



Identifying the hidden systems methodological footprints of UNDP-GEF- SGP projects: Reflections on SGP in Iran

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Though several national and international development agencies claim commitment to participative approaches to reduce poverty by helping the rural poor, little progress has been made in actualizing their claims and translating ambitious programs into effective action. The GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) is a promising approach to engage individuals within local communities and to support them to formulate and to shape their collectively-identified problems into a proposal through collaboration with an NGO or a CBO, as well as with an in-kind sponsor. It aims to improve ecological problems as well as the communities' life style by providing alternative livelihood and reducing poverty in a participatory manner. This article depicts how the Small Grants Program encompasses different dimensions of the most practical participatory research and sustainable community development methodologies and. as an amalgamated holistic entity. Participatory Action Research is the most appropriate methodology which fits with the contextual framework of the SGPs in Iran. In the case studies we will see how the action research-based projects are moving forward through the interdependent complementary cycles. It also promises a more practical and holistic approach for research and development in developing countries.

Key words: SGP, Iran, sustainable development, natural resources management, empowerment community-based participation