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Participation and Ownership in Agricultural Extention: Two Cases in Eastern Turkey

Tecer Atsan and Ziya Yurttas
Department of Agricultural Economics, College of Agriculture,
Ataturk University, 25240 Erzurum, Turkey

Abstract: Participation and ownership are two important concepts to be taken into consideration for rural extension projects to secure effectiveness and sustainability. In other words, the farmers as well as the technical staff and administrators need to take part in the decision making process from the early stages to the end of project activities and consider the project as their own so that desirable changes can be brought about on the part of the target population and maintain the momentum of these changes after the formal project period is over. It is unfortunate that in some major extension projects some concepts such as participation and ownership are not given due importance which results in an ineffective use of resources or outright failure. The comparison of two projects that were implemented in Eastern Turkey in the last two decades can clearly show the importance of participation and ownership in extension. The objective of this study is to highlight the importance of participation and ownership in extension projects and put forward recommendations for future extension activities. Extension components of ERDP and UPRDP will be compared with regard to participation and ownership and conclusions will be made as to how ERDP failed and UPRDP succeeded and became a model for succeeding extension projects such as LEAP. The conclusions will be applicable not only in the project area at hand but elsewhere too.

Key words: Participation, ownership, agricultural extension, eastern Turkey

INTRODUCTION

The resources are scarce but the needs are unlimited. Therefore certain principles must be taken into consideration in all activities to make the best use of available resources allocated for extension, as well as for other fields. Participation and ownership are two important concepts that will assure efficiency in extension. Participation implies that all parties involved in the project, the farmers, trainers and the administrators, should take part actively in the decision making process from the beginning to the end of extension activities. Ownership on the other hand, implies that all the parties to the project should consider it as their own and feel responsible for the success and accountable for the failure of the project. Participation is a prerequisite for ownership.

Several development projects have been implemented in Eastern Turkey. Erzurum Rural Development Project (ERDP) is one of the most important of them. Extension component of this project has been evaluated as not very successful by both the clientele and the implementing agencies. The failure of the extension component of ERDP can be attributed, to a large extent, to the lack of concern on the part of the project designers and implementers for the concepts of participation and ownership. On the other hand Uzundere Participatory Rural Development Project (UPRDP) has proved to be successful and sustainable. The success of this study can largely be attributed to the attention given to the concepts of participation and ownership in both planning and implementation stages of the project process.

The objective of this study is to highlight the importance of the concepts of participation and ownership by comparing the extension components of above mentioned projects to contribute to the success of similar projects in the future.

Erzurum Rural Development Project (ERDP): ERDP is an integrated rural development project comprising infrastructure, credit and extension components. The project budget was $137 million. The World Bank provided $40 million, IFAD $20 million and Turkish Government $77 million. $26.7 million of the project

Corresponding Author: Tecer Atsan, Department of Agricultural Economics, College of Agriculture, Ataturk University, 25240 Erzurum,Turkey

budget was allocated for Agricultural extension activities[1]. $34.5 million was allocated for investment and production credit and $68.1 million for infrastructure in 400 of 1050 villages of the Province. Provincial Directorate of of Agriculture (PDA) would be responsible for extension, regional directorate of rural affairs for infrastructure and Agricultural Bank for credit components.

The general objectives of the project were to[1]:

- raise agricultural production and incomes in Erzurum Province;
- expand rural employment opportunities;
- improve conditions of rural life.

In order to achieve the general objective of increased production and farm incomes for the predominantly small, mixed crop and livestock farmers in Erzurum, the project would implement an intensive Agricultural extension program to introduce improved technology at the farm level. Technical investigation would be commissioned and stronger links established with research entities and with other complementary Government services in the project area, including the plant protection, animal health and breeding, irrigation services. To accomplish these objectives, extension staff of PDA or the Provincial Agricultural Extension Service would be retrained and considerably expanded, its work programming decentralized and its field agents posted to the village level. A major reorientation of approach would be undertaken, which essentially involved the adoption of T and V system. The institutional pattern to be adopted in Erzurum Province would eventually be introduced to other provinces. Lancer wheat variety would be adopted by a large number of farmers in the project area. Production of cereals, fodder crops, pulses, potatoes, potato seeds (2000 tons) and animal products would be increased substantially. Subjects to be covered in Agricultural Extension Education for the farmers would include field crops and forage production in rainfed and irrigated areas, utilization of fallow and meadows, irrigation practices, use of agricultural machinery, fruits and hotbeds, management of summer rangelands, animal care and feeding, apiculture and home economics. Investment and production credit would be provided to enable farmers to utilize the techniques recommended. By the end of the tenth year, it was expected that 28.000 of the 80.000 farmers of Erzurum would benefit directly from the project.

At the institutional level, a team of Village Extension Agents (VEAs) would be posted to each village clusters and provided with offices, housing and vehicles. The VEAs would be supervised by senior technicians and supported by Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) in each major discipline. Leading farmers would serve as the point of contact.

According to the final evaluation reports, it is generally accepted that the infrastructure component of ERDP was fully successful. For example, 200 kilometers of rural roads which is 10 kilometers more than envisaged in the project had been constructed. All other objectives related to infrastructure and equipment had been met[2]. On the other hand, credit component of ERDP was considered to be half successful for only 50% of the $34.5 million allocated for credit had been given to farmers. The farmers had not been able to benefit from the other half, because of the lack of sufficient collateral. The infrastructure and the credit components of ERDP are beyond the scope of this study. Therefore no further explanation is needed in that regard. But the extension component needs to be explained further.

The activities of the extension component of the ERDP can, very briefly, be expressed as follows:

- Brand new Village Group Extension Centers (VGEC) with office buildings, housing units, vehicles and modern audio visual equipments were established for each one of 59 village clusters to make it possible for T and V System to be implemented. All but one center are being used now for purposes other than extension.
- PDAs and VEAs were strengthened with regard to agricultural machinery office equipment and vehicles. But now every body must realize that physical investment is not the major factor in development activities but human capital is.
- Extension officers of PDA were retrained and some 20 teams of VEAs were posted to VGECs. The others were administered by the District Directorates of Agriculture (DDA). VEAs somehow have found a way to stay away from these centers after the formal project period was over.
- Numerous training programs for farmers were conducted in all fields mentioned above. The objectives of the project in terms of quantity were realized in this regard. Annual reports of PDA show that all extension activities in the annual program have been carried out and they have done their duties. But the evidence for success should not be the number of activities carried out by the extension service but it should be the behavioral changes brought about on the part of the target population. Therefore the objectives of the extension projects should not be expressed in terms of the number of activities to be carried out, but instead they should

be stated in terms of behavioral changes that are expected of the farmers. Only then the objectives can be used as the criteria for success.
- Several demonstration programs were carried out in potato seed production and lancer wheat variety which were expected to be the symbols of success for ERDP. But those expectations proved to be in vain.

Uzundere Participatory Rural Development Project (UPRDP): UPRDP is relatively a small scale project with a budget of about $1 million implemented in 6 villages of one district of Erzurum over a period of 9 years. It was financed by international donors such as GTZ and SDC. The project was implemented by development foundation of Turkey (TKV) which is a non governmental organization that is well known for its training activities in Turkey.

The general objectives of the project were to[3]:

- increase the economic welfare of the target population;
- improve the social justice in the area by improving the status and talents of women and young girls;
- encourage cooperation among people and institutions;
- protect and improve the environment and restore the balance between the nature, human beings and technology in the project area.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the implementing agency would engage in extension activities that would cover the areas such as Animal husbandry, forestation, apiculture, horticulture, fish farming, viniculture, orchard farming, micro catchment planning and Home Economics.

According to the implementing agency, the principles of participation and sustainability have been a major concern for them from the project preparation to the phasing out periods[3].

The following activities were accomplished within the framework of UPRDP during the 1991-99 period[3]:

- 464 artificial inseminations were administered and 355 cross-bred calves were provided.
- 285.000 trees were planted.
- 1740 dk. demonstration plot for forage crops was established.
- 345 full bee-hives for 69 families were provided and these families were trained on apiculture. Winter losses were decreased from 30% to %10.
- Greenhouses were increased from less than 1000 m^2 to 40.000 m^2 belonging to more than 200 farmers,
- Technical help and micro credit were provided for 21 farmers to establish 164 pools which now produce 100 tons of trout fish in one year,
- 18.000 vineyard seedlings were provided for 310 families,
- Training programs were implemented on areas such as planting, grafting, pruning, plant protection and erosion control in micro-catchments,
- Training was provided for 750 women on hygiene and food conservation.

Impact analysis of ERDP and UPRDP: Final evaluation is an assessment process carried out at the end of the project implementation. But impact analysis is conducted some time after the formal project period is over.

The final evaluations for ERDP and UPRDP show that they both seem to be successful in the sense that they both realized the objectives in terms of numbers. The difference is in the substance and sustainability.

Reports prepared by PDA indicates that certain number of training activities called for by the project had been fully carried out, therefore the extension component of the project was 100% successful. In fact, the success of extension projects can only be measured by the behavioral changes brought about on the part of the farmers through the training process and the sustainability of the outcome. According to an evaluation study of ERDP[4] only negligible behavioral changes has occurred as the result of training activities. And none of the outcomes was sustained. For example, hundreds of families would have adopted lancer wheat variety and 2000 tons of potato seed would have been produced by the farmers after the project activities ceased. None of these objectives were realized. The farmers did not adopt the new wheat variety at all, neither did they produce any potato seed, let alone 2000 tons of it. Many more such examples can be given. On the other hand most objectives of UPRDP were realized during the project period and, much more importantly, the outcomes have been sustained since then. For example the farmers now are able to produce about 100 tons of trout a year in 164 pools and grow vegetables in 40.000 m^2 of greenhouses without an outside intervention and contribution. Many more such examples can be given here too.

Other things seem to be equal, but the most important difference between ERDP and UPRDP is the concern for participation and ownership for the latter. Representatives of the target population, NGOs, local administration took part in the decision making process from the start to the end. This participatory approach made it possible for all the stakeholders to be both informed and motivated. According to a consultancy report for the extension component of ERDP[5], the lack of

motivation and dedication to work which, for the most part, stem from the lack of participation and ownership has been a major problem hindering success for the extension activities in the project area.

The lessons of the past should be taken into account for the success of the future activities. This has been so at least for an important UNDP project in Eastern Anatolia, namely Linking Eastern Anatolia to Progress Program (LEAP) TUR/98/002. This umbrella program comprises three sub-projects one of which is Eastern anatolia participatory rural development project. The detail of this project is, no doubt, beyond the scope of this study, but as can be inferred from the name of the project, participation is a major concern for LEAP. It is a four year project which started in 2001. All indications are that the project will be another successful endeavor.

CONCLUSION

- Human capital, not the physical investment, is the most important factor in development. Only the motivated, dedicated and talented human beings can create success. Therefore, capacity development, which is the means to improve human capital, should be given a high priority in all extension activities.
- Participation and ownership are two essential principles to be taken into account to create motivated, dedicated and talented individuals, both farmers and extension workers and thus create a significant outcome and sustainable impact through extension projects.
- Some extension institutions measure their success by the number of activities that they carry out, especially when the objectives of their annual programs are stated in terms of numbers. Not the number of activities but the quality of behavioral changes can be used as the criteria for success. Therefore, the objectives of the extension programs should not be stated in terms of the number of activities that the extension service will carry out, but rather they should be stated in terms of the behavioral changes that are expected of the farmers as the result of training activities. Only then the objectives can be used as criteria to measure the success of a given project.
- A given system that is effective in one place may not be that effective in another. Therefore a new extension system such as T and V should be adapted to local conditions before it is fully implemented. Otherwise it may cause a waste of time, effort and money.

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