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Renewable Charcoal from 'Dry' Biomass Waste

Priyadarshini Karve¹, A.D. Karve²

*A simple, up as well as down scalable technology has been developed for converting agricultural waste into 'renewable charcoal'. The authors were the lead researchers that developed an Ashden-award-winning waste-to-charcoal technology in the late 1990s. The technology described in this article is the result of further innovation in this technology based on user feedback. The technology and potential markets for the charcoal are described briefly.*³

Introduction

Agricultural 'waste' that cannot directly be used as fodder, fuel, or roofing or packing material, etc., is mostly viewed as a 'problem'. Thus, the farmers tend to 'get rid' of the waste with minimum nuisance (e.g., burning off in situ). One can also look upon the 'waste' as an additional farm produce and a potential source of energy.

One of the useful technologies in this context is production of 'renewable charcoal' from biomass waste that typically contains less than 15% moisture – which is the case for almost all agricultural waste that is currently being burned off uselessly in open air. For example, with about 900,000 ha under sugarcane cultivation in Maharashtra state alone, about 9 million tons of sugarcane trash (dry leaves of sugarcane falling in the field upon harvesting) go up in smoke every year. We believe that all of this and other similar agricultural waste can be dealt with in an environment friendly manner, creating employment opportunities, and producing a renewable cooking fuel that is suitable for use in households, reducing the dependence on LPG or fuel wood at the household level. The authors were the lead researchers that developed an Ashden-award-winning waste-to-charcoal technology in the late 1990s. Based on users' feedback and further R&D work, a better design has been developed recently.

¹ Dr. Priyadarshini Karve, is the CEO of Samuchit Enviro Tech. Her work on innovative ways of commercialization of clean cooking technologies led to many inventions and innovations like improved biomass burning cooking devices, to reduce smoke in the kitchen and dependence on firewood, easy-to-use Samuchit Carbon Footprint Calculator.

She has been honored by several national and international awards, including World Technology Award 2005 (by World Technology Network, New York), Lux Sahyadri Hirkani Award 2011 (by Mumbai Doordarshan, India), etc. She can be reached at priyadarshini.karve@gmail.com.

² Dr. A.D. Karve has been involved in research in many areas of botany, agriculture and renewable energy since 1960s. He founded Appropriate Rural Technology Institute (ARTI) with colleagues and led the organization to achieve international stature. The appropriate technologies developed by him have won him international recognition and several prestigious national (Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Application of Science and Technology to Rural Development., etc.) and international (Certificate of Merit from United States Department of Agriculture, etc.) awards. His work in the field of biogas from food waste is considered to be path breaking in the field.

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Renewable Charcoal Manufacturing

If a stack of biomass is heated without allowing it to come in contact with sufficient oxygen to burn up, all the volatile gases are driven out, leaving behind solid carbon or char. We have designed an easy to use portable kiln for this purpose (Fig.1). Our prototypes are made out of galvanized iron sheets, but in principle sheets of any ferrous material can be used. The size of the kiln can also vary in proportion to the standardized dimensions, depending on the requirement. As the kiln is made out of sheets joined together with nuts and bolts, it can be easily dismantled and transported, whatever may be the kiln size. The model shown in the photograph is easy enough to operate by a single person, handling about 7-8 kg agricultural waste and producing about 2 kg of char, every 15-20 min.

The volatile gases produced in the kiln burn on contact with air, to produce a smokeless blue flame at the top hole. We are exploring various ways in which this potential source of thermal energy can be used either in the charring process or for any other thermal energy applications in the field.

The portability of the kilns ensures that the low density loose biomass need not be transported to the charcoal making facility. The waste can just be collected in one corner of the farm, and the kilns can be set up temporarily for a few days, till all the biomass is processed. The energy-rich and high-density char powder can then be transported to a central processing facility.

The char powder is ground into a fine powder by spreading it on the ground and rolling a heavy cement pipe on it. It is then mixed with the paste of waste grain flour, 10% by weight of the char powder. The waste grain flour acts as the binder. The mixture is wetted and fed to an extrusion type briquetting machine. The briquetting machines may be powered manually or by an electric motor or by a diesel engine, based on the scale of the operation. The char briquettes are spread out under the sun for drying. It takes about 4 days of direct sunshine for the briquettes to dry completely.

The operation may be as small as a single kiln and a manual briquetting machine, operated by the farmer herself for making charcoal for her own use using agricultural waste from her own farm. Alternatively, the operation may be an industrial scale one, with about 20-30 kilns going out daily to various farms to process waste on those farms, bringing back about a ton of char powder daily to the processing unit, to be briquetted using a diesel operated machine. Any other variations in between are also possible, and it is equally possible to start on a smaller scale, and then simply add on more and more kilns to expand the operation. The kilns can be easily fabricated by local fabricators from scrap metal sheets. The extrusion type briquetting machines of various capacities are easily available in different parts of the country through a number of local manufacturers. The economics of the business will depend on the scale as well as local labour charges, and market for the renewable charcoal in the area.



Samuchit Kiln

Marketing of renewable charcoal

Over the years, we have identified several potential uses for the renewable charcoal.

In some areas, the char powder has been used for improving the soil in barren lands. The whole concept of ‘biochar’ (use of charcoal as soil amendment agent) is being researched all over the world. This is a potential way of improving productivity of land while sequestering carbon, as a means of both mitigation of as well as adaptation to climate change.

The char powder can be further processed into other useful products (e.g., manufacturing of firecrackers, incense sticks, etc.) for which currently charcoal dust is being used.

One existing market is to replace wood charcoal by renewable charcoal, particularly in low energy applications, such as road side vendors selling roasted corn cobs and peanuts, or for space heating in cold regions, etc.

We have also developed a steam cooker operating on charcoal which can be used at household level for cooking (Fig.2). With our design, just about 100g of charcoal (either wood charcoal or renewable charcoal made from agricultural waste) is sufficient to cook enough rice and curry for a family of 6 persons. It is also a very clean, smokeless and user friendly way of cooking. Thus, the renewable charcoal can be introduced as a clean and renewable household cooking fuel in rice eating areas, thereby creating a new market for the renewable charcoal.



Women using Sarai system

With some type of agricultural waste, there is a possibility of producing activated charcoal using this simple process. This opens up a potentially very exciting agri-business opportunity, as activated charcoal is a very valuable and expensive material used extensively in the chemical industry.

Conclusion

We believe that agricultural waste can be dealt with in an environment friendly manner, creating employment opportunities, and producing a renewable energy resource using the novel technology of ‘renewable charcoal’.

Jaisa filmon mein hota hai, ho raha hai hoobahoo

Ananya Dutta¹

This article is written by a journalist. It was inspired by her experiences in interacting with various entities of the agrarian society and State functionaries of rural West Bengal while covering the rising farmer suicides in West Bengal in the 2012 for The Hindu.

It was as if I had walked into a film...

We had lost our way inside Kauri village and when I finally arrived at the home of Bhootnath Pal, his widow informed me that everyone had gone to the hospital.

“Is this for the post-mortem formalities,” I asked. It had been two days since Bhootnath’s body was found hanging from a tree in their neighbour’s compound, but the given the state of rural healthcare in West Bengal it would not have been surprising if there had been a hold-up.

“No, they have gone to bring the baby,” Attanti Pal replied.

“What baby?”

“The baby that was born to my daughter yesterday.”

Wondering if I had walked into the wrong home yet again, I had to confirm, “this is the house of Bhootnath Pal, right? The one who...”

“Yes, he hung himself day-before yesterday.”

By a cruel twist of fate, Bhootnath Pal died on the eve of the day that his first grandchild was born. As his family was managing the funeral formalities, his daughter was in labour.

As a journalist I have frequently had to report about fires, accidents and natural calamities, reluctantly intruding into the personal anguish of the kin of victims as I gather personal details for the story. Always awkward in these situations, intruding into the tragedy of the Pal family has been the most overwhelming experience of my life. But compared to Attani’s life my bourgeois problems seemed a luxury.

I watched as Attanti’s daughter and grandchild were brought to their home, as the poverty stricken family brought out rasgullahs to commemorate the first homecoming of the child.

Gradually I coaxed the details from Attanti. The Rs. 30,000 debt that had accumulated over the last three years, the fortnight long wait for the money from selling the little excess paddy that had been harvested from their land this season, the worry over their son-in-law in a neighbouring village who has already lost his lands to the local Mahajan.

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The thought of a grandchild, of having an extra mouth to feed, must have been the last straw that broke Bhootnath's back.

Ironically, these "family problems" are the escape hatch that the authorities always use to wash their hands off; claiming that it is not a case of a "farmer suicide," but a person driven to desperation by other troubles.

Bhootnath's suicide was the 31st instance of a farmer killing himself in West Bengal since the Kharif crop was harvested in January 2012. The State government however insisted that there was no reason for concern, there was no agrarian crisis and the maelstrom in the media was merely a distortion of facts.

Enigmatically, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that only one of the over 30 incidents being reported in the press was a "genuine case," most of the remaining were "not even farmers."

Was Bhootnath the one? Or was it Prosenjit Mondal?

In a village not too far from Kauri, Prosenjit used to till five bighas of land – two owned by his father and another three belonging to a landlord. Over the years his father had run up a debt of Rs. 40,000 – a large chunk of which was owed to the electricity board, which had subsequently cut off the power supply.

As the father worried about how they would irrigate the lands for the Rabi crop (Kharif is largely watered by the Monsoon rains, but the winter crop requires water to be pumped from canals to the fields), the son insisted that they repurchase the bullocks that had been sold off on a previous occasion.

"He was always very attached to the animals. He had been livid when we sold them and he wanted them back. With all that is happening, how could I afford to buy or feed a pair of bullocks," explained his father.

After an acrimonious fight between the two of them, Prosenjit took off one night and hung himself.

Cause of suicide?

"There was a family feud. The father and son did not get along," a district official told me.

Farmer suicide is now a media buzzword that attracts negative attention so the authorities always like to deny they occur. They will inform you instead that the region has witnessed a bumper crop this year; neither the farmers nor their families are starving.

But what about the fact that the bumper crop caused the market price of paddy to plummet? The market was flooded with grain and rice-mill owners had a field day buying it off desperate farmers. The mill owners pay a lot less than the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the government, if you demanded the MSP there were others willingly selling it in distress sales.

Or what of the reality that the MSP – Rs. 1080 for a quintal for paddy – did not even cover the cost of producing that grain? In recent years, prices of all inputs – fertilizers, pesticides

and electricity – have soared. The farm-gate price of grains however hasn't gone up. 2012 followed a drought year in West Bengal and the prices the previous year had in fact been higher.

Moreover, farmers like Bhootnath and Prosenjit – small farmers and sharecroppers – don't produce in quantities for it to be feasible for them to take the grain to the mills themselves. They rely on middlemen, who also take their pound of flesh.

It is not as if the authorities are completely callous to their suffering. Within the constraints of intense political pressures, the district authorities tried their best to provide these families with some relief.

It wasn't easy. There is no "farmer suicide" in official parlance, no compensation that can be given to the families. They have to come up with creative ways to provide some financial relief, which usually doesn't go very far, but by then the issue has lost momentum.

In a more irritable mood, a district magistrate had once asked me: "I don't know why these people are claiming that they borrowed loans from a mahajan...Did they watch Peepli Live?"

Evolving Role of Cooperatives in a Globalizing World

J.N.L Srivastava¹

This article is the reproduction of the inaugural address for the 8th International Cooperative Alliance- Asia Pacific (ICA- AP) Research Conference delivered by Shri. J.N.L Srivastava held by the University of Mysore on 29th of November, 2013. It elucidates the evolution of the role of co operatives in an increasingly globalised world which is dominated by the knowledge sector. It intends to explore and understand the challenges faced by the Co-operatives, especially in the form of competition by Private and State sector. It also notes some of the salient features of co operatives which can be utilized to give co operatives a competitive edge in a global marketplace. Finally it emphasizes on the role of innovation in improving service delivery mechanisms as a means to exploit the strengths of co operatives to overcome the challenges they face in current context.

I am very grateful to the ICA-AP Research Committee, Dr. G.N. Saxena, Director Cooperative Services, IFFCO & President of the Research Committee and the University of Mysore for inviting me to the 8th ICA-AP Research Conference. The theme of the Conference “Mainstreaming Cooperatives in the Global Economy” has a great significance in the current economic, political and social scenario. I complement the Research Committee for selecting the theme. The sub-themes reflect on critical dimensions of the main theme and I am sure, during the Conference after in-depth discussions, holistic recommendations would emerge on the main theme.

Even though the spirit of Cooperation has been in existence ever since the dawn of human civilization as the very birth of the social systems and organized economic activity depended on mutual cooperation, however, the Cooperation, as we recognize today, came into existence, after the Industrial Revolution started creating an exploitative capitalist society. International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) has a very long history and, in my opinion, the ICA is the oldest International organization which has such deep roots and such sound principles that it has survived very severe political, economic and social upheavals including the two world wars and the cold war. It is, therefore, a matter of privilege to attend a Conference organized by the Research Committee of the ICA.

In today’s context, let us look at the global economy and the emerging trends. One of the most important aspects of the global economy is that it is a knowledge economy. Knowledge is emerging as a key resource with knowledge workers as dominant force in the work force. Over a period of time, there has been a major structural change in the world economy; gradually the contribution of agriculture and thereafter of manufacturing has declined and

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services sector has taken over, leading to the dominance of the Knowledge Sector. The main characteristic of this economy is that it is borderless, it is already globalized, it is highly competitive, and the ease and speed at which knowledge travels, one has to be globally competitive. The new modes of trading, internet based trading, is acquiring more and more business gradually. Even in the Private Sector, we find a movement from Corporation to Confederations. A Confederation of the Public, Private and Cooperative Sectors is being created through joint ventures alliances and agreements. In the case of IFFCO itself, e.g. a Japanese company has created alliance to promote insurance, an Indian corporate created alliance to promote communication and Joint ventures have been set up abroad to create a linkage between supply of raw material and consumption of the fertilizer product. Outsourcing/establishing overseas facilities has become an important part of business expansion. It is being said that IT revolution is disintegrating the monolith of business as more and more activities are being either outsourced or facilities are being created overseas. This is leading to movement of business activities in other countries to exploit cost or skill deficiency. A collaborative business eco-system is being created to access Specializations and companies are flocking in the cluster like technology parks, software parks where specialized business infrastructure has been established. Emergence of the City of Bangalore is a part of this process which has focused on software and business process outsourcing services and has been a leader of the IT revolution in the country and has also proved to be a preferred destination for multinationals and micro multinationals. The IT revolution and the growth of the Knowledge economy have also led to disruptive innovations both in products and processes. There is a growth of dynamic specialization through connectivity and leveraged capability building. The Digital Technology and the Public Policy of Trade liberalization and Reforms are intensifying the competition of a global scale leading to challenge in business processes. In this background, how to mainstream cooperatives is most important challenge. It is obvious that cooperatives will have to become change agents through improvement in their products, services and production systems through innovations. In the historical background, we are aware that the cooperative system emerged in three streams, e.g. Consumer cooperatives in England to protect the interests of the consumers; Agriculture cooperatives in France to protect the interests of the farmers and Thrift & Credit Cooperatives in Germany to protect the interests of the artisans and craftsmen and for a long time, the Consumer, Agriculture and Credit Cooperative movements have been in the forefront. Agriculture cooperatives still have a dominant position in emerging economies like India, China and others. However, the modern trends of economic growth call for major diversification efforts in the cooperative sector. There is a need of specialized cooperatives for specialized markets, specialized products and for specialized consumers.

Education and health are the emerging sectors in which cooperatives can start playing a very important role. In India, realizing this trend, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) made changes in their Law to provide financial support for such service cooperatives including Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Tourism, etc. The modern economy has also provided increased role of women in workforce. This is leading to systems which encourage larger women participation. For mainstreaming, therefore, the

cooperatives need to prepare themselves to face the challenges. Development of proper systems, diversification, specialized human resource and introduction of technology infrastructure would be most essential.

It is also worth mentioning that the biggest challenge for large companies is their social legitimacy. In the case of cooperatives, it is well defined. It is a part of cooperative principles. Cooperatives have assimilated all the three dimensions of a Corporation, i.e. as Economic Organization, as a Human Organization and as a Social Organization and as such are in a stronger position to develop and do not face the dilemma of the Corporate Sector. The Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is being promoted by Corporate Sector as a Voluntary effort. In case of India, the Indian Companies Act, 2013 is promoting it through legal provisions also. The Corporate Sector, therefore, has to learn from the Cooperative principles to achieve the social objectives as societal responsibility is accepted as part of the business strategy. In an integrated economic system, based on the specialization, the Public, Cooperative and the Private Sectors have to collaborate with each other. This model is already emerging as trust is getting built between various sectors of the Economy.

It appears to us that the Cooperative philosophy which professes that human life is precious and all life is equal, is a real role model for economic and social development in the long run. Even UN system has acknowledged it by declaring the year 2012 as “International Year of Cooperatives” and treats ICA as a permanent invitee to their social and economic council. However, the cooperatives face major challenge in the emerging world economy and must prepare themselves to face the challenge. Some of the dimensions highlighted would require deep study, analysis and research with a view to finding out innovative solutions for sustained growth and development.

An efficient, honest and ethical governance system is most critical for the political and social systems, especially for the cooperative sector, as it is stated to be a weapon for the weak and which has an abiding motto of One for All and All for One. A recent study quoted in “The Economist” of January, 2013 has reported that only 18 per cent people trust business leaders and 13 per cent political leaders. Obviously, this is caused by the governance deficit in the system. In the case of cooperatives, good Governance would make adequate and proper delivery of services to the Members without hitch or hindrance. Even though cooperatives are member-owned, member-managed, democratic institutions, but many times, cases of lack of governance, mis-governance or mal-governance, are seen. In the Indian context, it has led to decline and fall of a number of large cooperative Institutions. In cooperatives, everything is a way of life and so has to be good cooperative governance. One of major requirements is systematic change which provides improvement in member-satisfaction, creates internal checks and balances and while ensuring autonomy also ensures accountability. Integrity and vigilance have to move together. It has been found that good management depends 80 per cent on good systems and 20 per cent on good leaders but it is only good leaders who create good systems. In case of Cooperatives, thus, good leadership is the most important requirement to improve cooperative governance. Since cooperatives are member-owned and member-controlled and therefore, eternal vigilance by such members

with effective systems only can ensure a desirable level of cooperative governance providing very high level of services to the Members.

Innovation implies improvement in established product and services which outperform previous practices. In cooperatives, the most important is the service delivery innovation. The members demand more responsive customized and personalized services. In fact, cooperative itself is an innovative model which emerged after the Industrial Revolution which gave birth to a Capitalist Society. In the present time, when the cooperatives are facing competition both from the State Sector and the Private Sector, innovation becomes absolutely necessary. As the pace of economy and social changes quickens and new technologies are emerging, cooperatives have to be more ready for swift and sure footed response to provide tailored serviced to the members. Culture of innovation has to underpin the activities of the cooperatives which have to be a continuous process leading to new services, new service delivery mode, development of new concepts and new systems. In the case of cooperatives which are member-owned and member-managed, it is easier to know the customer insight for the strategy, products and services provided by the cooperatives and need for innovations.

Many Cooperatives have introduced innovations in their activities which have been adopted by the Public and Private Sectors. There is an urgent need, however, for the cooperatives to adopt systems which will encourage innovations in the cooperative organizations. The sector requires an “Innovation and Research Unit” which should capture, synthesize and disseminate examples of innovations and best practices. It should be both at the ICA and at the National levels. Innovation hubs need to be created for the purpose. Cooperatives also need to create right conditions to encourage innovation and develop leadership for innovation in their organizations. They need to build the capacity and leverage the power of collaboration. Innovation has also risks attached with it as some of the new ideas may fail but this should be treated as an opportunity for learning. The employees of the Cooperative Organizations have to be provided suitable incentives for attempting innovation. The cooperative innovation network should comprise of academics, cooperative members, cooperative institutions, practitioners; it should create consciousness about the innovations through information and communication technology including the use of social media.

I have highlighted some of the key issues which I think, are on the horizon. I am quite sure; the Cooperative system is capable of facing it boldly and will take steps for sustained development of the cooperative sector at the Regional, National and International level. I hope this Conference will throw some innovative strategies, which, with further research and refinement, would lead cooperatives to achieve greater heights in the 21st century.

FDI in Retail: Impact Analysis on Various Stakeholders in India

Smiran Bhandari¹

In December 2012, the Government of India made a historic decision to open up the retail sector and allow Foreign Direct Investments(FDI) up to 51% stake in a domestic company in India. This decision to allow FDI in retail was made amidst a lot of controversy and debate. The article attempts to explore the possible consequences of FDI in retail by assessing the impact it would have on some of the shareholders who are directly affected by it. The article discovers that foreign retailers, who are the main beneficiary of this ruling, are themselves not enthused by the it due to the underlying uncertainties surrounding it. The article also discovers the impact FDI would have on the unorganized sector. The paper also argues that it would impact positively as it would cause better pricing for their produce, improve the storage and warehousing facilities and provide better linkages in the supply chain. The overall cost-benefit analysis in this article suggests that FDI in retail will have a positive impact on the retail sector in our country.

Keywords: Indian retail industry, FDI in Retail, Unorganized retail, Domestic organized retailers, MNC Retailers, Farmers

Introduction

FDI in Retail has traditionally been a debatable topic of discussion in the Indian context. Persistent opposition to the passing of the bill delayed the entry of foreign capital into Multi-brand retail and it was only in December 2012 that the bill was eventually passed. The main bone of contention in the debate was the impact of the bill on the estimated 14 million retail outlets in the country. The amount of employment generated by the retail sector is next only to the agriculture. Hence, any decision of importance regarding retail is a politically charged one due to the large number of people linked to this sector either directly or indirectly. However, the Congress led UPA Government bit the bullet on the topic and agreed to open up the sector to foreign investment in spite of heavy criticism of the Opposition parties. But the introduction of FDI in retail also held with it some caveats namely

- a) Foreign groups could only own up to 51% stake in Multi-brand retail
- b) Multi-brand stores would have source at least one-third of their purchase through domestic Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)
- c) The presence of the stores will be limited to cities having population of more than one million.

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- d) Minimum ticket size of foreign investor should be \$100 Million. with at least half of it dedicated to investment in back end infrastructure, including cold chains, refrigeration, transportation, packing, sorting and processing
- e) The ultimate decision of allowing FDI in retail would be left to the individual states. State Governments could choose to not implement the decision of allowing FDI in their respective states.

To ascertain the impact that this FDI ruling will have it is necessary to analyze its impact on the different stakeholders. The different stakeholders who would be impacted the most by this decision are the large MNC retailers like Wal-Mart and Carrefour, unorganized retailers (Commonly referred as the Kirana stores), the domestic organized retailers like Future Group (Big Bazaar) and Aditya Birla Group (More), farmers, and the consumers

Impact on MNC Retailers

For long, companies like Wal-Mart, the largest retailer in the world, have been lobbying hard to enter Indian markets as it is considered by many as the last frontier for retail giants. Yet, the entry of foreign players has been a non-starter so far. The foreign players are not particularly enthused due to two critical riders which have been imposed on them. The first hurdle is the requirement of half of the investment amount being ploughed into backend infrastructure. This investment will further elongate the gestation period which is quite high in the retail business. The second and more important reason is the clause requiring 30% sourcing from local SME's. This condition will pose many difficulties in managing adequate quality and hence companies are hesitant to enter even a lucrative market like India. The Government reviewed the above clauses in 2013 in an attempt to lure foreign supermarket chains but the political uncertainty surrounding the regulation also carried forward the ambiguity surrounding the issue. Most foreign retailers would prefer to wait for the 2014 general elections to unfold as there is a high possibility that the FDI rules may be roll backed if there is a change in Government.

Impact on Unorganized retailers

A legitimate concern in the FDI policy debate is the potential impact that entry of foreign players will have on the smaller traders running the Kirana stores in India. The argument is that once the large players start dominating the retail markets, the smaller players will start disintegrating due to the competitiveness shown by the large players. Due to deep pockets, large players also have the luxury of withstanding sustained losses to gain market share and throw out the competition. This would adversely affect a large number of small retailers. Patibandla (2012) estimates the number of the Kirana stores in India are around 12 million spread across 5,000 towns and 600,000 villages. The retail sector also accounts for 8% of the total employment out of which a significant chunk belongs to the unorganized retail sector.

On the other hand, there is another line of thought which argues that large retailers can coexist with the small traders due to the unique benefits that small traders offer. The Kirana

stores offer proximity, accessibility, credit facilities and unmatched customer experience due to personal relationship with the customer. Hence it is unlikely that there will be large scale displacement of unorganized retailers. However, there will be some amount of job losses for the unorganized retailers especially the ones who are located in the vicinity of malls in the urban cities.

Impact on Domestic Organized retailers

FDI in retail presents both a threat as well as an opportunity to the incumbent domestic organized retailers. It is a threat because the domestic firms may not be able to retain their competitiveness if pitted directly against foreign investors. Kishore Biyani, Chief Executive of one of the largest domestic retail firms, argues that domestic retail is still in a nascent stage to take on the companies backed with foreign capital. The foreign companies like Wal-Mart have huge capital and technological advantages over the domestic firms and hence there is a lack of level playing field. At the same time, the 51% limit on ownership for foreign firms has necessitated the teaming up between domestic and foreign players. There is an opportunity for domestic firms to access foreign capital in the form of Joint Ventures as could be seen in the case of Bharti and Wal-Mart. Overall, the net impact will be positive as it will force the domestic firms to improve quality of products and service to customers even further so as to remain competitive with foreign firms.

Impact on farmers

To perpetuate their viewpoint, the supporters of FDI generally point out the numerous benefits that FDI in retail will provide to farmers. The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) report of 2010 notes that farmers in India get only a third of the price paid by the final consumer. The farmers in nations having higher percentage of organized retail generally get two-thirds of the price paid by the final consumer. The farmers will also be able to diversify their options and hence reduce excess reliability on any one mode of sourcing. Another benefit that farmers will be able to enjoy are the warehousing facilities and storage infrastructure brought about by foreign investments. Official estimates suggest that around 25% of the agricultural produce goes wasted due to insufficient warehousing and storage. The improvement in the storage infrastructure will directly impact farmers by helping them retain and safeguard their produce which is of a highly perishable nature.

Impact on Consumers

Organized retail in general and retail backed foreign investment in specific have a positive impact on the final customer. Organized retail option provides an additional choice to the consumer. The numbers of products that are available under one roof are much more than what can be available in a Kirana store. Also, due to the economies of scale, large organized firms can provide price discounts on products. This appeals to the Indian customers as most of them are often hunting for bargains. On the whole, opening up of retail sector is extremely favorable to the final consumer.

Conclusion

Current scenario suggests that FDI in retail is likely to have a positive impact on the farmers and final consumers and a negative impact on the unorganized retailers. The impact on the domestic organized sector will moderate as some players can benefit due to access of foreign capital and other players who might fail to tie-up with foreign players are likely to face adverse consequences and very tough competition. It is difficult to accurately project the consequences of allowing FDI in retail as there are many variables operating on the stakeholders in this scenario. However, FDI in retail shows the potential to provide an impetus to growth and can infuse much needed capital to improve the infrastructure. There are legitimate concerns regarding the job losses in the retail sector as a consequence to FDI in retail. However, there is a compelling argument that predicts that these losses will be limited as organized retail will not be able to match the benefits that local Kiranas provide namely accessibility, proximity and personal connections. Hence, it is likely that the large firms and Kirana firms will co-exist together. To conclude, the decision to open up the retail sector to foreign investments is a step in the right direction as it can support and promote the evolution of the Indian retail sector.

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Impact of Opening up the Retail Sector on Traditional Retailers

Tapan Yadav¹

The prospect of opening of the retail sector to foreign players such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour has attracted enough uproar from various stakeholders. Apart from delineating the rationale for liberalising the retail sector, this article establishes the importance of retailing to the Indian economy. It also points out the strengths of the traditional retailers as well as the growth drivers of organized retailing. The international experience of opening up the retail sector is analysed through case studies of 2 countries, which is then used for suggesting steps to mitigate the negative fall-out, if any, of opening up the retail sector. These safeguards include timing of allowing Multi-Brand Retail Trade (MBRT) when the India Economy is growing at a fast pace and formulation of Zoning regulations for a limited time period so as to ensure that the large retail chains are not present in residential localities.

Keywords: FDI, Indian traditional retail industry, Indian retail sector, Thailand retail sector, Chinese retail sector, Mitigation of impact.

Presently, the Indian Government allows 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in “Single-brand Retail Trade” (SBRT), subject to approval by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), vide its circular dated 10th April, 2012 (PIB, 2012a). The Government has also allowed 51% FDI in “Multi-brand Retail Trade” (MBRT), again subject to approval by the FIPB, vide its press note dated 20th September, 2012 (PIB, 2012b). It is noteworthy that the above policy is an “enabling” policy only, and the State Governments / Union Territories would be free to take their own decisions in regard to the implementation of the policy. Moreover, though the associated conditions state that only “single-brand” products would be sold, the Government has not defined the term “single-brand” categorically. Thus, retail of “multi-brand” products, even if produced by the same manufacturer, would not be allowed. Secondly, the “single-brand” products should be sold under the same brand internationally.

Rationale for Liberalisation

The rationale for liberalising the retail sector (PIB 2011) hinges around the following benefits:

- Leveraging foreign investment in supply chain through the stipulation of 50% of investment in “back-end” infrastructure

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- Bringing supply chain efficiencies through better management practices and technologies
- Medium-term salutary effect on food inflation
- Securing remunerative prices for farmers, which, as a percentage of retail price, is higher in nations with a higher ORP
- Employment generation of 1.7 million jobs in the retail sector in the next 5 years, apart from those in areas such as agro-processing and logistics management

Despite all the good intentions of the Government, not a single proposal has been received for MBRT. The main reason is that investors want 100% FDI in MBRT to recover investments that shall have to be made in the back-end (Jain 2011). Continuity of policy after the 2014 General Elections (Ghemawat 2013), and the inordinate role of states in implementation of retail policy are cited as other reasons for the lukewarm response to the FDI Policy in retail.

Importance of Retail in the Indian Industrial Context

With this as the background, we can now take a look at the Indian retail industry. According to one estimate, the Indian retail industry is worth USD 450 billion in 2012 (IBEF 2013). At an exchange rate of Rs 55 per dollar, this translates into 24.75 lakh crore rupees, thereby being the fifth largest retail market in the world. Retailing contributes nearly 13% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Singhal 2012), and is the second largest employer after agriculture (Singh & Singla 2011). India has 12 million "kirana" stores which implies that India has nearly 10 such retail outlets for every 1000 persons, which is quite high. Thus retailing is a very important economic activity for India.

The typical "kirana" store is quite small : the average size hovers around 200 square foot in area which is used to stock 500 – 800 SKU's (Sheela 2010). With such a small scale of operation, the "kirana" stores are serviced by the wholesaler rather than the manufacturer. The shopping experience at a "kirana" store is characterised by :

- Lack of comfortable ambience
- Limited access to product storage area
- Lack of transparent pricing for product sold loose
- Limited quality control and after-sales service

Despite these shortcomings, the "kirana" stores have some strong positives. The first and the foremost is the informal Customer Relationship Management (CRM) whereby he knows the customers on a one-to-one basis. This CRM is anytime more effective than the formal CRM Programmes run by organized retailers (Sinha & Uniyal 2007). Moreover, the "kirana" store offers credit facility and provides home delivery which is not done by the organized retailers.

On the other hand, organized retailing is expected to grow in the future as is indicated by the low current organized retail penetration (ORP) at around 10% (Jain 2011), which measures the share of organized retail in the total retail industry. It is pertinent to note here that the ORP is higher for those Asian countries which opened the retail sector earlier than

India. For instance, ORP for China is 20% (IBEF 2013) which allowed FDI in retail in 1992, and ORP for Thailand is 40% which opened its retail sector in 1997. Coupled with factors such as rising disposable income, changing lifestyle and availability of consumer finance, the organized retail sector is poised to grow.

International Experience

It is pertinent here to analyse the international experience in opening up the retail sector. Two countries, viz. China and Thailand, have been chosen for this purpose – the experience is positive in China whereas it is negative in Thailand.

In China, FDI was allowed in retail in 1992 which was progressively increased to 100% in 2004 (Sinha & Singhal 2013). Both the number of organized and traditional retail outlets (equivalent to “kirana”) increased over a 5 year period from 1996 to 2001. Even the wholesale trade recorded an impressive growth. Foreign players brought in new management practices along with supporting technology to increase the supply chain efficiencies. Employment in the retail and wholesale trade increased from 28 million people in 1992 to 54 million people in 2001 viz. from 4% of the total labour force in 1992 to 7% in 2001. In terms of macroeconomic indicators, GDP growth rate has been at 8% at an average after the introduction of FDI in retail. Positive externalities such as inflation control and export growth have taken place. Experience in China shows that the traditional and organized retail can co-exist, provided the economy is growing at a fast pace.

Thailand allowed FDI in retail as part of conditions laid down by International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan given after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. At that time wet market and family-owned grocery shops dominated the Thai retail industry. The organized retail in Thailand grew well resulting in emergence of Thailand as a new shopping destination. But this growth in organized retail happened at the cost of traditional retail : a survey done by Thailand Development Research Institute in 2002 concluded that the traditional retail outlets in one kilometre radius of a hypermarket suffered (Srivathsan 2013). The uproar in the wake of closure of many traditional retail outlets led to the formulation of Zoning Laws in 2003 which prohibited presence of large retail stores of 1000 square metre area or more, within 15 kilometre of commercial town centres.

From a marketing perspective, the situation seems similar to the appointment of a second Dealer in the same city as the first Dealer – if the (city) market grows at a slow pace, the sales of the first Dealer shall be “cannibalized” ; but if the (city) market grows at a fast clip, both the Dealers will grow in due course of time, and the effect of “cannibalization” shall be felt only for a short duration. Thus, the timing of the retail reform in MBRT is critical – it is best to introduce when the economy is growing at a fast pace.

Another point to be noted is that, even in Thailand, the more competitive traditional retail outlets survived the onslaught of organized retail chains. Moreover, zoning regulations can be introduced for prohibiting the opening of organized retail outlets in residential localities ; these regulations can be for a limited time period , say, 3 – 5 years so as to give a chance to traditional retailers to upgrade and become competitive.

Mitigation of the Impact

To mitigate the negative fall-out of allowing 100% FDI in MBRT, following steps can be taken :

1. Institutional credit at low rates for traditional retailers to gear up for competition
2. Timing of allowing MBRT when the economy is growing at a fast rate
3. Formulation of Zoning Regulation to ensure that large retail chains are not present in residential localities for a limited time period of 3 – 5 years
4. Conditionalities (IBEF 2013) attached to opening up of the retail sector relating to employment of rural youth and procurement from small and marginal farmers

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Efficacy of Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Skill Development

Priyambda Tripathi¹

The paper highlights the role and methodology adopted by extension functionaries in imparting agriculture related skills to farmers; challenges faced by extension functionaries in training delivery, follow up on training and ways to measure impact of training on farmers. Within its limited scope the paper stresses the need for revamping Krishi Vigyan Kendra to emerge as a dynamic grass root entity which is able to respond to changing context of Indian agriculture viz, shrinking land size, climate change, disguised employment, lack of market access for produce, lack of low cost farm inputs, lack of skills to imbibe modern technology. In such a situation public- private partnership needs to be promoted for making farm extension effective. Private players like ITC, DSCL Hariyali have come up with innovative solutions to cater to diverse needs of farmers through E-kiosks and Hariyali Kisan Centres respectively. KVKs can enter into partnership with such corporate on mutual terms so that a win-win situation is created for both the parties. The paper draws from secondary literature and primary data collected through interviews from staff of Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Keywords: Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Agriculture Extension, Vocational Training, Progressive Farmers, Training pedagogy, Public private Partnership

Introduction

Farm productivity is affected by farmer's ability which includes both innate and acquired skills. Rural extension services are an important element that provides human capital –capital enhancing inputs as well as flows of information that can improve farmers' welfare and enhance farm productivity. The goals of extension include transferring of knowledge from researchers to farmers, advising farmers in their decision making and educating farmers on how to make better decisions, enabling farmers to clarify their own goals and possibilities, and stimulating desirable agricultural developments(vander Ban and Hawkins, 1996).The services provided by extension have significant public-good attributes. It is, therefore, not surprising, that there are at least 800,000 official extension workers worldwide and some 80% of the world's extension services are publicly-funded and delivered by civil servants (Feder, Willett and Zijp, 2001).Universities, autonomous public organizations, and NGOs deliver about 12% of extension services, and the private sector delivers another 5%. There is a corresponding large volume of public budget allocated to extension activities. In India agriculture extension is conducted by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, district level institution managed and controlled by an apex body called Indian Council of Agriculture Research.

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Agricultural Extension in India

1. Genesis of KVK

Agriculture extension in India was visualized in the second education commission (1964-1966) under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari. He recommended establishment of agricultural polytechnics to provide vocational education to rural youth. After careful deliberation by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission and as a follow up of the recommendation, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta of Seva Mandir, Udaipur in 1973 for formulating the institutional design of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) for providing vocational training in agriculture. The first Krishi Vigyan Kendra was set up in Pondicherry in 1974.²

The basic principles enunciated by the Mehta Committee (1973) include:

1. The Kendra will impart learning through work-experience and hence will be concerned with technical literacy, the acquisition of which does not necessarily require the ability to read and write.
2. The Kendra will impart training only to those extension workers who are employed and to the practicing farmers and fishermen. In other words, the Kendra will cater to the needs of those who are already employed or those who wish to be self-employed.
3. There will be no uniform syllabus for the Kendras. The syllabus and programme of each Kendra will be flexible in nature and tailored according to the felt needs, natural resources and potential for agricultural growth in that particular area.

The primary aim of KVK is to integrate agriculture research happening in universities to on farm practice through training and testing of new technology for assessment and refinement. Vocational education to farmers, extension workers and rural youth is another objective of KVK.

ICAR, the apex body of agriculture research and technology lays down the following mandate for KVK across India:

- Vocational Training to farmers in various complex agricultural operations for adoption on farms: The training can be both on farm and in house. Vocational training is also provided to functionaries of line department at block level for information dissemination at village level. Line department functionaries can be village level workers, village livestock workers, anganwadi workers
- Vocational Training to rural youth and women for self employment
- On Farm Trial of major agricultural technologies in order to make the training of farmers location specific, need based and resource-oriented
- Front line Demonstrations of new variety of seeds or technology in the village to generate awareness about it among the farmers.

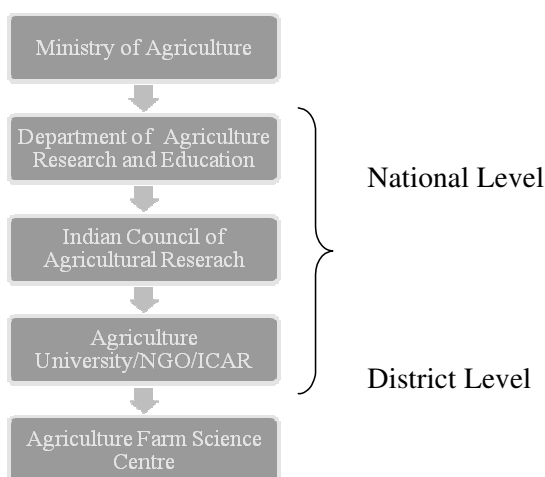
² Interview with Delhi staff.

2. Current Scenario

Outreach: The Agriculture Farm Science Centers are district level institutions hosted by agriculture universities, NGOs or independent institutions managed by ICAR. As of 2010 there were 583 Agriculture Farm Science Centers across different zones.³

3. Organization Structure

ICAR is the apex institution which funds and manages Agriculture Farm Science Centers. Awareness Generation and Information dissemination across KVK is done through an e-linkage portal called www.kvkhub.ernet.in.⁴ The organizational structure of KVK is explained through the following diagram.



KVKs are hosted by agricultural universities across India. However, in special cases in those districts without any specialized agriculture, KVKs are either hosted by reputed civil society organizations with required infrastructure or directly managed by ICAR. *The outreach is limited to one KVK for one or more districts across country.*

4. Resources Human Resource

As per the regulation of ICAR 16 staff is appointed on pay rolls of central government. Out of which 6 are Subject Matter Specialists from agronomy, soil science, horticulture, plant protection and agriculture extension, veterinary and home science. The remaining is support staff like farm manager, computer operator and driver etc. The institute is headed by Program Coordinator who can be one of the Subject matter specialists.

Other Resources: Every KVK should have minimum 16 hectares of land for on farm trial and demonstration of new technology apart from other agriculture equipments and training material. For mobilization of staff to villages, there is a provision of a vehicle.⁵

³ Interview with KVK staff, Delhi

⁴ Interview with KVK staff, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

⁵ Interview with KVK staff, Delhi and Baghalpur, Bihar

5. Functions of KVK

Vocational Training: KVK conducts vocational training for farmers, youth, women and extension workers at district level. Every KVK has to conduct minimum 6 trainings for each discipline in a year.

Training of Farmers: Training to farmers can be conducted both in the village as well as in the campus. Training is conducted on latest technology emanating from research institutions to the farmers through work experience by applying the principles of 'Teaching by doing' and 'Learning by Doing'. Training can be on use of improved variety of seeds, seed treatment, use of fertilizer, latest farming methods etc.

Training of youth and women: Vocational training to youth and women is provided in sericulture, animal husbandry, beekeeping, horticulture, food processing, tailoring, pickle and jam making etc for promoting self employment.

Training to line department staff: Apart from training to farmers and youth, training is provided to line department staffs like village level workers, village livestock workers, and anganwadi workers who are in direct contact with farmers. They become front line trainers who are easily accessible to the village.

No formal certificate or diploma is awarded, irrespective of duration of the courses to avoid the rush for jobs instead of self employment

Front Line Demonstration and On Farm Testing: Scientist conduct on-farm testing and Front-Line Demonstration on major agricultural technologies in order to make the training of farmers location specific, need based and resource-oriented so that research conducted in universities is assessed on the farm and refined as per local need.

Media used for training: Scientists use diverse media to reach farmers in remote rural villages. Farmers are mobilized through advertisements in radio, news paper and personal visits. Farmers have a 24 hour access to phone numbers of KVK staff. Some of the KVKs organize farm fairs to attract farmers to KVK. While others come up with low cost farm magazines with articles on latest technology, new variety of seed and on similar other subjects

Follow-up: There is no set guideline to assess the impact of training provided. As per Agriculture scientists interviewed follow up is regular through filling feedback Performa, personal visits or organizing ex trainee meetings. However, there is no standard way of assessing the effectiveness of training conducted. Effectiveness of training is measured through general indicators like changes in the district in terms of quantum of production, increase in area of production and through talking to progressive farmers.⁶

Preparation of Training Calendar: Training calendar is prepared annually in the month of September-October for each district. KVK scientists seek help from extension

⁶ Interview with KVK staff, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

workers to conduct participatory rural appraisal across district. Data related to land area, size of village is collected from statistical department. Through PRA exercise need based training manual is prepared. Every six months scientific advisory committee is summoned with representation from district level departments, “progressive farmers” and scientists for assessing ongoing training and preparation of training calendar.

6. Challenges faced:

6.1 *Farmer mobilization:* Scientist faces problems in farmer mobilization. Farmer’s availability is ensured only in the evening for training which makes it difficult for conducting off farm training. Most of the farmers are employed in wage employment through NREGS so they are not able to attend trainings. Scientist face problems in communicating farm solutions in the language which can be understood by farmers as most of the farmers are illiterate. Hence they are not able to gain confidence of the farmers. Training is limited to a few progressive farmers in the village.⁷

6.2 *Lack of awareness of latest technology and agricultural research being conducted in agriculture colleges among KVK staff:* KVK staff is not updated regularly on latest technology and research happening in colleges and universities.⁸

6.3 *Lack of village level extension staff:* Training is primarily conducted by scientists. There is no village level extension staff to bridge the gap between farmers and scientist. Most of the time scientists pay village visits or mobilize farmers for on campus training. It is difficult to ensure effective technology transfer to farms and cater to demands of farmers with a hand full of staff at district level.⁹

6.4 *Lack of mobility:* There is only one vehicle at the disposal of KVK so mobility is a big constraint among scientists.¹⁰

6.5 Training stipend provided for off farm training in vocational courses is RS 40 which is too less to attract farmers, youth and women for training as most of them are engaged in National Rural Employment Scheme.¹¹

6.6 *Location of KVKs:* Sometimes KVKs are not situated in the district headquarter. Hence, the farmer cannot pay a visit if he comes to district for his/her personal chore. He has to make a special effort to come to KVK.¹²

6.7 *Information gap:* There is no prompt communication channel between farmer groups and scientists for informing postponement of on farm training. This results in a lot of information gap between farmers and scientists.¹³

⁷ Interview with KVK staff, Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore), Punjab (Bhatinda), H.P (Kullu)

⁸ Interview with KVK staff, Himachal Pradesh, Kullu

⁹ Interview with KVK staff, Punjab, Bhatinda

¹⁰ Interview with KVK staff, Punjab, Bhatinda

¹¹ Interview with KVK staff, Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore

¹² Interview with KVK staff, Rajasthan, Barmer

¹³ Interview with KVK staff, Punjab, Bhatinda

Efficacy of Krishi Vikas Kendra

Krishi Vigyan Kendras were constituted not only to promote technology transfer among farmers to enhance their skill as cultivators but also to positively affect rural development through demand driven vocational training to rural youth and women for self employment. However, they have not been able to affect the productivity of farms and employment generation in the rural economy. The national farm survey in 2003 in India shows that nearly 60% of the farmers had not accessed any sources for modern technology. For those who did use sources, about 6% of farmers had access to a government extension worker, less than 4% accessed primary cooperative society (farmer based organizations), and less than 1% accessed NGOs, private sector extension agencies or Para-technicians (Birner and Anderson, 2007). **Only 0.7 farmers accessed Krishi Vigyan Kendras.** Around 60% of the farmers actually tried the technologies recommended by extension workers. This point to existence of problems regarding the practical relevance of the advice provided by training agents.¹⁴

Issues for Discussion

1. Training Pedagogy: KVK was formed to integrate agriculture research with actual farm practice so as to inform farmers about relevant technology, improved on farm practices and use of modern tools and techniques through on farm visits, demonstration in the farm and through lab experiment so that farmer has access to free information on improvements happening in agriculture so that his skill and capacity is built and he is more productive in his occupation. The pedagogy used to deliberate this process is training and visit by scientists. It is mostly limited to a monologue where the farmer is meek listener and the scientist is at an upper hand due to possession of knowledge. The relationship between farmer and scientist is hierarchical and not personal due to several factors (inability to simplify and talk in the language of farmer, limited number of visits, lack of effective training medium; projector and transparency are not appealing to farmers). The process of knowledge transfer is marred by such a relationship. The scientist is not able to establish a personal connect with the less informed and semi literate farmer so as to gain the confidence of farmer to make him think and act upon that information.

2. Bureaucratic Approach

Reliance on Extension functionaries of other department: The size of KVK to be able to conduct information dissemination for the entire district is too small. There is no cadre of KVK village level extension workers who can be in constant touch with farmers. KVK has to rely on village level workers of other department. PRA exercise to prepare annual training calendar is left to extension workers who are answerable to their respective departments. An information problem that scientists often face is the inability to determine what extension agents actually do in the field and to supervise them. Considerable

¹⁴ IFPRI discussion paper 0079' Nov 2007; Birner Regina, Anderson R. Jock

information asymmetries exist between extension agents and the KVK staff. There is no incentive for extension functionaries to carry forward such exercise for KVK.

Lack of resources: KVK, being a district level institution is provided only one vehicle to reach villages across the whole district. This restricts the mobility of KVK staff to get to the field and work effectively. Lack of capacity building of KVK scientists: There is an online portal for connecting KVK across the country with ICAR research and training. However, it is subject to proper connectivity. There is lack of constant capacity building of KVK staff to make them aware about changing agricultural technology and farm methods.

Limited to large farmers: Another failure inherent in public sector extension is inability to connect to small farmers, women and marginalized sections of the community. Most of the time technology transfer happens among large scale progressive farmers who are able to reach the KVK staff.

3. Question of Impact

There is no standard measure to assess the impact of trainings conducted. Feedback about effectiveness of training is taken through filling of performas which has its own limitation. The impact of extension is measured through general indicators like increased production or increase in size of land area. It is difficult to come to any conclusion through such indicators as (e.g. adoption of technology and farm productivity) they are also influenced by many other factors that have compounding effects. The effectiveness of extension in many low income countries is highly contingent on relaxing wider barriers to the successful development of the agricultural sector as a whole, including such potentially limiting factors as credit, technology, input supplies, price incentives, institutions and human resources constraint (Purcell and Anderson, 1997). There is very little research conducted to assess the impact of trainings on small holder farmers, women farmers and marginalized sections.

4. Limited to Technology Dissemination

In the changing context KVK has to go beyond its role of technology transfer agency to a holistic service provider with information related to marketing of crops, use of internet for marketing of produce, water conservation and forming farmer groups (mainly to promote integrated pest management and manage water resources) etc so that farmers are attracted to a complete package of services. Addressing new challenges requires extension to play an expanded role with a diversity of objectives, which include: linking farmers more effectively and responsively to domestic and international markets; enhancing crop diversification; coupling technology transfer with other services relating to input and output markets; poverty reduction and environmental conservation; viewing agriculture as part of a wider set of rural development process that includes enterprise development and non-farm employment; and capacity development in terms of strengthening innovation process, building linkages between farmers and other agencies, and institutional development to support the bargaining position of farmers (Sulaiman et al, 2006).

5. Demand Driven Training

The practice of extension may have stuck in technology diffusion from Agriculture University to farms. KVK serves to disseminate research happening in university to farms which is a one way process of innovation. The ideal situation should have been a bottom up approach towards technology development, whereby, the research theme should have arose from farmers demand for a solution to a burning problem. KVK could have been a facilitating agency between the research community and farmer to foster such need based research. "It is widely recognized that innovation comes from multiple sources, including farmers and how the agendas of different stakeholders are represented affects the 'appropriateness' of new technology developed (Sulaiman et al, 2006). Farmer participation in technology development and participatory extension approaches have emerged as a response to such new thinking". (Sulaiman et al, 2006).

Conclusion

Krishi Vigyan Kendra can play an important role in technology dissemination and in up gradation of skills of farmers and rural youth if equipped with more resources and a larger outreach. The challenge before extension service is how to involve and motivate 74% of poor farmers with a holding size of less than 1 hectare. It is evident that KVKs with limited outreach, over loaded infrastructure and bureaucratic approach, have not been able to respond to the changing context of Indian agriculture which requires increased innovation to tackle problems of ever shrinking land size, climate change, disguised employment, lack of market access for produce, lack of low cost farm inputs, lack of skills to imbibe modern technology. In such a situation public- private partnership needs to be promoted for making farm extension effective. Private players like ITC, DSCL Hariyali have come up with innovative solutions to cater to diverse needs of farmers through E-kiosks and Hariyali Kisan Centres respectively. KVKs can enter into partnership with such corporate on mutual terms so that a win win situation is created for both the parties. KVKs can contribute through information and expertise while corporate can provide resource and manpower. Such a partnership will benefit the farmers through package of services delivered promptly. KVK's ability to respond to farmer's needs through capacity building and information dissemination would be enhanced manifold. Corporates can reach farmers directly without middlemen and can get customized produce. Such a partnership would give impetus to training of farmers and village youth through proactive role of market and research as compared to training and visit without market focus.

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Civic Engagement and Civil Society: An important tool for enhancing participatory democracy and evolving accountability in governance

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India today, as well as in the past, has seen numerous citizen engagement techniques such as protest, social auditing, knowledge sharing etc. by the civil society to influence change in the governance and policy processes. The various agents of civil society, ensuring better governance and social accountability through civic engagement and participation have strong political and economic ramifications to the nature of participatory democracy and the nature of governance. It is hence, worthwhile to study of the role and potential of civil societies and engagement efforts in India and other parts of the world in enhancing participatory democracy and social accountability. This article tries to explore the different facets of citizen engagement and civil society and tries to make the case for the positive role of such initiatives and groups in developing socially accountable systems and their eventual role evolving a institutional framework through which a participatory democratic system of governance can truly operate.

Introduction

“People depend on networks and associations, and protect themselves against the depredations of their fellow human beings. It is this “social capital” which must serve ultimately to hold governments accountable and thereby enhance their performance.”

– World Bank Report (2002 Pg. 30)

Over the years, there have been many strong cases made in the favor of Participatory Democracy as opposed to Representative Democracy as a more organic and effective form of governance. Critics of representative democracy argue that it limits the role of citizens to only voting and election. The argument is that elections are not the only facet of a true democracy. A democracy solicits more involvement of the people in the decision making process, active participation and more open access to the workings of the democratic process. Hence, there has been steady inclination towards participatory democracy as an attempt to streamline the role of the citizen into the mainstream of the democratic process in a more direct and consequential manner. Participatory democracy is expected to give a more pragmatic character to governance as it gives space to people to voice their priorities, questions as well as their dissent. Thereby, giving them, as a community, a more direct role in their development process rather than having to rely on just one representative to voice their issues and opinions. Participatory development, a model of development that originated

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with the idea of participatory democracy works on a similar notion that direct inclusion of the local people in their development process would increase the impact and relevance of the development project in the community. In the past few decades there has been an increase in the number of organizations that have started involving the local people directly in their development projects with the objective of improving and empowering the people in the community. Hence, there are a growing number of development practitioners and social scientists that have prescribed participatory democracy as a means of achieving meaningful and long term social change as opposed to the representative democracy which as mentioned earlier limits the role of the citizen to only determining the outcomes of elections.

Since the idea of participatory democracy aims at applying the “bottom up” approach towards the democratic process, it has naturally become associated with civil society and civic engagement. The civil society is perceivably made up of more organic, smaller and pragmatic organizations as opposed to the bureaucratic structures which tend to be less responsible and inflexible. The idea of “civil society” has achieved prominence in political and developmental discourse particularly in connection with democratization in the developing world. It has also given rise to the desire for greater participation of people in decision-making at all levels of civil society. In 1993, civic engagement was defined by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as “a process, not an event, which closely involves people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives.” UNDP goes on to mark the distinctions between civic engagement and participation “While participation is a deliberate attempt at setting up channels of influence, representation, accountability at the state level, civic engagement affects social mobilization and can harness social capital through social experimentation, social innovation, social learning by fostering meaningful partnership between multiple actors engaged in promoting a pattern for development that is participatory and more fulfilling to ordinary people.” Hence participatory democracy is not the same as civic engagement, but it can be the consequence to civic engagement. Activities carried out by the civil society, their social experimentation, innovations can create spaces within the democratic process, which can be influenced by the citizens or the civil society and make the governance and development more empowering and relevant to the people. It can also create socially accountable systems which are answerable to the ordinary people for whom they operate.

This paper intends to explore the role and nature that civil society and civic engagement has in creating spaces for setting up systems of participatory democracy with the help of a few case studies. It also intends to explore the various discourses and narratives of civil society and civic engagement that influence and shape the extent and nature of the two factors in enhancing participatory form of governance.

Civil Society

Civil Society is one of the most dynamic and most largely contested aspects of society. Other sectors of society such as government and the businesses have relatively clear definitions. Civil society however, has been widely contested both as a phenomenon and its reach and effectiveness in the society and its development. However, the term has existed

ever since the revolutionary period of the late 18th Century. Since then 'Civil Society' has seen many changes both in character and composition. In its crudest and simplest form, civil society can be described as the third sector. A sector that is distinctly separate and outside the two sectors i.e. government and business. However, as we look at the many cases of change and citizen participation or dissent in the governing sphere, and are tempted to use the term 'civil society' to define the actors of phenomenon surrounding these cases, we realize that civil society is an excellent shape shifter. It is a very dynamic term and it changes in character, composition, attitude, discourses with the changing aspects of the cases and circumstances of the agents in the civil society. Sometimes, it is very organic to the people, sometimes it is an outside body that operates outside the realm of government and businesses but works closely with the citizens. It can be called a communicator and the bridge between the Government and the citizens. Due to the diversity of circumstances and discourses of governance in the public sphere the bridge of communication has to assume new language, nuance and color to effectively work towards achieving the goal and priorities of the citizens. Prof Heidelberg defines civil society today as a term "that both describes and anticipates a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self organizing, self reflexive, and permanently in tension, or with each other and with governmental institutions that "frame", constrict and enable their activities" This definition of civil society correctly captures the restlessness and the spirit of constant questioning and organizing that a civil society is expected to have. Politically, one of the most conducive political systems for these kinds of phenomena to survive is democracy. While forms of government which might be autocratic and monarchical are tempted to crush dissent and questioning, democracy embraces civil society as a necessary phenomenon that must work alongside democratic processes and be in continuous dialogue with each other. Democracy as a form of government does not seek to crush dissent or questioning. It does not extend its state power into the non state sphere of civil society. Civil society on the other hand is pragmatic and does not seek positions of power. It tends to be issue based and intends to set up channels of communications and the voice of the citizens into the decision making process of governance. It tends to be involved in monitoring the excesses of the government and warning the citizens of it. It is also concerned with acting as the mouthpiece of the citizens to mainstream their concerns and priorities within schemes of the government. Hence the civil society can be used in pragmatic ways to formulate social and political strategy or action program for achieving a pre-defined or assumed political good. Civil society calculates the tactical means of achieving areas of influence for the citizens, thus enhancing the participation of the people into the democratic processes. Civil society and participatory democracy are not different but essentially simultaneous phenomenon that are interdependent to each other. A democratic government structure can lead to a healthy civil society and a healthy civil society becomes a pre-requisite to achieving a successful democracy as it represents the voice of the people.

Civil Society in India

With the cultural diversity and conflicting interest of Indian citizens on different issues, it is natural that India being a democracy would have cultivated a thriving civil society to

make the democratic process work towards the benefit of the Indian people. India has about 1.5 million NGOs (IndianNGOs.com estimate) today. Sen (1997) notes that the non-profit sector in India includes religio-political institutions, institutions that have emerged from or nourished social movements, voluntary organizations, community based or grassroots organizations, welfare wings of religious organizations, business associations and associations for promotion of art, science & culture. It includes a range of institutions, which are outside the government and can include voluntary grass root organizations, community based organizations, intermediary voluntary development organizations, private consultancy and research groups, academic institutions, and even parts of the media. India has also seen the growth of cooperatives and trade unions which also fall under the broad conception of a third sector. According to a study by Society for Participatory Research in Asia, “There exist traditional associations in the form of caste associations, ethnic associations, kinship associations and modern associations such as professional associations of lawyers, doctors, engineers, nurses etc. They co-exist with development organizations, which provide services to the needy and poor. Public advocacy, research and support organizations also exist in various forms.” (PRIA. 2000)

Civil society on its own has a very dynamic nature and cannot be subject to anyone’s definition. Civil society in the Indian context becomes even harder to define as India itself is a diverse country with sometimes contradictory discourses and narratives in the civil sphere. The priorities of people of different communities and interest groups are different. Hence, civil societies that grow from or represent these organizations are also very diverse and sometimes contradictory in nature. Hence the role of the civil society and the strategy they use to involve their priorities in the democratic process differ a great deal. Over the years, the role of the civil society has changed numerous times. However, NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) tend to be the most popular form of civil society agents in India. Activism through NGOs seems to be one of the most popular forms of civil society initiatives in India. Since these are perfectly legal and even protected under the Article 19, Right to Protest, there is no reason for the government to limit such activists. The Right to Information Act of 2005, which gave the citizen of India the right to access government information, has been very popular among the civil society in India. It provided the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and the NGOs a free climate to operate in. This Act brought under its wing, the entire spectrum of government bodies, including the Panchayat Raj, municipalities, etc. The purpose of this act was to increase the participation of the citizens in the decision making process of the government at all levels. The information supplied by the government will give the people an access to information which can facilitate better participation of the people in decision making. Civil Society is now using the RTI act as a citizen engagement tool to help the citizens understand the democratic process better and enhance the meaningful participation of the citizens in the democratic process.

Civic engagement

As mentioned earlier, “Civic engagement is a process, not an event, which closely involves people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives.” Since it is a process that tries to achieve meaningful dialogues between multiple actors of

different organizations, it entails a number of processes which include the involvement of the people in decision making. It does this by eliciting their contribution to development interventions and their participation helps them share the benefits from development processes. This increases the involvement of the community in its own welfare and hence builds capacity and human resource at the community level that is skilled to solve their own problems. This generates human capital and also helps in promoting relevant change and development at the grass root level. Civic engagement usually opens up dialogue between the bureaucratic institutions and the local people. This facilitates in setting up more interactive and transparent systems of government or bureaucracy which creates more accountable systems. Since civic engagement can help in providing more reliable information about the local needs to the policy makers and development planners, it can then help in mainstreaming the priorities and needs of the local while designing development policy programs.

It must be noted that civic engagement is a multiple faceted concept that involves many groups, organizations and in some cases even a few individuals. In its simplest terms, civic engagement is “individual or public actions designed to address the public concern.” Any of the agencies can initiate engagement of the citizen. It can be initiated by the civil society, the governing body, bureaucratic institutions and collection of individuals. The nature and impact of the civil engagement efforts are largely dependent on the civic issues and the citizens themselves. Civil society is also one of the facets of civic engagement. Actions taken by the various agents in the civil society are almost always civic engagement actions which are usually aimed to streamline the goals and priorities of the people into the discourses of policy makers and agents of development, to create channels of communications between the people and their governing bodies, to make the governing bodies accountable to the local people and sometimes even to voice dissent over an unpopular decision taken by the governing authorities. Hence, civil society is one of the facets of civic engagement which tries to create areas of influence for the people in order to ensure a more participatory democratic process.

The following selection of three case studies attempt to explore the relationships between civic engagement, accountability and transparency.

NREGA Implementation Case Study:

In 2005, the Government passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) which guaranteed the country’s rural poor the “right to work” and the right to livelihood security. Within NREGA, the government accepted the responsibility for providing a minimum of 100 days of unskilled work per year to every poor rural family that needs employment. This case study explores the implementation of this scheme which, on paper, has the capacity to transform the rural employment landscape.

Samarthan, a Civil Society Organization (CSO) that works in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, took up the mantle of monitoring the implementation of NREGA, since it was instituted. They facilitated social audits and conducted two studies regarding implementation of the scheme. The findings through these audits showed that people were

not aware of what they were entitled to under the scheme. Their gaps in knowledge included basic entitlements like they did not know they could demand work under the law, how to demand this work, or what recourse to take if they were not given work or payment.

These insights prompted Samarthan to act and reverse the situation. They planned systematic interventions in 10 villages in Madhya Pradesh. They took steps like raising awareness amongst people, putting pressure on the gram panchayats to respond and helping them respond to the demands of the people, tracking the flow of the funds and briefing the media. The campaign resulted in significant local change and as a result of it; there was an increase in the number of rural poor demanding and receiving work under NREGA. Thus, the local implementation structures of NREGA were strengthened.

Lack of transparency and accountability were the reasons attributed for these implementation glitches. These factors lead to other evils like widespread corruption and bureaucratic glitches. Important provisions were introduced in NREGA to thwart dishonesty and lack of transparency and thereby improve implementation of the scheme. However, Panchayat officials found ways to circumvent the provisions included in the Act. One of the ways was the addition of bogus names to the attendance muster. They then colluded with officials and bank staff to embezzle the resultant extra payments and escaped accountability. In this case, the civil society along with acting as an organizer of the locals also played the role of a pressure group that made the Panchayats take faster and bolder decisions. They acted as watchdogs to the corrupt and unaccountable aspects of the schemes. But one of the most distinct characteristics of the role of the civil society in this process is that the presence of civil society in this scenario facilitated a feedback loop to the governing bodies for the shortcomings of the schemes that were recently instituted. The civil society was able to communicate the problems of implementation to the authorities and governing bodies and hence they were able to influence relevant changes at the policy and implementation level.

Citizen Report Card-Bangalore case study

In 1994, 1999 and 2003; the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) provided an assessment of the delivery of public services in Bangalore by initiating the Citizen Report Card (CRC) System. It attempted to gauge the satisfaction levels of citizens with regards to the performance of public service agencies dealing with water, power, municipal services, transport, housing, telephones, banks and hospitals.

The findings of the 1994 assessment mainly presented a bleak view: Public satisfaction was low, the agencies were not people friendly and lacked customer orientation, there was rampant corruption and there was a high cost attached to the inefficiency of the public sector.

The follow-up activities to the first CRC was as follows. The heads of the public agencies covered by the survey and the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary of Karnataka were informed of the findings of the study as copies of the study were sent to them. Findings were also disseminated to all the major newspapers published in Bangalore. The press was used to leverage the voice of the people and harness support among civil society groups.

Also, there was acknowledgement of the report card among the heads of agencies and the Chief Secretary who promised to study the findings.

The scope of the 1999 assessment was broadened as more agencies were included and the sample size of the survey was increased. The important findings in this study were the low quality of the services of most agencies, rampant inefficiency, poor grievance redress mechanism, lack of customer orientation and widespread corruption.

During the follow-up of the second CRC, extensive effort was made to engage service providers and the civil society as well. The findings were shared during individual presentations with high ranking officials of public agencies. There was a general sense of agreement regarding the findings of the study even among the officials though some were shocked at the extent of corruption reported. A press conference was held to release the major findings of the study and all newspapers and a few magazines prominently displayed the findings. A public meeting was also conducted to discuss the findings of the study and heads of four agencies addressed the audience of the meeting on how they proposed to solve the problems raised

Comparison between the two reports of 1994 and 1999 showed that while there was an improvement in the overall satisfaction levels from 9% to 34% the magnitude of the corruption problem remained the same. On the whole, while there was dissatisfaction with the public delivery system there was evidence of some improvement in the delivery mechanism.

The third CRC assessment in 2003 showed significant improvement in the satisfaction levels with the public services and there was also a decrease in the corruption levels. There was also a dramatic decline in the number of problems that citizens experienced. Satisfaction with the Urban Development agency also improved remarkably while improvement in the performance of the City Government was relatively lesser.

The follow-up activities to the third CRC was similar to the previous follow-ups conducted by PAC. A written summary of CRC findings was also sent to additional agencies covered in the survey.

The impact and the contribution of the CRC system are as follows:

- Improved quality of services
- Increased civic activism
- Increased public awareness
- Increased client orientation
- The replication of CRC in other states of India and other countries

It is difficult to measure the exact influence of the CRC in Bangalore but there is no doubt in the fact that they have provided further impetus to the efforts in improving public service delivery. It was a pioneering effort to determine the satisfaction levels of ordinary citizens regarding the performance of service providers. It contributed to increasing public awareness on many important issues and problems plaguing citizens. It also awakened key officials by prompting them to act on the findings and it stimulated civil society and citizen groups.

It facilitated and assisted the Government in monitoring and providing corrective action. Most importantly, it has shown the path that civil society groups can play to stimulate change and initiate action and reform by the seemingly simple action of providing feedback. This simple path goes a long way in strengthening the accountability and the transparency systems and enabling the governing machinery to perform better. Citizen report card system is very apt example of setting up more accountable system by increasing the participation of the citizens in assessing and critiquing the government agencies.

Policy Dialogue on Corruption in Rajasthan: Citizen Engagement through the Right to Information Act

Citizens experienced massive corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability in government administered welfare service in Rajasthan, India. This problem was taken up by CUTS CART, a local Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in Rajasthan that targeted this problem. In its project titled “Reforming the Processes in the Rural Development Department through Policy Dialogue and Civic Engagement based on RTI Act (2005) in Rajasthan, India.” It was based on the success of a prior project that was able to kickstart a process of empowerment and has been largely sustainable.

Through a survey, CUTS CART discovered that although in theory the locals of Rajasthan were entitled to service delivery from the government officials, in practise the people in the villages of Rajasthan had to bribe the service providers in order to get their services. CUTS recognised that the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and the rural development Dept. were in-charge of delivering the National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (NREGS) and two other welfare schemes in the area. CUTS realised that there was a big knowledge vacuum among the people of Rajasthan in terms of the tools and provisions of the government that were placed to make the bureaucratic institutions and government service providers more transparent and accountable. One such tool was the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. A survey showed that the people in the area were largely unaware and uneducated about either the existence of this act or its effective implementation. CUTS CART decided to use RTI as a tool of civic engagement to increase the level of accountability and transparency in the bureaucratic systems.

At first CUTS acted as an educator to the people. It organised the people into Citizen and Community Based organisations which acted as watchdogs to the corrupt practises of the government and disseminated information of the corrupt practises of the government into the village along with aggressively raising awareness among the citizens about the RTI act. They taught the people about the Act, they taught them how to file it correctly. They encouraged the people to file RTI in bulked and helped this process by setting up Model RTI Gram Panchayats and RTI Advisory Information Centre. The result of their efforts was seen quickly, 450 of the RTI applications were filed and 288 of them were resolved successfully. In this way CUTS acted as the educator and organiser of the local people and helped them ensure that there was a certain level of transparency in the workings of the service providers. They facilitated the beginning of a dialogue between the locals of Rajasthan and the bureaucratic institutions that were supposed to provide service to them.

Cuts then began with the task of sensitising the bureaucratic officials and government service providers towards the ground realities of corruption and the implications of the corrupt practises to the local people. They held ad-hoc meetings at the state level for policy makers and the media where they tried to explain to the policy makers the consequences and existence of the corrupt practises in the service delivery mechanisms in the villages of Rajasthan. CUTS CART also created a feedback loop by providing a set of recommendations to service providers on how to make the system more transparent and accountable. At first the officials and service providers were cold or non-committal to the initiatives undertaken by CUTS. However, CUTS' increasing confrontation with the ground realities in-front of the media helped in making the officers more sensitive to the people.

CUTS also used its considerable influence and used a top down advocacy approach and with the help of Rural Development Minister of Rajasthan and two Directors of two government programs, who motivated the lower level employees in the government to be more responsive to the queries of the people and to react to the corruption complaints of the people in a timely manner. They also instituted a mandatory maintenance of a complaints and suggestion box which was to be read and responded to in a timely manner.

CUTS, as an agent of civil society in the rural area of Rajasthan helped in setting up a channel of voice into the non responsive bureaucratic structure of government service delivery system. It acted as a communication channel between the government and the local people and helped in enhancing the responsiveness to the problems of the people. However, it must be noted that media also plays a very important role in this equation. It was only when CUTS continuously confronted the officers with their issues in-front of the media, that they were pressurised into responding to the CUTS and local people of Rajasthan. This shows how important it is for civil society to have strong networks with other agents in the society. Another aspect that the civil society was able to push was the agenda of transparency by exercising its influence with the top level authorities of Rajasthan. This is another example of civil society must having dynamic interactions with all agents of Government- grass roots, top down, media etc. The role and nature of civil society and citizen engagement is dynamic, it changes with the issues, the local population as well as with the power structures in the government. CUTS were able to harness on its networks and its ability to organise to create a space for citizen input and enhance the transparency and accountability of the service providers in Rajasthan.

Concluding Remarks

In India, there are a variety of cases which demonstrate the efforts of the government to work in tandem with networks of the civil society to ensure participatory governance. However, the success rates in these efforts fluctuates and is dependent on a variety of variables which are characteristic to each case. However, in successful cases, it can be said that greater participation of the community through civil engagement and civil society has led to a successful and more efficient implementation of government projects and schemes in the society than the ones that were formulated and implemented through a top down approach. Networks that the different elements of the civil society form are often

complex and require a lot of effort to keep intact. However, in India with different elements of civil society having different priorities and sometimes conflicting priorities, it sometimes leads to the breakdown of these networks. This is a problem area for Indian participatory development initiatives as this slows down the decision making process considerably and hampers implementation efforts and service delivery mechanisms. However, the cases in which the conflicts have been resolved, a collaborative effort from such civil societies have ensured that the diversity of civil society interest and the policies formed and implemented, organically have been more effective.

Civic engagement in public governance today is evolving against the backdrop of several worldwide developments that are transforming socio economic dynamics of the countries with both opportunities and challenges. Technology alone is revolutionizing the tracks of communications. The internet or cell phone is a very potent platform for the government and its bodies to reach out and engage the people directly in the democratic processes. And it has already started. Technology can also help civil society watchdogs to keep an eye on the government institutions and disseminate information far and wide without incurring much cost and effort. People are eager to be a part of their democratic and development process. Technology makes that much easier. Media also plays a very potent role in enhancing the impact of the civic engagement methods of the civil society. Civil Society has to play very dynamic while mainstreaming the rhetoric of the citizen into governance discourses; hence it must develop many networks which can help the civil society in creating more impact.

Social Audits seem to be a successful way to enhance accountability and transparency in the democratic institutions. They seem to have worked well for some of the projects where they have been implemented in the right manner. However, the civil society must have tactical ways of keeping the officials under pressure to ensure that they are compelled to answer the queries of the citizens. There have been some instances where efforts have been made to institute social audits as a part of the government schemes to ensure an inbuilt social accountability in the system. Hence, people get to participate and directly ask their officials pointed questions about their projects.

Civil society organizations have been interrogating and putting pressure on the state to broaden the public policy to include those who are marginalized and increase the participation of the people. There is a strong case for the idea that citizens if they are provided more information can use a network of individuals or agencies to participate and influence meaningful policy changes at the state level. It could be said that the civil society helps in enhancing participation in the democratic process as well as enhances the responsive and accountable aspect of government institutions. However, the case against participatory democracy states that it fails at a larger level and can work only in smaller communities. This has some truth to it since at the local level it is easier to accommodate different debates and come to compromises. However, at the central level participatory democracy can be hindered by the sheer volume of debates. Participatory democracy can scale up and lead to higher policy changes only if it is accompanied by some institutional changes.

At a local and community level however, if used in the right pragmatic manner, civil society and civic engagement can act as important agents of public opinion in the public policy discourses and can help in implementing development projects in a more relevant and organic manner. This can be achieved if the citizens and their governing bodies are able to focus more on their intersections and communicate in the space that intersects the domain of state with the domain of civil society. The policies that originate through this space and projects that are implemented through this space will be more organic and relevant in their outcomes for the citizens towards whom all policies and programs are ultimately directed.

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The IFFCO Foundation Bulletin: Information for Contributors

One of the key areas of work identified by the IFFCO Foundation is the research and analysis of agrarian and more broadly, rural developments in the Indian context. One way of doing this is by being a print forum for critical theoretical deliberation and field based scholarship. This is also an important way of responding to the challenges facing rural India. By incorporating the voices of researchers, policy-makers, grass-roots, organizations, practitioners, commentary by journalists covering agrarian issues; a dialogue can be initiated and possibly outcomes be influenced. In line with the Foundation's objectives, the Bulletin is a medium for original work that can help us understand emerging trends in specific contexts; provide important insights relating to structures of hierarchy and governance in rural India; and more generally, contribute to and question existing knowledge bank and policy debates and identify alternatives. In particular, it would attempt to promote young, upcoming researchers who, through their articulation, give voice to the marginalised sections of the Indian society. This is of utmost importance since the baskets of problems facing Indian countryside and agriculture today are historically unprecedented, complex and intricate and interdependent and global.

The IFFCO Foundation has identified certain broad areas of work such as agriculture, producer/farmer organisations, rural development, environment, micro-enterprises and skill development, gender, art and culture, governance. Each of these can be deconstructed into a multitude of specific topics. For example, agriculture could relate to its technological aspects, land relations, debates on models of farming, impact on farmers of government policies such as liberalisation of the trade regime and decontrolling prices and related global trends. Similarly, relating to gender, prospective studies could be on labour market organisation, impact on female farmers of increasing costs of cultivation and instability of earnings and more so in the face of male out-migration, how gender and other social identities intersect and relate to local power matrices, women's participation in local governance and institutions, improving their access to and effective ownership of critical assets etc. Rural development could relate to agrarian relations, poverty, food insecurity, health conditions, social protection, labour migration, agricultural technology etc.

The Bulletin is published once in four months (April, August, December). Each issue would comprise four to five articles of about five to eight thousand words (including everything) each. Submissions from prospective contributors can take several forms:

- (i) Commentary on a topical issue or policy review (for example, cash transfers)
- (ii) Analysis of models, mobilizations (for example, small holder farming model, farmers' movements)
- (iii) Theoretical/conceptual explorations (for example, the relevance or not of the 'peasantry')
- (iv) Field based research (qualitative and/or quantitative)

The above are only indicative and the Bulletin welcomes other enterprising studies as well. Though the articles would be India specific, a comparative analysis drawing on evidence

from other countries in the process of analyzing implications for India, would be welcomed. Contributions are welcomed from scholars/researchers in the fields of political science, economics, sociology, geography, development studies, labour studies, gender/women studies, anthropology, environment and other interdisciplinary areas. Authors are encouraged to use a simple and precise writing style so that it can be easily understood by nonacademic readers as well. Diverse analytical styles are welcomed. Selected submissions will be reviewed internally and externally.

Notes for Contributors:

- i) Papers are to be written in English and submitted at:
nilanshاتيwari@iffcofoundation.net
- ii) For further information and details: www.iffcofoundation.net
- iii) The submitted article or a similar article with only stylistic variations cannot be submitted for publication elsewhere at the same time.
- iv) Future reprints elsewhere would require permission of the organisation (i.e. IFFCO Foundation) and the author.
- v) Submissions to be accompanied by an abstract of not more than two hundred words indicating the article's relevance, objective, methodology and main conclusions.
- vi) The Chicago Manual of Style is to be followed.
- vii) Authors are requested to provide a brief autobiographical note mentioning institutional affiliation, areas of research and email address for purposes of contact.