

Chapter FIVE

Community Needs Assessment

Environmental pollution is an incurable disease. It can only be prevented.

— **Barry Commoner**

5.1 Introduction

To overcome the economic ripples caused by the establishment of industrial unit, the governments suggest modalities of compensation – sometimes unit specific and at other times common modalities. Unit specific modalities are fixed when it is first of its kind. Same measures would be adopted in all the subsequent cases. Sometimes nature of the particular unit or particular location also demands the issue of specific modalities. The government formulated modalities are generally rule-bound. Hence, in implementing those modalities not much needs assessment are necessary. In addition, however, the affected people are bound to demand additional compensations or the company itself might offer additional compensations. While implementing all such compensations, it is necessary to make proper assessment of community needs.

Importantly, no two individuals or households mirror the characteristics of one another, implying needs of each individual and household differ from one another. Similarly, each of the resources does need a different approach in their effective development and optimum use. Hence, services and facilities required by different communities too vary significantly. In addition, each household, community and resource experiences the impact in a different nature and magnitude. Some might have lost land, somebody else might have lost water source for his land, next might have lost a house and other might have lost grazing land for his sheep. So, each one of them needed a different nature of compensation.

Within communities also, differences could be there in requirements. Some street required a water tap connection, the other street required a street light facility, the third street required blacktopping and the next one required a culvert. Hence, each of them needs a different and unique solution or a different service to overcome the problems they are facing. Hence, needs assessment is essential to optimally utilise each physical, financial and manpower resource meant for CSR, including the skills and capacities for achieving overall welfare of the people. It is in this context Community Needs Assessment (CNA) gains prominence. So, it is essential to understand the framework, tools and techniques, and methods of conduct of CNA. Though CNA is not a step in itself, it is an essential part in the implementation of CSR initiatives. The other and more important side of CNA is prioritisation of household and community needs.

Prioritisation of community needs has to be done scientifically and also with community participation. Need for prioritisation is due to several reasons. No company can meet all the needs and aspirations of the displaced people and communities in the neighbourhood at the same time. Further, the needs of the communities cannot be met fully and forever by any company even if it is too generous and got the earnest concern for the community, as even if majority of the needs are met, newer needs of the community are bound to emerge with passage of time. In addition, the impact of the company's activities will also be felt in different spells with the passage of time. Hence, prioritisation of needs is most essential requirement in the implementation of CSR initiatives. So clear understanding of the steps involved in prioritisation and the necessary precautions to be taken in doing so is essential.

5.2 Importance of CNA

The communities displaced of industrial activity get battered and lose rhythm in the lives. Loss of residential places, lands and livelihood are only a few of the symptoms to mention the impact experienced by the communities. No doubt, the relocation does provide some relief. Apart from those relocated, the neighbourhood communities too suffer. To overcome, at least, some of the impacts, affected communities need to be provided with appropriate services. Basic problems in providing such services, in general, are ill targeting of activities and beneficiaries and ignoring overall requirements of the society. Based on the information available from BLSs and the Impact Assessment Reports (IARs), CNA could be done. But the CNA done by using BLS and IAR, would not be giving weightage to the opinions of individuals, households and communities and their preferences and priorities. So, it would be more effective if CNA tools are prepared based on the socio-economic profile and are canvassed among the sample of relocated and neighbourhood communities.

While conducting CNA, each individual, household, community, resource and sector need to be treated as a unit, and needs of each one of them have to be appropriately delineated. Soil, water, farming, farmers, labour, artisans, women, milch animals, small ruminants, housing, education, health, etc. are the important areas that necessitate needs assessment.

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