

## Community governance in rural development

Upali Pannilage

ITDG-South Asia,  
No. 05, Lionel Edirisinghe Mawatha, Kirulapone,  
Colombo, Sri Lanka.  
E-mail: UpaliP@itdg.slt.lk

During the last few decades many attractive and scientific models on rural development have been developed. However, the percentage of the rural poor is rapidly increasing in developing countries. Political power has remained in the hands of mainstream political parties and the elites who handle power according to the whims and fancies of their higher authorities.

The principal reason for the continuation of in this state is the absence of a strong and well-organised community governing system. Community governance is not a new concept or model to the Sri Lankan society. Especially the Sri Lankan society has more than thousands of years of experiences on governing systems like “Gamsaba”, “Wel saba” and “Dayaka saba”. These community based governing systems were able to govern our society from the ancient time. However with the introduction of different political systems and developments made to the mechanisms by national and international elites have totally distrusted our governing system and the sustainable development system of the society.

This paper describes the concept of community governance in rural development with practical experiences that the researcher gained through the design and implementation of the approach. The approach and key methodology adopted rests on two key principles. Firstly, people have different needs, and consequently different types of methods and combinations of systems and methodologies are required to meet their needs in an effective manner. Secondly, that people have their own strengths and capacities to resolve their own problems, if opportunities and appropriate support systems, are able to harness them to previously unimagined levels.

In conclusion the communities are strong enough to understand the issues they face. Development interventions which need to overcome those issues are within the limits of their management. Communities have the capacity to plan, monitor and implement the development interventions if they are chosen through the consultation of communities. Community participation in development interventions can and should be obtained for the decision making process rather than implementation of the such.

Key words: Community governance; Rural development; Political power; Decision making process; Sustainable development