

---

**LIMITS TO EMPOWERMENT:****Case of Control and Citizen Engagement in Community Driven Development in Sri Lanka***Dr. Gamini Batuwitage<sup>1</sup>*

---

**ABSTRACT**

Empowered communities are expected to be better performers engaged in local development processes. Power to people is a political slogan emerging from manifestoes of major political parties. Community centered development continues to be a declared strategy for bringing about change to places and to people for inclusive growth. Post war Sri Lanka has to face the challenge in making decisions on limits to empowerment balancing control and engagement of citizens in local development amidst conflicting and overlapping interests of stakeholders that affect the country's progress. Paradigm model of grounded theory is used to examine the lessons learned from the application of the community driven development strategy in seven districts in Sri Lanka. Series of events are analyzed and data used to validate evidence on outcomes to deepen understanding of the community driven development theme and the concerns of limits to empowering communities to inform policy making for local development.

**Key words:** community driven development, control and empowerment, citizen engagement, inclusive growth

**Introduction**

Community empowerment has been a widely expressed political objective before it became strategy for projects to advance participatory mechanisms to sustain development . Focus on power to people had been manifested in the programs titled Jana Saviya, Peoples Committees, Gramodaya Mandala, Gemidiriya, Jana Sabha, and Gama Neguma in Sri Lanka. When “participation” was considered the missing ingredient in projects considered not qualified for funding during 1970s, community empowerment took a prominent place in the development discourse later

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gamini Batuwitage is a practitioner and promoter of Community Driven Development(CDD) in Sri Lanka and several other developing countries, currently working as a short term consultant to World Bank and IFAD funded projects in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Laos. He holds a Ph.D. in Development Geography (Clark University, U.S.A) and he is a Hubert Humphrey Fellow in Planning and Resource Management (West Virginia University). As a member of Sri Lanka Administrative Service, holding positions of Additional Secretary to Ministries of Agriculture, Nation Building and Economic Development, he counts years of experience in designing, implementing and evaluating integrated rural development and worked as CEO of “Gemidiriya” Foundation directing the award winning “Gemidiriya” project in Sri Lanka.

more as a political desire in countrywide rural development policymaking. Has there been a shift from the empowerment discourse to an alternative discourse leading to a policy change in Sri Lanka? Who endorsed such a shift? What is the dialogue among the stakeholders on the justification for any such shift? What are the ingredients considered important in such a strategy for community development? These questions are raised for the development administrators to examine in view of the paradigm shift envisaged in new thinking and new programs brought forward affecting accelerated development pace of the country.

### Principles of Decentralization and Collaboration

Decentralization is understood as the process in which the central authority formally cedes power to actors and institutions at lower levels of administrative, political or territorial hierarchy. Decentralization is expected to increase inclusion, equity and efficiency (Ribot 2004,p.12). The principle of subsidiarity proclaims that tasks are better assigned to competent units at lowest level closest to people for effective outcomes. In local development, the community and its living space is considered the locality that will exercise power and perform the decentralized activity moving from passive participation to collaboration. Collaboration is defined as joint decision making on a problem domain and sharing responsibility of implementation of the decisions jointly made (Grey 1989,p11,Batuwitige 1996,p49). Although centralization is preferred in projects where insensitivity to local preferences is a result, empowered citizen engagement could lead to better outcomes in bringing about change as development.

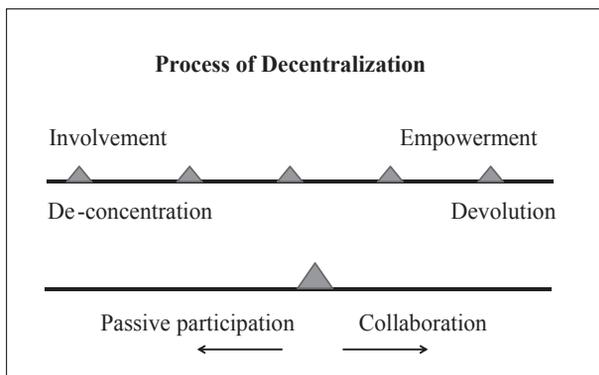


Figure 1: The case of citizen engagement  
Source : Modified from Batuwitige (1996)

The acceptance of community empowerment as strategy for poverty reduction was well placed in the decentralization policy of the country.

Figure 1 presents decentralization used as a process in a continuum from involvement to empowerment paralleled with de-concentration to devolution continuum. The process involves strategies moving from passive participation to stakeholder collaboration (Batuwitage, 1996,p40: Oakley 1987,p.3) . The country can be placed on a point on this continuum as to reflect its current stand on policy for rural development, marching towards devolution through empowerment or moving away toward de-concentration and involvement under state control.

Adoption of Community Driven Development (CDD) for local development as means of assisting the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy by the government was launched with the Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (CDLIP) designed during 1993/94 by the government with the World Bank. Gemidiriya means Strength of the Community. The total assistance committed by the world Bank for 12 year term was US\$ 181 million with a grant of US\$ 51 million for its first phase. Snapshots of 3 cases and 27 events relevant are presented to deepen understanding of the process and results of practicing CDD.

### **Cases and Events for Analysis – Space to Empowerment**

Major events in pursuance of CDD under CDLIP are presented for analysis below.

#### **Case 1 Event 1 – Case of interest to operationalize CDD**

A pilot project was launched titled Village Self Help Learning Initiative (VSHLI) by the World Bank and the Mahaweli Development Authority in three villages in Polonnaruwa district in 1999. Purpose was to test the hypothesis that if communities are given information, decision making power and supplementary resource assistance, they would manage the resources effectively. It was a case of empowering communities for better development outcomes. On results, the government requested the World Bank to scale it up to cover 5000 villages. This pilot project won the best practice award among the pilots under the Japanese Social Development Fund. The scaled up project was titled Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Gemidiriya Project (CDLIP) to practice Community Driven Development (CDD) in Sri Lanka.

#### **Case 1 Event 2**

A strong demand was indicated to the project when the Ministry of Samurdhi requested to shift the project to their ministry from the Ministry of Rural Economy where it was located during the design. With the intervention of the then President's advisor who happened to be a former Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, the shift was made. The government changed at the

elections and the new President of the country launched the project amidst a crowd of senior Ministers, secretaries, Auditor General, and senior World Bank staff.

### Case 1 Event 3

Gemidiriya Foundation was registered under the Companies Act as the implementing agency for this foreign funded project under the government with a clear majority of government staff in the Board to have strong control of management but without undue political influence leading to conflicts. The secretary of the Ministry holding the portfolio of poverty alleviation, secretary of the ministry holding the portfolio of rural enterprise and two senior members of the Ministry of Finance were ex-officio members of the Board while a senior government employee as the CEO selected from a very competitive process, a member or prominent research organization and a person of eminence on community development and a leader of private sector enterprise having operations at national level and country wide were other members of the Board.

### Case 1 Event 4

#### CDD Principles Adopted

- Self selection where communities express willingness to follow rules formally to the Government Agent of the district.
- Non negotiable principles (participation to all without discrimination on race, religion, cast or political affiliation, priority to the poor, women and youth, transparency, accountability and cost sharing, following ten principles viz. unity, self esteem, accountability trust, realism, thrift, transparency, equality, consensus and sincerity
- Self managed legally accepted community institutions with community accepted operational manuals
- Budget entitlement declared upfront
- Direct funding for village development plans
- Appraisal and milestone based disbursement
- Autonomy to guardians of rules.

#### Box 1

Orientation of the implementation modalities of community driven development as presented in Box 1, was made available for the stakeholders. The NGOs employed as support organizations initially were replaced gradually by community professionals emerged from the experienced members of the villages practicing CDD. Lead communities became mentor villages helping new communities.

**Case 1 Event 5**

101 VOS identified needing help in credit operations out of 1034 communities under phase I were assisted by community professionals (CPs). Senior CPs subsequently went to Dhaka in Bangladesh and Tamil Nadu in India to establish community professional learning and training centers (CPLTC) there leading to the result of spreading the model in 27 districts in Tamil Nadu winning recognition by the State Assembly to be the model adopted in the state. The Badulla CPLTC was contracted by a project under the International Fund for Agricultural Development to revitalize the social mobilization process and credit recovery in 300 villages in Badulla District using the sustained capacity of BDCPLTC practicing CDD. All seven districts practicing CDD had mentor villages with results on the ground.

**Case 1 Event 6**

Gemidiriya received recognition from the country's president who directed for wider coverage in March 2008 at a progress review on results after four years of implementation. The Minister of Economic Development conveyed the desire of the president to make all 36,000 villages of the country like the model village Kabillegama Gemidiriya project (KGPC 2013) communicating through Skype using IT. The Minister of Disaster Management reconfirmed this statement recently appreciating performance of all the village institutions following Gemidiriya CDD in his electorate in the presence of the minister of Economic Development. The Secretary to the Ministry of Finance once recognized Gemidiriya project as "the jewel of the crown of rural development in Sri Lanka" at a Meeting of Secretaries of ministries held at the Ministry of Finance and Planning<sup>2</sup> and requested the project to double the number of villages under its coverage which was done. Sponsored by the rural finance division of the World Bank, 80 development professionals from 35 countries visited Gemidiriya village institutions to study its micro-finance model and declared it as a role model. UNDP ranked Gemidiriya CDD project among the 20 best practices in the Asia Pacific region (Paul Steel et al, 2008, Pxx and 199) Gemidiriya commercial web portal won the Manthon 2008 award in New Delhi for the best e-enterprise application for development. The Gemidiriya task team won the best practice award for supervision and implementation support from the World Bank and also won the People First Award of the World Bank. The Gemiditiya Human Resource Development Model won the National Excellence Award on Human Resource Development. Kabillegama Gemidiriya VO was recognized among the three best water supply projects in the country on the World Water day 2012 and the

<sup>2</sup> This statement was conveyed to the World Bank supervision and implementation support team since it is an important comment made on the project as an expression of view, the date of which could not be traced but conformed with appreciation of the award won by the project as expressed by the secretary to H.E the President. Weerathunga, L. 2010 World Bank best practice award for supervision and implementing support to Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood improvement project. Letter issued to Secretary, Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development on 22.03.2010

Kurupanawela village organization won the best practice award on the World Environmental Day.

### **Case 1 Event 7**

Final implementation completion report recorded evidence for results (World Bank, 2010,P.7)under this CDD project as follows:

- 27 % reduction of population earning less than \$1 per day from 71% to 44% for project areas, compared to 14% reduction in control area (65% to 51%)
- 76% increase for households receiving project village savings and investment organization (VSCO) loans compared to average 35% increase for control area poor households.
- 30% to 52 % of households benefitting from increased income (in project area).
- 70% to 8 % of households benefitting from incremental infrastructure.
- The original target of 1000 villages (65%) with village organizations(VO) formed and legally accepted has been achieved 103% by establishing 1034 villages recording (103%)
- % of completed sub-projects (and ratified by the Maha Sabha) operated and maintained by VOs recorded from targeted 60% to 141%
- % of VOs with viable savings and credit organizations that are covering operating costs recorded achievement from targeted 40% to 103%
- % of VOs working in partnership with private sector organizations recorded achievement from the targeted 30% to 48%
- Utilization of funds recorded 100% disbursement.

The information in respect of performance of each village of the 1034 villages as evidence as disclosed by each village following the transparency principle appears in the Gemidiriya web site. ([www.gemidiriya.org](http://www.gemidiriya.org))

### **Case 2 Event 1 – Case of comparing CDD and Non CDD**

The name of Kotakethana Village in Ratnapura district was in media for several months on the 14 men and women murdered. The government had to deploy a contingent of 50 armed personal to give protection with a security post established in the village. Two studies were undertaken by two universities to learn the cause of these crimes and the decay in the social fabric in this village. However, Hattala Egoda is an adjoining village where CDD is being practiced (HGPC, 2013) with full protection provided

by the village organization itself.

**Case 2 Event 2**

Haththella Egoda and Kotakethana villages provided a good comparison. When Kotakethana village was open to the normal government rural development programs, Haththella Egoda village received CDD practice. As a result, this village organization had its own development plan, accessed funds, added 30% community contribution and constructed 11 internal roads, a drinking water supply project and a two storied multi purpose building providing various services to villagers including marketing and online payments of bills. They manage their village savings and credit organization making investment funds up to Rs. 75,000 per loan within the village for income generating. The civil defense committee is strong in the village and has links to the local police station. They take their own security measures without allowing unlawful activities in the village ([http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=1103](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=1103)).

**Case 2 Event 3**

Hathella Egoda VO decided at their general assembly to continue practicing CDD rejecting the suggestion of the project management of phase II to disband the village organization and reconstitute a village institute under government control. They continue to attract government funds and conducted a monthly health clinic of indigenous medicine for two years in the village. Haththella Egoda is a mentor village to other villages on demand at no cost to the government.

**Case 2 Event 4**

Etambahenayaya Gemidiriya Village organization was influenced to disband the VO ([http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=379](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=379)) and constitute a new association under the government control directed by the project management of Phase II. The village organization did not agree but due to strong influence, decided to form a new association to satisfy those who put pressure on them to do so, but continued with the village organization registered under the Companies Act. The VO operates its computer facility where the villagers pay their bills online and now running garments enterprise for income generation for women.

**Case 2 Event 5**

Several Gemidiriya village organizations registered under the Companies Act, running successfully, resisted the move to abandon CDD and go back to government control Kabillegama VO ([http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=6](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=6)) of Badulla district, Henyaya village organization

in Polonnaruwa district ([http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=174](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=174)) and Thalamporuwa VO ([http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=787](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=787)) in Hambantota district demonstrated capacity of community empowerment to the other VOs to follow this direction.

### **Case 2 Event 6**

The Bank of Ceylon in Hambantota district where the Thalamporuwa VO maintained its bank accounts stopped releasing funds to the VO and insisted that the VO should bring a letter of recommendation from the district project office to withdraw funds from the bank account. The VO retained a lawyer and contested this illegal criminal activity of withholding community funds violating Bank law. The Bank manger had to apologize and release funds on legal advice from the Bank since it is illegal to dishonor the mandate that the Bank had with the registered village organization.

### **Case 2 Event 7**

Kabillegama village received National excellence award becoming among the three best water supply projects in the country on the 2012 World Water Day with a very effective record of maintenance of the capital development. Where strong CDD principles were adopted continuously, even after 6 years of operations, the communities were successful and continued progressing with strong capacity building internal to the village organization and externally supported where necessary.

### **Case 2 Event 8**

Hambantota and Polonnaruwa Gemidiriya Federations, the second generation community institutions of the Gemidiriya CDD, could supply quality seed paddy to the North and East, supporting the government's program to help those farmers through FAO. Polonnaruwa Pulathisi Community Association which is a federated organization following CDD obtained Rs. 5 million loan from the National Development Bank for the economic operations and repaid the loan qualifying to continue access to large volume credit (Sunday Observer, 2013). Also, the federation has a trained community professional to assist any VO in work related to registrar of companies in registration or matters of filing reports.

### **Case 2 Event 9**

Badulla CPLTC collaborated with SRIJAN, a consulting firm in New Delhi and produced two documentaries for the World Bank on the community professional service of Sri Lanka and now they are published in YouTube titled Rising from Results 1 and 2. See the Documentary (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mDCrVY7pog>) and (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTplmnA4VjQ>) using these links in You tube. Sri Lanka

community professionals performed well in Bangladesh and India. (see case 1 even 5).

### **Case 3 Event 1 - Case of Information Disclosure and Accountability**

The induction training program of the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration for the new entrants to the Sri Lanka Administrative Service includes a three hour session on theory and practice of CDD and had the participants spend a day in a village where CDD is practiced. In the absence of a field visit due to funds, the program continued to bring villagers live on screen in classroom using IT allowing the participants to engage in detailed questions and answers session on theory and practice of CDD.

### **Case 3 Event 2**

Gamini Malawennagamage and Deepani Jayaratna, two journalists from Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation (SLBC) engaged in a program of development communication visited more than 200 Gemidiriya CDD practicing villages in seven districts interviewing on the practice of CDD. The story of each village was broadcast through the national radio in 203 village programs by the SLBC, during January 2007 to August 2010. Broadcasting was under “Voice of Development” every Wednesday from 10.01.2007 to 30.12.2008 from 4.30 pm to 5.30 pm and “From village to Village” broadcast every Tuesday from 12. 02.2008 to 10.08.2010 from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm. Men and women members of the board of directors of the village institution and committees for finance, procurement, social audit and other sub project committees representing the poorest of the poor, the poor and the middle income according to the village wealth ranking were interviewed and their statements were broadcast. People praised the president of the country for Gemidiriya CDD through which they could change their villages and livelihoods. These cases are available in the SLBC archives and in CDs in the project office.

### **Case 3 Event 3**

Gemidiriya CDD project website [www.gemidiriya.org](http://www.gemidiriya.org) was renamed during the second phase as [www.gamaneguma.org](http://www.gamaneguma.org) to be called the same name of the flagship rural development program launched by the government. The Website has detailed information on each village of all 1034 villages under the phase I which won 11 national and international awards.

### **Case 3 Event 4**

The renaming was considered as an honor to call the project in the name of the flagship project of His Excellency the President of the country. However, there was a concern by the people that the principles of Gemidiriya could

be diluted if Gamaneguma (village upliftment) implementation modalities would not change.

### **Case 3 Event 5**

“Gamaneguma” was introduced by the government to make the village the center of focus in development bringing power to people. This useful concept to empowering villagers was made to go off the tract during implementation. Initially an allocation of Rs. 500,000 per Grama Niladhari Division (GND) was made to all 14,000 GNDs in the country to undertake capital works of a local nature. In the name of expediting work utilizing the funds within the year, Samurdhi societies were recognized as organizations to award contracts without following the government tender procedure. Samurdhi society consists of the poorest of the poor in the GND and without capacity building they could not be expected to undertake such works. The need was to get the work subcontracted from the Samurdhi societies to the hands of other interested parties. The adverse effects of this scaling up to almost all 14,000 GNDs were reflected in the news media. Institute of Policy Studies (Wimal et al. 2010) compared Gemidiriya, Gamaneguma and Samurdhi program and found that Samurdhi societies were more of bureaucratic control than a process of community empowerment.

### **Case 3 Event 6**

Complaints appeared in media on the low quality of the construction work on rural roads under Gama Neguma although funds were disbursed quickly. The attempt failed to include CDD rules including cash contribution compulsory in Gama Neguma. Only 20% labor contribution was accepted avoiding the capacity building effort envisaged.

### **Case 3 Event 7**

The President of the country made a strong note on the off the tract model of Gama Neguma operations and directed the secretary to the Ministry of Nation Building to prevent subcontracting of public works by Samurdhi that can be handled by communities. The Secretary issued a circular to that effect.

### The paradigm model

The paradigm model of the grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin,1990) allows the use of reverse order of theory and hypothesis building, data collection, analysis and producing research findings in qualitative research. The approach is to focus on “process” as a way of giving life to data by taking snapshots of action/interaction and linking them to form a sequence/series. The approach here is to looking at data, extracting information analyzing series of events with authentication, leveling strong skepticism on any intervening conditions and validating data with evidence leading to phenomena under study and drawing conclusions in the paradigm model for theory building.

Figure 2 presents the model with the three elements;(a) Causal condition, (b) Phenomenon to study and (c) strategies managing the phenomenon.

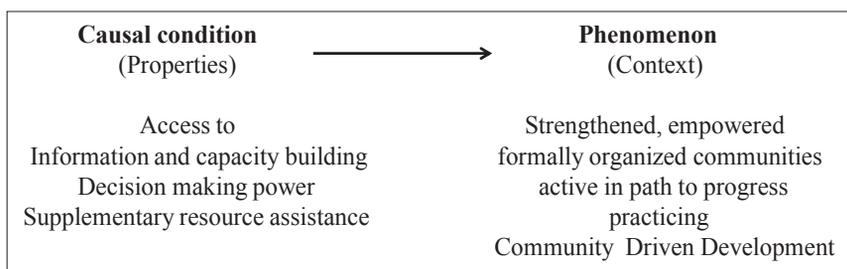


Figure 2 : Paradigm model

### Strategies in managing the phenomenon

Self selection, non negotiable principles and rules, autonomous community institutions with legal recognition, community accepted operational guidelines, prior declared budget envelop as entitlement for development assistance, direct funding. appraisal and milestone based disbursement, autonomy of guardians of rules.

### Validation

The 3 cases with 23 events provide information extracted from a large database and recorded evidence with sources authenticated with the results on the ground. The data and evidence are well documented in the Impact Assessment and the Implementation Completion Report (IA&ICR) of phase I of the Community Development and Livelihood Development “Gemidiriya ” project by the World Bank (2010), the Borrowers’ Report by the Government of Sri Lanka (MED, 2010) and an implementation completion report by an independent consultant (SLBDC, 2010).

The Impact assessment and Implementation completion report presented ratings of 13 implementation and supervision reports during the period from 22.06.2004 to 23.05.2010 with all the reports rating project performance satisfactory (World Bank, 2010) Having considered all reports, the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank rated the first phase of the project “Highly Satisfactory”.

It is the performance of the empowered communities that has been observed by many who recognized the performance with local and international awards. The Borrowers Report produced by the project on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka records this recognition as follows:

“The UNDP recognized the Gemidiriya project as among the 20 best practices in the Asia Pacific region and included in its publication “Poverty Reduction That Works: Experience of scaling up Development Success (Batuwitage and Fernando 2008). Gemidiriya Commercial web portal [www.itshed.org](http://www.itshed.org) won the Manthan 2008 award in New Delhi for the best e-content for development in the sector of e-enterprise and livelihoods. Eighty development practitioners from 35 countries visited Gemidiriya as part of the conducting of an International seminar in Colombo organized by the World Bank declared the Gemidiriya microfinance system as a role model. Gemidiriya M&E system was recognized and included in a publication by the ADB (Batuwitage 2009). The “Aggie” award for the best practice for supervision and implementation support won by Gemidiriya Task Team of the World Bank, among 270 bank projects which is a recognition of all of Gemidiriya team including the communities managing CDD in Sri Lanka (Williams, 2010) and Gemidiriya winning the National Excellence Award in Human Resource Development and Performance Evaluation was recorded (MED, 2010)”.

The Gemidiriya first phase won the People First Award from the Social Development Department of the World Bank, an honor of recognition of its high performance of CDD.

Secretary to the President of Sri Lanka recognized the high performance of the Gemidiriya project with the following statement conveyed to the Secretary to the Ministry of Nation Building.

“I was very glad to hear that the Gemidiriya project received recognition by the Social development & agricultural development network of the World Bank. From what I have seen Gemidiriya has undoubtedly contributed to the reduction of poverty in SL and quite understandably it has now being recognized as a role model in the poverty reduction domain (Weerathunga, 2010).”

Authentication of the strategies managing phenomenon is evident in the following summary statement that appeared in the World Bank Report.

“Foremost among the factors contributing to this strong performance was the soundness of the project village development model with its strong buy-in from the community. This was confirmed consistently by feedback workshops and discussions with communities, interviews with local officials, local and national politicians, and the Impact Assessment Study of 2010. Further, the Phase I Project has contributed to the peace process by extending the core methodology to the IDA-supported Community Livelihoods in Conflict Affected Areas Project (also called Re-Awakening; P086747 (World Bank, 2010,p19)”

### **Skepticism on Intervening Factors**

The skepticism raised against the relationship between the causal conditions and the resultant change in communities referred to funding made available by the project that would not be sustained by the government was the case in point.

This skepticism proved to have no strong basis due to the following facts:

- (a) Project funds were made available to already marginalized areas. In most of the Grama Niladhari Divisions other funds were not made available due to the availability to the project funds.
- (b) The funds made available under the Gama Nuguma program as Rs. One million a year per GND would be considered adequate to practice CDD. Gemidiriya demonstrated this fact as part of inclusive growth process in marginalized areas.
- (c) The current allocation per GND was not for holistic village development as the CDD model used, but to fund individual projects identified through the political process and implemented by private contractors in many cases through a sub contracting process avoiding any community procurement mechanisms of accountability.

The second skepticism was on the intensive capacity building for communities on the stand of the ministry of finance at the end of the first phase of the project that training and capacity building of this magnitude be not necessary to be financed by foreign funds since adequate training on rural development has been in place.

This skepticism is refuted on the following factors:

- (a) The capacity building needs cannot be underestimated in a major shift of decision making power to people with resources. The principle of subsidiarity reflects the need for the unit at lowest level closest to people to be competent to enable the use of power transferred. It was well proved that the implementation model of Gama Neguma failed in ignoring this principle and calling for the President's intervention.
- (a) The capacity building of the CDD model was cost effective and has proven high quality construction work (Nanayakkara et al. 2009) due to the capacity building provided.

The Third skepticism was on the institutional mechanism under which communities opted for registration under the companies Act. This has no strong basis since the alternative arrangement chosen by the management to dismantle the legally accepted VOs by registering them under the project has no legal recognition. The borrowers report clearly mentioned that out of 1034 VSCOs 87% of VSCOs are recorded as viable VSCOs since they were able to cover all their operational costs. The subsequent weaknesses if any are attributed to the efforts made to reverse the already accepted practices and the management will have to account for the decisions made to dismantle the system of economic and social organization.

### **Space and Limits**

The above analysis shows that space created for community empowerment has been fully utilized under the CDD model with results implying that no specific limits other than the limits of governance that are known and accepted by the stakeholders prevailed during the first phase. No village organization fought for gaining political power. VOs were operating in collaboration with the government functionaries with no political rivalry. Notwithstanding all the results, however, limits to empowerment have been imposed with a change in policy with no consensus but by unilateral action by the management in favor of control on behalf of the government. What caused this change? Has this change gone under adequate scrutiny of stakeholders?

### **The Case of Control**

Jana Sabha for Gama Neguma model never saw the light of parliamentary acceptance due to reasons including the attempt of control envisaged. Telephone interviews and personal communication with leaders of 15

Gemidiriya Village organizations in six districts revealed that a complete reversal of the community driven process is taking place under which the VOs are forced to abandon CDD. The stress was clear on the leaders of VOs with their own conscience of the principles and practices of good governance and the forced action on them by what is imposed as the desire from the government to abandon the CDD and accept in place the Politico-bureaucratic controlled development.

- Several village organizations have called general assemblies, discussed the issues, made decisions and continue CDD in their villages.
- Hambantota and Polonnaruwa Federations and Badulla CPLTC are functioning with private sector partnerships managing their own resources with the government support they received during their maturing period continuing to respect the hand from the government.
- The massive capacity built during the first phase is being used still by other organizations as well and peer to peer learning activity continues to help each other.

## **Conclusion**

The practice of principles of decentralization with the principle of subsidiarity within the realm of development of rural marginalized communities has been well demonstrated with evidence under the practice of CDD under the first phase of Gemidiriya community driven development. The model supports the government commitments to citizen engagement in marginalized areas to effectively utilize community strength to useful collaboration with government through sustainable community institutions. The resultant empowered communities are active in the path to progress as evident by the case events and confirmed data and also by the resistance to accept the alternative reversed policy of dismantling community institutions.

It is prudent for the government functionaries as stake holders to undertake a serious review of the policy shift under the second phase to assess the adverse effects of dismantling the economic and social organization created with an investment of US\$ 51 million grant of foreign funds, just to replace it with a model not tested or with no basis of proven credentials using a loan of US \$ 75 million reversing and abandoning a local solution to eradicating poverty and impoverishment in difficult areas of the country by alternatives not adequately planned.

The paradigm model provides a useful tool as a framework to view the alternative being attempted to forecast the effects on creating space or limits to empowerment and make the required adjustments to the proposed new initiatives to learn from the lessons well proven with evidence.

## REFERENCES

- Batuwitige, G.P. 2009. “Sri Lanka M&E Experience from a Community Development Project” in *Moving from Concept to Action: Asian Experiences on Managing Development Results*. Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on managing for Development Results [<http://cop-mfdr.adb.org>] Manila Philippines
- Batuwitige, G.P. & Fernando, N. 2008 Community Driven Development to Improve livelihoods: The “Gemidiriya” Project in Sri Lanka, in *Poverty Reduction that Works: Experience of Scaling up Development Success*. Edited by Paul steel et al. UNDP. Earthscan, London
- Batuwitige, G.P. 1996. *Managing Overlapping Interests: A case study of collaborative planning for sustainable integrated area development of Sri Lanka*, Clark University, USA
- Friedmann, J. 1992 *Empowerment: The politics of alternative Development*. Oxford. Blackwell
- Grey, B 1989. *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multi party problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- HGPC. 2013. Hattellaegoda Peoples Company Ltd. Retrieved on 10.08.2013 from [http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=1103](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=1103)
- KGPC 2013. Presentation with video clips on “our path to progress”. Kabillegama (peoples) Gemidiriya Company Ltd. Kabillegama, Welimada. Retrieved on 10.08.2013 from [http://gemidiriya.org/detail\\_page.php?record\\_id=6](http://gemidiriya.org/detail_page.php?record_id=6)
- MED 2010, Borrowers Report- Community Development and Livelihood Improvement “Gemidiriya” Project PO74872. Implementation Completion Report of Phase I (July 2004-march 2010) Gemidiriya Foundation, Ministry of Economic Development.
- Nanayakkara. W. et al, 2009 *Convergence of Three Poverty Alleviation Programmes Implemented by the Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development*, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. Colombo
- Oakley, P. 1987. State or Process, Means or Ends?: The concept of participation in rural development. *Ideas RRDC Bulletin*.
- Oakley, P. 1995. Peoples Participation in Development Projects: A critical Review of Current Theory and Practice. Page 6 Retrieved on 26.08.2013 from [http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/docs/Other/people's%20participation%20in%20development%20projects\\_Oakley.pdf](http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/docs/Other/people's%20participation%20in%20development%20projects_Oakley.pdf)
- Paul Steele et al, ed. (2008). *Poverty Reduction That Works: Experience of scaling up Development Success*. United Nations Development Program, Earthscan, London
- Peter Klibanoff and Michel Poitevin, April 2013. A theory of (de)centralization Retrieved from [http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/klibanof/ftp/workpap/klibanoff-poitevin\\_coasian\\_externality.pdf](http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/klibanof/ftp/workpap/klibanoff-poitevin_coasian_externality.pdf)
- Ribot, J.C. 2004. *Waiting for Democracy: The Politics of Choice in natural Resource Decentralization*. World Resources Institute. Washington DC
- SLBDC, 2010 *Community Development and Livelihood Improvement “Gemidiriya” Project Impact Assessment Study Final Report*. Sri Lanka Business Development Center, Colombo

- Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. 1990 *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications. London
- Sunday Observer, 2013 NDB helps boost seed-paddy production to support local farmers 25th August 2013.
- Weerathunga, L. 2010 World Bank best practice award for supervision and implementing support to Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood improvement project. Letter issued to Secretary, Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development on 22.03.2010.
- Williams, M. 2010 PROJECT NEWS. *Gemi Diriya Wins the "Aggie" for Good Supervision*, SASDA, World Bank. Washington DC <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTARD/EXTRURLIV/0,-contentMDK:22497618~menuPK:5120025~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:5097010,00.html#Aggie>

World Bank, December 2010. Report No: ICR00001760 Implementation completion and results report (ida-h0780) on a grant in the amount of sdr 34.2 million (us\$ 51 million equivalent) to the democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka for a community development and livelihood improvement "Gemi diriya" project in support of the first phase of the community development and livelihood improvement "Gemi diriya" program, Sustainable Development Department, Agriculture and Rural Development Unit, South Asia Region Washington DC