

CAPART: Creating People's Movement for Rural Development

Prabhukalyan Mohapatra

CAPART (Council for the Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, was set up in September 1986 by the amalgamation of PADI (Peoples' Action for Development India) and CART (Council for Advancement of Rural Technology) to address specific problems relating to development in the rural areas.

CAPART's mandate is to encourage, promote, assist rural action and propagate appropriate rural technologies for the benefit of the rural poor. Government of India has designated CAPART as the nodal agency to lead development work in the rural sector, formulate policies for the betterment of the people, coordinate and control the work of voluntary agencies in this sector. During 20 years of its existence, CAPART has become one of the major funding agencies for the voluntary sector in the field of rural development and has contributed to the development process by funding VOs (voluntary organizations) to supplement government's action. As of now, it has assisted more than 11,000 voluntary organizations scattered all over India.

The principal aim of CAPART is to involve people through non-governmental voluntary organizations in the implementation of

development programmes and need-based innovative projects. It works towards creating a people's movement for development in the rural areas by means of higher degree of social mobilization, lowering of social barriers and empowerment of the rural poor.

Almost seventy percent of our country's population, as per 2001 census, still lives in the villages-characterized by low income level and inadequate provision of livelihoods. Even meeting the basic subsistence needs in some rural areas is a challenge to which CAPART responds by promoting voluntary action through grass-root planning for sustainable development, organizing seminars and workshops, providing a platform for advocacy and sharing of knowledge. It selects and encourages innovative technologies and enables technology transfer from lab to land. The over-arching principle behind CAPART's functioning is the reduction of rural poverty and improvement in quality of rural poor's life.

CAPART not only promotes voluntary action towards implementation of projects for enhancement of rural prosperity but also serves as a catalyst for development of technologies appropriate for rural areas, assist a large number of NGOs for implementation of variegated projects. Its assistance is available for diverse categories of schemes under Public Co-operation

(PC), Organization of Beneficiaries (OB), Advancement of Rural Technology Scheme (ARTS), Watershed and Water Resource Development Programme (WSD), Disability Assistance (DA), Young Professional Scheme (YPs), Public Co-operation (PC) or Promotion of Voluntary Action in Rural Development. It focuses on empowerment of rural poor and aims at building community assets while providing employment, livelihoods and facilitating the social mobilization. Advancement of Rural Technology Scheme (ARTS) includes the development, demonstration and dissemination of innovative technologies for rural areas. Hence CAPART has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with leading institutes in the field of science / technology to explore and expand frontiers of new technology which could be introduced in rural areas for improving socio-economic status of rural poor. Watershed and Water Resource Development Programmes (WSD) are initiated to minimize the effect of drought on crops, livestock and productivity of land. CAPART has structured a two track system within which projects are approved depending on experience and credentials of the implementing agency. To reduce the cost and to improve the quality of rural life it promotes and propagates innovative as well as proven housing technologies- designs-materials in the rural areas. Marketing of products made by rural artisan is an important thrust area of CAPART for which it organizes 'Gramashree' and 'Saras' Melas. Above all, CAPART has also introduced the Young Professional Scheme (YPs) in 1988 to encourage young entrepreneurs to work in the field of rural development. In this scheme, interested young professionals are provided with grants under the "Starter Package Programme" which includes administrative and infrastructure cost to set up voluntary organizations of their own.

Primary objective of CAPART is to (1) promote voluntary action through grass-root planning, organize seminars and workshops, (2) provide platform for sharing and disseminating knowledge as well as experience, (3) extend funding support to innovative and need-based projects, (4) encourage voluntary organization to collaborate amongst themselves by developing networks, (5) select and encourage innovative technologies and their dissemination, (6) reduce rural poverty, (7) generate awareness for conservation of environment and natural resources, (8) provide minimum needs with respect to safe drinking water, hygienic sanitary conditions, etc. It also acts as a catalyst for development of technology appropriate for rural areas by identifying, funding research and development efforts, implementing pilot-projects by different agencies and institutions particularly NGOs. On the other hand, CAPART acts as a conduit for transfer of appropriate technology to government departments, public sector undertakings, co-operative societies, voluntary agencies, members of public to encourage adoption of modern techniques and appropriate technology in rural development. Besides, it acts as a clearing house of information and data-bank. Apart from this, CAPART disseminates knowledge on rural technology to manufacturers of machinery tools, equipment and spare parts so that large scale production of technically improved machinery etc. is carried out with private co-operatives and public sectors.

CAPART envisions to play a dynamic and catalytic role with various governmental agencies and NGOs, influence public policy and contributes its share towards the many-sided development of rural India. It aims to safeguard the rights of rural poor, improve their living conditions through introduction of appropriate rural technology, acquire marketable skills for rural poor and assist

them in their attempt to secure livelihoods through employment and self-employment.

The overall policy guidance and direction is provided to CAPART by its general body which consists of 100 members. Besides, representatives of associated government departments and individual subject experts more than half of general body's members are representatives of voluntary sector and other institutions concerned with rural development. But the executive and financial powers of CAPART is vested with executive committee comprising 25 members from the general body. While the Union Minister for Rural Development chairs the executive committee, Secretary Department of Rural Development occupies the post of vice-chairman of that committee. Besides, there are three National Standing Committees (NSC) which are chaired by Director General (DG) CAPART who sanctions the project above 25 lakh rupees. To decentralize the functioning of CAPART and to facilitate voluntary organizations nine regional committees (RC) have been constituted having

powers to sanction the project upto 25 lakh rupees. These regional committees are located at Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Luckhnow, Chandigarh, Patna, Dharwad and Guwahati.

Rural development cannot be isolated from the rapid socio-economic changes taking place in the rest of India. Instead of waiting for the benefits of the economic boom to trickle into villages, CAPART acts as a pro-active catalyst to steer and direct the benefits of economic development according to the needs of rural communities. Besides, CAPART has reoriented itself to fulfill the gaps that exists in the fabric of rural life by formulating appropriate long term policies and giving right direction for accelerating rural development.

Prabhukalyan Mohapatra is a Bhubaneswar based freelance journalist, who lives at Qr. No.-VR-3/2, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar.