

Integrating Inclusive governance within Projects – Carrying Out Power Analysis

Background:

Power Analysis is a method to understand the status of unequal power relations within a community, region, state, national or at an international level. A simple Power Analysis Tool was tried out in India across several projects. The current document highlights the experiences of carrying out a power analysis in several projects and contexts. The tool and methodology is designed to support project implementers in understanding Power Relations, identifying stakeholders based on their interests and planning for action. The following sections provide examples of the use of the tool in different projects and contexts. The purpose of developing the Power Analysis tool and trying it within the projects, is to (a) develop a simple tool for project implementers to understand power within the context of their work, and (b) to understand it the tool could be used in different contexts and issues and (c) document the utilization of the tool in projects.

Reclaiming Institutional Spaces

One of the key elements of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is the Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition committee (VHSNC). The committee has been formed to take collective actions on issues related to health and its social determinants at the village level. They are particularly envisaged as being central to 'local level community action' under NRHM, which would develop to support the process of Decentralized Health Planning. Thus, the committee is envisaged to take leadership in providing a platform for improving health awareness and access of community for health services, address specific local needs and serve as a mechanism for community based planning and monitoring. However, the working of the committee has been beset with problems, not the least due to the unequal power wielded by the service providers and other power holders, hampering voice and participation by the most marginalized (especially Dalit and Adivasi women). Several studies have attested to the following lacuna; (a) Inadequate representation of castes/tribes, (b) participation of civil society organizations¹, (c) lack of Voice and awareness among members, (d) lack of participatory planning², etc.

The Madhya Pradesh Nutrition Project (MPNP 2012-2017), has the objectives of (a) Reducing underweight and under-nutrition among children, (b) Reducing wasting and severe malnutrition among children, (c) expanding quality services and fostering accountability and mutual responsibility. The project has sought to strengthen VHSNCs and this has been done by encouraging ASHA workers and

¹ Assessment of village health sanitation and nutrition committee under NRHM in Nainital district of Uttarakhand, Semwal et al, 2013, IJCH

² Evaluation of NRHM, 2011, Planning commission.

other frontline village level functionaries to hold the meetings in a planned manner. This has been achieved in varying degrees of success across the project intervention area. While in some villages, such as Moongwari, the VHSNC is being regularly held; in many other villages, the meeting is not held. However, even in villages where VHSNC is held, and members do attend, it serves more as information sharing by the ASHA, and not as a village level committee overseeing the health, nutrition and sanitation status of the village.

Further, as the VHSNC is closely linked with the panchayat, the way the panchayat operates, also impacts on its functioning. For example, if the Panchayat Chief (Sarpanch) is powerful (Dabangg Sarpanch), then often, he/she connives with the ASHA to stall any inclusive decision making. Sometimes it is the other way around and the ASHA calls the shots.

As strengthening the VHSNCs falls under the third domain of the Governance Framework, lasting change could only be brought about by ensuring that the overall environment is worked upon, for which and understanding of the power context and community based action planning was important.

Capacity Building and Power Analysis exercise:

Capacity building workshops were carried out among the staff, resulting in staff understanding about key power holders, their effects, as well as taking them into account (as well as backlash and strategies to deal with them) during the planning process. The output of one Power Analysis is mentioned below.

People were asked to list the names of stakeholders who are actors in the context of the VHSNC. The objective is to strengthen the VHSNC so that it is able to function as per its' role of overseeing and monitoring the status of Health, Nutrition and Sanitation in the village. The group was asked to also think of people who may not be directly involved, but exert influence over the process. After the list was complete, the stakeholders were ranked per their power to influence the VHSNC process. Once the ranking was done, the participants were asked to characterize the stakeholders: whether their interest is positive towards achievement of the objective or their interest will be hampered in this process and may or are playing a negative role. The objective of the entire process was to ensure that; (i) Dalit and Adivasi women are adequately represented in the VHNCs and participate without fear, (ii) VHSNC members are aware, active and carry out mandated tasks of bottoms up planning, monitoring and evaluating Health, Nutrition and Sanitation status in the village.

Table 1: List of stakeholders in VHSNC in Moongwari Village, Madhya Pradesh³

S. No.	Name of member	Position based on power	Positive/ Negative Impact – whether they want to strengthen the VHSNC
1.	ASHA (frontline Health staff)	4	Negative
2.	AWW (frontline women & child dept. staff)	5	Positive
3.	ANM (frontline Health Staff)	6	Positive

³ Exercises on 7-8th September 2016, Chattarpur District, Madhya Pradesh

4.	MPW (Frontline Health staff)		Negative
5.	Woman elected leader - Panch (also Nutrition Volunteer)	2	Positive
6.	Sarpanch (Panchayat Chief)	3	Positive
7.	Teacher	8	neutral
8.	Hand pump mechanic	9	neutral
9.	Public Distribution Shop Owner	10	neutral
10.	Self Help Group	11	Positive
11.	AWH (frontline women & child dept. staff)	12	
12.	Chairperson VHSNC (Active/ Inactive) member*	13	neutral
13.	NGO	1	Positive
14.	Prerak (frontline worker)	7	neutral

**The (active/ inactive) member presently is a woman who is currently heading the VHSNC. She is not a Panch as required by guidelines. However, she is a respected member of the village.*

Typically, the ASHA is considered the most powerful member of the VHSNC, since as per the guidelines, ASHAs are required to hold the VHSNC meetings, keep minutes for the same and have access to money given to the VHSNCs. In some villages, there are local leaders who have full control over the funds and PDS shops of the villages. In such villages, the power exclusively lies with these local leaders and it was felt that it would be difficult to bring about change in the short term.

Based on the power analysis, a plan was prepared⁴ for bringing together those who have a positive influence and build a coalition for strengthening the VHSNC.

Planning for safety and security of girl students (outside Schools).

One of the key reasons for drop out of girls from the school system, especially in the secondary school is the issue of safety and security of the girl child. This is further acute in the case of the more vulnerable populations such as Dalits and Adivasis. Intervening for safety and security of the girl students required project teams to analyze power both with and outside schools. This enabled the teams to plan realistically for addressing the issues.

⁴ Refer to section on Action Plan in this document

While analyzing the key actors for safety and security of girls, outside schools, the following were listed as those having power today in Bahraich District of Bihar through the Girls Education Project (GEP) team in Uttar Pradesh.

Table 2: Power Analysis for understanding safety and security concerns of the girl child⁵

#	Bodies of control (Those who have power / control)	Sphere of control (what is controlled – role they play)	Means of Control (How is control actualised)	Negative / Positive / neutral
1.	Local youth (boys)	Mobility outside house	Cat calls, obscene remarks, physical assaults	Negative
2.	Community Leaders	Mobility. Influential but do not address situation	Non-Action. Guided by patriarchal norms.	Negative
3.	Relatives (including Parents)	Control mobility. Do not want confrontation with anti-socials	Withdraw girl from school. Think about marriage of the girl child	Negative
4.	Teachers / SMC	School environment. Do not engage with community	Non- Action	-----
5.	Police	Powerful. Do not receive complaints. Trivialize issues.	Non-Action	-----
6.	Kishori Samuhs (Adolescent girl's groups)	Powerful, within school. Can take up cases in alliance with others	Only some girls speak up in their groups	Positive

The Power Analysis exercise brought out key stakeholders and their influence in continuance of the harassment that girls in the community face. They also understood the way these actions are manifested and results on the girl child. This provided the project teams to plan for realistic strategies to deal with the issues.

Safety and security of girl students (inside Schools).

The analysis inside schools revealed that the Teacher and the Head Teacher wield disproportionate power within the school. The student committees as well as the Adolescent Girls Groups (Kishori Samuhs) do not take up issues challenging the power holders in case of transgressions. The Block Education Officer and the District officials are important stakeholders and be an ally, (especially where the officials are motivated).

To deal with issues within the school, the GEP program instituted a suggestion box mechanism. A box was kept in the girl's toilet to ensure privacy and provide a mechanism for feedback from the girls about

⁵ Exercise on 24th August 2016, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh

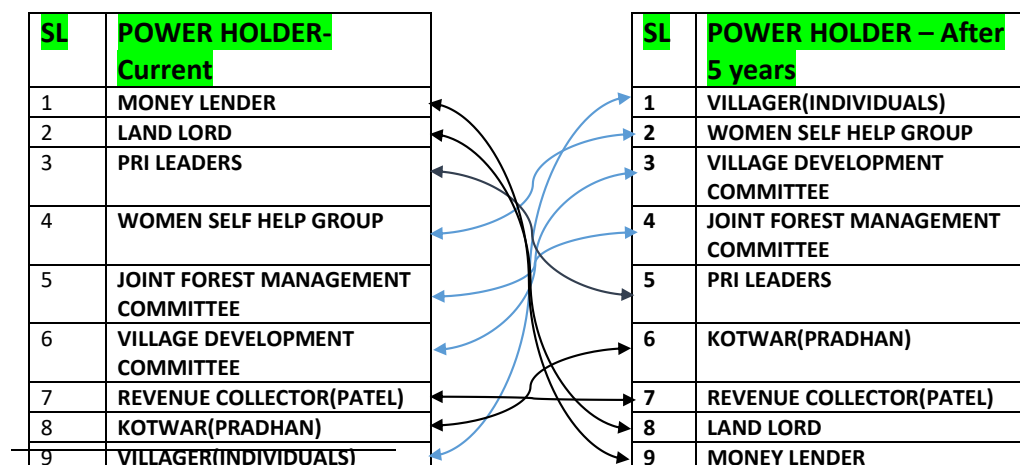
issues faced by them. Based on the suggestions and issues mentioned by the girls, discussion was held within the school as well as with Higher Level Education Department officials. Few issues such as harassment and intimidation were reported and resolved. Positive feedback was also received.

Participatory Planning Process through the Local Governance System

The Panchayat System is the name of the Local Government system in India. The system is designed to enable participatory planning, resource allocation and implementation at the local levels through a decentralized model, forming the third tier of government apart from the ones at the National and State levels. Further, special provisions provide unprecedented powers of self-governance to the panchayats in the tribal areas and recognises its traditional community rights over natural resources. However, in the face of powerful government departments and lack of clarity over whose power overrides, the interpretation of the more powerful departments has continued to prevail, making it a top-down developmental process.

As part of the Where the Rain Falls Project (WTRF), CARE India is addressing chronic risks arising out of climate change through Community Based Adaptation Practices. The project focuses on food and water insecurity that particularly impacts tribal (*Adivasi*) women's access, control, and natural resources management in Chhattisgarh, India. It was well recognised that long-term changes can be brought about by strengthening the Local Governance, especially in increasing the Voice of the Adivasi women in local development planning and implementation. The process was initiated by creating awareness among Dalit women as well as among the stakeholders. This was followed by the community identifying needs and resources and development of the 'Community Action Plan' (CAP), with a focus on building resilience through food and water related assets. During the process of taking forward the CAP to the Panchayat to institutionalize the same, the community faced challenges. To understand these challenges, Power Analysis exercises were done for supporting the process. A power Analysis output is mentioned below.

Image 1: Current and Future Status of Power⁶



⁶ Exercises Carried out on 14th-15th June, 2016 in Pathalgaon, Chhattisgarh, India

In the Project, the CAP process was followed in two Blocks of Chhattisgarh District, covering 40 villages. Through the CAP process, women SHGs and other stakeholders formed a Village Development Committee (VDC), which actively advocated for inclusion within the Panchayat System, including the Gram Sabha (Powerful Village Assembly comprising of all voters in the village). Over a period of two years (2014-2016), the project could increase the proportion of women raising their voice in Gram Sabhas on issues related to agriculture from 7.2% in the Baseline (BL) to 23% during the Mid-line (ML). The current phase of adoption of the plans within the Panchayat System as well as allocation and monitoring of the activities is ongoing.

Planning for Action:

Planning for Action is an integral aspect of the Power Analysis process. An example of an action plan at the project level, from the MPNP project is provided below.

Table 3: Action Plan at MPNP

#.	Milestone/ Action Plan	Timeline
1.	VHSNC guidelines shared with all. Key indicators for action within VHSNCs and monitoring performance of VHSNCs finalized (in Hindi)	End of September
2.	Capacity Building of Block Coordinators on the VHSNC guidelines	End of September
3.	Strategy to be dependent on power analysis of every village – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the power analysis will be carried out in all the listed villages and plans prepared. These plans are to be updated every month. capacity building of the block coordinators 	End of September
4.	Training of VHSNCs	To be initiated post October 15
5.	Active discussions on decision making with VHSNCs and monitoring of VHSNCs through the indicators identified	Should be reflected by November end report
6.	Supportive supervision	To be initiated simultaneously between November and January
7.	Different allies to be identified in block and district levels for push from the system	To be initiated simultaneously (in October) while community capacity building is happening

The project is monitoring and supporting the changes in the field. Detailed results of strengthening the VHSNCs would be available by June, 2017.

Conclusion:

Understanding Power at several levels is critical for enabling long term change. The Power Analysis Tool can be utilized to understand Power at the lowest unit of analysis, whether it be a Family, Locality, Village and at other levels. It is critical however, to focus on a specific issue or on the intended change for discussing with the participants and prepare a plan for change. As described above, the tool can be used in several contexts and at different times. Though it is important to carry out the Power Analysis at the inception stage itself, the experience of carrying it out shows that; (a) It enhances understanding at any stage of the intervention, though project staff said that “this exercise is critical during the beginning of the project”⁸ (b) it is important to carry out the Power Analysis Tool on a periodic basis. Experiences of project teams involved in the process talked about examples where a stakeholder earlier identified as “positive” had turned “negative” or vice-versa⁹; (c) Project teams have found the exercise “very useful”¹⁰ as it has supported them in looking at power in a structured manner and “brought about definite actions for change”¹¹, “make realistic plans because it becomes clear about what is possible within the short term and what requires long term engagement”¹².

⁸ MPNP project Staff

⁹ MPNP project staff

¹⁰ WTRF Impact Population

¹¹ WTRF staff

¹² PCTFI project staff