

Community Development: Case Studies in Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses community development as a comprehensive process aiming to enhance economic and social progress with active community participation. It emphasizes the empowerment of individuals and groups to address challenges and improve their quality of life. Community empowerment involves gaining knowledge, skills, resources, and confidence to take control of one's life and participate in decision-making processes. Two community development initiatives in India are highlighted. The first is the Paani Foundation's Satyamev Jayate Water Cup competition, which focuses on watershed management and encourages community participation, training, and sustainable impact. The second is the "One Girl-One Hundred and Eleven Trees" initiative in Piplantri, promoting eco-feminism by planting trees on the birth of a girl child, fostering environmental awareness, gender equality, and economic benefits. The Teach India Initiative, a community education program, is presented as an effort to provide free English education to underprivileged children. It involves volunteers and aims to improve education access, empower children, engage the community, and promote skill development. The paper also discusses the AMUL initiative, a community economic development effort through dairy cooperatives. AMUL's success is attributed to fair pricing, income generation, capacity building, community engagement, women's empowerment, social and economic development, technology adoption, and its replicability as a scalable model. In summary, the paper covers community development initiatives in environmental sustainability, education, and economic development, showcasing diverse approaches to empower communities and improve their well-being.

Keywords: *Community Development, Community Empowerment, Community Participation, Inclusivity, Training, Participation, Capacity Building in Communities, Paani Foundation, Eco-Feminism, Teach India Initiative, AMUL*

Community development and Empowerment programmes are taking place in India at all levels and in many different areas. Community development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative. It is a comprehensive approach that seeks to improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of a community. The fundamental premise of Community Development is to combine and increase community resources (Kloos, Hill, Wandersman, Elias and Dalton, 2013). The focus is on empowering community members to take collective action to solve problems and improve their quality of life. It seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the

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skills they need to effect change within their communities (Jason, Glantsman, O'brien and Ramian, Eds 2019). These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda.

Community empowerment refers to a process through which individuals and communities gain the knowledge, skills, resources, and confidence to take control of their lives, address challenges, and actively participate in decision-making processes. Empowerment includes action on one's own behalf and involves fostering a sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy, emphasizing the idea that individuals and communities have the capacity to create positive change (Moritsugu, Wong, and Grover 2014).

In short, Community development is a process that aims to improve the well-being of a community through combining resources over a range of activities while community empowerment aims to engage community members by giving them a voice and involving them in the decisions that affect their lives.

There are many community development and community empowerment related programmes happening in India. This paper gives a brief over view of a few of the very effective ones.

The first case study is about a project of critical importance to the future of the planet itself - Environmental Sustainability Projects:

1. An initiative run by the Paani Foundation - The Paani Foundation is a non-profit organization in India founded by actor Aamir Khan, Kiran Rao, along with Satyajit Bhatkal. It aims to address water scarcity issues through community-driven initiatives and watershed management programs. The foundation works primarily in rural areas, focusing on mobilizing and training local communities to take collective action to manage water resources effectively. Paani Foundation emphasizes the significance of watershed management, which involves activities like soil and water conservation, afforestation, building check dams, trenches, and other measures aimed at improving groundwater levels and water retention in the soil. In order to engage and empower the community in this, the Paani foundation came up with a creative and innovative idea – to hold a competition for conserving water amongst drought prone villages of Maharashtra. The Satyamev Jayate Water Cup is an annual competition organized by Paani Foundation, where villages compete against each other to implement watershed management strategies effectively. This competition is designed as a platform to encourage and empower communities to actively participate in water conservation efforts. The Foundation provides training on technical aspects and social leadership to a small number of representatives from each village before the competition. These representatives (called Jal doot or 'water messengers') are expected to return to their villages and mobilize fellow villagers to work on watershed management structures around the village. The competition rules stress on the importance of shramdaan (volunteer labour) by people. The Foundation itself does not provide financial assistance to carry out works, except bearing the costs of the training program and prizes for the winners. The villages are expected to arrange for finances from internal, government or private sources. The Foundation also has several partner organizations that lease machinery such as excavators, JCBs or offer other expertise to the participating villages, free of cost. However, any material or fuel costs have to be borne by the village. The Satyamev Jayate Water Cup competition serves as a community development as follows:

- i. It ensures Community Participation:** The competition involves active participation from local villagers. It encourages teamwork and collaboration among community

members, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards water conservation.

- ii. **It gives opportunity for Training and Capacity Building:** Before the competition, Paani Foundation conducts extensive training programs for villagers. They learn about various aspects of watershed management, including soil and water conservation techniques. This knowledge empowers them to implement sustainable practices in their villages.
- iii. **It helps in Implementation of Water Conservation Projects:** Villages competing in the Water Cup undertake on-ground projects aimed at conserving water. These projects range from building structures like check dams, contour trenches, and percolation tanks to planting trees and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- iv. **The cup gives opportunity for Learning and Sharing Best Practices:** Through the competition, villages share their experiences, successes, and challenges. This knowledge-sharing aspect helps other communities learn from each other's strategies and adapt successful methods to their own contexts.
- v. **The competition has long term influence in terms of Sustainable Impact:** The focus on watershed management and sustainable practices ensures that the impact of the initiatives goes beyond the competition. Villages continue to benefit from improved water availability, increased groundwater levels, better soil health, and enhanced agricultural productivity.

Overall, the Satyamev Jayate Water Cup competition organized by Paani Foundation serves as a catalyst for community-led development, fostering a sense of unity, responsibility, and sustainable practices among rural communities to address water scarcity issues. This initiative started with a few socially conscious individuals and with proper planning and efforts, soon involved many communities with wonderful results.

2. **‘One Girl-One hundred and Eleven Trees’** – This initiative was started in Piplantri, a village located in Rajsamand district in Rajasthan State, India, by Shri Shyam Sunder Paliwal, in the year 2006. Shri Paliwal is a former Sarpanch, that is village head, of Piplantari, and started this in the memory of his daughter Kiran, whom he had lost earlier. He encouraged the villagers of Piplantri to plant 111 trees every time a girl child is born and the community ensures these trees survive, attaining fruition as the girls grow up. As we all know that India has a huge deficit of girls because society is obsessed with the male child. Along with this, girls are considered financial burdens because of the dowry practices. In a system that did not allow the birth of a girl child to be warmly welcomed, to observe her birth with some special practice, like tree planting, was a paradigm shift in societal mindset. Along with welcoming the girl child, awareness is also created about environmental degradation and steps are actively taken to alleviate the damage done to both gender parity and nature. This initiative is named as ‘Eco-feminism’. Eco-feminism is a socio-political and philosophical movement that explores the interconnectedness between the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment. This ideology emerged in the 1970s, drawing upon feminist principles and environmental concerns to highlight the intersectionality of gender, ecology, and social justice. Eco-feminism promotes a caring ethic, emphasizing the importance of nurturing and interconnectedness. It advocates for a more holistic approach to environmental issues, incorporating diverse perspectives and valuing traditionally feminine qualities like nurturing, cooperation, and interconnectedness with nature. The one girl 111 trees initiative, over the years, people in Piplantari have managed to plant over 300,000 trees on the village's grazing commons - including Neem, Sheesham, Mango, Amla among others. This initiative has turned the village into an oasis.

It has higher ground water level and richer wild life. The economy of the village has also benefitted. Products from the tree are harvested, processed and sold. Another unintended benefit occurred because of the villagers planting around 2.5 million aloe vera plants around the tree saplings. Aloe Vera was planted to protect the trees from termites. Parts of this aloe vera were also processed to produce and sell aloe-based products like juice and gel, making it a profitable business for the community. This community development initiative is path breaking and a guiding light for both development and empowerment for all. Some highlights are –

- i. **Planting Trees on the Birth of a Girl Child:** For every girl born in the village, the community commits to planting 111 trees. Families pledge to nurture and care for these trees, **making the birth of a girl child a symbol of hope and environmental stewardship.**
- ii. **Empowering Women and Promoting Gender Equality:** The initiative challenges the prevalent gender bias against the girl child by celebrating her birth. By associating the girl's arrival with the planting of trees, it elevates her status and contributes to changing societal attitudes towards gender equality.
- iii. **Community Participation and Involvement:** The project involves the entire community, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and ownership. Villagers actively participate in planting and caring for the trees, which fosters a sense of unity and purpose within the community.
- iv. **Environmental Conservation and Sustainability:** The planting of trees significantly contributes to environmental conservation. Trees play a vital role in preventing soil erosion, improving air quality, conserving water, and providing sustainable resources for future generations. The initiative helps in reforestation efforts and contributes to the overall health of the ecosystem.
- v. **Education and Awareness** about the importance of environmental conservation and the value of the girl child. It raises awareness about the interconnectedness between gender equality and a sustainable environment, educating both the present and future generations.
- vi. **Economic Benefits:** As the trees grow, they can offer economic benefits to the community through products like fruits, timber, and medicinal plants. This can contribute to the local economy and provide additional incentives for the community to protect and care for the environment.
- vii. **Inspiration and Replication:** The success of the "One Girl Child, 111 Trees" project has inspired other communities and initiatives worldwide. It serves as a model for combining social change, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

In essence, this project at Piplantri is a holistic community development initiative that empowers women, challenges societal norms, fosters environmental consciousness, and cultivates a sustainable future by recognizing the intrinsic value of both the girl child and the environment.

3. The Teach India Initiative - This initiative acknowledges the important role played by the English language in all aspects of life, especially in having better career prospects and overall progress in life. It further posits that underprivileged sections of society do not have access to English education and focused efforts are needed to help them access good quality English education. The Teach India Initiative is a program launched by The Times of India in collaboration with various NGOs and educational institutions in India. It addresses the educational disparities in the country by providing free and accessible education to underprivileged children. The Teach India webpage states, "The Times Group launched

Teach India as a CSR initiative to teach spoken English to the youth belonging to underprivileged sections of the urban society. British Council has been brought on board as knowledge partner for designing the curriculum, and for training the volunteers who will thereafter train the learners. The course curriculum has been designed keeping in mind the present language levels of the target segment and the spoken English requirements of potential employers. The Times Group also pro-actively attempts to build a bridge between the learners and the potential employers and connect the two to facilitate the ultimate goal of employability. On completion of the course, the learners get a certificate, which is certified by The Times Group.” The initiative has expanded to also include soft skills and interview skills to help participants face the professional world confidently and successfully. This initiative contributes to community development and empowerment in the following ways:

- i. **Education Access and Quality Improvement:** The program focuses on providing quality education to children from marginalized communities who may not have access to proper schooling. Volunteers, including professionals, students, and individuals from diverse backgrounds, offer their time to teach and mentor these children.
- ii. **Empowerment through Education:** By imparting education, the initiative empowers children by enhancing their knowledge, skills, and confidence. Education is seen as a tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering individuals to make informed choices about their lives.
- iii. **Volunteer Engagement and Community Participation:** The Teach India Initiative encourages volunteers from the community to actively participate in the educational process. This engagement fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership among community members, promoting a collaborative approach to addressing educational challenges.
- iv. **Skill Development and Capacity Building:** Apart from basic academic education, the initiative often includes programs that focus on skill development. Teaching practical skills or vocational training equips children with abilities that can help them secure better opportunities in the future.
- v. **Fostering Social Inclusivity:** The program promotes inclusivity by bringing together volunteers and children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This interaction helps break stereotypes and fosters empathy and understanding among participants, contributing to a more cohesive society.
- vi. **Awareness and Advocacy:** The initiative also raises awareness about the importance of education and advocates for educational reforms and policies that ensure equitable access to quality education for all children, regardless of their background.
- vii. **Community Development:** By investing in the education of children, the initiative contributes to the overall development of the community. Educated individuals are more likely to contribute positively to society, fostering economic growth and social development in the long term. The Teach India Initiative serves as a community development and empowerment initiative by providing educational opportunities, engaging volunteers and the community, empowering children through knowledge and skills, fostering inclusivity, and advocating for equitable education for all. It not only enhances the prospects of individual children but also contributes to the holistic development of communities.

3. The AMUL initiative, also known as the Anand Milk Union Limited, is a dairy cooperative movement in India that has significantly contributed to community development and empowerment, especially in rural areas. It is under the ownership of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Limited, Department of Cooperation, Government of Gujarat. It

is controlled by 3.6 million milk producers. A brief history of the co-operative movement that led to the formation of AMUL is that - Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel founded the organisation in 1946 and served as its chairman until his retirement in the 1970s. He hired Verghese Kurien in 1949, initially as the general manager, where Kurien guided the technical and marketing efforts of the cooperative. Kurien briefly became the chairman of Amul following Patel's death in 1994, and is credited with the success of Amul's marketing.

Amul was found on 19 December 1946 as a response to the exploitation of small dairy farmers by traders and agents. At the time, milk prices were arbitrarily determined, giving Polson an effective monopoly in milk collection from Kaira and its subsequent supply to Mumbai. Frustrated with the trade practices (which they perceived as unfair), the farmers of Kaira, led by Tribhuvandas Patel, approached Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who advised them to form a cooperative. If they did so, they would be able to directly supply their milk to the Bombay Milk Scheme instead of working for the unfair Polson the dairy. Following a meeting in Chaklasi, the farmers formed the cooperative and resolved not to provide Polson, the dairy, with any more milk. Milk collection was decentralised, as most producers were marginal farmers who could deliver, at most, 1–2 litres of milk per day. Cooperatives were formed for each village. Then-Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited Anand to inaugurate Amul's cattle feed factory. On 31 October 1964, he spoke to farmers about their cooperative. After returning to Delhi, he set in motion the creation of an organisation, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), to replicate the Kaira cooperative in other parts of India. The cooperative was further developed through the efforts of Dr. Verghese Kurien and H. M. Dalaya. Dalaya's innovation of making skim milk powder from buffalo milk was a technological breakthrough that revolutionised India's organised dairy industry. With Dr. Kurien's help, the process was expanded on a commercial scale, which led to the first modern dairy cooperative at Anand. This cooperative would go on to compete against the established players in the market. The success of the trio (T. K. Patel, Kurien, and Dalaya) at the cooperative's dairy soon spread to Anand's neighborhood in Gujarat. Within a short span, five unions in other districts – Mehsana, Banaskantha, Baroda, Sabarkantha, and Surat – were set up, following the approach sometimes described as the Anand pattern. Amul spurred India's White Revolution, which made the country the world's largest producer of milk and milk products, and has since ventured into overseas markets. The story of Amul is a story of fighting for social justice and overcoming oppression through united efforts by individuals and the community, that too with technological innovation, creative and ingenuous marketing, adaptability, grit and determination of all involved. AMUL serves as a community development and empowerment initiative in the following ways:

- i. The Formation of Dairy Cooperatives:** AMUL is a cooperative movement that involves local milk-producing farmers who join together to form cooperatives. These cooperatives empower farmers by providing them with a platform to collectively market their milk and dairy products.
- ii. Fair Pricing and Income Generation:** Through cooperatives, farmers receive fair prices for their milk. The cooperative system ensures that profits from the sale of milk are distributed among the participating farmers, thereby augmenting their income and improving their standard of living.
- iii. Capacity Building and Training:** AMUL invests in training and capacity building for farmers. They receive guidance on best practices in animal husbandry, dairy farming techniques, and quality control measures. This education empowers them to enhance milk production and product quality.
- iv. Community Engagement and Ownership:** The cooperative model of AMUL promotes community engagement and ownership. Farmers actively participate in

decision-making processes and have a stake in the success of the cooperative, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

- v. **Women Empowerment:** Women's participation in dairy cooperatives is significant. Many women are involved in activities related to dairy farming, animal care, and milk collection. This involvement not only empowers them economically but also socially by enhancing their role in decision-making within their families and communities.
- vi. **Social and Economic Development:** AMUL's cooperative model has led to significant socio-economic development in rural areas. It has reduced middlemen exploitation, provided a sustainable livelihood for farmers, and contributed to rural employment generation.
- vii. **Technology Adoption:** AMUL has facilitated the adoption of modern technologies and advancements in dairy production. By introducing efficient milk collection and processing techniques, it has enhanced productivity and product quality, benefiting both farmers and consumers.
- viii. **Replicability and Scaling Impact:** The success of AMUL's cooperative model has inspired similar initiatives across India and in other countries. It demonstrates how community-based cooperatives can empower farmers and communities, making it a scalable and replicable model for rural development.

Overall, the AMUL initiative stands as a prime example of how a cooperative approach in the dairy industry can pool resources to empower farmers, improve livelihoods, foster community development, and contribute significantly to rural empowerment, gender equality and economic growth.

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