

Participatory Approach for Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in the Villages of Kachchh, India

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An earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale hit the Kachchh region, located in the northwest region of the State of Gujarat, India at 8:46 am on January 26, 2001. As a consequence of this disaster, thousands of people died and injured, the social and physical infrastructure of the region were literally collapsed, and thousand of houses, particularly in the villages were damaged and destroyed. Lot of national, international organizations came up with their rendering hands for rescue and relief as well for the rehabilitation and reconstruction for the disaster affected people. The Gujarat Government had taken major three approaches namely Owner Driven Approach, Product Centric Approach and People Centric Approach for post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction. Taking case studies according to three approaches, the paper tried to evaluate people's participation for post-earthquake reconstruction in the villages of Kachchh. The region Kachchh is characterized as harsh weather, pro-patriarchal and caste based society, and one of the economically and socially backward districts of Gujarat. The study shows that how rural power structure, socio-economic differences influence the reconstruction process from the view point of people's participation. The high degree of social differences, absent of efficient local organization and the pre-dominant economic structure helped upper caste to accumulate power and wealth and on the contrary a section of people are totally deprived from the new opportunities of the development and as a result they are still in a vulnerable position. In case of Product Centric Approach, NGOs came and reconstruct the houses and

infrastructures without pay much heed to people's requirements and thus the new settlements were totally refused by the people. Whereas, a section of NGOs came up with strong motivation and proved that how reconstruction process can be people centric and sustainable by involving local people, using locally available resources, skills, labor and as well as social interdependency of the villages. Thus by analyzing these three approaches, the study brings up the issues that need to be taken into consideration for strengthening local organizational structure, optimum utilization of village level resources like labor, skills and building materials. Proposal have been given for strengthening these very approaches through which the people's involvement can become a part at all stages of the whole process, which can help to make the reconstruction a sustainable process, particularly for the area level development.