



Rights-based approaches to development

Rights-based approaches are gaining currency in development policy and practice because conventional approaches have produced disappointing results, particularly with respect to reducing poverty and promoting greater equity.

Rights-based approaches to development begin with the understanding that the purpose of development is the expansion of human freedoms. They recognize that poverty is multidimensional: it is not just about low income, but also about vulnerability, insecurity and the inability to make oneself heard. Rights-based approaches aim to empower people to exercise their 'voice' and influence decisions that affect their lives; help state and non-state actors realize their responsibilities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil citizen's rights; help donors identify how pro-poor political change can be supported; and help translate human rights principles into reality (Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

The key principles of all rights-based approaches are the protection and promotion of rights, accountability of duty bearers, participation and empowerment of rights-holders, non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups. While many international development agencies have subscribed to rights-based approaches, a solid evidence base on rights-based practice in development programming does not yet exist.

Approach

KIT contributes to building evidence for translating rights-based approaches into practice, and develops methodologies and tools to integrate these approaches into programming. In doing so, KIT brings a broad understanding of both 'rights', to include those not enshrined in national legislation or international conventions, and 'duty-bearers', to include all development actors not just the state. In collaboration with partner institutions, KIT studies methodologies used by rights claimants and rights-based movements to influence the formulation, interpretation and implementation of rights. KIT also examines how duty bearers can use a rights framework.

Focus points

- Development of an actor-oriented perspective in rights-based practice
- Development of methodologies to support duty bearers - whether state or non-state organizations or international donor agencies - in their efforts to integrate rights-based approaches into sector programming
- Capacity development to undertake research, policy formulation and programming using rights-based approaches

Key projects

Development of a framework to study rights-based approaches, ongoing since 2004
KIT, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa) and Sahayog, a civil society organization in India, developed a framework for studying rights-based approaches. To build the framework, they first made an inventory of major rights movements and selected one rights movement in each country for closer study. The analysis focused on the institutional channels through which claims were made, the type of claim relating to each institutional domain, the methods of citizen action and the outcomes in terms of the entitlements that were secured.

Course on building capacity for rights: democracy and development in Africa, 2007

Undertaken with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, the training engages researchers, advocates, trainers and programme officers from civil society and government in exploring understandings of rights and develops practical approaches to employing a rights perspective in advocacy and development.

Training on rights-based approaches to situation assessments, 2006

KIT conducted rights-based training for seventeen NGO partners of the East Africa Committee on Rights. Participants from the region deepened their knowledge and practical understanding of a rights-based approach to situation assessments.

Rights-based approach in Royal Netherlands Embassy in Bangladesh, 2006

The project expanded the understanding of rights-based approaches for embassy staff and established better linkages between health, governance and gender activities. KIT undertook an analysis of sector programmes and used this to train staff in applying a rights-based approach and to reflect upon and revise their programming approaches.

Support to orphans and vulnerable children: a rights-based perspective, 2005

The project contributed to the development of innovative rights-based approaches for orphan and vulnerable children support. KIT identified rights-based programming principles and developed strategies, methods and tools for their implementation. The focus was on sexual and reproductive health rights, agency and participation.

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights programming, Benin, 2004- 2005

KIT provided assistance to Plan International in formulating a sexual and reproductive health and rights programme with the direct participation of young people. The focus was on ensuring access to sex education and health services as a right by engaging health institutions, traditional leaders, schools and parents, and creating safe spaces for young people to be trained in life skills.

Human rights and good governance review of Danida sector programme support, 2005

KIT reviewed Danida's agricultural programme support in Bangladesh. The project identified rights and governance issues, current measures being taken to address them along with their results, rights violations and areas for future interventions.

Papers and forthcoming publications

Albertyn, C. and S. Meer (forthcoming) *Citizens or mothers? The marginalization of women's reproductive rights in the struggle for reproductive health care for HIV-positive pregnant women in South Africa.*

Dasgupta, J. (forthcoming) *The story of struggle of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Sangh.'*

Kamminga, E. (2006) *Rights of children in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty.* Issues paper.

Wegelin-Schuringa, M. and E. Kamminga (2006) 'Water and sanitation in the context of HIV/AIDS: the right of access in resource-poor countries', *Health and Human Rights*, 9(1): 152-172

Mukhopadhyay, M. (2003) *Rights-based approaches in development.* KIT issues paper.

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