difficult or perhaps impossible" (Reilly, 1985; pp.37-38).

The conventional M&E system has gained a pre-eminent position on the strength of three important claims. The first is that of "reliability and validity". But the recent study by N.S. Jodha (1989) in rural Rajasthan, India, shook the confidence in questionnaire surveys and their validity. The longitudinal study, carried out at two points in time (1964-66 and 1982-84), using per capita income measures showed that 38% of the sample families had become poorer over the period. However, qualitative indicators and perceptions of the community which were also assessed showed trends to the contrary. The second claim of the conventional system pertains to "objectivity". But the idea that there is a social world which exists independent of people's subjective awareness of it has been seriously questioned.

Rahman (1984) is of the opinion that information gathered from communities is necessarily objective if it passes through social verification - "the dialogical process of collective reflection". Eichler (1988) has pointed out that scientific objectivity in male-centered research simply means using a male frame of reference. Use of rigorous sampling and hypothesis testing techniques cannot substitute a first hand knowledge of the community. The third and, perhaps, the weakest claim is that of 'causality'. The concept of a causal model in social science research where $Y=f(x)$ and the direction of influence is from 'x' to 'y' has been completely rejected (Richards, 1985). Attempts to model community participation and behavioural change as shown in Annexure 2 have not met with much success (Cochrane, 1979). The use of baseline studies, control groups, and sophisticated statistical analysis have not been able to discriminate between gross and net impact of development projects.

In practice, it is found that most M&E systems are neither cost-effective nor of real use for the management in decision-making. This happens because of poor and top-down M&E systems design coupled with a lack of interest in this task among line managers (Feuerstein, 1986; Hulme & Turner, 1990). But the fundamental problem has to do with the issue of paradigms - the philosophical underpinnings of conventional M&E. Competing world views also lead to competing forms of social knowledge - each with its own hierarchy. The status hierarchy of methodology interprets hard data to be superior and scientific, i.e. the danger to which numbers can be assigned to the M&E process. The production and dissemination of knowledge based on the positivist paradigm (also referred to as traditional, orthodox, mainstream, systems, empirical-analytical or classical paradigm) treats only objective facts and observable phenomena and is "uninterested in the ultimate origins of these facts" (Maguire, 1987).

This has given rise to the "alternative" research paradigm (also called symbolic, hermeneutic, cultural inquiry, local theory, critical knowledge paradigm), which relies on naturalistic inquiry techniques and a "subjectivist epistemology". This paradigm is based on what has been called a "transaction model" (Rossi and Freeman, 1987; Patton, 1990; Rabson and Foster, 1989). The alternative paradigm is understood to be holistic, responsive, heuristic, and clearly skeptical of the attempt to free data and findings from their socio-historic context (Altrichter, 1991).

The contrast between the two paradigms are summarised as being objectivity vs. subjectivity,

researcher distance vs. closeness to subject, generalisations or universality vs. uniqueness, quantitative vs. qualitative, social control vs. local self determination, impartial advice vs. solidarity and action (Maguire, 1987). Some of the important qualitative evaluation models based on the "alternative" paradigm are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Qualitative Evaluation Models

	Model	Description	Key proponents
1.	Goal-free evaluation	unencumbered by logic of preordinate objectives	Scriven
2.	Responsive Evaluation	Personalising and humanising with stakeholders	Stakes
3.	Illuminative Evaluation	Looks at underlying causes within local context	Parlett, Richards
4.	Utilisation focussed Evaluation	Based on needs of users	Patton, Rossi

The major stream of evaluation research which has looked into the political aspects of supposedly value-free paradigms and come up with alternative methodologies is that of participatory action research. It is based on the premise that evaluation is a political exercise and the evaluator, knowingly or otherwise, is in collusion with either those who have power or those who do not. But it was only in the 1970s that this developed into "participatory (action) research" and the yardstick for judging the quality of research was understood to be empowerment or social justice rather than efficiency or academic knowledge. A Bawden (1991) claims, the process of evaluation can be an emancipatory one only if the community feels a sense of ownership of the data.

The fact that participatory action research was itself steeped in patriarchy was forcefully brought home by Maguire: "While Freire stresses man's alienation in the world, feminist research includes women's alienation from a man-made world" (Maguire, 1987; pp. 84). It is heartening that mainstream research in social science is now waking up to intra-household asymmetries with Sen's "cooperative conflict" view of the household gaining acceptance (Wilson, 1991).

Having reviewed the different approaches to the measurement of change, the final chapter can focus on exploring issues related to the assessment of empowerment.

ASSESSING EMPOWERMENT

The Need

Most projects involved in empowering the poor politically are relatively small and in the NGO sector, where the notion of accountability and M&E are vastly different from those used by official aid agencies who work with large public systems in the state sector. Objectives are qualitative and flexible. M&E systems are run by line managers and field workers; concern for standardisation, aggregation, and generalisability is virtually non-existent (Tendler, 1982; Ser 1987; Cameron & Cocking, 1991).

This explains the plethora of evaluation documents and other assessment reports of empowerment approaches in such projects, based on isolated case studies or depth interviews of members of the community (Ray, 1981; Axad, 1986). This statement on the benefits of literacy by Rukia Ohashi, a peasant woman, is a fairly typical extract from an evaluation report: "...now we can defend our rights, we can't be forced to do anything against our wishes, we can't be cheated. You put your signature only to those things you clearly understand and accept and which you can read yourself (Kassam, 1989; pp. 535).

It is, perhaps, the overdependence on such methods that has led many critics to stress the need for "depoliticising ambiguity" (Brown, undated-b). The allegation that NGOs seek refuge behind unclear objectives using vague terms like empowerment and conscientisation is not uncommon. However, the gravity of the situation has still to sink in fully. At a time when accountability and cost effectiveness are at a premium, the lack of a credible M&E methodology for empowerment is leading to a questioning of the intrinsic value of the concept. "Examinations of the results of participatory are largely anecdotal and usually conclude with affirmations of belief, rather than tests to confirm, modify or reject the common predictions" (Leighton, 1985: pp.85). Whether this is used as a ruse by those subscribing to the dominant positivist paradigm and controlling large international aid agencies to avoid sticky political issues and safeguard their institutional self-interest or a genuine concern is a question which is hard to put to test.

Undoubtedly, a truly empowering process would incur the displeasure of powerful sections of society. Oakley and Marsden fear that empowerment "faces formidable barriers and that it is also difficult to imagine governments and locally established structures offering other than powerful opposition" (Oakley and Marsden, 1984; pp.27). The highly political nature of empowerment issue has precluded support from official aid agencies. The impediments created by "ideological and institutional obstacles within aid bureaucracies" cannot be underestimated (Hall, 1988).

If small NGO-run programmes already have methods of assessing empowerment and larger aid projects are not inclined to include empowerment-related objectives in their projects, what is the compulsion to pursue this question? Several reasons combine to give this task a high priority. It is true that, in general, empowerment objectives lack legitimacy and sound overly political for projects funded by large official aid agencies to endorse. But to suggest that empowerment is feasible only through small ideologically-charged NGO-run initiatives would not stand an empirical test because: a) As we have already seen, empowerment does not have a universal and uni-dimensional definition and most projects are likely to have some element of empowerment and; b) Viewing either the official aid community or NGOs as a monolithic identity would be fallacious.

Further, there seems to be a new-found interest in the concept of "empowerment" in many large official aid agencies. The World Bank now talks more often about "genuinely empowering" programme beneficiaries. UNICEF has underlined the importance of empowerment in the light of structural adjustment; "empowerment and participation of vulnerable groups, especially women, helps to secure the political commitment to get the policies introduced and effectively implemented" (Fleming, 1991; pp.37). Even the Government of India has spoken of women's empowerment in a recent plan document (Government of India, 1988). One could easily dismiss this as empty rhetoric, but the opportunity to convert the rhetoric to reality does exist. Talking of the room for manoeuvre, Moser reveals "there are individuals and groups involved in changing policy approaches; government and aid agency personnel who argue that the efficiency approach can also be the means, with a hidden agenda, to empower..." (Moser, 1989 b; pp.1818).

Assuming that developing an approach for dealing with the question of assessing empowerment is of importance, the nature of this approach merits careful consideration. It is rather obvious that any evaluation methodology for assessing "empowerment" should not result in eroding the principles of empowerment, as conventional M&E methodologies do. The need for using a participatory paradigm and methods which make evaluation a key element in capacity-building and "an empowering intervention" are self-evident (Tandon, 1989). However, in its extreme form, this line of argument would suggest that M&E systems can only be evolved by the community, who will be the primary consumer of all information generated by the M&E system. But development projects beyond a certain size require M&E systems which are acceptable to all stakeholders. The real challenge is to match the needs of all the stakeholders and yet arrive at an M&E system which does not destroy the empowerment ethic. As Salmen says: "...development managers need something midway between spurious, short-cut head counting and extensive, comprehensive field studies" (Salmen, 1987; pp.125). One way of striking this balance is through the process of "complementing paradigms" (Chambers et al, eds., 1989). Patton (1990) makes a strong case for "triangulation"- using a mix of needs-based paradigms and methods (ref. Annexure 3).

In the mixed paradigm, M&E is seen as a continuous mutual learning process, and measurement refers to a clear indication of change rather than a mere numerical quantification (White, 1991). This helps in setting to rest a long-standing myth that qualitative and quantitative methodologies are conflicting and mutually exclusive (Rossi and Freeman, 1989). Qualitative procedures can precede, succeed, accompany or substitute quantitative methods. Krueger (1988) wisely recommends the middle ground- to have faith in all procedures and yet retain skepticism. Empirical techniques such

as surveys and questionnaires are not rejected because they are positivistic; instead they are given a new meaning.

State-of-arts

While it is true that the issue of assessing "empowerment" is an area that has not been adequately researched within mainstream development literature, it is important to recognise that several significant contributions have been made especially in the 1980s which, once carefully sifted, could provide us with an integrated framework to monitor and evaluate this thorny area. One of the early attempts at evaluating participation was by Haque et al (1977) who looked at "attitudinal indicators" and "self-administration and momentum". The Work of Cohen and Uphoff (1977, 1980) on community participation contributed to the debate, though not in a direct fashion. Oakley and Winder's (1981) paper helped to develop a before-after design to evaluate work in the area of group organisation. In the context of evaluating community participation in urban development projects, Moser (1983) proposed a set of criteria (political/social, economic, etc.) adding that "ultimately it is an evaluation of the transfer of power". The panel on People's Participation, set up within the UN system, published Oakley and Marsden's "Approaches to Participation in Rural Development" in 1984 which clarified many of the basic concepts and briefly dwelt on the question of evaluation of participation. The work in the field of participatory evaluation by Feuerstein (1986), Brown and Tandon (1983), etc. strongly influenced thinking on this subject although these authors did not specifically discuss M&E of participation.

What could, perhaps, be called the first exclusive work on the subject was produced by Oakley (1988) under the aegis of FAO's People's Participation Project, primarily for rural development programmes. Salmen's is one of the few attempts at using well-established tenets of anthropological and ethnographic research in the development project context and systematically looking at the possibility of scaling up the use of such techniques (like participant observation) in large World Bank-funded projects (Salmen, 1987). Bamberger's (1988b) paper presented at a World Bank conference on community participation is easily the most comprehensive analytical piece on the methodological aspects of evaluating community participation in mainstream development literature. A statistical analysis correlating specific participation and associated variables with project outcomes was carried out by Finsterbusch and Van Wicklin (1989).

The 1989 conference on the subject of the "Evaluation of Social Development" and the publication of its proceedings underlines the renewed interest in the field (Oakley and Marsden eds., 1990). An interesting approach within the systems paradigm is provided by Brown (undated-a) who suggests measuring information flows (coverage, direction and linkages) as a proxy measure of empowerment, though it is not clear whether a detailed and tested methodology is available. A recent ILO publication by Oakley et al (1991) given a useful summary of the work that has been carried out in this field.

The Indian Slum Improvement projects supported by U.K. Overseas Development Administration is a case where a large state-run development project has made some effort to include the assessment of "soft" issues. This endeavour is particularly interesting as it operates within the orthodox project planning and evaluation framework discussed in Chapter 3, relevant portions of

which are presented in Annexure 4 (Harding, 1989).

Proshika, an NGO that has initiated about 16,500 groups of landless workers (20 families per group on average) in Bangladesh, offers a classic example of an NGO trying to reconcile the spirit of its traditional participatory action research approach with the mounting internal and external pressure for a conventional M&E system. The "transition from a popular approach to a systematic approach" means strengthening of the central office and recruitment of trained professionals which could dilute the empowerment approach. Proshika and many other NGOs have tried to deal with this problem by retaining participatory action research methods at the group and inter-group level, which are complemented by a central M&E system that functions purely as a support unit for the field work. The central unit has the additional responsibility of acting as a "processing and packaging" unit to cater to the genuine information needs of external constituencies like donors, the state apparatus, etc. An illustration of such a process in action is Proshika's innovative work in gaining irrigation water-distribution rights for the landless. The "reversal of learning" commenced at the group level, using participatory action research methods but this was followed by a systematic study of the programme by reputed external professionals in collaboration with the project staff (Shahabuddin & Wood, 1989).

With respect to the tools and techniques for data collection and analysis, an emerging approach, that has as yet largely been used for diagnostic studies and need assessment in natural resource management projects, is that of Rapid or Participatory Rural Appraisal (IIED, 1988-91). The USAID has been actively examining the value of rapid low-cost data collection methods like group interviews and key informant interviews (Kumar, 1987a; 1987b; 1989). UN bodies like the FAO (Molnar 1989) and the UNDP (Srinivasan, 1990) are also beginning to document non-conventional methods of data collection.

An Approach

Any approach for the assessment of empowerment has to be outlined within the analytical framework presented in Chapter 2. At the outset, the M&E approach has to recognise the "process" nature of empowerment. This means that the conventional dichotomy between monitoring and evaluation is found to be less useful, and evaluation because a concurrent and on-going process, merging with the monitoring function. Secondly, a sectoral approach to the evaluation of empowerment would lead to a partial and, perhaps, incorrect assessment. The M&E system has to be holistic and integrated.

Further, it is abundantly clear that empowerment cannot be defined and hence evaluated outside a specific context (institutional-NGO/official aid agency etc.; spatial -rural/urban; geographical-S.Asia, Latin America etc.; socio-political-regime characteristics, caste structure, etc.). An assessment of empowerment has to be rooted in such key contextual issues. Next, even if the assessment of empowerment is being carried out within the main M&E system of an agency, information should be available with respect to marginalised groups. Unless there is such a focus right at the design stage, it is all too common for aggregate data to distort the picture in favour of the more powerful groups. The M&E system has to look for strategic changes at the collective and individual levels, encompassing power equations and political structures. And, finally, the approach has to take

cognizance of the fact that empowerment is as much a psychological construct, having to deal with the effective dimension of feelings and perceptions.

Clearly, there can be no single way of assessing as evasive a concept as empowerment. One approach, which relies heavily on the Writer's field experience with NGOs in India, is to assess empowerment separately at the level of the group, and at the level of the individual/household. Although, empowerment at the group level cannot be durable without empowerment at the individual and household levels, it is generally agreed that in the Third World context, organisation-building at the group level should be the cornerstone of any empowerment strategy (Honadle and Vansant, 1985; Rahman, 1989). This rests on several tested assumptions: that the major strength which poor and marginalised groups have is the strength of their numbers; that organisations - whether formal or informal- provide them with a forum to voice their opinions amongst themselves; that organisations lend an air of legitimacy to political work, and increase the bargaining power while interacting with the external environment; that organisation-building leads to institutionalisation and thereby sustainability. This "beneficiary organisation" thesis was borne out by statistical analysis of USAID projects reviewed by Finsterbusch and Wicklin (1989).

Before the proposed approach is outlined, a brief look at Chen's (1983) participatory evaluation of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a large NGO working with landless groups, will help place the discussion in perspective. BRAC's strategy is to initiate "functional education" classes which provide an opportunity for the project staff to understand local problems and set up informal savings and credit groups. In order to evaluate the performance of groups, open-ended interviews of group members were conducted which generated a set of indicators. Groups which were identified as "stronger" were found to have a steady growth in membership, and held meetings regularly where the attendance was routinely high. These groups encouraged participation of their weakest members through a process of decentralized decision-making. The stronger groups were those which had clear operational procedures and the capacity to mobilize and manage financial and other resources. Most of them had been able to gain the confidence of their members and acted as "people's courts" in arbitration and conflict resolution.

At the level of the individual, BRAC studied changes in women's status in terms of changes in relationship (with other women, with their families, and with the village), changes in power, changes in attitudes and changes in resources. Changes in power were studied in terms of women's influence in the local "shalish" (judicial councils), local elections, and other public goods and services. The term attitudes was used in its broadest sense to include literacy skills, self-confidence, problem - solving ability and independent action.

a) Empowerment at the group level

It is proposed that at the group level (women's organisations, agricultural labourers' collectives, farmers' associations, tribal cultural groups, etc.), there are two distinct but inter-related aspects to empowerment. One deals with the internal aspects of group - functioning which could be called "internal empowerment. Groups need to follow an empowerment approach within their organisations in order to empower themselves to deal with the external environment - "the organisational congruency" thesis (Esman and Uphoff, 1984; Finsterbusch and Wicklin, 1989). The other deals with

external aspects. From a systems perspective, it could be argued that internal empowerment deals with intermediate variables (output and effect indicators) and takes place in the first few years of the project life cycle, and external empowerment deals with end-of-project results (impact indicators). But in reality, the process of empowerment does not follow such a linear path.

Internal Empowerment

Although many internal empowerment parameters can be identified, four key aspects have been selected, viz. self-management, problem-solving, democratisation and sustainability.

Table 4.1
Assessment of Internal Empowerment at the Group Level

Parameter	Indicators	Methods*
Self-management	Membership growth trends-quality/quantity Clear Procedures/Rules Recording of minutes Regularity of /attendance at meetings Maintaining proper financial accounts	AD, RA
Problem-solving	Problem identification, analysis and arriving at solutions	CIL, SRS, RA
Democratisation	Free and fair selection/election process Decision-making processes-role of weaker members Information flows-transparency	AD, SSI RA
Self-reliance/sustainability	Conflict resolution Actions initiated by the group itself Extent of dependence on animator Legal status Economic independence-capacity to mobilise resources Intra-group support system	CIL, SRS, RA

* AD = Analysis of documents

RA = Rating by animators

CIL = Critical Incident Log

SRS = Self-rating scales

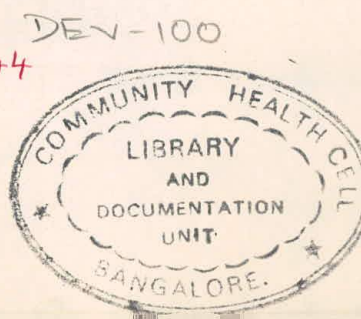
SR = Status/Wealth Ranking

SM = Social Mapping

SSI = Semi-structured interviews

MR = Matrix Ranking

AP = Activity Profiles.



External Empowerment

The group will be interacting with several other institutions/individuals in the external environment, including project staff, state agencies, and other powerful sections within the community. The extent to which the group can increase its bargaining power with each of them could form the basis for assessing external empowerment.

Table 4.2

Assessment of External Empowerment at the Group Level

Parameter	Indicators	Methods
With project implementing agency	Influence in decision-making process of project at all stages Institutionalisation of power-sharing norms Representation in project policy-making bodies Degree of financial autonomy	AD, SSI, AR SRS
With state agencies	Leverage of state development funds Influence on design and implementation on other state programmes in the area	AD SSI SRS
With local social and political bodies	Representation and role in local government bodies, formal co-ops, etc. Lobbying with mainstream political parties Influence in local schools, PHC centers, etc.	AD, SSI, SRS
With other groups and social movements	Formation and strengthening of inter-group federations Networking with larger social movements	AD, SSI
With non-group members (eg., the local elite, men, caste Hindus)	Extent of dependence for routine and non-routine tasks/needs on patrons Conflict management Achievements in retaining or wresting power	SSI, CIL, MR

Some field-level examples of similar attempts at assessing empowerment through group organisation are worth reviewing. Uphoff's work in developing a participatory evaluation methodology in farmers' organisations, using simple numerical self-rating scales has been hailed as a seminal contribution. The methodology was used in the Gal Oya Water Management Project in Sri Lanka and is one of the few examples of a systematic assessment of group organisations in a large project.

A list of evaluation questions are jointly agreed by the project staff and the groups eg., "How well does the group carry on its meetings without the Group Promoter?". The responses are then rated by group members on a 4-point scale as follows: 3=Group is able to meet regularly and effectively without Promoter; 2=Can meet, but not regularly; 1= Can meet, but not effectively; 0=Cannot meet. Average scores can be computed for individual questions and for a composite index at the group and inter-group levels. Uphoff suggests that this method is better suited for longitudinal rather than cross-sectional studies, in terms of reliability and validity. However, the objective is "self-education" and "self-improvement" rather than objectivity and comparability. Groups have been studied in terms of operation and management, economic performance, technical operation and management, financial operation and management, group institutionalisation and self-reliance, and other considerations (Uphoff 1988, 1989).

Rifkin et al (1988) have used a similar 5-point scale to assess six "process indicators" in a primary health care project in Kaski district of Nepal. The indicators are related to leadership, organisation, resource mobilisation, management and needs - assessment, and focus on the poor (ref. Annexure 5). However, the rating is carried out by project staff on the basis of participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Data interpretation and analysis can be carried out at different levels of aggregation. Annexure 6 shows the visual difference in performance - either between two points in time or two groups in the same period.

Another case using a systematic structure for designing and monitoring group organisation work is found in the Local Resource Management Track III Program Framework of the Philippine Business for Socio-Progress. The process of "organisational building for poverty groups" is seen to evolve over three phases, as shown in Annexure 7 (Panganiban, 1988).

Proshika offers a good example of using a comparable methodology in practice. Indicators such as inter-group solidarity/alliance-building, resource mobilisation, pressurising local authorities, etc. are used as measures of group performance (Shahabuddin and Wood, 1989). Case studies and semi-structured interviews of group action and intra-group support are also available - eg., one group persuaded a poor member not to waste all his resources on his daughter's marriage; in many other cases, consumption loans were provided from within the group to reduce dependence on moneylenders; a state-run tube well manager was incriminated by the group for non-payment of fair wages (Hossain, undated).

b) Empowerment at the individual/household-level

At the individual and household levels, impairment can be assessed in terms of skills, perceptions and actions. Most projects following an empowerment approach are involved in imparting literacy/

numerous skills, training group members in basic legal rights, etc. The psychological aspects of empowerment are covered under the parameter dealing with perceptions. However, the most important set of indicators relate to the actions carried out by group members on the basis of the skills that they have acquired or the perceptions and attitudes they have developed. For example, the male head of household might have indicated a positive attitude towards female literacy; what is more important is that he converts this into action by providing his daughters the opportunity to go to school. It is under this section that changes in intra-household power distribution can be studied in terms of women's triple roles, decision-making powers, etc.

Table 4.3.

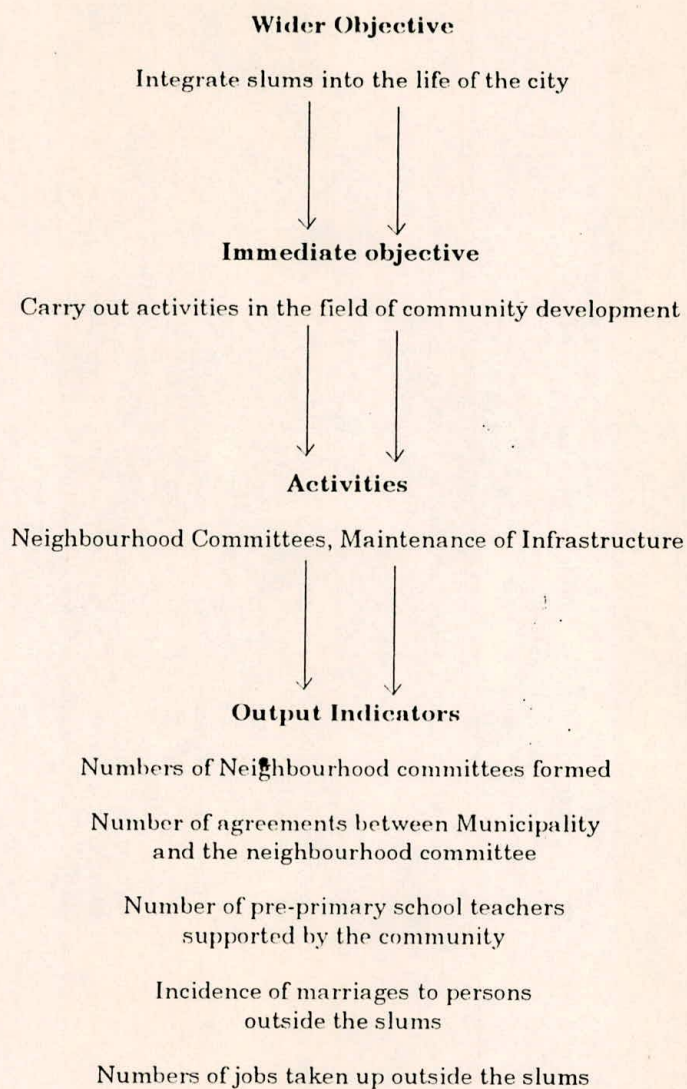
Assessment of Empowerment at the Individual/Household Level

Parameter	Indicators	Methods
Skills/ Awareness	Literacy/numeracy skills	RA,
	Awareness of basic legal rights	SRS,
	Awareness of project and state development activities	SSI,
	Critical political consciousness	MR,
	-electoral process -societal analysis -gender issues	
Perceptions	Social status	
	As perceived by self	SM,
	As perceived by others	SR,
	Freedom from exploitation eg. moneylenders, landlords	SSI
Actions	Role in group organisation and other political bodies	AD,
	Ensuring literacy of girl children/women	SSI,
	Women's time utilisation	MR,
	Decision-making powers of women within household	AP

Some case studies of attempts to assess empowerment at the level of the individual/household are presented to place this discussion in perspective. Women in a resettlement project in Philippines have used group discussions and workshops to assess awareness levels over time. Attitudes were classified in a graded from as submissive, pre-critical, critical and liberating-critical. A woman was classified as having a liberating-critical attitude when she identified problems, analysed them, took

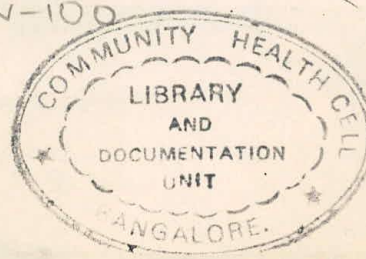
ANNEXURE 4

M&E of Social Development in The Indian Slums Project



Source: Adapted from Harding (1989)

4344



PROCESS INDICATORS IN A PHC PROJECT

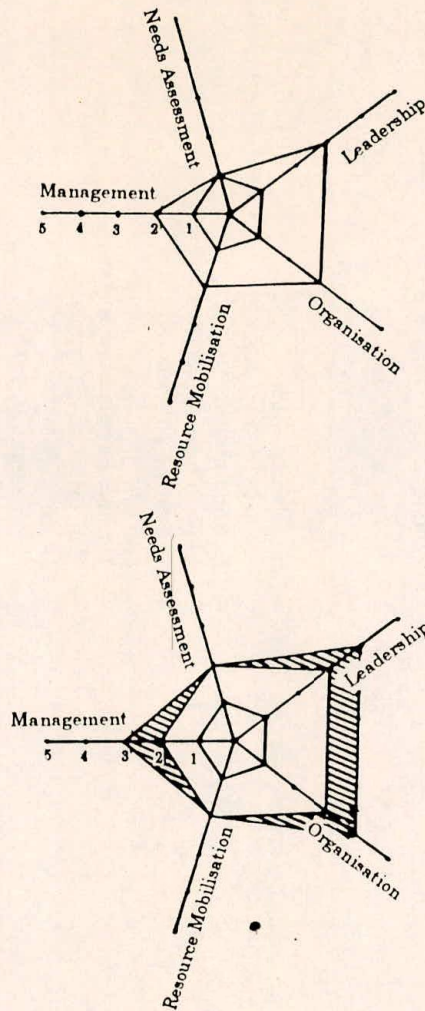
Indicator (range)	RANKS				
	Narrow, nothing 1	Restricted, small 2	Mean, fair 3	Open, much good 4	Wide, very much excellent 5
1. Leadership (L) [wealthy minority-variety of interests]	One-sided (i.e. wealthy minority: imposing ward-chairman; health staff assumes leadership; or: inexistence of heterogeneous WHC.	WHC not functioning, but CHL works independent of social interest groups.	WHC functioning under the leadership of an independent CHL.	Active WHC, taking initiative.	WHC fully represents variety of interests in community and controls CHL activities.
2. Organisation (O) [created by planners—community organisation]	WHC imposed by health services and inactive.	WHC imposed by health services, but developed some activities.	WHC imposed by health services, but became fully active.	WHC actively cooperating with other community organisations	Existing community organisations have been involved in creating WHC
3. Resource Mobilisation (RM) [small commitment+ limited control-good commitment+committed control]	Small amount of resources raised by community. No fees for services. WHC does not decide on any resource	Fees for services. WHC has no control over utilisation of money collected.	Community fund raising periodically, but no involvement in control of expenditure.	Community fund raising periodically and WHC controls utilisation of funds.	Considerable amount of resources raised by fees or otherwise. WHC allocates the money collected.
4. Management (M) [professional induced-community interests]	Induced by health services. CHL only supervised by health staff.	CHL manages independently with some involvement of WHC. Supervision only by health staff.	WHC self-managed without control of CHL's activities.	WHC self-managed and involved in supervision of CHL.	CHL responsible to WHC and actively supervised by WHC.
5. Needs Assessment (NA) [professional view-community involved]	Imposed from outside with medical, professional point of view (CHL, VHW, HP-staff); or: Latrine building programme imposed on community.	Medical point of view dominates an 'educational' approach. Community interests are also considered.	CHL is active representative of community views and assesses the needs.	WHC is actively representing community views and assesses the needs	Community members in general are involved in needs assessment.

VHW = village health worker; WHC = ward health committee; CHL = community health leader; HP = health post

Source: RIFKIN (1988) pp 936

ANNEXURE 6

COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF GROUP PERFORMANCE



Source : RIFKIN (1989) pp 934

PBSP'S ORGANIZATIONAL BUILDING FRAMEWORK FOR POVERTY GROUPS

	Level I Leadership Orientation/ Organization Formation	Level II Organizational Consolidation/ Capability Building	Level III Organizational Expansion/ Maintenance
Organizational Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Clear statement of goal/ objectives— Set of functioning officers/leaders— Defined structure— Operational organizational systems and procedures— Action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Clear statement of goal/ objectives— Organization with legal personality— Short and long term organizational plans— Functioning and skilled leaders— Trained C.O. Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Clear statement of goal/ objectives— Organization with legal personality— short and long term organi- zational plans— Functioning and skilled leaders— Refined organizational systems and procedures based on experiences— Upgraded C.O. Volunteers
Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— On-going basic services projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— On-going livelihood projects— Defined project implementing structure— Operating policies and procedures— Trained barefoot technicians— Utilization of appropriate technologies— Representation in the Municipal Development Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Refined project systems and procedures
Advocacy Role			<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Advocates policy changes to the Municipal Development Council/Sangguniang Bayan

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a public stand, and joined group activities to confront issues (Womens' Research Committee, 1984).

Writing about the perceptible changes in female workers' attitudes and consciousness as a result of WWF's work in India, Azad (1986) uses case studies and analysis of documents to show that most group members opposed dowry for women and favored inter-caste marriage. The work of Richards in evaluating "PPH", a development project run by the Catholic church in Chile, from a Freireian perspective provides a valuable illustration of the use of non-directed interviews, verbal images and a host of other qualitative methods to study attitudes such as "disposition to participate in constructive activities" (Richards, 1985).

"Arbol Andino", a social forestry project in the Southern Andes of Peru, has tried to evaluate attitudinal changes among the peasant farmer towards forestry and the increase in his/her capacity to analyse and solve problems at the individual level. Semistructured interviews were first used to generate statements denoting attitudes - eg., "We need to organise ourselves". These statements were later converted to standard attitudinal scales. The results from the attitudinal study at the individual level were analysed to provide individual and group averages. Control groups were used for comparison. In order to measure the respondent's capacity to analyse problems, mock exercises and role simulations were carried out. The verbal and written results were then interpreted by the evaluation team, using qualitative and quantitative tools (Garaycochea, 1989)

The study of poor urban households in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, by Sollis and Moser (1989) has shown that rapid questionnaire surveys can be effectively used in collaboration with communities to assess sensitive indicators such as changes in the balance between women's time in their productive, reproductive and community managing roles, and other intra-household impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Some Issues

It is essential, at this stage, to identify the limitations of the proposed approach to assess empowerment and the manner in which these problems are sought to be countered. Some of the major limitations that are faced by such a method are political in nature. In the state-sponsored development sector, instituting a M&E system for the assessment of empowerment will expose the rhetoric associated with the concept. Empowerment objectives included in high-sounding project documents, which adorn the shelves of aid - bureaucrats, will have to be resurrected and translated into action. Low-intensity "parachute" evaluations that can be carried out by outsiders provide jobs for many "experts". Such evaluations are often constrained by deadlines and produce reports that speak a language that aid bureaucracies like to hear. Moving towards the proposed approach would not only demand a great deal of political commitment from those controlling the levers of power, but also a transition from the "mind set" of scientific research with quasi-experimental designs to more pluralistic traditions. Those NGOs which shun any attempt at measuring progress in a systematic manner will be equally hesitant to consider the proposed approach. The major problem would, therefore, be one of resistance to change.

This study, like most other similar attempts, has not been able to resolve the basic issue of whether the contextual relativity of a concept like empowerment undermines the value of any

attempt at developing a generalised approach for assessing empowerment. A precise definition of the concept of empowerment has not been provided and, consequently, the M&E approach has had to operate at an abstract level. The approach, in general, and the indicators, in particular, have been merely illustrative and by no means - exhaustive. At the same time, the study has steered clear of trying to associate empowerment variables with the project cycle.

Assuming for a moment that such a distinction is meaningful, the approach is clearly biased in favour of the assessment of political empowerment, since it was felt that social (health, education, etc.) and economic (income generation, natural resources, etc.) empowerment have received better attention in the existing literature on the subject. The study merely highlights the need to be conscious of gender issues and users will have to deal with this aspect in a comprehensive manner. On the empirical front, the South Asian bias is a serious limitation. It is assumed that the "how" of operationalising the approach, in terms of the methodology for data collection, interpretation and analysis, is an issue deserving exclusive treatment and is, therefore, treated in a superficial manner in this study. Similarly, aspects like the proportion of expenditure that an agency should invest in its M&E system (cost effectiveness) and the staffing and training issues (M&E organisation) were considered to be outside the purview of this study.

On the other hand, the approach has been outlined in a fashion that can deal with most of the problems mentioned above. By offering a broad spectrum of parameters and indicators that cut across sectoral boundaries, it has highlighted the manner in which the assessment of "soft" issue. can be approached. User will have to provide the contextual moorings and select/adapt those parameters/ indicators from the menu that are relevant to their specific needs. In suggesting an indicative range of "methods" for data collection, the objective is to allow the approach to be used by agencies in both the state and NGO sectors, without substantially altering their current M&E system.

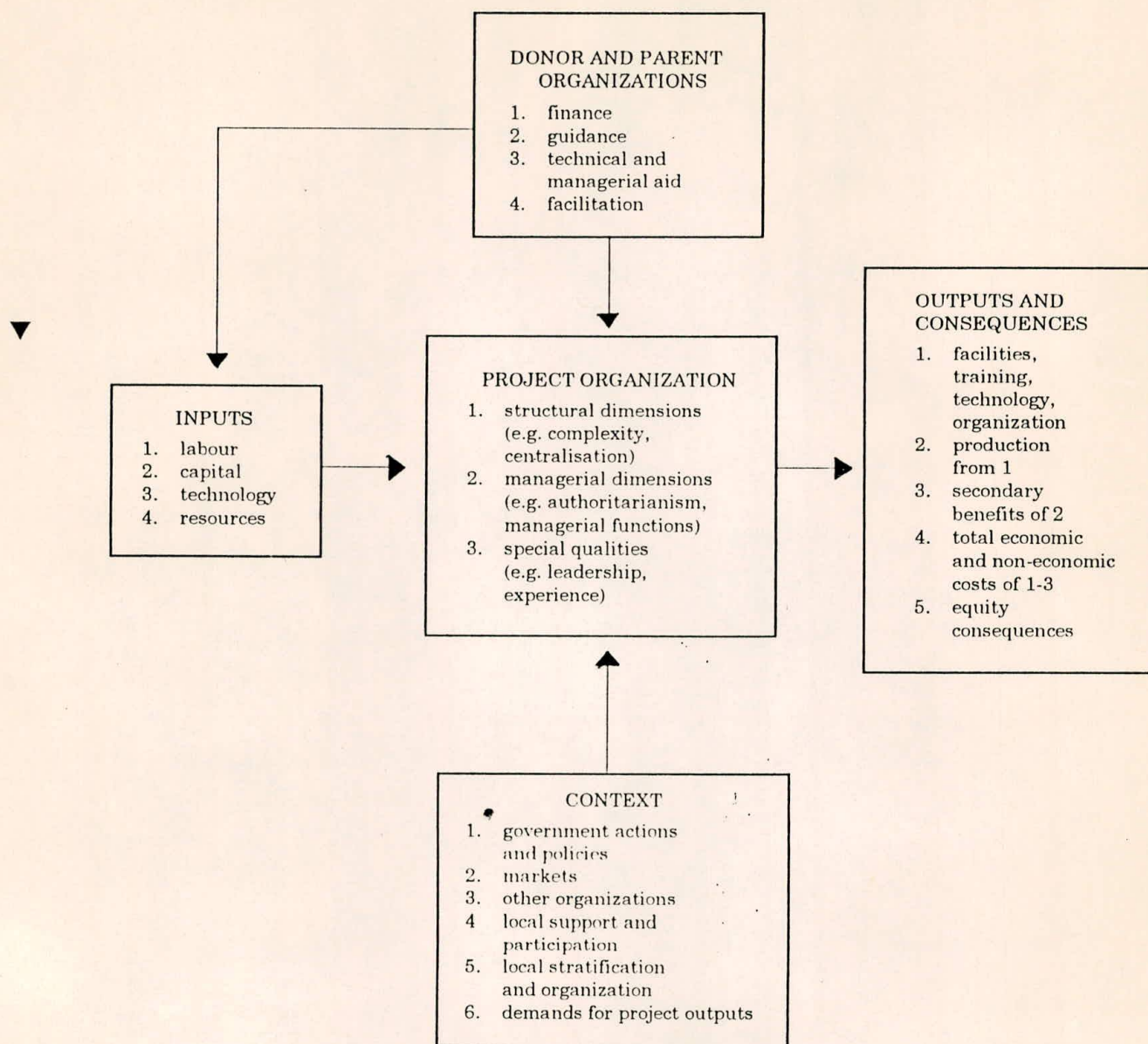
Although the nature of this study is purely exploratory, few of the policy implications stemming from this approach need to be considered. The first, and the most fundamental, issue is to do with legitimising empowerment strategies, especially in official development projects. This requires a shift from the commonly held instrumental view of participation based on the "efficiency" approach to an "emancipatory" one. The next step would be to strengthen the linkages between the project planning and M&E systems with the understanding that on-going evaluation is an essential part of the "learning process". In practical terms, the approach needs to be institutionalised and incorporated in agency and project-level documents dealing with community participation and M&E system.

Staff at all levels need to have a clear understanding of the rationale and the methodological aspects of the approach. This has implications on staff - training. It is certain that assessing empowerment and other process indicators require higher order skills. The lack of adequate training packages and institutional interest (both academic and training institutions) is an added obstacle in the spread of such methodologies. NGO training institutions, like the Society for Participatory Research in Asia could take the lead in developing training modules.

At another level, it is imperative that the movement for developing effective methodologies for evaluating social development is strengthened. This could be done by documenting and disseminating many innovative efforts being carried out in the NGO sector. The idea of promoting an informal network of those interested in the subject (like the RRA network) could be considered. In order to gain from each other's experience, inter-project visits and training sessions for staff in the state and NGO sectors could be fruitful.

Annexure 1

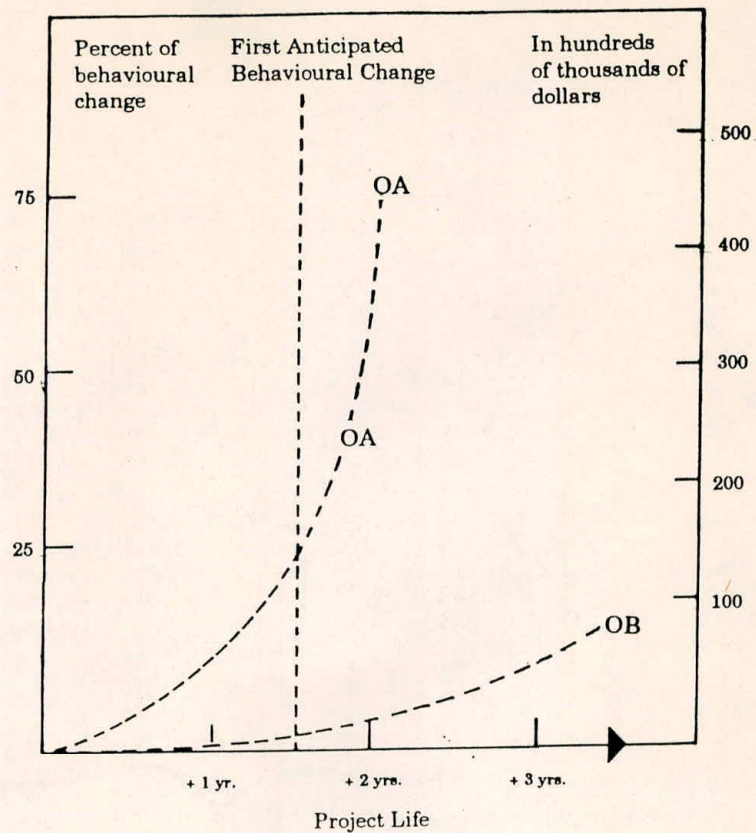
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INPUT-OUTPUT FRAMEWORKS



Source : FINSTERBUSCH AND WICKLIN (1987) pp 6

ANNEXURE 2

MODELLING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE



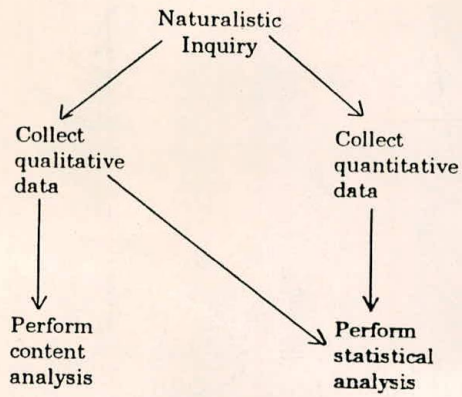
Note : A refers to data drawn from the area where the project is located; B refers to the area where spread effects are anticipated (see Table 6.2). At A, consideration should be given to project close-out activities. The percent of behaviour change in the target population(s) is with respect to factors identified as critical (see Table 5.1).

Source: Compiled by the Author

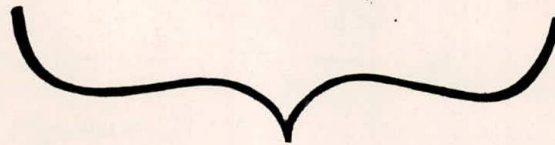
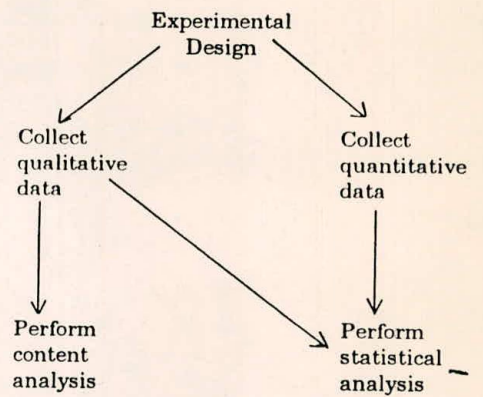
Source : COCHRANE (1979) pp 77

ANNEXURE 3
COMPLEMENTING PARADIGMS

Pure Holistic-Inductive Paradigm
(outer left path)



Pure Hypothetical-Deductive Paradigm
(outer right path)



Mixed Paradigms
(middle paths)

Source : PATTON (1990) pp 195