

International Development Project

Rural Development & Participation Approach

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Outsiders?

- Who are concerned with rural development
- Who are themselves neither rural nor poor
 - E.g. staff of government organizations in the third world
 - Academic researchers, aid agency personnel, bankers & businessmen, consultants, politicians, lawyers
- Outsiders under-perceive rural poverty
- Outsiders' often have limited experiences with rural development such as brief visits

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Why should we, the outsiders influence?

- The insiders, poor rural people have limited access to information and resources
- The initiatives often lies with outsiders who have more power and resources

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Rural Development Tourism

- A brief rural visit by urban-based professionals
 - government officials, community developers, journalists, technical specialists, voluntary agencies, educators, engineers...
- Differing widely in
 - race, nationality, religion, professions, age, sex, language, interests, prejudices, experience, etc.
- Things in common:
 - Come from urban areas, want to find something out, short of time
- "The more powerful professionals are, the less chance they have of informal learning"

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Rural Development Tourism: Local Perceptions

- "They come, and they sign the book, and they go"
- "They only talk with the buildings"
- "Ils ne savent pas qu'il y a ici des gens vivants"
- "The poorer people tend not to be seen, far less to be met"

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Six Biases

1. Spatial biases: urban, tarmac and roadside
2. Project biases
3. Person biases
4. Dry season biases
5. Diplomatic biases: politeness and timidity
6. Professional biases

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Spatial Biases

- Concentrates on rural visits near towns and capital cities and administrative centers
- Hard to reach from the urban centers, “remoter areas”, they remain largely unseen
- Services near main roads are better staffed and equipped
- Road and transportation development brings well-off rural people to visible areas
- Fuel shortages and costs...remoter areas cost more

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Project Biases

- Rural development and research are linked to networks of urban-rural contacts
- Research generates more research
- Investment by donors draws more study and project
- “Project tour” may be organized for public relations
- “Project focused areas” may not reflect real situations of rural people

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Person Biases

1. Elite bias: less poor and more influential rural people
 - They are the key informants
 - Progressive farmers, village leaders, teachers, traders
 - They articulate ‘the villagers’ interests and wishes”
2. Male bias: most local level representatives are men
 - Female farmers have less chance to be heard and to be seen
 - Rural women are deprived class within a class
3. User and adopter biases: those who use new practices are more seen
 - Children in schools rather than those out of school
 - Patients in clinic rather than those who are too sick, too poor
4. Active, present and living bias:
 - Much of the worst poverty is hidden by its removal

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Dry Season Biases

- Most poor people live in areas of “wet-dry” tropical seasons
- Wet season: food shortage, infectious diseases, higher infant mortality rates, malnutrition
- Outsiders’ visits concentrate on dry season due to accessibility and feasibility
- Institutes concentrate their field research in dry seasons
- “The worst is not seen”

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Diplomatic Biases

- Poverty in any country can be a subject of shame, something to be shut out
- Project officers may not wish to examine the failure of the program intended to benefit the poor
- Courtesy, politeness and cowardice may keep outsiders and the poorest apart

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Professional Biases

- Professional training, values and interests present problems
- They can satisfy their interest through informants among the better educated or less poor
- Poverty (lack of assets, inadequate stocks, foods and income), physical weakness, isolation, powerlessness all mesh and interlock!
- Professionals often lack in time and become narrowly single-minded to their own specialization
- They are NOT aware of all the negative factors affecting poorer people

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Knowledge & Outsiders' Biases

- In crop research: crops for export, grown by plantations, large farmers, mainly by men of the household
 - Tea, jute, palm oil, cotton, coffee and cocoa
- In livestock research: attachment to exotic cattle rather than indigenous
 - Smaller native cattle fits local environment: goats, ducks, donkeys, yaks, pigs, sheep, turkeys, etc.
- In forestry research: introduction of exotic trees rather than indigenous species

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Rural People's Knowledge

- “The whole system of knowledge, including concepts, beliefs and perceptions, the stock of knowledge, and the processes whereby it is acquired, augmented, store and transmitted”
- E.g. (problems with terms)
 - People's science: to describe the knowledge system of a group of rural people
 - Ethnoscience: to describe indigenous knowledge systems themselves
 - Indigenous: to imply originating from and naturally produced in local areas
 - Local knowledge: to refer to knowledge of a local environment

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Knowledge: Outsiders' vs. Rural People's

- Outsiders are hindered from appreciating and learning from rural people's knowledge
 - Lack of contact, professionalism, problem of language, prejudice, and
- Unfortunate communication gap between practitioner and academic cultures exists
- Outsiders' knowledge is accessible in written forms and taught all over the world
- Knowledge of rural people is accessible through learning from rural people themselves

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Importance of Rural People's Knowledge

- Rural people's knowledge have many dimensions
 - Linguistics, medicine, clinical psychology, botany, zoology, ecology, climate, agriculture, animal husbandry, craft skills etc.
 - Its validity and range have been neglected
- Rural people's practical knowledge
 - Farming practices, knowledge of the environment, rural people's faculties, rural people's experiment
- Rural people's knowledge and involvement are inevitable for sustainability

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