

Rights Based Approach in Poverty Alleviation Programs

Methodology and application in development programs

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Right Based concept in development programs

Poverty, in particular, extreme poverty is the worst form of degradation of human condition and an outright denial of basic human rights to the poor, in the economical, social, cultural, civil and political field. Seen from this perspective poverty is the deprivation of basic human rights and fundamental freedom; there is a link between the existence of poverty and the incapacity of the states to fulfil their basic human rights obligations.

Central to the right based approach to development is the protection and realization of human rights, and the ultimate goal in the development process will then be the respect and fulfilment of basic human rights to everyone in order to achieve integral development. Thus it is both a vision and a set of tools wherein human rights (and not just legal rights) become the means, the ultimate end and mechanism to focus on sustainable total human development of the poor.

The Right based approach to development is not necessarily a rejection of former development models, especially empowering the poor and in particular the gender oriented actions. But on the contrary it is an approach based on the good practises and lessons learnt from the different development programs and making the different dimensions of development converge towards the total development of the human person perceived as a right bearer whose basic rights are deprived causing severe condition of poverty.

Through the Rights Based Approach, the NGO and the local communities are naturally entitled to take up action to lobby with the local government, the administration or at the international level who are duty bearers towards those whose basic rights have been deprived.

The strategies for empowering the poor is of utmost importance in the RBA, because the beneficiaries participation is central to the integral development process, they are the owners of right and the first concerned in the development process ; they are also the focal point of all development activities. The empowerment process in the RBA aims at giving the people the power and the capacities to act, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives and improve their lives and that of their communities. This is taken up with the full participation of the beneficiaries and the community at large.

In the rights based approach, the beneficiaries both individual and the group they belong to are not just passive aid recipients but are motivated to perceive themselves as active rights holders fighting for the social justice that is due and denied to them.

Gender equality is a natural norm that is integrated into the rights based approach. It is not just an addendum but on the contrary, equality and non-discrimination become central to the whole development process giving ample space for the most vulnerable groups especially women who are in most of the traditional societies marginalised and excluded from the mainstream to participate actively in their own development and claim their due to economical, social and political resources.

From the above discussions, the Rights based approach is based on four basic principles which orient and guide all the development activities :

- **Universality, non discrimination and equality.**

Human Rights is a basic right acquired at birth and belongs to all human beings. They are inclusive and in particular prioritize the most vulnerable, marginalized and excluded in particular children, women and the poorest of the poor. Gender equality is one of the most basic area of interest in the RBA.

- **Accountability**

Human Rights recognize people as active right holders and active subject in the society. In this regard they are also claim holders, establishing duties and obligations on others to ensure that needs are met and obligations are fulfilled. Duty holders are held accountable for their action or omission to take up action to fulfil the needs of the claim holders.

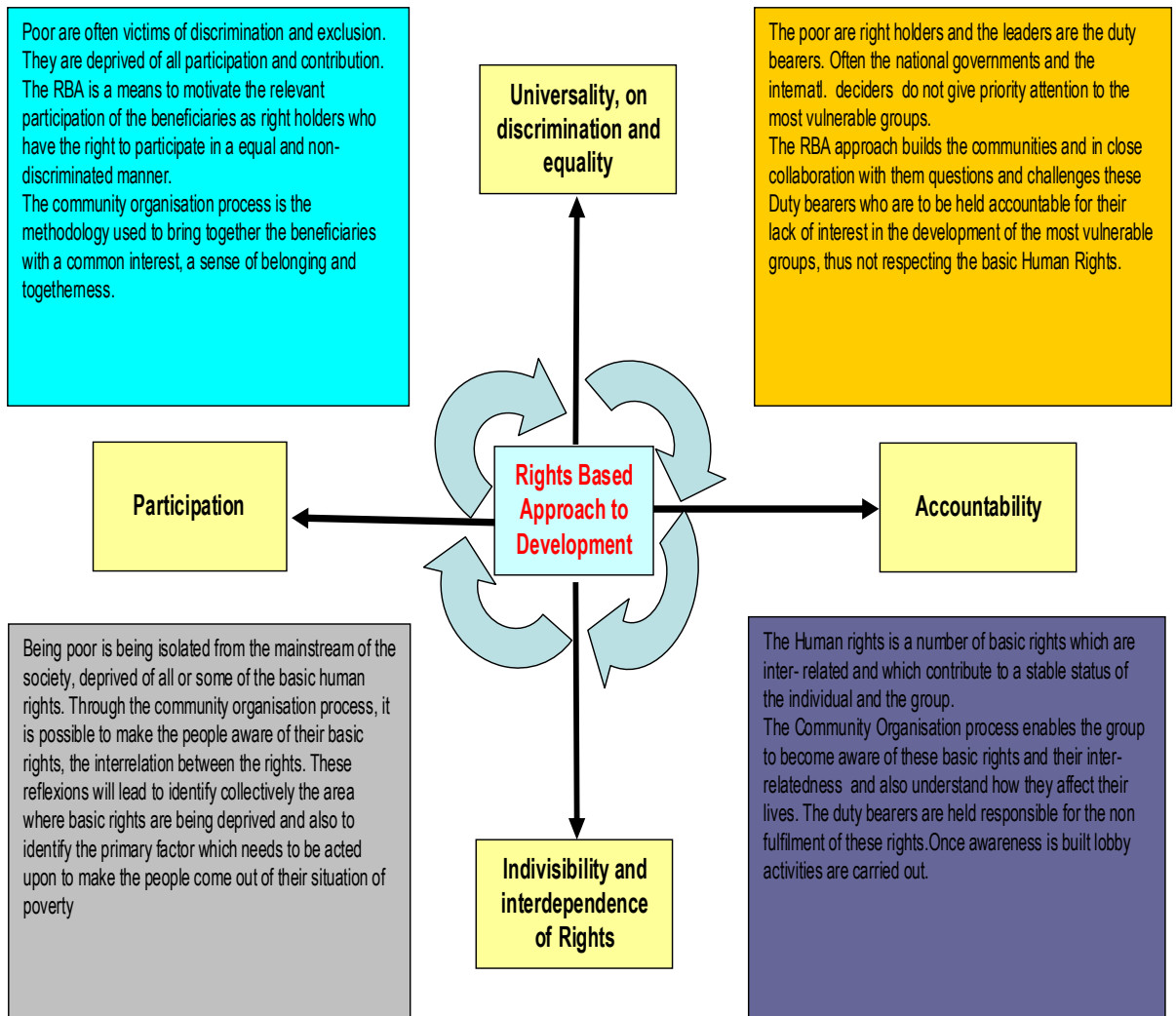
- **Participation**

One of the basic principles of Human Rights is the active participation of the subjects in a state, that is every person is entitled to participate, contribute and enjoy the fruits of the participation. Although the normal development activity views participation as one of the basic principles in order to promote local ownership and sustainability of the programs, the RBA views participation as a right by itself in the whole process of human development.

- **Indivisibility and interdependence of Rights**

All rights are equally important and they are inter related. One right cannot be addressed in isolation from the other in the context of related rights. Further different rights supplement and compliment each other. (Dalit political participation cannot be achieved if the right to education is not fulfilled; the right to education cannot be fulfilled if the right to basic needs such as food and shelter are deprived which in turn refers to economical access which need to be catered to.)

Rights Based Approach to Development



Poverty analysis from the Right Based perspective.

Poverty is often assimilated with the lack of material means or impossibility to have access to basic needs. In other words poverty is not merely absence of commodities and services to meet the basic needs, but rather a question of powerlessness. In situation of poverty, the vulnerable groups are disempowered by the influence of factors such as lack of respect and dignity; cultural identity; social alienation, organisational capacity is questioned, no political representation, and lack of accountability.

People's freedom to live as citizens is at stake in situation of extreme poverty. Human rights which play an important role in maintaining links between social progress and economical progress do not play this significant role that they should. This results in powerlessness of the most vulnerable groups. Poverty is then a resultant of the powerlessness, non respect of human rights and lack of access to material benefits. The three factors are inherently interlinked and clearly deviate from the long pursued economic perspective of poverty analysis.

Because poverty is a question of disempowerment and denial of human rights, human rights concepts provide useful tools in analysing issues and identifying linkages among different dimensions of a problem, allowing for a clear understanding of strategic entry points.

The poverty analysis will be based on a holistic picture of the development problem and the inter-relations among the root causes of poverty:

A. Analysis of the conditions of poverty and the situation of the poor as right holders

1. The first step will consist of identifying the victims, who they are, where they live and how they live and the degree of vulnerability they are subject to. Particular attention will be given to the gender aspect. This analysis will certainly contribute to question the existing facilities in the society concerned and the life condition for the global society. This analysis will lead to the relevant understanding of the inequalities and discriminations and how they are perpetuated.
2. Once the major issues are identified, then the question to be addressed will be to analyse the social, cultural, economical and political dimensions and the inter-relations among them. At this stage, it will become necessary to see how human rights are at the centre of poverty and causal relation with the other problems.

B. Stake holder Analysis, or the analysis of the role of the duty bearers.

1. In the RBA the stakeholder analysis becomes an important aspect to understand the linkage between the condition of poverty and the non respect of human rights. It is also a means to understand the strength and weakness for the realisation of human rights in a given context . From this perspective, are the duty bearers and the right holders clearly identified?
2. Analysis of all the activities in particular the development activities, are they geared towards an impact on the human situation of the disadvantaged groups? Are the poor and the vulnerable considered as right holders or claim holders with clear entitlement to rights ?
3. Do the government and administration view themselves as duty holders andrealise that it is their duty to respond to the needs of the vulnerable groups ? What are the strength and weakness of the duty holders, what are the factors that influence their decision making ?
4. Who are the other stakeholders having an influence on both the duty bearers and the right holders ?

C. Participation of different stakeholders to development activities

1. Participation is a key dimension in the RBA and is the important aspect in the development strategies. How are the different stages of the program implemented?

2. Do the assessment and the poverty analysis done in close cooperation and collaboration with the different stakeholders. How do the beneficiaries react as right holders . Do they realise their right to participate in the analysis of their own situation and does this participation empower them?
3. Do the duty holders participate in the analysis of the poverty situation and the assessment of the action to be undertaken? How do they assume their role and how do they want to respond to the needs of the vulnerable groups?

D. Assessment and analysis of the beneficiary environment from a Rights perspective

1. Claim Holders : Who are the most adversely affected in the situation of poverty ? What are the sub categories within the group ? Which is the most affected sub category within the group that is being analysed ?
2. What are the specific human rights problems existing within the groups ? what are the specific elements of the rights being affected ? what are the specific human rights concerns (HR contents in terms of norms) that seems to be more strategic is affecting (availability of resources, capacity of the people to have access to facilities etc.) the group and in particular the sub group defined as the most vulnerable?
3. What are the human Rights principles that are weak or lacking and affecting the realisation of different rights(transparency, accountability etc.)
4. Who are the duty bearers and their responsibility towards the response for the main human rights concerns and the specific duties involved.
5. What are the capacities and vulnerabilities of the claim holders and the duty bearers for overcoming or responding to human rights concerns.
6. Identification of causes affecting the claim holders to demand for their rights and the duty bearers to respond to their obligations.
7. What are the different levels of participation and contribution expected and the actions to be implemented.

E. Structure and Environment scan

1. What are the structure that affect positively or negatively the human rights principles to be implemented.
2. What are the actions or events that are undertaken or not undertaken that will have an impact on the people in claiming for their rights.
3. How do the claim holders and duty bearers behave before the vulnerability of the groups and how do they react ?
4. What are the local, regional and national political structures that will facilitate or affect the development process from the rights based perspective.

2. Social Analysis in the Rights Based Approach

As discussed earlier, development interventions contribute to general objectives, but they usually cannot achieve the rights oriented objectives on their own unless and until they are integrated in the whole process of project planning and problem analysis. This means that development programs are viewed as the realisation of fundamental human rights and freedom and not just as social action or charity oriented activity.

The Rights based approach puts the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable groups at the core of policy and the focus of capacity development strategies. In other words the vision of development becomes an empowering process and also a poverty eradication strategy.

IN this context of development, the social analysis which is done in normal development programs take a Human rights perspective. The social, cultural, economical and political dimensions are not only analysed from the perspective of the poor, but also in the rights perspective. The Marginalised before the oppressing force is viewed as a right holder or claim holder whose natural capacities as a social being are deliberately or through omission being denied, leading to the disempowerment of the poor and creating a group of right less citizens.

In the normal development programs the inter-relation of problems are viewed from a social point of view and the analysis is done to define the problems in social terms or in terms of re-humanisation of the poor through empowerment and people's participation. Creating linkages through social analysis helps the communities to build up around a common interest.

In the rights based approach, the inter-relation between problems is perceived from the perspective of human rights and the poor put in the centre is viewed from the perspective of different levels of duty bearers, who have an obligation towards the socialisation of the poor towards the fulfilment of their basic rights. In this regards the attitude of the poor is also viewed from the perspective of right bearers who are not able to claim their rights and live their lives as normal citizens.

Social analysis in development programs does often deal with power relationship within the group and the poor with the global society. The power relations and discriminations have a major influence in the production and reproduction of deprivations and its impact on the poverty situation of the communities. The RBA approach goes a step further in the analysis, in the sense it deals with the power relations from the Human Rights perspective and provides a framework for an holistic analysis of poverty conditions and development from the different angles : social, cultural, political and economical. This puts the whole development process on a people centred analysis with a special emphasis on the condition of the poor and the causes of poverty with a special focus on the role of the duty bearers.

The analysis of the duty bearers puts the focus on the different levels of duties and the role to be played at each level. It is thus necessary to identify the different levels of duty bearers within the community or group in question in order to define and clearly understand if each of the duty bearers fulfil their duties. This in turn opens the space for relevant and focussed action especially in the field of lobby and popular education. Thus the added value of the RBA approach analysis is that it focuses on the structural dimension of poverty and the structural causes of poverty leading to a development process goal wherein the responsibilities of the different stakeholders are taken into consideration for a holistic solution to the problem. This is done through the empowerment process of the poor and the empowerment process of the duty bearers through lobby.

Another specific area of social analysis in the RBA is the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis. Such an analysis focuses on the impact of social, economical and other development policies on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. This also helps to define the role of the major duty bearers and their commitment for poverty alleviation. The Poverty and Social impact analysis focuses on the following areas of influence :

- Analysis of the link between policy reforms and their poverty and social impacts.
- Globalisation and its impact on the poor
- Analyse the positive impact of the reforms and minimise their adverse effects.
- Assessment of policy reforms especially in the field of structural readjustments proposed either by the national governments or from international bodies such as IMF and the world Bank.
- Analyse the capacity of the people to understand the impact of these reforms and get benefit out of them and in case of adverse policies take up lobby actions to counteract these policies.

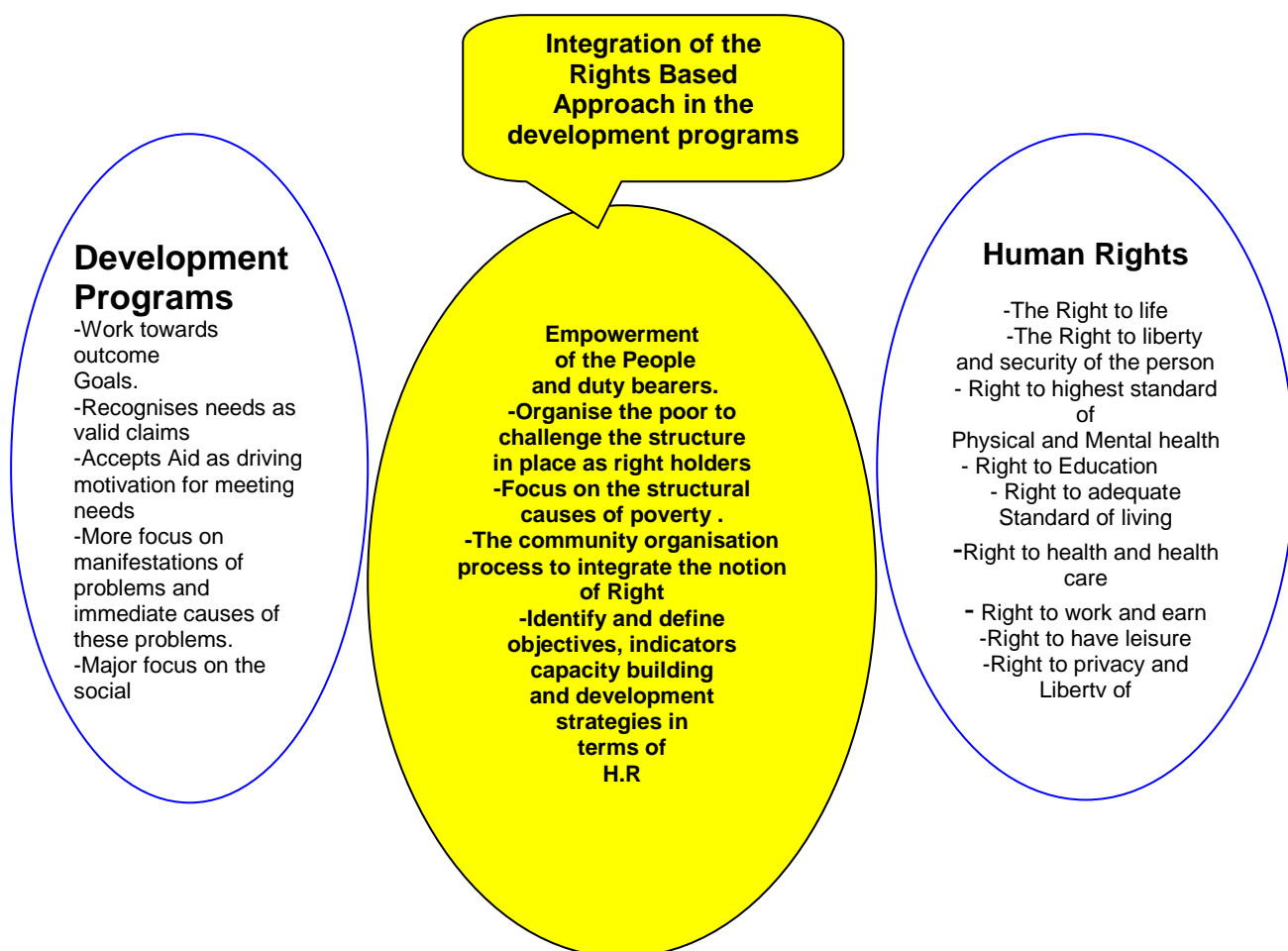
The Poverty and Social impact analysis has to be considered as a systematic approach to social analysis based on the basic human rights and as part of the social analysis in the development programs. It is not a separate orientation or a separate product.

3. Application of the RBA in the Micro-development process

The RBA approach is not a specific new concept. As discussed earlier it is rather a development process which integrates the Human Rights dimension in the poverty alleviation programmes. Development cooperation then becomes a means to gear all activities towards the achievement of one or several of the human rights by promoting active peoples participation and also by challenging the power structures in place.

As depicted in the schema here below, the rights based approach in the micro-development process orients towards the empowerment of the poor so that as claim holders they can claim their rights and get back to social life which integrates them and give them a place as full-fledged citizens. Development then becomes an integrative process in terms of democracy where right claimers will be able to cooperate and challenge the duty bearers in order to ensure the holistic development of the community.

Rights based Approach- Application in Development programs



a. The community organisation process and Animation methodology

Link to Community Organisation Methodology (cf document on Community organisation methodology in: aloysiusjohn.fr

b. Programming RBA in the Development process

	R B A	Development
R B A	<p><u>Defining the RBA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -RBA is a people- centred, focussing on the transformation and development of individual and their communities through the process of claiming rights -The universal human rights standards serve as guidelines for poverty analysis and also the stakeholder analysis -It helps identify a framework for seeking and understanding ways by which states and other actors could be held responsible for realisation of the rights of the claim holders. 	<p><u>Integrating the RBA in the development programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrate human rights awareness building in the animation process. -Form alliances and mobilise the right holders to take up collective action with the duty bearers clearly identified. -Mobilise people to make demands and provide input to standard setting in order to get their demands fulfilled -Raise collective or community awareness around conditions and actions needed to access the enjoyment of rights. -Empower the beneficiaries as rights holders or claim holders and motivate them towards collective set of actions. -Integrate the HR dimension in the social analysis and motivate people to understand what is their due as citizens.
D E V E L O P M E N T	<p><u>Creating a development strategy based on the RBA :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Go beyond development objectives. Take into account the external factors that affect the realisation of the objectives and also the stakeholders who influence them. -Capacity development of the individuals and the community to develop their abilities to solve problems individually or collectively. -Identify and define rights based indicators for measuring the awareness building and the achievement of the objectives. Identify areas for capacity development strategies for duty holders and also claim holders. -Initiate a participatory process based on human rights awareness building and also on motivating the beneficiaries to become claim bearers. 	<p><u>Defining Development programs from the RBA perspective</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrate HR awareness building in the animation process -Empower the beneficiaries as right holders and mobilize them to enter into alliance with the duty bearers. -Integrate the HR perspective in the Social Analysis, and raise collective awareness around conditions and actions needed to access the rights. -Through community organization liberate the individual and collective power within through awareness building and creating a common vision and aspiration for liberation.

Conclusion

The Rights Based Approach is the outcome of the combined and complimentary empowerment process and the capability approach. Integral Human development is possible only when the development programs are able to integrate the RBA dimension and motivate people to become actors in their capacity as right bearers and assume their responsibility to develop themselves.

The green quadrant in the above schema, based on the different experiences in south Asia, gives clear indications as to how the RBA can be integrated in the development programs.

This document will be complemented by another paper on new paradigm in development which will be published shortly.

Aloysius John
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