

CHAPTER 1

DEFINITION OF SELF-RELIANT RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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The objective of the Guidelines is to clarify and propose an appropriate approach and methods to achieve self-reliant rural development for poverty alleviation in a concrete manner. For this purpose, the appropriate approach and other relevant issues must firstly be clarified. This clarification of the definition of the underlying concepts of self-reliant rural development is conducted in this chapter in order to firmly establish guideposts for more concrete discussion in Chapter 2 and thereafter.

1.1 What is Self-Reliant Rural Development?

Self-reliant rural development is defined in the following manner based on debates which have taken place so far. “The population of rural areas sustain their lives without external help using resources which are naturally available to them. Self-reliant rural development means to strengthen or reinforce the available resources (five capitals) without disturbing such independent lives of the rural population and to maintain as well as improve their livelihood (enhancement of the sustainability of lives) while assisting the rural population to enhance their capacity and to engage in various activities based on their own initiative.”

In order to obtain a more concrete picture, let us examine “population participation” which is a key phrase linking external supporters and administrators who will leave or change in time and people living in rural villages (the rural population). Clarification of the relationship between the rural population and an external body or administration or those whose interests are served by population participation is important so that an in-depth discussion of this issue can be held. There are four types of population participation in the present context.

Led by an external body or administration

- 1) Population participation within the development framework set by an external supporter (development with the participation of rural population)
- 2) Population participation with certain decision-making power within the development framework set by an external supporter (development with the participation of rural population who play a leading role)

Led by rural population

- 3) External cooperation within the development framework initiated by rural population (development with the participation of external supporters)

Solely by rural population

- 4) Development led by rural population within the framework set by rural population (development by rural population based on their own initiative)

Figure 1.1 Types of Participation



The ideal development approach is Type 4 where rural population make their own decisions to independently proceed with rural development using the relevant resources available. This type or Type 3 where rural population use external assistance based on their own initiative is presumably what self-reliant rural development should be

The time and budgetary constraints on the part of donors and the great expectations of external assistance on the part of rural population, however, mean that the actual circumstances of project implementation vary from one village to another. The reality appears to be that the situation of project implementation considerably varies depending on the actual local context in terms of the abilities of the project implementation organization (or people) and socioeconomic environment of each locality, etc.

PRA, PCM and other tools are expected to contribute to the realisation of self-reliant rural development. Meanwhile, there are many cases where the interests of rural population primarily lie with obtaining as much external assistance as possible. One approach suggested is for an external supporter or administration to provide assistance or cooperation with full awareness of being an external supporter and to introduce cost shearing systems, respecting the intentions, procedures and meaning of “time” shared by rural population as rural population do have the capacity to achieve self-reliant development based on their traditional sense of values.

Based on the above-examination so far, it may be argued that what is in question is clarification of an appropriate cooperation approach for the reality of the target villages by understanding the said reality (particularly in terms of such cognitive social capital as norms and customs, etc.) To be more precise, it appears to be important to think about the way to provide cooperation in order to achieve self-reliant rural development such as Type 3 based on the reality of each village although the ultimate goal is to make the target villages capable of implementing. In other words, it may be that an external supporter or administration become involved in the framework created by rural population and examine realistic concepts and methods to achieve their targets. It is considered that how to realise population’ empowerment is the key to approach the task. The concept of empowerment here obviously includes grouping involving a change of awareness of the members in addition to human resources development.

Based on the arguments so far, the objectives of the present Guidelines (Implementation) are to clarify the concept, mechanism and techniques of empowerment for the purposes of human resources development and grouping and to compile concrete proposals and improvement points in order to realise self-reliant rural development which is defined as follows.

“The population of rural areas sustain their lives without external support using resources which are naturally available to them. Self-reliant rural development means to

strengthen or reinforce the available resources (five capitals) without disturbing such independent lives of rural population and to maintain as well as improve their livelihood (enhancement of the sustainability of lives) while assisting rural population to enhance their capacity and to engage in various activities based on their own initiative.”

1.2 Concepts to Realise Self-Reliant Rural Development

The meaning of self-reliant rural development is further examined next based on the lessons¹ learned from the Study on Mali conducted in Fiscal 2003. The key points established by this study are listed as follows:

- It is necessary to examine the kind of external assistance which can be understood and responded by rural population while taking their receptive capacity into consideration.
- The concrete results achieved by rural population through their “re-interpretation”² of external assistance and their sense of achievement form the foundations for further activities.
- Such cognitive social capital as norms and customs continue to change and also to be created in response to external assistance as well as information.
- Conversely, external assistance which exceeds the receptive capacity of rural population does not lead to sustainable development in the area concerned.

In short, self-reliant rural development means the provision of external assistance which does not exceed the receptive capacity of the target area, followed by the re-interpretation of such assistance by rural population themselves to initiate further activities. One important issue here is how to understand the receptive capacity of the target area. There are two thoughts about this. One is that the receptive capacity can be better understood through actual practice. The other is that a person with in-depth knowledge and much experience may have a good understanding. While it may be true to say that people who have experience of study, research or cooperation activities in the target area can determine the level of local receptive capacity to a certain extent in advance, it is generally difficult to determine the level of local receptive capacity.

What is this capacity to receive, re-interpret and transform external assistance? What affects such capacity? This capacity is believed to be “built in”³ the lives of population living in the area concerned. What really is this built-in capacity which affects the daily lives of rural population without them being aware of it and which can receive and even transform external assistance?

¹ Based on a report submitted by Mr. Suga of JVC at an intensive discussion session of the Working Group which was held on 8th December, 2003.

² The process of interpreting or understanding external assistance in the context of the actual local situation.

³ The concept of “built in” is fundamental to the living environmentalism of environmental sociology and proposes that wisdom and practice fostered by a local community through daily life are “built in” in such daily life. See Funabashi and Furukawa eds., Introduction to Environmental Sociology (Bunka-Shobo Hakubun Sha), Chapter 4 – Viewpoint and Methodology of the Study on the History of Social Environment (Akira Furukawa).

The receptive and transformative capacity can be substituted by such cognitive capital as the norms, customs and social rules, etc. of a local community as well as the experience and accumulation of technical expertise. Norms, etc. which are recognised and respected by the population of a local community can significantly affect decision-making, activities and community management in the area concerned. These norms, etc. which are determined by the nature of people's awareness are built into their daily lives and continue to change in accordance with changes of their awareness of situations, triggered by actual events or experiences. Is it, therefore, possible to clearly understand such cognitive social capital?

The cognitive capital built in a specific area consists of the sense of values, norms, customs and social rules which are recognised through interactions between the actors in the said area and constantly changes while maintaining its geographical characteristics.⁴ Such social capital as community groups and local systems, etc. referred to as one of the five capitals in the "Formulation of Rural Development Methods for Africa: Planning" (JICA, 2001) presumably corresponds to "structural social capital" rather than "cognitive social capital" based on the classification introduced by Uphoff (Uphoff; 2000, p. 221).⁵ These two types of social capital interact and it can be said that "cognitive social capital is a precondition for structure social capital to function".

A proper understanding of the built-in cognitive social capital is thought to be extremely difficult as this type of social capital is determined by the awareness of and attitudes to the norms, etc. among individual actors. It is thought that cognitive social capital manifests through concrete activities. Part of it can be understood by focusing on the processes of concrete activities to understand how and why such activities, daily activities if possible, are performed. In this sense, a cultural anthropology study method is required to understand the "built-in cognitive social capital" in an area. In other words, the participatory observation of daily life of the local people and other study methods used by anthropologists are believed to enable understanding of the built-in receptive and transformative capacity in the entire range of daily life. The process monitoring described later should prove to be an effective method to understand this built-in cognitive social capital.

It is clear that cognitive social capital is strongly related to organizational management and, in the case of the definition of self-reliant rural development, the willingness of rural population to act on their own initiative has much to do with cognitive social capital. What is crucial for self-reliant rural development is the provision of external assistance (cooperation) which can contribute to such cognitive social capital of local communities as the inherent norms, customs and social rules, etc. without damaging them. The Guidelines explore the significance, method and important points of cognitive social capital, etc., which aim at realising self-reliant rural development to achieve poverty reduction, being fostered among local actors to contribute to the development of the area concerned.

⁴ See Junichi Watanabe, Social Capital, Actors and Viewpoints for Rural Development presented at the Conference of International Development Society (at Nagano University, June, 2002).

⁵ Norman Uphoff, Understanding Social Capital: Learning from the Analysis and Experience of Participation, Social Capital – A Multifaceted Perspective, World Bank, pp. 215 – 249, 2000.