

Time for CAPART to have retrospective introspection

CAPART, i.e. Council for Advancement of People's Action for Rural Technologies coming under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has been constituted to act as a nodal agency for catalysing and coordinating with NGOs by providing financial assistance for the development of rural India through its various interventions. Even after several years of its existence, CAPART seems to have not seen success in terms of change in the quality of life of our rural people or generated any sustainable employment or income generation. What ails this organization is presented here and solutions are also offered.

1. CAPART never gets a stable leader, Director General (DG), for a reasonably long time. Often the DGs are appointed just before their retirement, and they would stay for 4–5 months leaving little time to understand the organization and the ongoing programmes. The solution is to appoint a DG for a minimum of 3 years and to also consider technocrats for DG position.

2. Unnecessary delays between sanctioning of a project, disbursement of funds during different stages of the project (often 3–4 years) could demoralize the NGOs and their employees may quit due to lack of regular salaries. The solu-

tion is to send a facilitator-cum-evaluator on time and adopt e-governance for speedy disposal of reports and financial assistance.

3. While some NGOs are sincere, genuine and service-oriented, unfortunately many are not. CAPART rightly blacklists them. But such NGOs open with new names. Nowadays with micro-credit and microfinancing being practised everywhere, none of the NGOs is looking towards CAPART for any funds. NGOs have to assess whether their interventions have changed the quality of life of the beneficiaries. Those who indulge in cheating should realize that such acts are of the worst kind. However, the few good NGOs should not suffer because of the bad ones. Corruption is a menace in every society, country and all departments. CAPART has to adopt its own mechanisms to arrest this in its own department. Corruption in the name of doing service to the people is the most unkindest of acts.

4. Among several programmes of CAPART, rural housing and sanitation seem to be the most conspicuous because they are concrete structures, and CAPART would be remembered for this and all other interventions would just vanish in no time. The main reason for the failure

of several other types of interventions is that they do not have a proper feedback mechanism, or provide after-support, guidance, maintenance and redressal mechanism, lack of market avenues and buy-back mechanisms. Further, CAPART should have a proper withdrawal mechanism for the programmes which it funds. These issues could be addressed.

5. CAPART could concentrate more on housing, sanitation and infrastructure, viz. roads, irrigation, tank renovations, in addition to creating facilities for food processing and other agro-industries.

6. Most of the awareness programmes could be taken to the people through the electronic media. CAPART could collaborate with Doordarshan and bring out VCDs/DVDs on various programmes, healthcare, hygiene, technologies and methods of operation of the technologies and their implementation. Such programmes could be repeated every fortnight.

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Vituperative book review

I was surprised that a reputed journal like *Current Science* would publish a review¹ that makes unsubstantiated remarks about the book and its authors. I had purchased the book and read it before I saw this review. I found the book extremely informative and revealed the struggles that Indian scientists and engineers had to face before the nuclear power programme of the country was firmly established. If it were not for their efforts, whether it was legal or otherwise, India would not have obtained the approval of the nuclear suppliers to give us power reactors and fuel.

The reviewer however makes derogatory remarks on the authors, without

ascertaining that both of them had been involved in the reactor programmes, beginning with the *Apsara* reactor, before opting to do basic research. To say: 'The authors reveal their unfamiliarity with simple facts of nuclear reactors or nuclear weapons, resulting in misleading statements' without quoting instances of such errors, is in itself misleading. Having been in the field of radiation physics, I fail to see what units are 'carelessly' listed and what 'hasty judgements arose from a failure to check out their bases' – the reviewer should consult the internet to correct himself.

In an interview with the authors, I found that they did obtain full coopera-

tion and information, not from the senior Directors of the DAE, but from those working on projects. With this cooperation they decided to write on the power programme and how weapons development hindered it. Nowhere in the book do the authors allege the main focus of the DAE has been weapon design and production, rather than power generation.

1. Krishnan, L. V., *Curr. Sci.*, 2008, **95**, 1747–1748.

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