Right Based Approach to Development

1. What is development?

In simple terms development is understood as construction of infrastructures and earning better livelihood. The efforts for development in the past fifty years have all followed this school of thought. But this approach failed to live up to the expectations of uplifting the livelihoods of the common people. Instead this approach increased dependency on others. As a result development could not sustain and the community lacked feeling of ownership towards development activities. The gap between the rich and the poor increased. The failure of this need-based approach in fulfilling the development needs proves that the definition of development we know and the approach we follow to it alone is not enough to bring about positive change.

To broaden the understanding about development it can be defined as:

*Orderly positive change in physical, economical, social, political and cultural conditions of a human being or society is called development.*

The above definition focuses on the positive change in the economical, physical, social, political and cultural aspects of people and society due to the efforts by the people. This is an ongoing process.

These processes help in diminishing the social discriminations by bringing change in people’s thoughts, mentality and awareness.

2. What is Right Based Approach to development?

Right Based Approach to development is an idea that studies, views and applies all activities of social change in regard to rights. Development should be viewed as a right rather than charity. The development efforts for education, health, employment and other infrastructures must be decided with the participation of the people. Development must be taken through rights perspective rather than reward. If there is failure to ensure the participation of the community, development process cannot be completed and is treated irrelevant for community. Lack of participation means no sense of ownership towards development.

Critiques argue that Rights-Based Approach has been a new entry in the development jargons. On the other hand, a different band of social observers claim that securing political and civil rights has been the prime objective of all kinds of social and political movements for centuries. Therefore, RIGHTS is not a new agenda, nor any new approach to social development process.

The tenth five-year plan of Nepal a state that being denied of rights is also poverty. In the context of Nepal the poor, women, dalits and ethnic groups have been deprived of rights. The main reason for this is the unequal power relation in the society. The process of exploring the root causes for deprivation from rights, addressing these causes and establishing the needs of the people as rights is the Right Based Approach to development. This creates a community cohesive, strong and active which gives impetus to steady social transformation process.

Human rights, is said to be violated if a person’s basic needs aren’t fulfilled. So to respect the human rights, development approaches must be viewed in regard to Rights Based. In this regard the active participation of the poor and vulnerable communities is important in the decision making of the development activities and processes. The other important aspect is; to aware the
people that development must not be taken as a charity but as a right. The development hence achieved can be sustained.

3. Basic assumption of Right Based Approach

- Owners of resources are the people
- Poor, women, Dalits, victimized and the ethnic minorities must get equal opportunity
- An environment where people can get education, health services, social security and freedom to participate in politics must be made
- Participation must be broad and meaningful
- Active participation of the targeted people is a must in the decision making process of every development activities
- Access to resource and control over it must be vested upon the poor and the voiceless people
- Enhance self reliance and help each other to solve common problems
- Establish basic needs as basic rights

4. Consideration in Right Based Approach:

- **Change the view about poverty**

  Until now we have regarded poverty as fate, god’s curse result of being lower caste and inability of a person. This understanding of poverty reflects the lack of awareness about the society. At this point of time the relevance of the reasons such as fate, caste and god’s curse must be questioned.

  The root causes for poverty are lack of opportunities, disparity in access and control over resources, and exclusion from development activities and unjust laws. The exclusion of people from political, social and economical mainstream decision-making level feed to extreme poverty. The unequal power relations persisting in the society is another main cause of poverty. So, until and unless we change our perception about poverty we cannot create a positive impact through out development effort. An effect caused due to social, economical, political discriminations and unequal power relations cannot be addressed by starting goat rising and poultry farming. Feeding the hungry or training poor people skills is not enough to bring about positive change. The right to practice those skills must be ensured if a sustained positive change is to be obtained.

- **View development as a question**

  The analysis of social context is the basis for Right Based development. This helps in identifying the denial rights, marginalized groups and community and the root cause for their poverty and marginalization. The causes that are identified must be established as issues and efforts to solve these must be made in a planned way with the leadership of marginalized groups or community. Which ultimately, establish the basic needs as basic rights.

- **Form, mobilize and empower peoples organizations**

  Externally driven development cannot be sustainable is the fact that has already been proved. This is because of the lack of proper knowledge about the context, social structure, power relations, economic, cultural and political conditions. Change in its true sense is possible only when leadership is taken locally, people’s organizations are formed and take leadership of development efforts. So, the initiation of marginalized group in establishing the basic rights of the
society is important. In this regard an environment must be created for them to be organized, aware and empowered to take leadership for rights claiming campaign.

- **Ensure equal access, control and ownership over public resources**

The management and utilization of the community resources such as river, well, forest etc must be equitable in nature. The control of single group over the resources will be against the concept of social justice. Social justice ensures equitable access, control and ownership of resources. In this regard social inclusiveness must be promoted and formulate rules and regulations on the basis of equity. These types of rules and regulations will define and establish rights of all.

- **Mobilize public resources in a sustained and proper way**

No one have authority to usage of public resources unmanaged and Irregular. According to various studies twenty percent population is using eighty percent of the resources. This cannot be said equitable distribution in any circumstances. This practice of usage of resources by only one group of people must be diminished through the institutionalization of participatory benefit sharing process. The resources are exhaustible. So, it is important to ensure that the future generations get the right to utilize these resources. Resources must be utilized without compromising the ability of the future generations.