

Do participation and the use of participatory approaches in development projects and programs really matter?



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Introduction

- Does our work really make a difference and, if so, what difference does it make?
- 1. *Participatory projects* – a popular form of aid delivery.
- 2. *Evaluations of participatory projects* -the paper examines and critically review the existing evaluations of *participatory projects*, using project reports from the World Bank.
- 3. *What is needed to be able to answer the question?* Substantially increase investment in performance monitoring and evaluation of participatory projects.



1. Participation and Participatory projects

- Late 70s early 80s, limited success of many development initiatives
- Increase in participatory projects in development
 - “participatory development movement”
 - Chambers (1983), applied ideas to small-scale development
 - Sen (1985), move towards “capability approach”
- Scale up of World Bank, AusAID participatory projects



World Bank, AusAID participatory projects

- **Increase in share of projects that include participatory approaches:**
 - The World Bank 2000/2001 World Development Report: Attacking Poverty.
 - The World Bank’s CBD/CDD share of projects has grown from 2% in 1989 to 25% in 2003.
 - AusAID “Investing in People” promotes empowering local stakeholders to participate in development.
 - AusAID: PACAP, CEPA, ACCESS, TVETSSP, CDS



Does participation matter?..... It matters for whom

- Donors:
 - Achievement of outcomes and impact
- **Ultimate beneficiaries of the participatory projects/ the community**
 - to be empowered/ to increase social capital, and the intensity of participation?
- Or both... and the association between the two.



2. Donor Evaluation

- Achievement of outcomes and impact which is rarely empowerment
- I found only 1 case, PACAP



Ultimate beneficiaries of the participatory projects/the community

- **Change in Social Capital and Empowerment= a means for assessing community participation**
- **Measuring Social Capital**
 - SOCAT (the World Bank): Social Capital Assessment Tool
 - Social Capital: norms and networks to enable collective activity in a community or....definition of the term...
- **Measuring Empowerment**
 - A Good Example: Ways to capture the effects of community development interventions in low income Detroit neighbourhoods.
 - Empowerment: process of increasing the capacity of individuals and groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes...definition of term...
- **Assessing Community Participation: Active Partners Benchmark (COGS); The Well Connected Tool.**



Or Both: Impact and Process

- Or both... and the association between the two.
- None of the project reports have looked at both



What problems exist though ...that affect measuring participation

- Definition of the term: often means “different things to different people”
 - Social Capital – “collection of separate constructs” in SOCAT
 - Empowerment – stakeholders have different understanding about empowerment
 - *The Bank view.....vs...*
 - *Local stakeholders view:* activities that help build the capacity of the communities to participate in the development process



What problems exist though ...that affect measuring participation

- Participation can occur at many levels
 - Ladder of participation
 - Arnstein 1969, Samuel Paul 1987, Marisa Choguill 1996, and Abad 2004.
 - Paul, 4 levels: information, consultation, decision making, and initiating action
- This aspect is rarely captured in evaluations of participatory projects
- Paul' work (1987): 80% of the projects did not go beyond consultation



3. Conclusion and the answer to the Q from the title...

- Probably YES ... for donors, if they achieve the outcomes
- Probably YES... for beneficiaries, if they have been empowered
- To have an informed YES or NO ... it *is a need* for a convincing evaluation to look at BOTH aspects, validate (or invalidate) the participatory model, and look at the correlation between process & impact and quality of the process & impact.



Questions