

## Project proposal: An approach to community development

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### Abstract

The identification of a community through its own structures which should also be a creation of their own selves needs to be encouraged. The role assignment as well as participatory involvement in decision-making is essential in the present era of empowerment. This could become a reality if the people are being treated as equal participants of the structure established for their development. The objective of writing a research paper is to share the limited understanding about the project implementation, share the formulation of project proposal in easy language and to amalgamate theory with examples from the field. This paper try to make it convenient for the students, researchers and others to understand a brief structural understanding of Donor Agencies, NGOs, and the formulation of Project Proposal, and its implementation on the ground.

**Keywords:** non-governmental organization, donor agency, project proposal, social problem

### 1. Introduction

A project proposal is the outline which explains to the donor agencies about the need of the place where the project is to be implemented. The social workers must realize the existing problem of the area or community. In other words, the problem may be expressed in a way that its solution may be obtained through the proposal made in the project. Any problem can be taken for its solution under the project proposal. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can be successful in obtaining approval and budget from the donor agency if well written project proposals are submitted to it. Very often ill prepared project proposals are presented to the donors and subsequently they reject the projects. The problem under consideration in the project proposal could be an unmet need which may be economical, medical, educational or recreational which hampers or undermines a person's adequate living, or it may be of stress (psychological, social, physical, environmental) which causes the person to be ineffective or disturbed in carrying out his social roles. Thus, before writing the project proposal the NGOs, individual effort of project proposal by an employee of University, college, or any other institution needs to look into the formulation amongst the existing problem. Whenever the organization start recognizing a problem and identify its implications on the individual, society, community or the country there is an unanswered question how to go about in solving that specific problem. This requires a logical understanding and analysis of the problem. This paper tries to demonstrate the understanding about the formulation of project, the approaches towards problem solving, need identification and techniques in developing community programme.

### 2. Methodology

The paper focuses over the formulation of project proposal based on the secondary sources. The books written on formulation of project, field exposure, and articles in journals were chosen to prepare a research paper on the topic.

### 3. Objective of the Study

- 1) To share the limited understanding about the project implementation;
- 2) To share the formulation of project proposal in easy language;
- 3) To amalgamate theory with examples from the field.

According to Collins Co-build dictionary 'project' (*Pariyojna*) is a carefully planned task that requires a lot of time and effort. 'Proposal' is a suggestion or plan, often a formal or written one. Meaning by it is a carefully planned task which is suggested to the funding or donor agencies often in the form of written document. Thus, the question may be raised in the minds of NGO director, students, researchers, field workers that who proposes a project and to whom? Why it is important to understand it in the sphere of social work? Is it necessary in the field of NGOs? Why project proposal is an integral part of implementing agency? Who provides budget for the implementation of the proposed project? What is the structure of writing a proposal of project? Hence, in order to understand the obvious questions we need to understand a brief structural understanding of Donor Agencies, NGOs, and the formulation of Project Proposal, and its implementation on the ground.

### 4. Funding/Donor Agency

The funding agencies are the source for project function. These agencies may be private or governmental in its nature. There are innumerable number of funding agencies which supports the projects based on the particular themes promoted by them. The themes may be of Scheduled Castes' empowerment, Scheduled Tribes' development, addressing the cause of old aged, women, children, trafficking, fatal diseases, issue of environment, differently able community people, education of marginalized sections of society, health and well-being of people, micro-financing, human rights based approaches, etc. Some of the names of the funding organizations are World Bank (WB), World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF (United Nations Initiative for

Children Education Fund), Save the Children, USAID (United States Agency for International Development), Plan International, DFID (Department For International Development), (IPAP (International Partners Agreement Project), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), Christian Aid, Action Aid, Oxfam, CAPART, so on and so forth.

### 5. Non-Governmental Organizations

The World Bank has defined NGOs as “private organization that pursue activities to relieve sufferings and promotes the interest of the poor. Project the environment and community development.” It further defines NGO as a wide variety of groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of governments and characterize primarily humanitarian or cooperative matter than commercial activities (World Bank). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), one can say is a non-for-profit organization which is independent from states and international governmental organizations. They are usually funded by donations but some avoid formal funding altogether and are run primarily by volunteers. NGOs are highly diverse groups of organizations engaged in a wide range of activities, and take different forms in different parts of the world. The number of NGOs worldwide is estimated to be 3.7 million. India is estimated to have had around 2 million NGOs in 2009, just over one NGO per 600 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centers in India. The term "non-governmental organization" was first coined in 1945, when the United Nations (UN) was created. The UN, itself an international organization, made it possible for certain approved specialized international non-state agencies — *i.e.*, non-governmental organizations — to be awarded observer status at its assemblies and some of its meetings. Later the term became used more widely. Today, according to the UN, any kind of private organization that is independent from government control can be termed an "NGO", provided it is not-for-profit, no prevention, and not simply an opposition political party ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental\\_organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization)).

### 6. Social Problems/Issues

A social problem has been defined as “a situation confronting a group or a section of society which inflicts injurious consequences that can be handled only collectively” (Reinhardt, 1952:14 quoted in Ram Ahuja). Horton and Leslie (1970:4) <sup>[2]</sup> write that a social problem is “a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which it is felt that something can be done through collective social action.” Thus, the social problems could be of varied kinds, *i.e.*, poverty, unemployment, population explosion, communalism, secularism and regionalization, Youth Unrest and agitation, violence against women, illiteracy, urbanization, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drug abuse and drug addiction, AIDS etc. The concerned staff of NGO’s project proposal often tends to generalize issue which may not be specific to the community. For example, poverty is a vast spread social problem. Stopping at any point and rushing to solve this problem may have an ill effect. That is why, when we take a well-defined specific problem, that is to say, poverty of whom, which group of people, area of people, background of the people should be

well defined manner. It is, therefore, essential to discuss the approaches towards solving problem of a community.

### 7. Approaches towards Problem Solving

According to Fernando, the problem based on its nature can be dealt with in two different approaches. The approach may be remedial based on the necessity and emergency of the problem or it may be a developmental Approach in which the thrust area would be dealt in such a way that the roots of the problem should be eliminated through effective implementation. We need to focus upon the two mentioned approaches in the following manner.

#### 7.1 Remedial Approach

This approach provides an immediate result and can be a short term measure in nature. Therefore, different steps involved in this approach are:

Identifying the problem

- a) Assessing the need which has arisen as a result of this problem and finding the appropriate steps involved in addressing it.
- b) Identifying support zone
- c) Support provision

In this approach the problem is solved by the Social Worker and less initiation is required on the part of the community people. However, their co-operation and support is essential in the process of problem solving.

#### 7.2 Developmental Approach

The developmental approach has a long term effect. It emphasizes more on finding a permanent solution to the problem. It involves different steps like:

- a) Recognizing the problem;
- b) Identifying the context in which it has arisen;
- c) Identifying the basis of the problem;
- d) Assessment on the basic requisites of the solution of the problem;
- e) Finding the ways to solve them;
- f) Identifying the support zones;
- g) Educating the community through awareness;
- h) Creating knowledge base about the problem in the community;
- i) Establishing support systems like self-help groups;
- j) Applying techniques in psychotherapy for a sustained impact and finally
- k) Enabling the community to address its own needs.

This approach try to make the concerned community fully equipped to address its own issues and solve them accordingly. This also creates a permanent impact and the Social Workers are required to provide actual services to the community. In order to understand a developmental approach in a more conspicuous manner we are mentioning certain examples of developmental programme which have been tried and implemented effectively in recent years.

##### 7.2.1 Poverty Alleviation Programme

According to Guhan, Cassen and Barbara Harriss in *Poverty in India: Research and Policy* poverty has been recognized as an interlocking condition of assetlessness, underemployment, low wages and incomes, proneness to disease, illiteracy, gender, economic vulnerability, social disadvantage and political powerlessness (quoted in Sinha, 2013:112) <sup>[5]</sup>. A

developmental programme was implemented to eradicate poverty. In the process, people in the community have pooled whatever money they could spare out of the expenditure. The Social Worker, therefore, started a joint savings scheme along with the money given by the community members. This was helpful to them for their economic development and subsequently it provided adequate support in times of emergencies. The group formation in such a programme came to be witnessed by the community. SHGs are the base experienced by the community in the adoption of developmental approach. Self-Help Groups are generally formed for long term achievements of the set objective. In order to address poverty, the community capacity development requires a habit of saving by its members. The Women Self-Help Groups are catalyst of change. Such groups not only function during a long-term project implementation by an organization in a particular community and geographical area. The impact of such a group formation is generally quite high and it gets penetrated in the lives of the community members, thus, becoming an ingredient part of individuals. Apart from saving habits, the community members also learn the skill of decision making which in turn help in everlasting impact of taking decision by their own even after the termination of the project.

### **7.2.2 Joint Educational Programme**

A joint educational activity was tried to educate people through the educated workers of the community. The people themselves identified the aspects to educate their community and did it successfully through informal education classes. Joint income generating activities like co-operatives and joint information activities like demonstrations are some useful examples.

## **8. Identification of Needs**

The programme which is going to be implemented depends on the type and the nature of the need of the community people.

### **8.1 The Need May be**

- a) Material need (to acquire the means of production, that is, physical needs)
- b) Social need (to grow as an organized community)

### **8.2 Methodology of Identification of Needs could be through**

- a) Using the data available from the area and community and placing it before the people for a study.
- b) Dialogue, may be Individual informal chats to formal discussions and meetings.
- c) Launching of Pilot action programs for mobilization of resources and to announce felt need.
- d) Studying national priorities towards community people.
- e) Collaboration with government and other voluntary agencies' through consultations.

Grass-root planning is essential, with the active participation of people to identify the need of an area and plan accordingly for obtaining good results.

## **9. Techniques to Develop Community Programme**

The techniques mentioned are from the point of view of a social worker who is an outside agent. The objective to a large

extent will guide in involving techniques. The techniques found useful are:

### **9.1 "People's approach" should be a motto**

This is believed that the concept of 'development' of the community, by the community, and for the community should become a truth. In this process, formally and informally the participation of community people at grass-root level should be ensured. The community, for the time being, need to be treated as the subject of the programmers' of non-governmental organization. This does not mean that community should neither become an object of NGO programmers nor the object of government to accept forced regulation of any sort. However, mostly the practice of forced regulation is in operation all over the country. This forced regulation contains the absence of peoples' ideas, views, experiences, thus, adverse implications are bound to inflict upon the community.

### **9.2 Self-reliant economy should be an outcome of the community programme**

Planning through education and awareness building should lead to self-help activities and promotion of self-reliance. Mobilization of local resources in terms of men, material and money, however limited it may be, will be an acid test. Opportunities evolved in the above field will help to measure the motivation and commitment of people.

### **9.3 Creation of Grass Root Structures need to be encouraged**

The identification of a community through its own structures which should also be a creation of their own selves needs to be encouraged. The role assignment as well as participatory involvement in decision-making could become a reality if the people are being treated as a part of the structure established for their development.

### **9.4 Community Development Programme should be a Learning Process**

The process of awareness building, an analysis of the situation in which the community is placed, will evolve a self-educating programme. It may impart hopes, aspirations and even lead to develop a spirit for confrontation. But an unbiased and balanced approach to reality will build proper awareness and the learning process will be continued.

### **9.5 Short term tasks for immediate action**

An increase in production, an improvement in employment opportunities or similar short term benefits would motivate one for active involvement. The short term tasks such as at the time of natural calamity i.e., floods, drought, Tsunami etc. requires immediate actions. The tasks, therefore, should also be of short term which stops with the completion of the task of immediate nature. The provision of providing immediate action is the need of the time in such a time of natural disaster. Any sort of delay or a longer period of task will only divert the attention of the activists to unintentionally waste their valuable time and efforts.

### **9.6 Long term targets for improving quality of life**

The long term objectives of liberation from exploitation and

contributing to the establishment of a just order in society can be differentiated and tackled at different levels. The project should take care of providing quality of life to the marginalized community. This is not an easy task to accomplish. However, the efforts could be taken to move in the way of providing quality of life to the people. For such purposes long-term investment of time, money and efforts are the means to progress in this direction. The organizations, therefore, requires long-term projects as well. The projects like short and medium sort may not be so effective in the realization of improvement in the quality of life of the community. A short-term project of either three years or a medium-term project of five years will require a foolproof management and discipline on the part of the organization and the community people respectively. It is, therefore, requires that a long-term project of about ten years will be a sufficient time and target for improving quality of life.

### **9.7 Launch Simple programmes**

It is desirable to begin simple programmes manageable by people and in which they can participate. The programmes like saving groups in the community, making available the job cards under MNREGA scheme, formation of women groups under right based approach, electric choke making opportunities at local level, goat rearing schemes in tribal and other marginalized areas, and linkage to the bank etc. This sort of programs and schemes simplify the process of letting the community participate in the overall and all round development of a particular community.

### **9.8 Guidance to complex projects**

Various interests in the community are to be considered and efforts should be made not to divide the community. The launch of simple program may facilitate the implementation of complex projects for the empowerment, growth, and development of a target community. However, the process of implementation requires community participation and facilitation from the side of the social workers in the process. The proper guidance at the time of crucial importance is an integral part of the process in the success of any such projects in any geographical locations.

### **9.9 End up with integrated projects**

Integrated and complex proposals beyond the capacity of ordinary people will prevent them from being subjects of project. This refers to the capacity of the programmers that the approach should be of integrating the projects with other prospects in mind. Leaving a project of complex nature merely on the ability of the community-in-making is doubtful to accomplish any substantial results. The social workers, therefore, end up any project with an integrated project approach.

### **9.10 Provide opportunity for interaction**

Possibilities of communities interacting with similar or dissimilar groups would create an understanding and awareness of problems, and to find solutions. Mutual collaboration and understanding will boost the morale of both groups. The social groups formed with a particular purpose need to be exposed to the other groups in the same locality with same objectives. This will facilitate the process of confidence building among the members of several formed

groups on a particular goal-orientation. The interaction with the other group members also helps in developing leadership quality among the members and this further facilitates the process of decision-making. Such sort of skill development indeed helps in developing efficiency not only among the members but the group itself get strengthen in the process.

### **9.11 Maintain the animator ship**

Social worker, if began performing non-professionally, can easily behave as demanding and imposing own ideas and attitudes in the work performance. The social worker should not behave in a manner showing custodianship. The role of animator ship should, therefore, be maintained. Thus, it will help in maintaining self-sufficiency of the community. The purpose of facilitating the community is to build capacity and effective leadership and avoid overdependence on the external leadership. The community should be encouraged to manage their own affairs and shape their own destiny so that the growth is natural under the local leadership.

### **9.12 Identify with the community**

It is essential that glaring differences in the standard of life between the animator and the community be avoided. To become part of the community, the social worker may have to simplify his/her life style. The trust and confidence of the community is essential for the efficient functioning. Social workers must keep in mind that they be recognized as internal members of the group. Such a feeling of oneness and trust can be developed when social worker adopts the habit of mixing in them. They should not give much attention and care to their apparels than the care and attention of the group objectives. The workers must practice the principle of acceptance. For example, if they are sitting on the string cot, or on the mattress, a professional worker must respect and adopt the practice of community people instead of demanding chair for their sitting for group work process.

### **9.13 Tackle rights based issues after sufficient ground preparation**

Premature fight against root causes of exploitation and oppression could result in frustration. Hence, a stage by stage application of a strategy conducive and palatable to the differing situations would ultimately pay dividends in changing of the contained unjust structures. It would require the building up of a large network. Isolated efforts are usually nipped in the bud. Indeed this is required for the success of demand of entitlement rights. For that, women groups, children groups or the groups of concerned population be formed and training programmes be organized time and again to empower the community for further fight for the right. The process of preparing a mindset of concerned community through conscientization process is the first step in tackling the right based issues. Only on the basis of formation of groups in different communities, localities and exposure to each other time and again will help in strengthening the confidence and preparing the community for the legal struggles for their rights. In this process, the community may have to go to the Local people representatives, block officers, police stations, District Collector's office and even the local and national level courts. This requires a lot of confidence among the community members. For this objective, a sufficient ground preparation is essential for tackling the rights based community issues.

## 10. Conclusion

The challenge of development is in the liberation of the oppressed from unjust and exploitative system to establish a new social order. While gathering the data about the problem, too many unwanted information may flow. A good judgment must be made during this fact finding process. Those dealing with the problem tend to limit their perspective to the conceptual methods in which they have been trained. Some will deal sociologically, others politically and yet others through economic development. It is always better to define the problem in the context of any organization. It helps the organization to concentrate on the special need of the people. Thus the social workers must be aware of both the community and the organizational factors that could affect the problem. In doing so a project proposal is quite effective in directly addressing the need and the solution of the social issue in any geographical locations. The efficiency of a project depends upon its formulation and address of a real need of the populace in a particular area of concern. The selection of a pre-determined social group for the growth and development of the same shows the grass-root understanding of the team of project formulation. The success of any project implementation depends upon the participatory approach of the implementing agency and the enthusiasm as well as effective participation of the target social group. Meaning by the process of formulation of project is not the end rather a means to address issues of affected, marginalized, depressed classes.

## 11. References

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