

A Study of Sustainable Livelihood Approaches to Poverty Reduction in Maharashtra

Sampat Kale

Assistant Professor

Head of MA in Sustainable Livelihoods and Natural Resources Governance
 Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur Campus,
 Tuljapur, District Osmanabad, Maharashtra.

Email: samkale@gmail.com

The aim of the present paper is to understand, examine and trigger a debate on approaches to sustainable livelihood initiatives in the context of developing countries. Developing livelihoods, strategies and achieving sustainability of livelihoods are central to most development programmes in India. Mostly there has been an influence of top down approaches in developing poor peoples' food security, food sovereignty and neglected local and traditional sustainable approaches which have been used as bottom up approach for strengthening water and food security, poverty reduction strategy and promotion of well-being of the poor and marginalized people. Therefore, it is necessary to study and understand different approaches to sustainable livelihoods and rural transformation in the era of neo-liberal state regime. This paper reveals that there has to be four major approaches required in developing sustainable livelihoods, those are societal approach, entrepreneurial approach, human developmental approach and critical political approach.

This paper is based on empirical study of the Civil Society Organizations' social innovation in sustainable rural development work has resulted in developing food security, water security, fodder security, employment security, financial security and environmental sustainable use for the present and future generations.

Multipronged strategy used in sustainable livelihood that is conscientisation, awareness, sensitization, participation, networking, and innovative methods, continues for demonstrating social innovations in the fields of rural transformation. Therefore, there has to be very serious region centred policy advocacy initiatives for pro-poor policy environment and sustainable rural transformation with relevant technology measures. Efforts of the both the organizations have revealed that constant efforts with the sustainable livelihood approaches for poverty reduction can make poor people's life more meaningful and happy. The organizations efforts resulted in working towards water security and food security are the two sides of same coin.

[Key Words: Sustainable Livelihood, Civil Society Organisations, Conscientisation, Water security and Rain-fed Agriculture and Food Sovereignty]

Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to understand, examine and trigger a debate on approaches to sustainable livelihoods in the context of developing

countries. Developing livelihoods, strategies and achieving sustainability of livelihoods are central to most development programmes in India. Mostly there has been an influence of top down approaches in developing poor peoples' food security, food sovereignty and neglected local and traditional sustainable approaches which have been used as bottom up approach for strengthening food security, poverty reduction strategy and promotion of well-being of the poor and marginalized people. Therefore, it is necessary to study and understand different approaches to sustainable livelihoods and rural transformation in the era of neo-liberal state regime. This study reveals that there has to be four major approaches required in developing sustainable livelihoods, those are societal approach, entrepreneurial approach, human developmental approach and critical political approach.

A popular definition of livelihood is that provided by Robert Chambers and Conway (Allies, Frank 2013) "livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claim and control) and activities required for a means of living". Many livelihood scholars have identified five basic categories of capital as contributing to assets in the livelihood definition, and these are natural capital, physical capital, human capital, financial capital, and social capital. The recent livelihood development approaches and perspectives have been quite successful in creating poor family's domestic assets that includes individual, family and community's assets which in turn have increased with the efforts of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in India and abroad. In the recent several initiatives and processes have proved beneficial in reducing hunger deaths, malnutrition, anaemia among women and children in most of the vulnerable communities and regions of the rural Maharashtra. The objective of this paper is to understand their perspectives and approaches towards sustainable livelihoods and rural transformation with special reference to the case of rural Maharashtra. Another aim of this paper is to highlight to alternative initiatives and learn some lessons which can lead towards policy advocacy and social change in rural society.

Civil Society Organizations with the help of Government policies and initiatives has contributed into the development of a large number of successful initiatives particularly sustainable livelihoods for marginalized and vulnerable sections. The larger functioning aim of CSOs is to enhance peoples' well-being through education, awareness, research, knowledge generation and management, skills, innovations and transformative actions. Hence, it is very pertinent to study the approaches to sustainable livelihoods at the international and local level and thereby efforts should be made for poverty reduction and promotion of rural transformation as a process of social change. The author has selected two CSOs for the study and analysis is being done with the help of primary and secondary data that includes focus group discussion, participant observations and field immersion methods.

The sustainable rural livelihoods policy involves three important words *sustainable*, *rural* and *livelihoods*. The term sustainable denoting a particular

approach was possibly first used in 1986 in a Geneva discussion around the Food 2000 report for the Brundtland Commission involving M.S. Swaminathan, Robert Chambers and others (Scoones 2000). This paper discusses the Department for International Development (DFID) sustainable livelihoods strategy framework and has been extensively used in India by the development professionals. In livelihoods discourse sustainability has generally tended to refer to coping with immediate shocks and stresses, where local knowledge and capacities are used. How the selected organizations are following these pathways in developing rural sustainable livelihoods of the poor is very crucial in development process.

A key element in the definition is the unity of environment and development. The Brundtland Commission argues against the assertions of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and provides an alternative perspective on sustainable development, unique from that of the 1980 World Conservation Strategy of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The term sustainable development was coined in the paper *Our Common Future* (Krantz Lasse 2001) released by the Brundtland Commission. Sustainable development as defined in the report is the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of livelihood creation and its enhancement and elimination and reduction of poverty has been widely used in the contemporary writings. But this connotation differs from time to time and with the context. Basically it focuses on natural capital like land, water, forest, employment, non-timber forest produce. Physical and human capital deals with the human potentials to achieve minimum survival through enhancing productivity, financial components deal with the income generations activities and building personal assets or family assets and social capital develops personalized networks, associations, cooperatives, village committees etc. A holistic definition of livelihood used by Ellis Frank in his book on *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries* (Ellis 2013) elucidates, “A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household” (Ellis 2012).

In this context we need to focus on the three major incomes generation forms those are mainly Farm income that includes own-account farming, owner-occupied land or land accessed through cash or share tenancy. Farm income broadly defines livestock, crop income; the farm income leads to household income. b) Off-farm income refers to wage or exchange labour on other farms; it could be agriculture labourers, that includes payments in kind, such as harvest share. It may also include income through environmental resources firewood, charcoal, house building material, wild plants so on. c) Non-farm income refers to non-agricultural income sources like non-farm rural

wage or salary employment, rental income, from leasing property or land, pension payments and urban to rural remittances arising from within national boundaries.

Grassroots development initiatives have proven the decentralized, sustainable and ecologically sensitive forms of livelihoods in many ways are different in different times and contexts. But there is a need to understand these initiatives critically and formulate people centred approach to policy formulation, which will help to enhance livelihood securities over diverse regions of India. Civil society organizations have strongly advocated over the rights of vulnerable and the marginalized people over the natural resources and decision making in decentralized governance and clearly showed its effect on the sustainability. In most part of the rural India, the sources of non-farm employment opportunities have been increasing and thereby regularly resulting in high distress migration of people to urban areas where many find odd jobs in various unorganized sectors.

Methodology

The following paper is based on two case studies on Civil Society Organisations. Author has conducted several visits to the particular areas, organized in-depth interactions with respondents, beneficiaries of the programmes, implementing agencies as the members of CSOs in respective areas. The following organizations were selected in accordance with their functioning areas particularly at the grass root level while engaging themselves in the generation of livelihoods particularly in drought prone regions and developing individual, family and community assets. These organizations are Yuva Mitra, Sinnar in Nashik district and Pani Panchayat, Purandar in Pune district of Maharashtra State. As a part of the sustainable rural development and social work programme, we had placed students with these organizations. These students are part of the M.A. in Sustainable Livelihoods and Natural Resources Governance Post Graduate Programme started by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences at the Tuljapur Campus in 2014-2015. I had placed them into four groups, in each group there are four and five students respectively with having gender balance. The major objectives of the fieldwork is to understand the sustainable livelihood approaches to poverty reduction, process of rural sustainable livelihoods, identification and beginning of livelihoods programmes on resource base and non-resource base began by the development organizations in rural Maharashtra. In order to fulfill these objectives we have placed them for a one month period with a deep engagement with village community and village immersion and learn from the community and organization as well. I personally made several visits to these organizations field area and interacted with people, stayed with beneficiary families and interacted with activists and social workers of the respective organizations.

Volunteerism & Role of NGOs

The term 'Voluntary Organisation' is synonymous with terms such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), voluntary action, non-profit

organisations, and grassroots social action groups. An informal and flexible structure, closeness to the communities, no limit in working hours, commitment to the people's cause, and being lively, strong and vibrant are some of the characteristics that NGOs tend to possess.

The excessively centralized state failed to extend welfare benefits to the poor. Such failures of formal macro organisations as well as the failure of the top-down development approaches led to the mushrooming of grassroots organisations at the micro level. India's liberal democratic regime permissive of activism in the civil society is a fertile ground for NGOs to flourish. (Panda, Pattanaik and Binay Kumare 2005). The importance of NGOs has been increasing due to the failure of the state to deliver and the growing involvement of the enlightened and enthusiastic middle class in the NGO sector. This is evident from the professionalism displayed by NGOs in reaching out to the masses and delivering the goods, from the recognition from the state because of pressure from international declarations summits/protocols, and from the increasing faith of donor agencies in the NGOs. Since the last three decades, NGOs' effective performance has been remarkable because of their pro-active involvement and commitment to the cause. NGOs have employed processes such as building awareness among masses, mobilization of masses, mustering support from political parties, benefiting the people through their participation in various projects and programs, and influencing the policies and programs of the government. Another very important factor is that NGOs empower the people through their participation and by creating grassroots level popular initiatives (Kale 2015).

From Independence in 1947, until the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-1985), there were few efforts on the part of government to define the role of a voluntary agency or to recognize the importance of NGOs in the development planning. Realizing the importance of participatory development, the Sixth Five-Year Plan document emphasized the importance of non-governmental organizations, both formal and informal in nature, as new actors, which could motivate and mobilize people in specific or general developmental activities. Through the Seventh Five-Year Plan, the government not only accepted the NGOs' vibrant role in development and social transformation, but also provided them a substantial funding support to the tune of about Rs. 150-200 crore (Pawar, Ambekar, and Shrikant 2004).

India currently has a large number of Voluntary Organizations or Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs)--about 1.2 million across the country. In the year 2007 a study of Non-Profit Institutions was undertaken by the society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), Delhi, in collaboration with the Institute of Policy Studies, John Hopkins University, USA. As per this study, the voluntary sector generated a sum of Rs. 17,922 crore (over Rs. 179 billion) in the year of 1999-2000 through self-generated funds, government funds, and private funds. These organizations were engaged in a wide spectrum of activities cutting across the economic, social, cultural, and scientific domains.

These groups involved as many as 19.2 million people, many of whom worked on a voluntary basis (Srivastava, and Tandon 2000). The survey estimated that approximately over 16 million persons were working as volunteers.

Brief Profile of the Organisations

The selected organizations are having at least two decades of experience in working with the grassroots development programmes and have commitment, passion and pro-poor people attitude in their approach. The common thing of the organization is that they are having programmes and projects supported by the Indian donor agencies and peoples support for their development and sustainable livelihoods programmes as well. One of the important common things is that they are working on resource and non-resource based livelihood options and creates innovative sustainable models of diversified livelihoods in their respective areas.

This section deals with their profile, areas of interest, issues that they have formulated for the community development, intervention and impact of the programmes in making difference in the lives of the poor and vulnerable sections of the society.

Yuva Mitra, Sinnar Nashik District: The Yuva Mitra organizing was started in 1995 with the larger objective of to create just society, eco-sensitive and eco-friendly society, shaping sustainable livelihoods through youth in developing their future on the means based livelihoods programmes in the droughts prone Sinnar block in Nashik district of Maharashtra. Initially, members of the organization wanted to initiate constructive activities based on the principles of people centred development. Various programs have been initiated over these years with community participation. Yuva Mitra believes in the people-centred approach of development where people are empowered to become agents of social transformation. Thus, they have endeavoured to work with people on issues that concern them and have implemented pro-people programs. Presently the organization is working in Sinnar, Igatpuri and Peth blocks of North Maharashtra. Yuva Mitra has been honored with national level *Mahindra Smaruddhi India Agri Awards in 2014* as a NGO of the year.

Peoples' Struggle for survival in Sinnar Block: Sinnar is located near the Dev-River tributary of Godavari river basin, 180 km. from Pune and 175 km from Mumbai, on the Sinnar-Shirdi highway. The Maharashtra State Government has been developing industrial infrastructure facilities in the region for the last 15 years, including the Ghoti-Sinnar highway, the Sinnar-Shirdi-Aurangabad express highway, and an airport. However, the government has not developed infrastructure for farmers and villagers, who lack regular electricity, storage facilities, and access to low interest loans. Citizens in the region do not oppose development, but seek an agro-based development in which the State Government should provide appropriate support to farmers and those involved in agricultural-based livelihoods.

Strengthening Agriculture and Food Security: Farmers of Khopadi village are particularly distraught over government acquisition of land which citizens

have struggled to make fertile over the last 20 years. While villagers in Khopadi were once unable to irrigate a single *biga* (1/2 acre), they have dug more than 250 wells and now cultivate cash crops. Their wells are 80 to 110 feet deep and the water table is high. Having done ground water recharge work, villagers can now take three crops in a year and earn more than 10-12 lakh per annum. Many villagers in the region feel angry at the injustice of government action.

Intervention on Livelihood Generation programmes: Sinnar has huge unit of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) as extension of Nashik MIDC but there is no adequate infrastructure facilities available like water, power and lands. Sinnar is known for its often drought situation, scarcity of water, fodder and food grains for the livelihoods of human and domestic animals. Mostly people are dependent on the rainfed agriculture, they are engaged in cultivating food grains and people have to migrate for the seasonal employment to Nashik, Mumbai, Bhivandi, Pune, Surat and nearby areas. Second crop is hardly taken by the farmers. The only source of water was well water and groundwater for drinking and other domestic use. Thirteen years back Yuva Mitra Organisation's founder Mr. Sunil Pote and ManishaPote started their work in the sustainable rural development areas. Both the leaders have Rashtra Seva Dal and Chatra Bharati's background and trained as Social Work from Nashik. Both the activists started their organizations with one file and two members themselves as social worker. They have extensively worked on the rejuvenation of Dev River which was completely neglected by the people and Government of Maharashtra. Dev River is a tributary of Godavari River which starts from Trimbakeshware in Nashik District. The clean and green river campaign motivated many people who participated and cleaned Dev River. They organized several rallies, got support from urban middle class youth and small donors and individuals. They have developed many watershed development techniques in more than fifteen villages in the Dev River Valley. Building participation and getting support was not really an easy task but they took it as challenge and began their work and got success in many activities undertaken during more than a decade.

Watershed development programme undertaken by the organization and got the expected results in three years. It has increased the income of the villages in cultivating traditional and cash crops with low water intensity requirements. Due to the availability of the water in the Dev River farmers dare to take second crop and got successful results too. Building confidence of the activists and learning from the various sources have helped them developing their team and supports for the programmes as well. The campaign for Save the double crop land from the land acquisition programme have resulted in sustaining their livelihoods and generating income, employment and making water available for their agriculture and domestic uses. The dairy programme has resulted in developing livestock and dairy business in the same vicinity. People are yielding thousands of litre milk on daily basis and sending it to the cooling plant which is started by the organization at their Lonarwadi village.

These programmes have resulted in developing individual income, family income, community assets and social capital in society.

Impacts of Sustainable Rural Livelihoods on Farmers: Impacts of the programme are quite visible and women also developed their confidence, decision making power through self-help groups and local self-governance process. Training and capacity building programmes have helped them in starting new programmes in nearby villages on sustainable livelihoods like they have registered Dev River Agree Business Mall which is taking care of their agro based requirements such as fertilizers, seeds, and agricultural equipment's. These initiatives have resulted in reducing the input costs in agriculture and increased their profits through organized and collective programmes.

Building Sustainable Water Resources: The organizations have conducted several periodic capacity building programmes for the farmers of the region and have resulted in developing and forming Water Users Associations on Kadwa Dam in Nashik District. The Kadwa dam is a major source of water for irrigation and domestic use for the Nashik district which support about 11000 hectares of land in four blocks of the district. YuvaMitra identified the needs of the farmers and formed fourteen Water User Associations which are registered under the Cooperative Societies Act (Pote 2014). Eventually, the organizational effort with holistic perspective has resulted in sustainable livelihoods for building well-being society with small efforts but big changes. Now, they have huge training and research campus and sustainable agriculture activities expended in more than twenty villages. Several youth have stopped migration to the nearby towns and have created own source of livelihoods like horticulture, floriculture and raring domestic animals and supporting to environmental balance as well.

A Case of Pani Panchayat (Water Council) Purandar Block of Pune District: The Pani Panchayat concept was evolved during the drought situation in 1972 in Pune district of Maharashtra. The eastern part of the Pune district is always facing droughts, the annual rainfall is almost 400 to 600 mm and this is very whimsical. During a visit to Purandar block Mr. Vilasrao Salunke observed that people were breaking stones during the summer in Purandar block and realized that workforce can be used for creating some kind of community assets. The concept of equitable distribution of water was developed by Vilasrao Salunke who was trained as an engineer from Pune. They mobilized people and worked on creation of water resources in the initial years but later on they founded a trust known as *Gram Gaurav Pratisthan Trust* in 1974.

In 1972, the state of Maharashtra went through a severe drought crisis and people had faced scarcity of water, food grains and fodder for the livestock. More than forty thousand people were affected due to the severe drought and many people were migrated to the nearby cities and towns in search of livelihood source. During his visits to the villages and learn from the people that if they could conserve the scanty rainfall in the same area they would survive in future. He had conducted many meeting with villagers and began watershed

development work from the Naigaon and Khalad villages in Purandar block of Pune district. The main objective of the organization was to create water conservation structures and use it in equitable manner for all sections of people. Another aim was to create community water resources with the people's participation and maintain ecological balance as well.

Innovative Programmes for Sustainable Water Conservation

The initial challenge was to make water available for drinking purpose for human beings and domestic animals in the Purandar block. Another challenge was to develop some kind of employment which will reduce the migration towards Mumbai and Pune and the other challenge was to develop vegetation so that other species could survive like flora and fauna. Thus, Vilasrao Salunke had vision to develop a society which is just, equitable and create well-being of the poor people even those who are resource poor. His dream was to develop the rights of the landless persons on community water resources by taking land on lease basis and doing share cropping and collective farming in the drought affected areas of Pune district. Now, Kalpanatai Salunke is fulfilling their dream through developing a concept of *Panchkroshi Vikas Programme*. They have identified five villages in Purandar block which are facing water shortage, energy shortage, food grains shortage, fodder shortage and poor health facilities at the village levels. She wanted to create a village which is sustainable in social, natural, economic, financial, physical, and environmental capitals for the well-being of the rural society. They have planted more than five thousand trees and increased vegetation in drought hit area. Their larger aim is to eradicate drought of resources and judicious use of available resources for future generations. They have done lot of training programmes for the villagers in awareness about water conservation, development of vegetation, community participation in understanding the importance of environment balance and survival of human and domestic animals. Salunke believes water is a common resource pool and all the villages should have rights of access to utilization of water harvested in the watershed areas. These activities reflected in creating membership of lift irrigation and developed control and access to water resources. In addition to this, Salunke developed *barefoot engineers* to take care of scarcity and drought situation who are well equipped with basic civil engineering skills so that they could assist farmers with technical assistance in lift irrigation schemes and other water-harvesting projects. Even, after three decades of work they have achieved in developing poor people's livelihoods, assets and social capital and environmental balance in the block. They have developed some principles based on some social and economic values like thinking about availability of resources and use of it, higher water consumption crops would not be taken in the water scars areas, adequate fodder will be generated by the farmers.

Impacts of the work done by Pani Panchayat

The innovative programmes implemented in the drought hit areas have resulted in developing barren land into best cultivable lands. More than ten

thousand people have been benefitted in taking single crop to double crops and sustained food security. More than three thousand acres of land has been brought under the protective irrigation. In village Shindewadi people are cultivating not only food grains but they are now into the horticulture and floriculture and sell fresh vegetables in Pune's market and sustaining livelihoods. Those who have migrated to Mumbai in 1972 after the mills closed down they have come back and engaged in agricultural activities in Purandar Block. They have acquired new technologies in cultivation and shifted on drip and sprinkle system. The several villages are using new appropriate rural technologies but have reduced high water use in cash crops yielding. The Gram GaurvPratisthan's people centred water schemes have enabled to *fifteen thousand families* in getting the benefits of micro-watershed programmes. The concept of family farming (kitchen garden) also introduced in several villages for empowerment of women at the grassroots level. The principles of Pani Panchayat have reflected in State Water Policy of Maharashtra in terms priority of distribution of water to the drinking, agriculture, industry and other usages. The technical aspects of watershed management and the lessons of village Naigaon have been incorporated by the government in the conception and planning of its comprehensive watershed programmes. The ideas developed by Vilasrao Salunke should be replicated and need to guide the functionaries of Civil Society Organizations under the India's National Rural Livelihood Mission, State Rural Livelihood Mission programmes and Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Conclusion

Both the Civil Society Organisation's social innovation in sustainable rural development work has resulted in developing food security, water security, fodder security, employment security, financial security and environmental sustainable use for the present and future generations. They have been successful in involving women's participation in decision making in the field of agriculture and rural governance processes. They have been successful in strengthening individual, family and community based sustainable livelihoods through the organisations schemes implemented in respective villages. They have also developed network of support organisations for small and marginal farmers training and demonstrations in the field. Now, they have been advocating some issues related to the replication of sustainable development model at the state level. Multipronged strategy used in sustainable livelihood that is awareness, sensitization, participation, networking, and innovative methods, continues for demonstrating social innovations in the fields of rural transformation. The real challenge remains that unless and until it reflects in public policy it will be treated as a model of sustainable development. Therefore, there has to be very serious region cantered policy advocacy initiatives for pro-poor policy environment and sustainable rural transformation with relevant technology measures. Efforts of the both the organizations has revealed that constant efforts with the sustainable livelihood approaches for

poverty reduction can make poor people's life more meaningful and happy. This study reveals that there has to be four major efforts required in developing sustainable livelihoods, those are societal approach, entrepreneurial approach, human developmental approach and critical political approach.

References

- Chambers, Robert and Conway, Gordon, 1991. *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*, University of Sussex, Flamer, Brighton, United Kingdom IDS discussion paper 296.
- Ellis, Frank, 2012. *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, P.7-9. New Delhi.
- Kale, Sampat 2015. *Grassroots Development Initiatives in India*, Aakar Books, New Delhi.
- Kale, Sampat, 2010. *The Anti-SEZ Movement in India*, National Centre for Advocacy Studies, Pune.
- Krantz, Lasse, 2001. *The Sustainable Livelihood Approach to Poverty Reduction*, SIDA.
- Panda, Biswambhar, Pattanaik, Binay Kumar 2005. *Effectiveness of Grassroots NGOs*, Man & Development, pp. 39-45.
- Pawar, S.N, Ambekar, J.B, and Shrikant, D, 2004. *NGOs and Development*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur.
- Pote, Sunil, 2014. *Broadening Horizons, Annual Report 2013-14*, YuvaMitra, Sinnar, Nashik.
- Salunke, Vilasrao, The Pani Panchayat: Water and equity, Gram Gaurav Pratisthan, Purandar, in Other India Press, Goa.
- Scoones, Ian, 2000. *Livelihoods perspectives and rural development*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Flamer, Brighton, United Kingdom.
- Srivastava, S. S & Tandon, Rajesh, 2005. *How Large Is India's Non-Profit Sector?* Economic and Political Weekly, pp. 1948-1951.

[The final revised version of this paper was received on 11 November 2016]