

## RURAL LEADERSHIP IN MODERN DEVELOPMENT

**R. M. Vijeratne**

Sri Lanka Foundation Institute,  
100, Independence Square, Colombo 07. Sri Lanka.  
*vijeratne@gmail.com*

**Key words:** Rural Leadership, Modern Development, New Development approaches

### **Abstract**

Man plays the leading role in the development activities. The cultural and social welfare are two major components of the development that go hand in hand. The development is reflected in spheres such as income distribution, status of employment, institutional level, housing, health education, social institutions, customs and beliefs, political system contribute to the common welfare of the society.

Rural social development has been recognized as a core concept prevalent in the developed as well as developing countries. It plays a vital role in the sphere of economic development. Thus, it is reckoned as a significant concept today. Rural social development signifies a socio-economic development in the rural sector. In discussions on development, rural sector occupies a prominent place as rural social development has contributed to remove anomalies that existed in the

living conditions of both urban and rural people of a country. When referring to the societies in the third world countries, it is always mentioned about a developed urban society and an under-developed rural society. Although these two opposing sections are described as a developed urban sector and the under developed rural sector in the present context of the world order, it is interesting to note that the rural sector has reached the threshold of development. It was an accepted fact that, it would not be possible to achieve any overall development target without developing the rural sector. For the third world countries, development of rural societies is important as major part of the population still lives in the villages.

### **Introduction**

For a long time many development programmes have been implemented following top to bottom approach and disbursing a considerable amount of money in addition to providing

transport facilities with the officers in the Government and the Private Sector. However, the benefits reaped by the rural folk from such programmes were rather noteworthy. The rural development should no longer be a haphazard exercise.

The trend in the modern times in to find new strategies that could be adopted to accelerate the development process implemented in rural societies. The developmentalists believe that this new development approach would usher in the desired results. The successive governments that came into power from time to time have introduced various development strategies for the upliftment of the rural communities. Most of these programmes, however, proved to be failures at the very outset, while some were abandoned half-way. In the light of such failures, government and non-government organizations came out with a new concept called new development approach as an alternative remedial measure. We, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, view development from two angles. The new development strategy that came into existence with the liberalized economy focuses on developing rural areas by adopting new types of approaches. It came to be known widely as the 'new development approach'.

In studying how village leadership functions under new development approach, its basic objectives are

discussed under the following broad categories.

- To draw attention how this new development approach could be made use of for the furtherance of development activities of the rural society by examining sociologically how the village leadership acts in the implementation of the community water supply project.
- To study how leadership functioned in the development activities in the rural society and to find out whether such system could be adjusted to suit current development activities.

#### **Methodology (Methodologies used or intend to use in the research)**

To secure data, the researcher adopted the interview method. An interviewing method known as 'unstructured interviewing' was the method followed. Interviewees were allowed to come out with their views freely and relevant information received was recorded.

The study area comprised of 671 houses. Since it was not possible to cover all the houses in the village due to time and other constraints, a sample for the survey was prepared, confining it to 50 houses. Selection of those 50 houses was done on the basis that the first house chosen was the 14<sup>th</sup> house in that list. Thus sample houses were selected at

random following a logical method. Though there were people belonging to different ethnic groups in the village, households were not numbered on the basis of ethnicity. Likewise, caste was also not considered in choosing the household for the sample. Absence of any discrimination in issuing numbers for the households selected enabled the researcher to avoid occurrences of any shortcomings in the sample. Some information was gathered using observation method as well.

### **Experimental results**

Rural water supply project at Pusalla Gramaseva division of Kuruwita divisional secretariat in the Rathnapura district was taken into account to study the community participation.

From the beginning to the completion of this project the community participation was observed. This project was designed in such a way that the participation of the community was present always. The base of this rural water supply and sanitary project was to take the decisions from the community and ownership of all enhanced services is to be handed over to this community. The center of this project was the community and the government sectors involvement is only to guide the project. The government sector collaborates with all the government and the non-government organizations which can assist this

project. The specialty of this project is that, it has changed the previous general practice of completing the project by the government sector and handing it over to the community; into completing the project by the community for the community. The rural water supply and sanitary services program consists of the following three stages which operate with the assistance of community organizations and partner organizations.

Stage one - Project development stage  
Community mobilization  
Planning

Stage two - Construction stage

Stage three - Stabilizing stage

When operationalizing this project in the Pussalla GS division during the community mobilization stage, the community leader has taken measures to identify the village and its community. The time duration for this matter has consumed a period of three months. The geographic location of the village, culture, economy and the political status were observed by the moderator. Further, they have taken steps to obtain assistance from the private enterprises, political leaders and all the potential individual organizations by building up reputations with them.

After analyzing the information gathered by the community, they have forwarded a community proposal with regard to the water requirement for the village to the partner

organizations. Upon receiving the proposal the water supply project officers assess the mobilization. After the officers conclude the preliminary assessment of the proposal submitted by the community, the mobilization stage has been completed during this period.

Then the focus turns to the planning stage. During this stage, the utilization of funds, obtaining services and methods of maintenance is discussed.

On completion of signing the agreement by the three institutes, the project gets underway as a 'gravity' water project with the community leaders and technical officers providing necessary training for pioneering groups. The pioneering groups of the community base organization showed a high interest at the beginning of the project, it has reduced gradually. As per the agreement, a family in a group has to devote 27 man days of labour for the project. But during the research it was found out that there were families who have contributed 7 days less than the requirement as well as families who have contributed more than the required 26 days.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions can be reached on rural leadership. Rural leadership plays a major role in

community activities. New and old qualities of leadership are displayed within this rural leadership. Male domination is active in the village. Act as a group when resolving common problems.

Priority must be given to programs that go with the people and not to programs for the people. Activities should be well coordinated from the national level to the rural level. People should be educated on development projects which are based on the community. By promoting the new leadership to be based on self-power can attain targets.

### References

- Ariyaratne, A.T., 1980, *Collected Works*, VO I, Sarvodaya Research Institute, Dehiwala
- Midgley, J., (1986, *Community participation, Social Development and the state*, London
- Karunaratne, W., 1991, *Sahabagithwa Sanwardenya*, Sri Lanka and Canadian Development Fund Funded
- Kurera, M.R.N., 1992, *Nawa Sanwardena Praweshaya*, Rural Development Training and Research Institute, Colombo 08
- Dias, H.D and Wickramanayake, B.W., 1993, *Rural Development Planning*, Sarwodaya Vishwalekha