

## **ABSTRACT**

**Title :** Towards understanding the process of development: A case study on eco-income generation approach.

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### **The objectives of the study**

- a) To understand the particular social reality within which the project is located -that is the Changar area.
- b) Study the perceptions of various actors involved regarding development as its goals.
- c) Understanding the formal and informal networks (both horizontal and vertical), rules, norms, trust which guide their collective goals.
- d) Analyzing how such perceptions in b) are linked to c) and shape and are shaped by them.

### **Methodology**

The study was laid within a theoretical framework provided by actor oriented approach. This recognizes that social context of development and larger macro-economic as well as social conditions of power and knowledge influence the outcomes of development interventions. A Case study design was used to capture the complexity of the development intervention (eco-income generation approach in Changar area). The focus was on analytical generalizations rather than statistical generalizations.

### **Universe and Sampling**

The universe constituted the entire range of interactions and actor strategies that are part of the development intervention. Purposive sampling was used as a base for selection of respondents and selection of actor strategies

### **Data Sources**

Data sources constitute members of the women producer groups, key informants (persons associated with the formation and functioning of the cooperative, persons in the villages where Women Producer Groups are located) and the social context as well as the documents related to the project. In all 16 FGDs, 35 interviews and various documents related to the project have been studied.

## **Study areas**

The study area is related to two districts of Kangra and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh. The area of operation of the cooperative is divided into clusters – three of which are located in Kangra District and one is located in Chamba district. The clusters located in Kangra district are 1) Dhati, 2) Billa Bichwai and 3) Ropri. The first two clusters fall within the development blocks of Bhavarna and the third one Ropri falls within Lambagaon Block.

## **Findings and Conclusion**

It was found that

- a) The perception of actors is important in understanding the intervention. Perceptions are influential in determining the strategies of the actors. These can range from individual, group and organizational levels.
- b) Development perceptions vary across social actors- these vary over a period depending on the changes in the family, the social and natural context
- c) Conflicting and contrasting perceptions between the various social actors- that is the initiators of the project believe in the linkage between the women and nature – while the women view the development interventions at best as another income earning opportunity. The conservation aspect is less cared for. Even with the imitators and the supporting organizations the ecological linkage is less emphasized in the later years and has been replaced by a concern for running the business efficiently.
- d) Shrinking natural resources base leads to increasing the burden on women. Water shortages and declining returns from agriculture, declining raw material availability- influence the groups to seek alternative employment ventures on a regular basis.
- e) The economic value given to natural resources does not necessarily lead to ecological value.
- f) Conflicting perceptions of various actors- builds up the tension between the various social actors. These perceptions are important in determining the choices/strategies actors employ. Further strategies used could be located at - collective, individual and institutional levels. The actors are engaged in active social construction of reality.

- g) In running the enterprise the embeddedness of the individuals and groups in social networks is clearly recognized. The norms of using these networks varies with the amount of trust expressed between members, members and other villagers, within group relationships, as well as with the apex members. Groups were drawn from Mahila Mandals Caste-based (hamlets) groups and also mixed caste groups. Enterprise also builds on the personal and organizational networks. Norms of these networks keeps changing.
- h) Social actor's perceptions are important in determining their strategies. Life worlds of social actors intersect and interact in multiple ways to weave a complexity. Social actors' strategies are linked to social networks. Development is thus an ongoing, socially constructed dynamic transformation

### **Implications for social work practice**

Using actor-oriented approach to study development interventions yields rich insights into the complexity of development processes. Development interventions need to be understood using a variety of methods of data collection – a triangulation of data sources and methods to yield useful insights. In this interdisciplinary perspectives need to inform research studies in social work.

There is a need to continually evolve intervention strategies based on the continued reading of the situations. The situations are never static. The dynamism of social situations and the changing perceptions and consequent strategies of the various actors has to be taken into consideration for designing interventions. The context of the social actors shapes their perceptions and hence their responses to social reality. This can help in providing responsive design of interventions and building of theory grounded in the reality of social life.