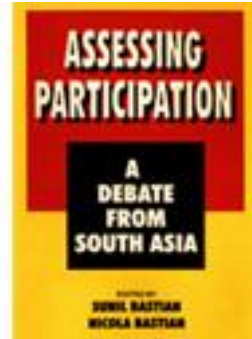


Assessing Participation: A Debate from South Asia

or 'Participatory Development' has become one of the orthodoxies of the mainstream discourse of development. Participation is not only expected to allow the involvement of wider sections of the population in the development process, but also contribute to the distribution of fruits of economic growth. As part of an on-going research on participatory development, a group of researchers and practitioners of development took a fresh look at the notion of participatory development at a workshop organized by Duryog Nivaran in November 1995. (Duryog Nivaran is a South Asian network promoting participatory approaches in situations of natural disasters and internal conflicts).



Assessing Participation brings together the papers presented at this workshop. The starting point of some of the papers in analyzing the theme of participation is development. They look at the conceptual basis of the notion of participatory development as well as concrete experiences of its use in specific projects. For others participation is essentially a concept relevant for civil society politics. Almost all the papers point to the need to understand the limitations of participation. These limitations arise both at conceptual level, and, in what could be achieved through participation at project level. The editors hope that this volume will contribute to a debate on participatory development, and will help, us to assess its potential in more realistic terms.