

NOTE FOR DISCUSSION

THE ENTRY PROCESS

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How does MYRADA initiate the process that develops into people's institutions at the local or micro level?

Over the past few years, MYRADA's efforts were geared towards the formation of local level institutions which were developed by the people and managed by them. Depending on the area (eg. micro watershed) or the asset (credit) the processes resulted in peoples institutions which were appropriate to each and therefore different but in all cases the institutions evolved and stabilised only if the groups were socially functional.

The problems MYRADA had to cope with were many; for example :

1. In many projects, especially in the early stages, the people's associations that were formed were too large since they included all the poor in the village.
2. In some projects, the project invested funds in the groups before values (most of them traditional) had an opportunity of reviving and influencing peoples behaviour - which happens only in the context of institutions that people have developed and in which they have confidence.
3. In some cases the older pattern of forming village associations comprising all the poor in the village continued to guide our approach and attempts were made to bring back smaller groups that were pulling away to the larger association instead of allowing them to function independently.
4. Non-formal education programmes continued to focus on literacy according to standard syllabi for all those who attended the sessions (even though attendance was often poor) instead of focusing on the small functional

groups and on their specific priorities (e.g., Numeracy). The focus was also needed on improving the effective participation and management capabilities of all the members of the groups which are important skills required to institutionalize the culture of social functionality, and provide the necessary checks and balances. In other words it is not enough for the group to function together. What is essential is that every member must have the skills and confidence to participate effectively.

We have had 2 to 3 years of experience in the formation of small groups. It is imperative that we draw from this experience to develop broad and tentative guidelines covering the process of entry. This effort is urgently called for since several new projects will start during 1989-90 and several older ones are extending and undergoing a review of their credit management groups which are primarily socially functional groups which are utilising credit as an instrument of change leading towards self-reliance.

To initiate the discussion, we will attempt to analyse the processes that have developed and try to identify the various steps, though this effort will force us to artificially dissect the process into individual activities which (we must bear in mind) are not static but closely interlinked and interact with one or the other. We will however only try to initiate an analysis of the first three phases which together form the essential part of the entry process.

PHASE - I

A period of rapport - getting to know and feel the people, their local problems, politics and pressures.

Methods :

Visiting tea shops, casual discussions in the village, meetings with village leaders, strengthening contacts with those families already in touch through programmes like health and veterinary services in areas where projects are extending coverage, and through several other ways. At this stage (which may take from 1 - 3 months), no meetings or education programmes are conducted. However contacts can be made mainly through agriculture, contacts with women and children, veterinary and health services and some awareness provided in these areas.

PHASE - II

Common Action Programmes :

During the first phase certain possible activities involving the whole community can be identified. Such activities must attract the attention of all. Of these various activities one can be selected after discussions with the people. Such activities could be road building, tank desilting, community hall/school construction, sanitation, tree planting etc.

What is important in this activity is to ensure people's participation and decision making -

- in choice of project
- in planning/ project formulation
- in contribution (cash and/or labour)
- in monitoring / implementation of the work
- in management of wages and *shramdaan*.

MYRADA can consider providing upto 70% of costs of this common action. The people should be paid for their labour as well as contribute *Shramdaan* for part of the project.

During this phase, senior MYRADA staff should keep in close touch with the people in order to :

1. identify the really poor.
2. identify enlightened leadership both among the older generation but especially among the new.
3. Most important to identify the socially functional groups among the poor. For example, if there are 80 poor families, we may find that they are divided into 3 groups. Infact, while being involved in the community activity, it often happens that these groups will plan and implement as a group. The "Talavadi Elephant Trench" project brought this out adequately. As a result of these small functional groups operating separately yet within the overall plan, 42 kms of trench was completed in 8 months, while a similar project implemented by the Church in the same area took 6 years to complete 6 kms!

During this phase some form of community education can be attempted in the area of :

- health
- animal husbandry

social reform, but not in the areas where conflict will arise like land reforms, organisation of labour since the people are not ready as yet. It often happens, however, that as a result of community activity, wages do rise and often do not come down. One useful social issue that could be resolved is that of paying equal wages to men and women. Another habit that could be revived and strengthened is the thrift and saving habit. Some of the groups especially those of women could be persuaded to save from their wages.

During this phase, street theatre can be used effectively as a means of communication as well as video tapes of other MYRADA projects. Exposure trips could also be organised.

The major objectives of this second stage however are :

1. To strengthen rapport with the people.
2. To identify the socially functional groups (SFGs) among the poor.

PHASE - III

Focus on the socially functional groups. Though other community activities can continue to be undertaken, the focus should now be on the SFGs.

It could be that in one village there are two or three groups each comprising 25-30 members (over 30 makes it difficult for the group to operate) and that a few of the poor are left out. We may have to accept this situation for the time being and not insist on including all the poor; there are reasons why the groups have not included them and we have to find out these reasons. The policy of saturation, therefore, namely that our programme should cover all the poor in the village should be reconsidered.

By focusing on the SFGs, we mean primarily that our non-formal education should now begin and be targeted to the SFGs.

The groups should meet weekly or 4 times in a month. This is imperative in this phase. One meeting could be fully devoted to non-formal education (NFE), one could be partly NFE and a cultural programme or to build up the functional skills of the members, the other two could be partly business and partly NFE. Where the groups have not saved in Phase II they could be motivated to save. All groups should be motivated to build up a common fund through savings, fines, fund raising

projects, etc., where the groups are ready, they could start giving small loans, but after they have decided on the rules and regulations. MYRADA could also match the common fund of good groups. Since the groups will differ widely in their activities ranging from groups that have not started savings to those who have a common fund which they are lending, it is difficult to have a common pattern for the meetings as suggested above. Obviously those who have more business activities will need more time for these activities, but non-formal education is essential at this stage and atleast two meetings a months should be devoted to NFE. As the groups progress the number of meetings every month could be gradually reduced as two NFE sessions every month may not be required. Exposure trips could also be organised.

During this phase apart from concentrating on NFE for the whole group, it is necessary to focus especially on the weaker members of the group. Though the group may function well it is also necessary that each and every member participates effectively. In an average group of 25 it will be noticed that several, possibly 10 members, do not participate effectively. These members should be given special attention by organising separate training sessions and exposure trips. This focus on the weaker members will ensure that power does not concentrate in the hands of a few.

During this phase other skills should also be provided - eg. numeracy, simple accounting, conduct meetings, monitoring records etc. By this time all the records required for the proper functioning of a CMG should be in place even though MYRADA staff will have to maintain some of them.

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