

ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL EMPOWERMENT AT THE GROUP LEVEL

Parameter	Indicators	Methods *
Self-management quality/ quantity	Membership growth trends Clear Procedures/ Rules, Recording of minutes, Regularity of attendance at meetings	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	
Self-reliance / sustainability	Conflict resolution Actions initiated by the group itself Extent of dependence on animator Legal status Economic independence - capacity to mobilise resources Inter - group support system	CIL, SRA, RA
*AD - Analysis of documents CIL - Critical Incident Log SR - Status / Wealth Ranking SSI - Semi - structured interviews AP - Activity Profiles	RA - Rating by animators SRS - Self- rating scales SM - Social Mapping MR - Matrix Ranking	

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	AD, SSI, SRS
	Influence in local schools, PHC centers etc	
With other groups and social movements With non-group members (eg. the local elite, men, caste Hindus)	Formation and strengthening of inter-group federations Extent of dependence for routine and non-routine tasks/needs on patrons Conflict management Achievements in retaining or wresting power	AD, SSI, CIL, MR

Case I

Background

A poverty analysis carried out by the World Bank in 1990 indicated that farming families with less than 2 hectares of land, traditional inputs and practices, insecure tenure and no access to irrigation or off-farm incomes were the most impoverished, ill and vulnerable segment of the population. Four districts in the west and three in the east of the country, each with a population of about 1.2 million were found to have the highest concentration of this type of population, some 25 percent of households with an average of 6 members. AGDEV, your NGO, was specifically established to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable members of society. It used the World Bank findings to initiate a pilot project to see what could be done to both improve agricultural productivity and reduce vulnerability of this type of rural group.

The pilot involved 300 households in one western district. Its components were: a) introduction of modest yield, but drought and disease resistant seeds which did not require irrigation, together with on-farm seed recovery and storage; b) credit aimed at women to engage in the production and marketing of goods, such as clothing, utensils, dung cakes and so on; and c) pressure on the local administration to issue title deeds for farms, which is government policy but was being resisted by local elite who benefited from a state of permanent insecurity amongst the poor.

AGDEV's strategy was to employ and train (3 courses of 2 weeks each) local people who had some formal education as extension workers and pay them a monthly stipend—they were not actually employees. One extension worker dealt with all the three parts of the project for a maximum of 30 households, typically spread over an area of 15 sq km. Three of these areas formed a zone with a paid staff member called a coordinator. Three specialists, one in agriculture, one for credit and one in law were located at the district HQ provide professional support, documentation, learning and linkages to other similar initiatives. Further there is an administrator and the project manager. Overhead costs in the pilot set-up have been high, some \$40 per year, when calculated per family served.

The direct cost per household of these activities combined had been moderate, some \$12 per year. Evaluation had shown a 15 percent increase in yield per hectare over 3 year, despite adverse conditions. The proportion of families with sustained access to off-farm income rose from 9 to 25 percent while 20 percent more title deeds were issued in the third year of the project than in the first, although this only amounted to 4 percent of households. In addition, the incidence of illness amongst women and children dropped by some 30 percent when calculated in terms of money spent or time lost

Project Parameters

AGDEV's success has led to internal and donor pressure to increase the scale of operations within the district and in other districts. Government officials are less enthusiastic however, because their role has not been significant, yet they have the same mandate. Elite are far from happy because their leverage is being reduced. In addition, AGDEV, has played an active role in educating farmers about the new practices, running the credit programme and pushing the local administration for title deeds. In other words, the community organisation and management side of things has not developed in step with the technical and financial elements and new skills will be needed to deal with this.

After long negotiation, over a three year period, AGDEV has agreed with donors to increase coverage to 6000 households in the existing district and to start up new programmes in two others. the direct cost per household must be brought down to \$10 per year and overhead costs to not more than this amount.

Build a monitoring system for developing overall objectives / project purpose / key result. Also develop qualitative and quantitative indicators for attaining result and overall goal. Specify source of verification.

Background

It was a sleepy town in the terai region of a mountainous country in South Asia that Urmilla, the project coordinator of the Women's Enterprise development project(WEDP), had spent her last five years. WEDP was part of the community development project of the well known voluntary organisation. The Terrai Development Society, which was formed in 1989 to improve the quality of life of the majority of poor families(constituting about 80%) of the terai region by enhancing their material resource base and bargaining power.

Urmilla's work in organising the local women, mostly belonging to the landless households, had commenced in 1991 and focused on about 100 women spread over 50 villages. The women had initially been brought together in village-wise Mahila mandal(women's groups)to discuss issues of common interest such as access to drinking water. Over the last two years, the Mahila mandals had increasingly started talking about issues of domestic violence and the subordinate status of women within the household. This had also led to a great deal of tension between the men and women folk in some villages. In recent months, Urmilla had noticed a reduction in attendance at the meetings and some women had indirectly suggested that although this process of forming women's organisations had built solidarity among women, there were no tangible benefits to help women with their day to day problems such as lack of access to food, credit, drinking water etc. A month ago Ramesh Shreshta, the head of the NGO, called Urmilla and said that he had been receiving complaints from the local elite and the district government officials that WEDP was leading to women questioning men's authority to make decisions and leading to conflict.

Project parameters

This formed the genesis of a new project idea which Urmila conceived along with some inputs from the NGO senior management and some articulate members of the Mahila mandals. It was proposed that WEDP launch a women's income generation programme for basket making, tailoring, weaving and handi craft making. The idea of promoting entrepreneurial skills among rural women held great appeal to North American donor who immediately sent a consultant to prepare a project proposal along with the local NGO. During the project-preparation phase, Urmila was very particular that the original empowerment objectives of WEDP were not lost. She was equally concerned that this project does not result in an increased burden on women's time and health, with the accruing incomes going in the hands of men. The donor was of course very particular that savings and credit, skills training in micro enterprise management, and marketing gets highest priority resulting in very definite income increases in every household. The Mahila Mandals were quite exited about the prospects and agreed to provide land and construct at least four temporary sheds as production centres. the local Government officials were also relieved and assured to provide some credit assistance through the formal banking

and cooperative system. It was finally agreed that the project would run for three years and cover all the 1000 women with a project outlay of US\$ 5000,000.

It took almost a month to put together the project proposal especially because the donors were particular that the proposal includes something called a Logical Framework.

Build a monitoring system for developing overall objectives / project purpose / key result. Also develop qualitative and quantitative indicators for attaining result and overall goal. Specify source of verification.

Case 3

Background

As the name suggests, Rights-Slum is an organisation that has been working for the rights of slum dwellers in a mega city in the deltaic plains of South Asia for the 15 years. It was late in the evening and the rikshaw pullers, having finished their days work were chatting rather loudly in the tea shop outside the Rights Slum office in Likkapara. As Dr. Nurul, the founder Director of Rights Slum, sat back he found himself in a reflective mood about how Rights Slum had started just with his wife Taslima and himself providing curative medical services to slum dwellers around their house in 1980. By 1985, the organisation had a full team of medical doctors and health workers covering a whole ward in the city and had started receiving funds from foreign donors. It was only by 1990 that it became clear that providing health services was not really addressing underlying causes of poverty and deprivation among the slum dwellers. Perhaps the single most important event that made Dr. Nurul and his team rethink their strategy was that in June 1990 when a medical team went to the slums on their morning rounds, they found that the entire slum had been raised to the ground by municipal authorities declaring the entire population to be unauthorised squatters. There was a huge outcry both within the slum community and the media and evictions were prevented albeit temporarily. This led to a series of strategic planning sessions along with the community and other NGOs which led to a focus on issues of tenurial rights, shelter, AIDS issues, legal education sanitation, access to civic amenities and collaborative efforts with the city municipal corporation and other NGOs. Social groups such as pavement dwellers, street children and commercial sex workers were identified as priority groups. This diversified approach was initiated in 1992 (with the renaming of the organisation from Likappara Slum Welfare Society to Rights-Slum) and the last four years had generated a wealth of experience.

Project Parameters

Today was the end of a three day Retreat of the staff of Rights Slum along with key representatives of the client constituency. The retreat had reaffirmed the commitment to a rights and advocacy approach as the most appropriate one but felt that this work cannot continue to be carried out in an adhoc manner. Particularly it was felt that the key issue of securing tenurial rights for all the two thousand inhabitants of Likapara slum had to be achieved in a systematic manner. This meant that at the micro level people had to be made aware of their legal rights, formed into rights protection groups and helped in evolving emergency procedures in case of eviction attempts by slum lords, building contractors and municipal authorities. At the same time stronger linkages had to be built with other NGOs, sympathetic lawyers and police and municipal authority personnel. Separately an advocacy campaign had to be designed with the media in the legislature which would highlight the injustices in the current legal and administrative framework and propose concrete alternative. While the government had a stated policy to legalise all dwelling older than 20 years, this was never achieved in practice because of the resistance of vested interest groups. A Norwegian foundation was quite supportive and had agreed to provide financial support of upto \$ 4 lakhs for a 5 year project.

Dr. Nurul had been assigned the responsibility of preparing a project proposal using a logical framework and had rashly agreed to prepare a first draft tonight.

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Case 4

Background

In 1993, participants at a South Asia regional NGO conference identified weak organisational capacities as a major constraint to achieving sustained improvements in the lives of the people they were dedicated to serve. A solution to this problem was seen to lie in establishing a new NGO whose specific task would be to help build the organisational capabilities of NGOs in the region. SANA was the name chosen for the new agency. The starting point for creating SANA was a study on the existing strength and weaknesses of the NGOs in the region. Major findings of the study were:

1. There were some 28,000 NGOs in the region, the smallest comprising three staff with a budget of \$1700, the largest had 3700 staff and a budget of \$36 million. Most NGOs, some 65% are in fact small, giving a regional average of 26 staff and budgets in the order of \$17,000 per year.
2. 70% of the NGOs pursued only one development activity such as credit, or AIDS or water supply, 20% tackled between 2-5 distinct activities and 10% more than 5.
3. Most NGOs, some 78%, lacked basic internal administrative systems needed to both design, monitor and account for projects.
4. Staff by and large were recruited because of their commitment or social status rather than their personal competencies.
5. There was a common over dependence on the leader in decision making.
6. Boards were usually very weak or in a very few cases overpowering leading to a lack of unaccountability through anyone other than donors.
7. Only the very big NGOs had an ability to think and act strategically.
8. Overall, a hard earned credibility with poor people was being threatened by increased levels of official aid available to NGOs.
9. There was a structural inability of NGOs to effectively collaborate with each other and with other agencies and sectors of society.

Based on these findings SANA was created with 4 professional and 3 support staff with a mandate to help build the capacity of a small to average size NGOs, drawing as much as possible on resources from the bigger and better endowed agencies and from the umbrella NGOs to be found in each country.

Project Parameters

A project needs to be defined which will improve development performance of targeted NGOs by building their internal capacity. To ensure balance, attention must be paid to each of the 5 countries of the region, where NGOs are unevenly distributed. Negotiation will be an important initial part of project design.

from discussion with 3 donors, it appears that support would be forth coming for an initial period of 3 years, with an expectation of some 10% of eligible NGOs. They, like you, are particularly concerned with seeing organisational change within the participating NGOs

and expect to have concrete evidence of SANA's effects in reducing the problems found by the study.

Governments in the region have different attitudes towards NGOs. Some feel that NGOs are usurping their role, others that they are having to compete with NGOs for donor funds, others are happy to have NGOs help them deal with an impossible level of demand for services, while others are happy with the NGOs as long as they only provide services but are wary when they stray into areas of policy influencing or structural change. The environment must therefore be taken into account.

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