

Chapter THREE

Conducting Baseline Survey of Communities

Participatory Rural Appraisal is a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local rural or urban people to express, enhance, share and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.

— Robert Chambers

3.1 Introduction

As establishment of an industrial unit causes significant tremors among the displaced and adjacent communities, a thorough understanding of the social, economic and political complexion and cultural profile of those communities helps in adopting a scientific approach in implementing the CSR initiatives. Scientific conduct of Baseline Survey (BLS) of those communities is the best way for such a thorough understanding. First step in the conduct of BLS is identifying the target communities. The target communities, in general, are mostly the displaced communities and the communities living in the vicinity of the industrial unit, who are exposed to the immediate impact of the industrial activity. Hence, a discussion on the need of conducting BLS, apart from providing framework, tools, techniques and methods is essential in the conduct of BLS.

3.2 Importance of Baseline Survey

The BLS report could be considered as a photo image of the present as well as the immediate past of the displaced communities and the communities living in the neighbourhood of the industrial unit. The CSR initiatives demand a scientific approach at different stages of their implementation to achieve the maximum positive impact on the target community. The CSR initiatives undertaken based on BLS would help in achieving maximum positive impact, otherwise, the development and welfare initiatives undertaken are bound to end up as disjointed, under-productive or unproductive initiatives, and reach 'no man's land' and 'ill-targeted'. To avert such negating scenario, the BLS provides answers to specific questions like which is the target community and who are the target beneficiaries.

The conduct of BLS is the one time effort in general. But in all fairness, periodic conduct of BLS would help in assessing the changes that take place between different points of time, and in designing appropriate initiatives from time to time. The conduct of BLS involves several steps:

1. Delineating the aim, objectives, scope and limitations;
2. Designing the methodology, preparation of tools and conduct of field survey for BLS; and
3. Preparation of the BLS report.

It is essential to note that conducting BLS is not only time consuming but also demands appropriate skills. If BLS is undertaken efficiently, it needs to be remembered that it comes to the rescue of the company when it is facing community aggression blaming company's activities for their problems.

3.3 Baseline Survey for Old Industrial Units

Though this chapter aims at suggesting methodology for conducting BLS of new units in the offing, such exercise is necessary for old units as well. Official records of revenue, Quinquennial Census of forestry, agriculture and irrigation and Decennial Census of population would be highly useful for the assessment. Interactions with people that were aware of the then situation of the displaced and neighbourhood communities would be an equally important source of information. Memory recall and timeline methods would be appropriate methods to adopt while interacting with such people. The information so collected can be substantiated and corroborated with the current situation of those communities. These methods would be highly useful with regard to the units that came into existence during the past two or three decades.

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