



Published by:

P R I A

42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi- 110 062, India

Ph: 011-26089559

Fax: 011-26080183

E-Mail: info@pria.org

Web: www.pria.org

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Foreword

At a time when ‘good governance’, ‘transparent and accountable governance’ are fast gaining significant place in the development discourse, Gram Sabha as the vehicle for democratic governance assumes immense importance. In fact, one of the most important provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is the mandatory provision for constituting a Gram Sabha for every Gram Panchayat.

Gram Sabha is the basic unit in the Panchayati Raj mechanism. The basic philosophy that underlines the concept of Gram Sabha is that of participatory democracy. Gram Sabhas provide a local platform for people to meet and discuss the local development problems, analyses the development and administrative actions of the elected representatives, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability. Most importantly, it provides opportunity for the participation of all sections of the village (women, Dalits, tribal and other marginalized groups) in planning and implementation of local development programmes.

There have been mixed experiences from across the country regarding the functioning of Gram Sabha. A majority of the state governments are yet to provide adequate powers and spell out clearly the procedure of this significant institution. People are yet to understand the significance of this institution. But, if participatory democracy is to take place, people need to be aware of the importance of Gram Sabha, voice their opinions & concerns, seek more transparency and accountability in the functioning of Panchayats.

Recognizing the potential of Gram Sabha, PRIA and its partners have been working towards increased mobilization and participation of people in Gram Sabha meetings. The participation of people in Gram Sabha meetings is yet to improve substantially but the fact remains that where people have recognized the potential of collective action through Gram Sabha, they have taken initiatives in mobilizing resources and getting things done, even in the absence of any support from the government machinery.

This booklet is a collection of cases and experiences of functioning of Gram Sabhas, which have been collected in the course of interventions in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions by PRIA and its partners.

Rajesh Tandon
President
PRIA



An Overview of Micro Planning

Introduction

The concept of micro level planning, involving people in plan-formulation and implementation is not new. Right from the days of community development programmes, people's role and participation has been stressed. Yet in practice putting the people in the centre of the planning process has remained a dream. The eighth five-year plan made an attempt to deal with this shortcoming by recognising the need to involve people in the process of development through micro level participatory planning. The plan stressed the need for changing the old pattern of development where everything came from the government and people were the passive recipients. This meant that the people must become active and the government should cooperate in the process of development.

This concept of giving power to the people has been given definite shape with the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. It has given formal recognition to the panchayats at village, block and district levels to function as a government. In addition to this for the first time reservations for women and dalits have been made so as to enable and encourage their participation in the political and development processes.

This Amendment allows the people the following functions, authority to the three-tier structure of panchayats at village, block and district levels so as to enable them to function as institutions of self-governance. With respect to this, Article 243G of the Constitution of India reads thus: "Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the legislature of a state may, by law endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary with respect to:

- The preparation of plans of economic development and social justice
- The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice including those in relation to matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule."

Planning is now thought of as a “people-driven” activity, in which each of the layers of governance have been given some degree of independence and self governance, and have to discuss matters with each of their successive layers in order to obtain their share of benefits.

The responsibilities of the panchayats are many and varied. Many of the leaders and members of these newly constituted panchayats have entered the political field for the first time and for those who have been struggling with responsibilities for a long time, the idea of planning is brand new. Doubts are being raised as to their ability for taking on these many responsibilities. For the last 50 years and more the people have been dependent on the government for development, can they now plan for their needs? And even if they plan will the government machinery allow them the space to do so? Do the people and panchayats have the necessary skills and confidence to deal with their responsibilities? Will they be able to collect and analyse information required for planning for different subjects? What about women and dalits, will they be involved in the decision-making processes? Will the women be allowed to sit with men to discuss priorities and development issues?

Driven by these and many more questions combined with a basic belief in people's capacities, PRIA began its initiative of strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions towards the end of 1995 in eight states of India.

PRIA's commitment to strengthening local self governance in the country is guided by the belief that

- Panchayati Raj Institutions are Institutions of Local Self-Governance and not mere implementers of centrally determined development programmes. They should not be allowed to become the third tier of development administration.
- The “base upwards” comprehensive planning based on the micro Planning exercise is to be the basis of self-governance.
- The PRIs encourage the active role of women and other weaker sections of society in decision making with the aim of enhancing their role, status and leadership.
- The PRIs should be able to use and control local natural and human resources as well as other development resources available within the state and central governments.
- Strengthening the PRIs will require clarity about their roles, systems of governance, accountability, transparency and inter-linkages.

As a strategy for strengthening PRIs, PRIA and the Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations initiated participatory base upwards planning processes (micro planning) in some Gram Panchayats spread over 7 states of the country namely Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Participatory Base Upwards Planning Initiatives: A Brief Overview

Name of State	Name of District and Block	Name of Gram Panchayat	Objectives of Planning	Duration of Process
Bihar March	Muzzaffarpur, Bochaha	Belthi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To find possible links between the gram sabha and Bochaha Rasulpur government welfare schemes To involve people in analysing & prioritising their problems as well as their participation in implementation 	March to May 1998
Haryana	Jhajjar, Salhawas	Dhana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage people's active participation in the decision making and implementation processes To enhance the participation and decision making capacities of women and dalits To promote transparency and accountability with regard to the functioning of the Gram Panchayat and the administration at the block level 	April to October 1997
Himachal Pradesh	Mandi, Sadar	Kehar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and work out a real model of base upwards planning where people act as their own agents of development To develop a simple and systematic framework for the participatory planning process which can be replicated To prepare a plan that is sensitive to and reflective of the needs of women and dalits 	May 1996 to January 1997
Kerala	Kollam, Sasthamcotta	West Kallada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a model demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of the participatory planning process To encourage and enable people to use their knowledge and capacities for the development of their village To enhance and develop peoples' capacity to plan according to their needs To empower people - especially women and dalits To encourage and enable peoples' co-operation and participation in the activities and programmes of PRIs 	July 1995 – on-going

Madhya Pradesh	Sehore, Sehore	Jamunia Tank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen participation of people at the grass roots level in decision making processes with the focus on women and dalits To build the capacities of the members of gram panchayat so that they may be able to prepare a plan based on their own needs To develop and give shape to a concrete model of base upward planning with the gram panchayat 	1995
Rajasthan	Ajmer, Jawaza	Naikalan Durgawas Kabra Jawaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific attention may be paid to programmes aimed at the rural poor Programmes are geared towards the specific needs of the area and its growth potential The process of planned rural development may be decentralised A closer partnership with the rural population is achieved The lowest rungs of the administration may be organised and coordinated 	
Uttar Pradesh	Kushinagar, Kasya	Mathia Madhopur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To activate gram panchayat and gram sabha members through their involvement in the planning processes To enable people to identify their needs, prioritise them and find appropriate solutions and resources to address those needs To prepare a systematic plan based on people's needs and submit it to the administration 	May 1996

The following document is based on the experiences collected and compiled during these participatory planning exercises. An attempt has been made to retain the uniqueness of each experience and yet recognize the fact that given the opportunity people can plan for themselves

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The Haryana Initiative

PRIA, Haryana began functioning in 1995, as part of PRIA's initiative on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. It began its initiative with 5 districts of Haryana through the training of local voluntary organisations and elected members of Panchayati Raj institutions. Now its work has spread to 9 districts. However the main issue is the strengthening of PRIs so that they may become institutions of local self-governance. The following is an account of the process of planning by the people of Dhana, Haryana, facilitated by PRIA.

A. A VILLAGE CALLED DHANA

In the beginning of the 19th century a man named Todaram came from the village of Jamalpur and established himself in what is now known as Dhana. He is remembered as the founder of Dhana. Today it is one of the 33 villages that make up the Salhawas block in Jhajjar district. It is situated at a distance of just 70 kms from the capital city, Delhi, 34 kms from the district headquarters and barely 2 kms from the block, the centre of all panchayat activities. The nearest railway station and market is just 10 kms away in Kosli, a sub-division of district Rewari.

According to the 1991 census, the village has a total population of 1,416 out of which 753 are males and 663 females. The dominant castes in the village are Jat (922), Jogi (249), Chamar (109), Nai (60), Brahmin (48) and Khati (28).

Dhana is predominantly an agricultural village. Almost 33% of the population is occupied with agriculture, 30% in agriculture and service, 7% in agriculture and small businesses and about 30% are daily wage earners (labour). The standard of living depends upon the land holding and the type of service they are involved in. The major crops in the area are jawar, bajra, wheat and mustard. The village has a high literacy rate of almost 75% and the dropout rate in the schools is almost nil. The men folk spend most of their time discussing politics, playing cards and in agricultural season are found sowing (mostly by tractor). Women are responsible for all the household chores, livestock rearing, and agriculture related activities during harvesting season. There are taboos on women sitting or attending meetings in the village "chopal". Their role in the panchayat affairs is minimal. The situation of the schedule castes in the village is more or less the same, though the caste structure in Haryana is not rigid, i.e. people of various castes inter mingle freely. The power, however, lies with those in control of the major portion of the village resources.

The village of Dhana is divided into seven wards thus there are seven elected ward representatives called "panches" in the panchayat. The sarpanch of the gram panchayat belongs to the dominant Jat caste. Of the seven panches two are women and one a SC male.

The panchayat has an annual income of about Rs.8000-9000 from its land that is leased out to the highest bidder every year and from taxes such as "chulha" tax, and house tax. The panchayat also gets grants and funds from the government under various schemes. The gram panchayat has one middle school, one anganwadi centre, one fair price shop and the services of a health visitor every week. In addition there is a registered youth club and a registered community based organisation.

Initiation in April 1997

Consultation and meetings: Meetings with these ward members and the Sarpanch became the starting point of interactions with the people of Dhana. Gradually these meetings extended to meetings with the gram sabha members in their houses. Initially the discussions centred on various issues related to their daily lives in the village and politics in the country, in general. Regular meetings were now being organised to discuss people's participation in gram panchayat activities, the basic provisions of the

Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, power granted to the people, their ability to think and plan for their needs. Many meetings in small groups were organised in all the wards; care was taken to include members of all communities and women as well as schedule caste members were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings.

While this environment of mutual trust and co-operation was being built in the village, meetings were also being held in the block office. The sarpanch and PRIA representatives met the Block Development and Panchayat Officer, the planning initiative was discussed with him and after that the block office became an integral part of this process.

Ward Meetings Held in May 1997

During the early phases, discussions and meetings between the ward members took place, and this laid the foundation of the planning process. They were further encouraged to have meetings in their own wards concerning the planning process. Elected members contacted the people in all seven wards. These meetings became a platform for not only sharing their problems but also for looking at possible solutions.

PRIA representatives got their first look into the problems faced by the people as well an opportunity to explain the purpose of planning in detail. They were asked two questions. Why would an outside organisation be interested in their problems, and what would they get at the end of it? They were told that there were no quick solutions offered, the idea was to look at their own abilities and build on them. The discussions took on a new meaning after this answer was given.

Survey in May 1997

It was decided to do a survey so that the information already available to the people could be organised in an orderly manner. The survey was planned with the help of the yuva mandal, mahila mandal, members of Gram Sabha and Ward representatives. Collecting information was the task of the members of the community. Information was collected about caste, gender, the population, occupation, landholding, education, livestock composition, irrigation facilities and garbage disposal facilities.

Ward and Gram Sabha Meetings in June 1997

Ward level meetings were organised to discuss the issues that would be raised in the Gram Sabha meeting. During the process the panches met the people for the first time to listen to their problems. Care was taken to bring women and scheduled caste members to attend these meetings. These groups so far neglected could now share their concerns about land encroachment and lack of electricity

in small ward meetings. A Gram Panchayat meeting was called by the sarpanch to discuss the date, time and venue of the meeting. It was also decided that the BDO and Gram Sachiv would be informed of the meeting.

The Gram Sabha meeting was held on 18.06.97 in the sarpanch's "chopal". The BDO and Gram Sachiv were present at the meeting and could see the people's active participation in a meeting which is usually just a formality in most of the Gram Panchayats in Haryana.

Using Pictorial Exercises to Know about Available Resources

In the ward level meetings and survey, it was seen that the people had little or no idea as to where a tap or street light could be installed for the best results as well as the resources that are available within each ward. For the purpose of involving the people, pictorial exercises in sharing and collecting information regarding available resources was adopted. People sat together and drew a map of their ward - households, lanes, positioning of taps and electricity poles, garbage disposal sites, land holdings and so on. The exercise had two aims, one the people were actually able to draw a map of their ward with the help of discussions and two, the information collected through the survey could be re-checked as well as discussed.

Village Planning Meeting

All the ward plans were prepared and a discussion took place on the difficult issues of land encroachment and garbage disposal. The sarpanch gave the point of view of the panchayat on the topic of planning and solving the problem of land encroachment. Everyone contributed to the discussion and listed their needs in order of importance. The proceedings of the meeting were duly recorded so that they could be formally passed in the formal Gram Sabha meeting to be held in December 1997.

Setting up of a cutting and tailoring centre in Ward No.3, Gram Panchayat Dhana

The members of ward no 3 and 4 (mainly SC and OBC dominated wards) held meetings once a week to discuss issues that needed immediate attention. In one such meeting the need for a vocational training centre for young girls and women was discussed. Subsequently it was decided that a cutting and tailoring centre would be started in the dalit chopal. At the meeting the people could discuss fees for training and the arrangements made by the panchayats in the chopal. This activity gave the people faith in their ability to bring about changes.

SECTOR SPECIFIC PLAN: *Prepared by the Panchayat and Members*

Issue	Activities	Time Frame	Responsibility
Link Road from the Village to the Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> † Project planning, resolution in gram sabha meeting and submission to the block office † Part of the planned estimate given by the PWD minister 	<p>Mar 1997</p> <p>Oct 1997</p>	Gram panchayat and Block Development Office
Free the Common Ponds from Garbage and clean them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> † Arrange an alternative place for garbage disposal † Seek the help of Public Works and Public Health Department 	<p>Nov 97 to Jul 1998</p> <p>Aug-Dec 1998</p>	Gram Panchayat and Community Gram Panchayat and Public Works and Public Health Department
Drinking Water Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> † Survey done during planning for location † Project planning for two water tanks and taps (14) and submission to block office † Project passed and construction completed 	<p>Sep 1997 to Jan 1998</p> <p>Mar 1998</p>	IVG members and PRIA representatives Gram Panchayat Gram Panchayat and Block Development Office
Electricity Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> † A core group is formed for handling the issue of installing transformer † A request for a transformer and 10 poles † Installation of transformer and poles 	<p>Jul 1997</p> <p>Oct 1997</p> <p>Dec 1997</p>	Gram Panchayat, community members & PRIA representatives Gram Panchayat, core committee and CBO Electric Supply Department, Gram Panchayat and core committee
Women's Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> † Ward wise awareness camps on health issues † Forming of a health committee and its training † Forming a self help group † Opening a vocational training centre (cutting and tailoring) † Continued awareness programmes and activities for women to encourage their participation in decision making processes and leadership 	<p>Oct '97 to Jan '98</p> <p>Nov. '97-Mar '98</p> <p>May-Jun 1998</p> <p>Jul 1998</p> <p>Dec 1998</p>	Mahila Mandal, Gram Panchayat VIC and PRIA Mahila Mandal, Gram Panchayat, VIC and PRIA Mahila Mandal Mahila Mandal, Gram Panchayat and VIC Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha Members and VIC

SECTOR SPECIFIC PLAN: *Prepared by the Panchayat and Members*

Issue	Activities	Time Frame	Responsibility
Garbage Disposal on Panchayat land and land encroachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of and environment building through small group discussions Solution to the encroachment issue through the SDM Court 	<p>Apr 1998</p> <p>Dec 1998</p>	<p>Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha Members and VIC</p> <p>Gram Panchayat, VIC and Courts</p>
Construction of Metalled Road and Drainage Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan formulated, passed as Gram Sabha resolution and submission to the Block Office 	<p>Sep 1997 to Dec 1997</p>	<p>Gram Sabha Members, Gram Panchayat, VIC Committee and Block Development Office</p>
Kutch Lane (laying of Streets with bricks) and Drainage Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget estimation, resolution by Gram Sabha and submission to Block Office 	<p>Seo 1997 to Jan 1998</p>	<p>Gram Sabha Members, Gram panchayat, VIC Committee and Block Development Office</p>
Establishing a Village Information Centre (VIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement of a common place for the centre Formation of a VIC Committee to look into the functioning of the centre 	<p>Nov-Dec 1997</p> <p>Jan 1998</p>	<p>Gram Sabha Members, Gram panchayat and Anganwadi Workers</p> <p>IVG Members and Gram Panchayat</p>
Construction of a cremation ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimate prepared and submitted to Block Development Office Formation of a Old Peoples Committee for the maintenance of the ground 	<p>Dec 1998</p> <p>Dec 1998</p>	<p>Gram Panchayat and old peoples Committee</p> <p>Gram Sabha Members and VIC Committee</p>

Strengthening the Process of Participatory base Upwards Planning: Some Initiatives

The discussions took into account the steps that went into the process, resulting in a specific plan for the sectors. However the actual process did not move in an organised manner. There were many processes taking place in the village and outside, at the same time that contributed to the ultimate plan. Some of these processes resulted in initiatives made by the people, while others resulted in plans made by the PRIA team members. All these initiatives are discussed in brief in the following pages so that the reader may be able to understand the process in totality.

Learning to Help Themselves: The Village Information Centre Initiative

During the planning process it became clear that people were not properly informed about issues that come up on a daily basis, how they can be dealt with, where to go and what their rights were etc. The ward meetings, survey and pictorial exercises, discussions about the possible solutions, helped them to come to the conclusion that a Village Information Centre was needed.

A village Information Centre (VIC) was set up where the panchayat and the volunteers of Dhana would take up the responsibility of collecting information and distributing it. The centre will provide information on issues ranging from the new panchayati raj act, employment opportunities, health and sanitation issues, and how people can solve their everyday problems.

The newly constructed “anganwadi centre” building was used as the VIC after the anganwadi timings were over.

Lessons Learnt

The planning process in Dhana has been a learning experience.

- Some members of the Gram Sabha have shown the qualities of community leaders, realising the importance of their role in the development of the village.
- The panchayat has learnt to function in a more organised way in the general interest of the people.
- The panches have begun to realise that they have a greater role in the functioning of the panchayat than just passing resolutions.
- The panchayat and especially the sarpanch have learnt the task of bargaining with the government administration for more resources for the development of the panchayat.
- On the whole the people and the panchayat members of Dhana have learnt to be more aware of their own abilities and use the resources (human and others) available within the village.
- The planning process has enhanced and built up people’s skills to organise the information available to them that is essential for planning and they now know where to go for more information and resources so that the planning process continues.

Future Directions

The planning and implementation process in Dhana was completed in October 1997. The number of tap connections has increased from 6 to 14 as a result of the community's contribution and panchayat initiative. Two water tanks have also been constructed, a new transformer has been installed in order to deal with the electricity problem. The people and the panchayats have adopted the Village Information Centre initiative.

B. MICRO PLANNING INITIATIVE IN BALAICHA, HARYANA

Micro Planning

Based on our experiences of carrying out participatory bottom-up planning in two panchayats Dhana and Khetavas in district Jhajjar Haryana, PRIA undertook a similar initiative in District Mahendergarh, Haryana. Inspired by the process, Jan Sewa Kendra, a voluntary organisation based in Mahendergarh District took the responsibility of replicating it in their work area. This was seen as a good opportunity for both replication of the earlier participatory model as well as to build the capacities of the local organisation undertaking this process in collaboration with PRIA. Village Balaicha was selected for carrying out this process. The reasons for this selection were

- Firstly that the office of the Voluntary Association (VA) is situated in this panchayat and apart from sharing a very close relationship with the people of Balaicha, Mr Sripal who is heading the VA showed a keen interest in carrying out a Bottom-up planning exercise in that panchayat based on the model developed by PRIA
- Secondly the Sarpanch of this panchayat is a woman and one of PRIA's objective is to build capacities and enhance leadership skills of women representatives.
- Finally Balaicha not being a "Roadside Panchayat" is cut off and relatively not so developed as others in the State.

This case has been divided into three sections; section 1 describes the panchayat and its socio-economic status, section 2 gives some insights into the process of participatory bottom-up planning carried out in Balaicha and finally section 3 highlights some of the learnings derived from this exercise and suggestions for further improvement.

Historical Background

It is said that the village Balaicha is about 1000 years old. Earlier on, it was known as Ballabhgarh and ruled over by the Nawab of Jhajjar. The village was situated 1 kilometre west of the present day Balaicha and was razed to the ground by a fire (ordered by the Nawab of Jhajjar). Even today remains of the old village can be found in and around the area. During those days only two castes Brahmin and Dalits used to inhabit the village. The Ahirs came to the area much later. Elders of the village say that

long ago a young girl by the name of Paira had come to the village and given birth to a male child under the Jati tree. Even today the majority of households in the village belong to the "Paira" subcaste.

Status of Panchayat

The village is divided into seven wards. The main characteristic of the panchayat is that all the ward members and the Sarpanch have been selected unanimously by the people. The procedure is to call a village meeting whereby all those present select there Panchayat members.

Profile of Panchayat Members

S.No	Name	Post	Age	Caste	Education
1.	Murti Devi	Sarpanch	40	Brahmin	Illiterate
2.	Shri Hukum Singh	Up-Sarpanch	30	Ahir	10th Pass
3.	Ram Pratap	Panch	35	Brahmin	5th Pass
4.	Satnarayan	Panch	50	Brahmin	5th Pass
5.	Jawahar Ram	Panch	40	S.C.	Illiterate
6.	Smt. Shanti Devi	Panch	48	Brahmin	Illiterate
7.	Smt.Ompati	Panch	35	Brahmin	Illiterate
8.	Niranjan Lal	Panch	32	S.C.	8th Pass

The panchayat has an annual income of 40-45 thousand rupees from its panchayat land. This income was utilised in the year 1997-1998 for boring of a tube well, repairing of hand pumps and payment of electricity bills (panchayat Tube well). Although initially they carried out a lot of developmental work in their area, the irregular visits of the Panchayat Secretary has led to disinterest in carrying out any further work. It has also become extremely difficult in the absence of the secretary for them to get information about the various schemes and provisions available to them. Further some inter-village dynamics arising out of a water dispute in that panchayat has resulted in less co-operation and involvement of the people in panchayat activities.

Socio-Economic Profile

The village is spread in an area of about 60 bighas and is dominated by the Brahmin community having a total population of 1041 of which 542 are males and 499 females. The total number of household is 152. Out of this 90 households belong to the Brahmin community and 30 to the dalit community. Other than this, one household belongs to Jat community and one household belongs to Nai community. The village is located on the Rajasthan border; therefore the terrain is dry and sandy. The water table is very low and the water is salty. Balaicha Gram Panchayat falls under Mahendergarh Block of Mahendergarh District located 8 km away from the district and 35 km away from the district headquarters Narnaul.

Sectors	Present status
Agriculture	The main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. Mustard and wheat is the predominant crop of the Rabi Season whereas Jawar, Bajra, Guwar are of the Kharif Season. The agricultural yield is low due to the low water table and sandy water available. Most of the farmers are not aware of the latest varieties of different crops and use of modern practices. Only a few progressive farmers are aware of new varieties and used modern practices for high yield. Some families give cultivated land to other farmers for agriculture and in return they take a proportion of the produce.
Animal Resources	Balaicha is rich in animal resources with a good number of cattle, sheep, goat and camel in the village.
Education	The educational status is low in the village. Primary education is higher among the villagers whereas higher education is not easily within the reach of the villagers. The nearest secondary level school is 4 km away. The dropout rate is higher among girls. Low economic status and traditional practices are some of the other factors responsible for this.
Occupation	Occupational status reflects the economic soundness of any village. The villagers' main occupation here is agriculture. The other occupation is daily wage work. Very few villagers are working as government employees. Wage opportunities are not easily accessible to them.
Health	Lack of hospital facility and lack of preventive measures among villagers is responsible for the low health status in the village. Another factor of low health status is the impure water available. The nearest PHC is 10 kilometres away and without adequate transportation it is less accessible to them. They approach Mahendergarh for the treatment, which is 10 km. away from the village. Lack of frequent transportation will make it costly affair for the poor villagers.
Women	The major burden of the work is carried out by the women. Women are responsible for the household activities, livestock rearing and agricultural related activities during agricultural season. Despite rigid social taboos and traditional practices resulting in their subordinate status, the presence of the Sanjeevani and the VA has helped to bring awareness about women's equal status and empowerment.

The process

Step 1: Training on PRI

As an initial step, a one-day training for elected representatives and other interested Gram Sabha members of Balaicha was organized which provided an orientation to micro planning and importance of people participation. The training was followed up by individual discussions with the VA, Sarpanch and panches about their role in the process.

Step 2: Panchayat Meeting

As a second step, a panchayat meeting was called by the VA who took on the role of initiators steering the participants towards developing an understanding about the planning process and the need for their involvement in the same. A decision was taken as to organize ward level meetings, to identify issues of concern and seeking people's participation in planning for development.

Volunteers were sought for the occasion in helping to facilitate the discussion of people in various wards. These volunteers were given prior orientation on people's participation in planning process. The ward meetings also helped in ensuring the participation of the weaker sections.

Step 3: Pictorial Exercise

During the process of small group discussions and meetings it was found that people were unclear about the exact ward boundaries, which demarcated their wards from others in the panchayat area. It was observed that more than 40% (a large percentage of which were women) of the people did not have a clear understanding of where the ward starts and ends. As a result they were unable to give suggestions or answers to questions like where the taps can be installed or which part of gali should be considered first for construction. It became obvious through these discussions that people could actively participate in such a process only if they had a clear picture in their minds about the ward. Thus plans were made to have pictorial exercises in each ward whereby the different groups and individuals living in those wards could come together and map out a picture of their ward along with the existing resources available in the same.

Pictorial Exercises were carried out in two wards, i.e., Ward No.1 and Ward No.2. In this exercise all the ward members were asked to draw out a map of their ward and identify the problems along with the probable solutions to those problems in the specific wards. For example where water scarcity was identified as a problem, solutions also were found by the group as to where exactly taps need to be installed to ensure equal water supply to all the inhabitants of the ward. The ward level meetings helped the different sections of the community to articulate their needs and problems as they slowly began to get involved in the process.

Step 4: Sector Specific Plan

Based on the issues/problems identified by the villagers during earlier meeting, the sector specific plan was prepared in the presence of panchayat members, voluntary agency representatives and others at the Jan Sewa Kendra premises.

Issue	Activity	Responsibility
<p>Agriculture: As agriculture is the main occupation of the villagers most of the people showed a keen interest in improving agricultural practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide training related to new practices in agriculture To develop a channel for providing information about availability of seeds and fertilisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA & Panchayat will approach Agriculture Department
<p>Drinking Water : Non-availability of drinking water close to the households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance Installation of pumps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a committee and make rules for fees for private connection and of other related things Available water sources should be repaired by Panchayat and contribution by villagers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panchayat and Committee Members VA will help in formation of Committee Alternate: Panchayat will co-ordinate with Water Supply Department for supply of drinking water
<p>Construction of lane and drainage facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan formulation and Selection of site (Priority-wise) Passed resolution and submitted to the concerned authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panchayat and VAs
<p>Lack of employment opportunity for youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of target groups To prepare literate youth for government and non-government jobs and organise awareness camp for various target groups to engage in income generating activities To organise training for self generating scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA and active Gram Sabha members

MICRO PLANNING AND PANCHAYATS

Issue	Activity	Responsibility
<p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Lack of awareness about preventive care ⌋Lack of hospital in the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋To establish Primary Health Centre ⌋To train and streamline the functioning of Anganwadi and Sanjeevini workers ⌋To raise the awareness and capacity of people to initiate self-help activities ⌋To organise health awareness camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋The panchayat will facilitate and approach Health Department for establishment of PHC ⌋The VA will co-ordinate with Health Department in organising camp and provide training to target group
<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋High rate of drop out among girl students ⌋Lack of awareness for higher education ⌋Lack of a middle and high school in the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Panchayat and school teachers will approach concerned department for up-gradation of school ⌋Organise camps to motivate parents for educating girl children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Panchayat, Parents and Voluntary Group
<p>Electricity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Non availability of street lighting ⌋Less number of electric poles for proper connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Selection of sight for digging of electric poles ⌋Provision for street light at different corner of village by approaching government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋Panchayat and Voluntary group members will approach Electricity Department for electric poles. ⌋People's contribution for street light
<p>A common meeting place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌋To build Panchayat Ghar ⌋Panchayat should approach Block office for grant of Panchayat Ghar. ⌋To ensure peoples contribution in of Panchayat Ghar 	<p>Panchayat and VAs</p>

Note: Budgeted cost and time has not been mentioned in the format.

Step 5: Gram Sabha Meeting: Village Planning Meeting

In order to share the sector specific plans with the entire village and elicit discussions on it, a Gram Sabha meeting was called by the panchayat. While the VA and panchayat representatives went about organising the meeting, the Volunteer group played an equally important role by meeting individual Gram Sabha members and motivating them to participate in the meeting. Focusing the discussion on implementation of the plans various issues were discussed such as the need for active participation of all, bureaucracy and others. Follow-up plans were drawn up based on the issues identified in the planning process and a committee of 12 people was formed (VA representatives, Panchayat representatives and active Gram Sabha members) to take up the issues with the concerned departments. The issues were divided into two- firstly those which came within the ambit of the different government departments and secondly those which could be implemented by the panchayats with the assistance of the people. It was decided that contributions by the people in both cash and kind would be called for to implement the latter.

Implementation Plan

Issue	Activity	Responsibility	Department
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity connections to ensure proper supply of water Installing pipelines and fixing water taps Building 6 water tanks in selected areas of the panchayat. Installing some hand-pumps in selective areas 	Panchayat members, VA representatives and some active individuals	water department, health department, block office, DRDA and CAPART
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting an ANM Availability of medicines Health awareness camps 	VA, Panchayat, sanjeevini and anganwadi worker	Health department, PHC worker at Narnaul and Civil Surgeon Hospital, Narnaul.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness camps in the Panchayat on the need for education Up-gradation of the primary school Building rooms in the school Constructing bathrooms for boys and girls in the school Constructing a water tank in the school premises 	Panchayat, village education committee, VA and the school teachers	DPEP, block office, education department, Mahendergarh
Common meeting place	Building a Panchayat Bhavan/ Ghar	Panchayat, IVG members	Block Office, DRDA

Issue	Activity	Responsibility	Department
Sanitation and environment protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building latrines in the panchayat and creating awareness about its proper use. preparation of soak-pit, to create awareness about protecting the environment. Tree plantation. 	VA, Panchayat and active individuals	CAPART, forest department
Village lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> construction of lanes through the village preparation of a proposal for the same eliciting peoples participation for maintenance and contributing their labour during construction period 	VA, Panchayat and active individuals	Block office, DRDA
Providing employment opportunities	<p>Selection of beneficiaries on the basis of economic status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organising trainings to impart knowledge and skills to the people constructing a training bhavan 	VA	DRDA, agriculture department, IGSS, Delhi and women and child welfare department, Narnaul
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> waste land development. Availability of seeds and fertilisers, awareness on new agricultural technologies, awareness about harvesting two crops in a year for generating more income 	VA, Panchayat	Assistant agriculture department, Narnaul
Access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organising camps on this issue on a regular basis Opening a village information centre, preparing a list of information to be acquired Create awareness on the importance of information 	VA, Panchayat	Block and the various departments

Follow-up of Micro planning in Village Balaicha

As a part of the follow-up several meetings were organised at the panchayat in which there was active participation of Gram Sabha members, Junior engineers, committee members (set up in the course of the micro planning exercise), panchayat members, VA and PRIA representatives. In the course of these meetings it was decided (by all present) that the priority issue of water needs to be addressed, as this was a common issue critical to the entire panchayat. As water tank was the priority issue, a budget estimate meeting was organized on June 24th 1999.

The overall amount estimated to build this water tank was Rs 2,29,000 as drawn by the Junior engineer, panchayat members and the volunteer groups. The amount was discussed and people thought that the estimate was high and felt that the actual cost would be less. Everybody felt that once the process was started it would be easier for them to request other parties like the government, the local MLA and the other two tiers of panchayats namely Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad to contribute towards this end.

The panchayat offered to give the land, which had been selected by all in the previous meetings as well as Rs 50,000/- from the panchayat fund to the committee to start their work. The community members all agreed to contribute either by providing the labour or giving approximately Rs 200/- per household for the completion of the project. Volunteer agencies and Non-government organisation also contributed to the kitty, which was around Rs. 50,000/- as a matching amount given by the Panchayat.

Outcome of the Process

- The entire process helped to bring the different sections of the community together and make decisions collectively for the development of the panchayat. An increased involvement of the marginalised groups was observed as the process moved forward providing an opportunity for their issues and concerns to appear in the emerging plan.
- People's knowledge about their own panchayat and wards was enhanced enabling them to identify the various issues and find solutions with the available resources. Knowledge about external resources and opportunities was also increased in the process of planning.
- The participatory bottom-up planning process helped build knowledge, skills, role clarity and solidarity amongst the panchayat representatives who played a key role in taking the process forward. Prior to this they had no knowledge about their roles and responsibilities and therefore had been unable to actively engage themselves in the development of the panchayat. The process helped them to recognise the needs of the people and the resources available for fulfilling some of these needs thus bringing them closer to each other as well as the people.

Conclusion

Despite being an extremely time consuming and intensive exercise, the participatory bottom-up planning process was a unique experience for both the people of Balaicha as well as for the facilitators. Bringing together a treasure of knowledge and skills it provided a platform for people's active participation in development. The Balaicha experience also provided valuable insights for replication of this model as a vehicle for enabling good governance vis-à-vis people's participation. This calls for preparation of some modules enabling replication of the process by other players namely the government and non-government organisations committed to people's participation in governance. The final challenge perhaps lies in finding easily replicable models that could enable the panchayats to carry out this process themselves with or without any external support.

Decentralised Planning- Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is situated in the north west corner of India, in the lap of the Himalayan ranges. It is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Uttar Pradesh in the south-east, Haryana in the south and Punjab in the west. In the east it forms India's boundary with Tibet.

The state is almost entirely mountainous with altitudes ranging from 460-6600m above sea level. It has a deeply divided landscape, a complex physical structure and rich vegetation found in mild sub-tropical latitudes. Himachal is drained by a number of rivers, the most important of which are Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej and Yamuna. All these rivers are snow-fed and therefore perennial.

Participatory Planning Exercise

Mandi district is found in the central part of Himachal Pradesh. It is one of the twelve districts of the State. The district is mostly hilly. The Balh valley (in the district) is our work area, it is surrounded by mountains on all sides. This is the valley of the River Suketi, a tributary of the Beas. It originates from the town Sundarnagar and terminates at south of the town Mandi. It is a very fertile valley and has a dense concentration of population. This area is covered by 26 panchayats and is part of the Mandi Sadar block, one of the 10 development blocks of this district.

A Panchayat named Kehar Getting Started

The micro planning exercise was started in the Kehar panchayat, Mandi Sadar Block, Mandi district. Since the first round of elections to the panchayat had just been completed in December 1995 (after the new Amendment to the Constitution), the need came up to enable the panchayat members to handle their new responsibility of making village/ panchayat plans. The exercise of micro planning, began in Kehar panchayat. Sukhdev Vishwa Premi was the then Pradhan, the chief functionary of the

VA, as well as the co-ordinator of the Rural Technology and Development Centre (RTDC), a local organisation in this panchayat. Panchayat elections in Himachal Pradesh had taken place in December 1995 on a non-party basis.

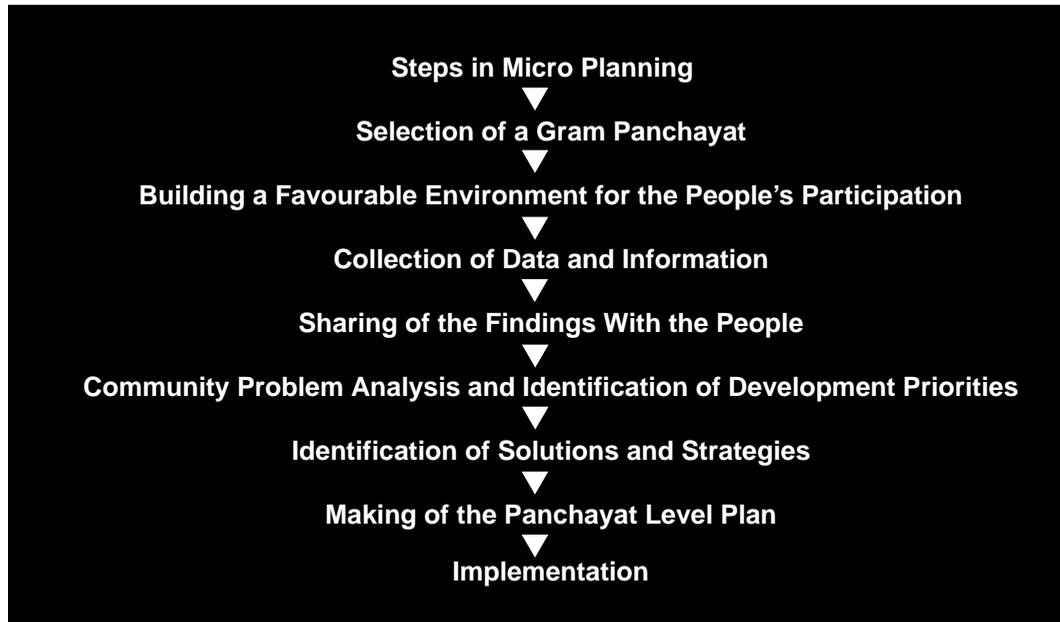
The Panchayat

The panchayat has six revenue villages - Kehar, Satoh, Bhiura, Rigar, Khiuri and Chawari . There are a total of 11 wards out of which four are represented by women members.

Before 1978, Kehar was a part of the Baggi panchayat. Kehar is surrounded in the east by the Segli Panchayat, north-east by the Mowiseri Panchayat, in the north by the Sakroha Panchayat and in the west by the Kummi Panchayat. Most of the panchayat is situated in the plain regions that have been divided by a number of rivulets. The total area covered by the 6 villages is 1,177 hectares, while the total population is 3,924. Most of the people are engaged in the irrigation of the agricultural area. As a result, there was an increase in the production of cash crops, especially vegetables. In fact, Kehar panchayat is the largest vegetable growing area in this region.

Micro Planning: An Initiative

Micro planning can be carried out based on the available skills and capability, knowledge base etc. However, the basic design of the planning process will include a study of the state of affairs, identification of problems and priorities and plan formulation. The method may vary from place to place, depending upon the situation and the circumstances



The period taken up by the micro planning process was about one year.

The Process:

The entire participatory planning exercise has been divided into different phases depending on the type and nature of the work accomplished.

Phase one (May 1996), involved building an environment through holding workshops with the elected members along with RTDC, meeting of the Gram Panchayat, training workshops for volunteers and ward meetings. These workshops and meetings focused on building a core team that would work directly with the community in the planning process. A total of 22 volunteers were identified in this process from 11 wards and they were provided additional training.

Phase two (June 1996) dealt with understanding the situation in the area through an organised collection of data and information. The focus was on getting community members to think about their individual realities using a combination of data-collection methods. The door-to-door surveys were used to cover 747 households for this process. Information was collected by the volunteers.

Phase three dealt with the sharing of the findings after the survey. This was achieved by organising workshops/ meetings. The exercise helped people to think collectively as a group rather than one person. The focus of these workshops was to get the community members to understand the socio-economic status of the village and its problems.

Phase four (December 1996-March 1997) This appeared to be the most crucial stage for the formulation of a micro-plan. The facilitators (including the panchayat, volunteer groups and the non-governmental organisations) encouraged the community members through a series of workshops, to analyse problems faced at the individual, village and panchayat levels and then arrange the first three in order of priority. From the first three it was easy to see what the development needs of the village were and to take some action. Guidance was given so that the people could choose the right methods. It was important for the people to contribute land, labour and money for the development of the village. Resources available locally could also be used. At this stage Village Development Committees (VDCs) were formed in all the six villages of Kehar Panchayat of 15-25 members chosen from voluntary organisations, Gram Sabha members, elected ward members, and technical skills from the line department i.e. education, sanitation, lawyers, forest etc. The ratio of women and scheduled caste in the committee was one-third. The development plan could now be put into action, with the panch as the chairperson and help from the JEs.

Formation of Village Development Committee:

A village level committee was established. The Ward Member of Bhiura was unanimously declared the Chairperson of the Committee. The committee had a total of 13 members out of which 5 are women. The main tasks or responsibilities of the VDC were

- a) To formulate a detailed action plan that was technically feasible and economically viable as well as a detailed budget estimate of all the equipment needed, materials required, wages of technical people employed etc. and
- b) Implementation of the action plan.

Plan for Drinking Water in Bhiura

The problem: Bhiura's water supply comes from the BBMB project at Baggi, the neighbouring panchayat.

Identification of locally available resources: the potential source of water was at a distance of one km from the village at Baryha. This according to the people could be tapped in order to get a regular supply of water.

Land required for the construction of the storage tank was also identified and the community members provided the labour.

Action Plan-

- a) The laying of a pipeline from the source to the village, along the road. A total of 150 pipes were needed to cover a distance of 1km, each pipe being 20 feet long.
- b) The building of storage tank and
- c) 3-4 households would be provided with one tap each. At this rate 18-20 taps would be installed.

Phase Five (March-April 1997) The responsibility of the process at this stage is that of the communittees rather than the facilitators. The Village Development Committees were responsible for formulating plans at the village level and these helped to form a panchayat plan.

Phase Six (1999) The implementation stage began. The year from May 1997 to May 1998 was called the "Frustration period".

In May 1998, a Gram Sabha meeting was organised, budgetary allocations and the people's contribution were discussed in relation to the plans that were made in the 6 villages on the prioritised issues. These issues need to be further prioritised for implementation purposes. In the Kehar panchayat the two main developmental priorities of the people are:

- Drinking water facilities
- Road construction - both earthen as well as metalled roads

For the two priorities mentioned above plans were drawn up , technical advice was sought by the VDC and the people's contribution was generated in the final implementation of the plan. In the implementation process the panchayat adopted an innovative method, to keep a worksheet of the activities involved, delegation of responsibilities, material required and the budget. This determined and ensured the participation and the timely implementation of the plan.

Worksheet on Plan Implementation

Activities	Responsibilities	Facilities	Equipment/ materials	Service
Organise and conduct meetings in the village	VDC, staff of RTDC, Pradhan, Up-Pradhan and ward members	Place (venue) of the meeting.	_____	_____
Organise labour to clear the land	VDC and PRI members, members of Nehru Yuvak Mandal	Temporary shed to store equipment	Equipment to clear the land	Volunteers
Collection of material, equipment	VDC, PRI members and CBOs, NYK	Temporary shed	People's contribution for Material	_____

The Community's Contribution: An Achievement in Kehar Panchayat

The people of Rigar have taken up a developmental activity for their village, that of road construction. This was a major priority of the people as discussed earlier. On the 4th of February it was also decided that the VDC along with some of the villagers would take up the work of widening and repairing of the village road themselves. This road has been in a state of disrepair for a long time and neither the panchayat nor the government has done anything till now.. On the 23rd of February the people started work on the widening and repairing of the village road. A total of 22 local villagers worked in shifts from 10a.m to 7p.m. The ward member, members of the VDC and a member of the core team were all involved in the process.

Lessons and Challenges

From the experiences of micro planning in Kehar Panchayat, H.P, involving the community members, CBOs, PRIs etc. many challenges and issues emerged that needed to be handled in an effective manner in order to get the desired result.

- Participatory micro planning and community participation in village development activities is a pioneering project. It is a new approach for villagers who till recently have been totally dependent on the government for all kinds of support. Very few panchayats have comprehensive development plans, more so a plan that is a result of a participatory process.
- Long gaps between the phases or the various activities can lead to a loss of interest on the part of the volunteers as well as the villagers. Continuity in the programme is necessary for the active involvement of the people as well as building up a better rapport with them.

- Proper channels should be used for giving prior information to the people regarding the date, time and venue of village meetings. This can be achieved by :
 - 1) Using posters with the venue, date and time written very clearly and put up at vantage points in the village e.g. tea stalls, shops, walls etc.
 - 2) Visiting people's houses, shops and other places and telling them about the meeting, its purpose and the need for people to attend it. This can be achieved by the team of volunteers.
- Social dynamics, especially the caste factor has to be kept in mind while organising village level meetings. This way the gathering will be well attended and the people will indulge in healthy discussions.

3

Madhya Pradesh: Micro Level Planning

The Background

Samarthan is a support organisation working on various capacity building initiatives in the state of Madhya Pradesh since 1995. It has been focusing primarily on project planning, monitoring participants, evaluation and keeping records of the process. One of its core activities is the initiative on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh. This includes training of elected representatives, micro planning, awareness generation through educational material preparation and distribution, an ongoing dialogue with the government, building networks of voluntary organisations and research on issues critical to the success of the Panchayati Raj.

Experiences of the Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat

In 1995, Samarthan began its initiative on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh. After visiting various districts of the state and interacting with local voluntary organisations, elected representatives, government officials and other interested groups and individuals, a Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme was organised in January 1996. This programme was aimed at training representatives of voluntary organisations interested in working on the issue of the Panchayati Raj. One of the voluntary organisations in this programme was Gyan Deep Mandal - a training programme was organised in collaboration with them and Gram Panchayat of Jamunia Tank in Sehore district. As part of its strategy of strengthening panchayats directly, Samarthan began its micro planning initiatives in two Gram Panchayats of Sehore namely, Jamunia Tank and Raipura. A similar initiative was also begun in the Nayagaon Gram Panchayat of Gwalior district, in collaboration with a local organisation.

Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat

Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat is located at a distance of about 8 k.ms away from the Sehore district headquarters and 40 kms from the state capital, Bhopal. This Gram Panchayat is represented by a woman sarpanch belonging to the backward class. The sarpanch is an educated woman with grit and initiative. The Gram Panchayat includes 12 panches representing the twelve wards, 4 of the panches are women.

The village is spread over an area of 1002.16 hectares and is inhabited by 618 males and 541 women. People belonging to the Mewada, Meena, Khali, Rathore, Aggarwal, Pandit, Gosai, Dalit, Balia, Prajapati, Kumhar, and Tyagi castes live in this village.

The facilities available to the people living in the village include a primary school, telephone exchange and a child care centre. The Gram Panchayat has undertaken various initiatives to enhance these facilities and to provide new facilities to the people such as an adult education programme, construction of low cost latrines, drains and upgradation of school facilities.

Raipura Gram Panchayat is also a reserved seat for a backward caste sarpanch. This panchayat is headed by a male sarpanch. The Gram Panchayat is comprises 3 villages namely Raipura, Hasanpura and Jamunia Farm and is represented by 13 panches from the thirteen wards, of which 4 are women. The Sarpanch is educated (matriculate) and belongs to a family owning the largest landholdings in the village. However he lacks initiative and takes little interest in the affairs of the panchayat.

The Gram Panchayat is spread over an area of 823.26 hectares and is inhabited by 703 males and 593 women. People belonging to Mewada, Meena, Khali, Kumhar, Prajapati, Pandit, Balia, Rathod And Gosai communities live in this village.

The facilities available to the people include a primary and middle school and a child care centre. The panchayat has taken some interest in the literacy programme launched by the district authorities, but by and large the panchayat leadership and the community lacks initiative in the various development programmes available for their own development.

For the purpose of this document we are only elaborating the experiences of the Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat.

The Process

Rapport Building and Awareness Generation

In the initial stages all efforts were focused on building a rapport with the people and representatives of the Gram Panchayats. Meetings were held with various groups like the youth and women groups, groups of men were met separately. Orientation programmes were organised to create an understanding among the panchayat representatives and the community regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Gram Panchayat members and the role of the Gram Sabha members in the decision-making

processes, especially during the planning process.

This phase was most instrumental in determining the future course of planning and capacity building in the community as it enabled the concerns of the people of the community to be brought out in the open. The facilitators such as VAs, NGOs, CBOs were also able to emphasise their neutral positions so as to generate faith and mutual trust.

The Stake-holders Analysis

The rapport-building phase laid bare the complexities of village life, class and caste conflicts, stakes of various groups and individuals in the socio political structure of the village and other socio economic relationships. It became increasingly clear that the mere strengthening of Gram Panchayat representatives would not result in the resolution of existing problems. Therefore it was felt that the viewpoints of all groups and individuals should be so presented so as to ensure maximum benefit for all. Efforts were made to bring the women and other marginalized groups into the mainstream of these discussions, to understand their point of view and enable their participation in the decision making process. To this end, discussions, PRA exercises and focus group discussions were initiated with women's groups and groups of dalits so that they could analyse their own status in the village polity. This eventually led to problem identification, prioritisation and problem solving through their own efforts. The stakeholders were identified and their perceptions analysed so as to enable their incorporation in future strategies. The needs assessment phase enabled each group in the village to analyse their needs and prioritise them on the basis of the needs of the community as a whole.

Building Linkages

The process of rapport building with the community and the stake holders analysis led to the realisation that the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha needed to build and strengthen their linkages with "outsiders" such as the government officials, MP/MLA, community organisations and so on. However this process is an ongoing process linked to capacities of the people concerned. After undergoing a number of structured capacity building exercises for the Gram Panchayat members and Gram Sabha members, they have begun realising their own power to negotiate and make the required linkages and trade offs for the desired results.

Capacity Building

The stake-holder analysis and need assessment exercises led to need-based designs of capacity building initiatives. These initiatives were by and large structured training inputs for Gram Panchayat representatives, women and youth groups, village level functionaries such as the panchayat karmies and KRPs. Sensitisation workshops were also held with the media personnel so as to make panchayats and governance a wider issue. These trainings were followed up with "follow up" initiatives, such as capacity building on specific issues like finances of panchayats, conducting ward level meetings and

mock Gram Sabhas. Capacities of mahila mandals and youth groups have been strengthened so as to enable their functioning as “monitors” of the Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha members are being encouraged to take an active part in initiatives such as the Total Literacy Campaign, health and environmental awareness building campaigns.

Participatory Planning : Lessons in “Empowerment”

Building confidence: Ongoing capacity building exercises with exposure to the outside world have built the confidence of not only the Gram Panchayat representatives but also the Gram Sabha members. This in turn has increased the people’s participation in Gram Sabha meetings and other committees and informal meetings, giving them the confidence to ask for accountability from not only the Gram Panchayat representatives but also the government officials and functionaries.

Power to negotiate: A case in point

The Public Health and Engineering (PHE) department of the district office, Madhya Pradesh implemented a scheme which provided for building of low cost toilets in the rural areas of the state.

The main features of the scheme were:

- It sanctioned construction of 65 toilets in the panchayat
- The PHE would provide for 80% of the cost and 20% of the contribution will be made by the community.
- According to the scheme each toilet (construction) would cost Rs. 2,700.
- The PHE would commission the work to an NGO (the contractors had registered themselves as an NGO) and the NGO would construct the toilets (totalling Rs 2,160). The community would give their contribution in the form of labour and bricks (amounting to a total of Rs 540) for the implementation of the scheme

A meeting was called in the village to prepare the list of people who would benefit from the scheme. The list was made on the basis of those below the Poverty Line and discussions in the meeting. The people chose the site for the construction of the toilets. . Very soon the people realised that very low quality material was being used for the construction of the toilets.

These complaints were brought to the notice of the sarpanch who mobilised a group of people to make an inquiry into the matter. The group checked the quality of the material being used as well as its market rate. The total amount spent on the material turned out to be an amazing Rs 1,000 (as against the government demand of Rs 2,160). A complaint was lodged against the contractors in the PHE department. The peoples united efforts forced the PHE officials to make an inspection of the toilets constructed in the village. A dialogue was initiated with the contractors and certain conditions were laid down by the community - the contractors had to reconstruct the toilets with better quality material.

The community was united in their ability to negotiate with the PHE department and the contractors and make a proper inquiry into the entire episode. The Gram Panchayat was able to use this opportunity to further negotiate with the PHE department for the installation of a hand pump in the village.

Access to information has given the Gram Panchayat representatives a new confidence to handle the everyday affairs of the panchayat with ease. It has also enabled them to become accountable without getting defensive or overwhelmed by the people's questions. They have begun sharing the information on government schemes and programmes with the people and encouraging open discussions in Gram Sabha meetings.

The increase in confidence, access to information, ability to discuss and plan for problem resolution has strengthened people's capacity to negotiate with government officials and politicians.

“We” can do it!

For years the people of Jamunia Tank had been trying for the upgradation of the village primary school to middle school. The administration was not listening to their requests. With their newly found confidence the people and Gram Panchayat representatives of Jamunia decided to take a tough stand with the administration as the primary school was being run in a building donated by the people of Jamunia. Along with the head master of the primary school they threatened to close down the government school being run in their building and start a private school unless the education department agreed to upgrade the primary school to a middle school. They went with a list of students who were unable to continue their education because of the lack of facilities. Eventually the school was upgraded to class VIII.

The people of Jamunia were overjoyed. They were beginning to realise their strengths and use them for the common good.

Increased Participation

The process of planning enabled the people to realise their own capacities as well as lead to an increased awareness through systematic interventions. The simultaneous processes have increased people's participation in formal and informal meetings. Participation of women and dalits has also increased in meetings and consequently in decision making. More and more government schemes are being accessed and implemented by the people.

The people of Jamunia had expressed a need for a village drain a number of times but nothing had been done about it. During the planning process this issue was brought up and they planned for the construction of a drain. The estimated budget for the construction of the drain was Rs 93,000. The community volunteered to contribute Rs 50,000, which was collected in proportion to their land holdings. Those who could not contribute money agreed to give labour and Rs 50,000 was sanctioned as the award for people's successful efforts in the Total Literacy Campaign. The people of Jamunia were able to achieve 80% literacy in the age group of 15-35 through their sustained efforts.

Regularisation of Meetings

The ongoing planning process has resulted in the regularisation of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings. Gram Panchayat representatives have started organising regular ward level meetings so as to keep in touch with people's needs and priorities.

Formation of Community Groups

The people have organised themselves in mahila mandals, youth mandals and pressure groups of different kinds. Their aim is to not only to monitor the functioning of the Gram Panchayat but also to give support to the Gram Panchayat in its negotiations with the administration and the politicians.

Establishing Viable Linkages

The process of base upwards planning has helped the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat in establishing co-ordination and linkages with the other tiers of the panchayats, administration and line departments at the district level. These linkages have led to better utilisation of available local and government resources. The linkages have also given the sarpanch of Jamunia visibility and consequently the confidence to represent her Gram Panchayat in various block and district level forums.

Efforts Made by the Community

The various programmes have raised the level of awareness among the community members and an understanding has been created about the powers and the functions of the Gram Sabha. Now better coordination is possible with the panchayats. The community has started coming together to study the situations, plan for their needs and are willing to put these plans into action.

Table 1. Fund Generation

S.No	Heads	Funds Received Jamunia Tank Panchayat	Funds generated (contributions)
1997-1998			
1.	Best GP Awarded	25,000	
2.	Construction of road, drain	50,000	17,000
3.	Construction of small bridge	25,000	16,000
4	Savings Award (Mahila Savings schemes)	15,000	
5	Construction of temple	4,000	3,00,000
6	Funds for Mahila Mandal	1,000	
7	Jawahar Rojgar Yojana	16,000	
8	Construction of Anganwadi	1,10,000	
9	Panchayat Dept	12,000	
10	Extra room in school	75,000	
1996-1997			
1	House for homeless @15,000/- per house	75,000	
2	Jeevan Dhara well	96,000	
3	Destitute pension 4 persons @ 5,000/-	20,000	
4	Material benefit @ 300/- for 4	1,200	
5	Tools for artisans @ 2000 for 5 persons	10,000	
6	Old age pension @ 150/- 71 persons	10,650	
7	JRY	4,00,000	

Community Organisation:

Issue based debates began, with regular interaction, building a good relationship within the community. The interaction took the form of dialogue, focusing on issues and looking for solutions to problems. People were willing to contribute labour and money. The result was good planning and motivating the administration, the panchayat and the line department.

Whenever a common issue came up, Gram Sabha meetings were held at night rather than the day. The attendance was greater than at the government Gram Sabhas. Debates and discussions took place more freely.

According to the people oriented plan, those involved in the implementation of the plan, have to negotiate, bargain with the related people, organisations, agencies, the line department as well as the government. For example, at the Jamunia Tank Panchayat, the sarpanch demanded 100 toilets from Zanpad but 65 toilets were sanctioned for the people of Jamunia. Construction was started by the

contractors (a newly formed NGO of contractors, in keeping with the government order, that toilet constructions will be handed over to a NGO) But the contractors asked for approximately Rs.1000/- per toilet as against Rs.2160/- per toilet (the total amount in the earlier scheme was Rs.2700/-, in which government, central/state were to have contributed 80% & 20%) The beneficiaries opposed the bad quality construction. But it had no effect on the contractors. Immediately a Gram Sabha meeting was called at night and it was decided that the people would meet the chief officer of Public Health, engineering department. They took their problem to the C.E.E. of the P.H.E. The C.E.E decided to go to the village to see the toilet construction. During the visit the C. E. E. said that either all the toilets should be reconstructed or contractors (NGO chief) should face the beneficiaries and satisfy them. The payment would not be made to the NGO till then. The contractors agreed to repair the toilets, and promised the beneficiaries that this kind of work will not be repeated.

Solving the problem of toilet construction helped to build the self-confidence of the villagers. Now the people can deal with their problems regularly. The villagers monitor all these activities, literacy campaign, drainage construction, temple planning, local road construction, the temporary bridge in SC community, the anganwadi building, school functioning, health centre, and functioning of cooperative societies.

The change in the people's attitude, their involvement in training, building relationships and creating awareness helped everybody in the village. For example:

In Jamunia the people focused on the school in their village. The funds for the primary school building had been collected, however they wanted the administration/ department and political leaders to build a middle school. Nobody paid attention to the request. The people brought up this problem in their talks with us. On 2.10.96, as suggested by us the people met in the Gram Sabha and discussed the issue. We also helped them to make plans and share the responsibilities with each other. It was decided that the sarpanch and the primary school headmaster would go to the Collector asking for the school to be upgraded till the 6th class. Other panches and well known people took on the responsibility of talking to the parents of children needing to study at the 6th class level (There were 16 boys and 22 girls) The panches convinced the parents to contribute Rs.20/- per child, per month, so that an educated youth within the community could be hired by the panchayat as a teacher.

The Gram Sabha told the sarpanch to talk to the collector, if the department did not start 6th class, the donated building would be used as a private school for the children needing the 6th class. After some discussions the collector inaugurated the 6th class on the 9th of October 1996. This achievement gave the people of the community self-confidence.

4

Uttar Pradesh: Micro Planning Experience

Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra is a non-governmental organisation in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Since 1990 it has dealt with multiple issues of development. It has also been a part of the PRIA network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations working on the issue of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions since 1995. As part of the initiative of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions SSK initiated a micro planning in 2 Gram Panchayats of Kasya Block of District Kushinagar in May 1996 in collaboration with the local voluntary development organisation, Nari Vikas Sewa Samiti (NVSS), Kasya. This case focuses on the process of micro planning in one Gram Panchayat namely the

Mathia Madhopur Gram Panchayat is made up of two villages Mathia and Madhopur and has a population of approximately 2,600. It is located at a distance of 14 km from the Kushinagar district headquarters. The Gram Panchayat is represented by a woman Pradhan belonging to the OBC category. She is a teacher in an inter college of the Kasiya Block. Being educated and aware of the affairs of the panchayat, her interest and initiative were one of the reasons this panchayat was chosen to put micro planning into action.

Historical Background

It is said that the village of Mathia Madhopur is about 150 years old. The story is that once a group of people were performing a "pooja"(worship) to a cap, under a tree. The cap was picked up by a fox and carried some distance, the place where the fox dropped the cap eventually became a place of worship and people began to settle around the place. The village was named Mathia Vishambhar Madhopur after the names of Math Singh and Vishambhar Singh.

The Present Status

Today the Mathia hamlet of the Gram Panchayat has 73 homes and the Madhopur hamlet has 194 homes. The total population of the Gram Panchayat is 2,600. The Gram Panchayat is inhabited by

people of various castes like the dhobi, kshatriya, brahmin, koiri, sharma, chohan, dhunia, nonia, yadav, dome, gupta and muslims. The dalits were the last to come and settle in the village, their numbers are small. The total area of the village measures 188 hectares and the land under cultivation is 153.2 hectares. The irrigated area measures 98.2 hectares. The main occupation of the majority of the people and the basis of the village economy are agriculture and related activities. Over the years there has been a change in the lifestyle of the people, however religion still plays an important role in the lives of people.

Making of the Plan

The micro plan for the Gram Panchayat Mathia Madhopur was prepared in a span of 6 days (15.09.97-20.09.97) using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques in combination with the belief in participation. The Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha members, members of SSK and Nari Vikas Sewa Samiti (NVSS) were all involved in the plan that was prepared.

How it All Began

Once it was decided that the micro planning initiative would be undertaken in Mathia Madhopur, the most important problems had to be studied. A course of action was decided upon:

- Since Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings were not held regularly, meetings were held for Gram Sabha members along with a few Gram Panchayat members to help them to raise their awareness.
- A more regular contact with the pradhan, led to regular Gram Panchayat meetings. The last day of the month was fixed for these meetings along with the Gram Sabha.
- Issues of concern and common interests began to appear in the discussions during the meetings.
- After the initial groundwork and rapport building with the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha members the micro planning initiative was undertaken and completed within a few days.

Gathering of Data and Information

Three methods were used for this purpose: observation, interviews and social mapping.

- *Observation:* Information about the location and the people was collected by simply observing the conditions and the activities performed in a particular place. For example, it was noticed that there were too many potholes filled with stagnant water, leading to the breeding of mosquitoes that cause malaria.
- *Interviews:* were held in order to collect data such as people's daily routine, decision making, health, seasonal changes in food habits, history of the village and so on. Interviews were held separately with men and women. The questions asked of each person were the same, but the answers were different. The questions were about the life styles, eating habits, farming techniques, the seasonal calendar, ceremonies etc. These were recorded.

- *Social mapping*: provided basic information about a village such as the number of homes, population, caste structure, assets etc. This information can then be used for future planning activities. Once all the information about the panchayat had been collected a village meeting was called to check that it was genuine.

The Resource Mapping Exercise

The resource mapping exercise is mainly used to collect information about the agricultural practices/patterns commonly used in the village and availability of natural resources. The people drew a map of the fields and provided information about the crop patterns. There are three categories of land in Mathia Madhopur, Dhoosi, Samtal and Barha. Corn and Arhar (dal) are cultivated on Dhoosi land. All types of crops and vegetables are grown on the Samtal land. Wheat, rice and cane are cultivated on Barha land as they need land that is very fertile. The village has a total of 44 private pumps and bore wells used for irrigation. In Mathia multiple varieties of wheat and rice are cultivated, while in Madhopur cane is the major crop and about 65% people are involved in its cultivation.

A team of five members was constituted for Resource Mapping.

The following exercises were taken up:

The first day

- Time line
- Trend analysis
- Social mapping
- Resource mapping

The second day

- Seasonality
- Institutional linkages
- Health, PRA
- Livelihood analysis

The third day

- Gender analysis
- Transectional walk
- Wealth ranking

Involvement of Women in Decision Making

In order to understand the status of women in the village it was decided to find out the extent of their involvement in decision making within the family. For this purpose the women were met first, and then later along with the men. The following visual shows the decisions that are taken by women and men independently and those that are taken by mutual consent:

Men and Women
(Mutual decisions)

Men

Land revenue payment
Education of children
Irrigation of fields
Ploughing of fields
Use of alcohol and other stimulants

Women

Marriage
Buying and selling of animals
Sowing
Labour
Buying clothes
Cooking
Shopping
Constructing a house
Immunisation

Cosmetics

Use of alcohol and tobacco

Other information was obtained with regard to income and expenditure, as well as the educational status of the people in the panchayats

Identification of Major Problems

Once the information was collected and presented to the people, they could identify the major problems facing them. These problems have been divided into 6 categories that are, health, education, environment, social taboos, economic conditions and wear and tear of material.

Once the problems were categorised the villagers were asked to distinguish the problems as short term plans and long term plans based on their importance. Women also participated in this process but their participation was not in such numbers as the men. The final short term and long term lists may be seen as follows:

Short Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small potholes can be filled with mud by the people Providing unpolluted drinking water Women and children's healthcare Stomach illnesses Disposal of garbage Water stagnation Divided groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low literacy among women Low wages paid to women Community toilets Laying of pipes on the road sides because there is no siphon Repairing the hand pumps Building a Panchayat Bhawan Increasing population level Low status of women

Priority was given to those problems that had been identified, on the basis of the extent to which the issue is prevalent, its seriousness, its effect on the people and the degree to which the people would be willing to participate.

Problems were highlighted in order of importance. The first was illiteracy among women and the need for a siphon. Problems of women and children's health came next, increase in levels of population and the need for community toilets were placed third, stomach related diseases were placed fourth, polluted water problem was placed fifth, garbage disposal was the sixth priority and women's wages and unemployment were the seventh priority of the people.

Work Plan

The First Year

Once the information was collected, categorised and prioritised, the people of Mathia Madhopur took three years to prepare a plan. During the planning period certain criteria had to be kept in mind, how the problem could be resolved, who would take the responsibility and for which part of the problem. The next question was how much time will be needed and what resources needed to be planned for. What would be the end result of each project undertaken? These criteria were considered before the first plan was prepared on the issue of the low literacy rate among women.

A core group was formed, made up of women and young people, to teach the women to read and write. The Total Literacy Campaign members and the voluntary agencies of the community were responsible for training the group. The materials used were simple and included pictures for easy understanding. The members of the core group and NVSS will follow up by making sure that girl students are enrolling in schools as well as attending them. Meeting the parents on a regular basis will ensure that this happens. The result will be an increased literacy rate among women.

The Importance of a Panchayat Bhawan

The Pradhan, members of the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha identified the lack of a Panchayat Bhawan as a major problem. They wanted the building to be constructed within the first year, as it was impossible to have meetings attended by a large number of people without it. The panchayat and Gram Sabha members selected the site for the Bhawan. It currently stands in the centre of the village under the peepul tree. The block sanctioned the sum of one lakh for its construction.

The Second Year

The problems related to the health of women and children had been given second priority by the people, they were also able to study the situation in the context of their families. It became clear that many problems related to ill health could also be resolved. The Gram Sabha and panchayat members

were able to form a health committee with the help of a non-government committee. The health committee would look into issues of immunization, nutrition of mother and child, family planning, nursery etc. For this purpose a training was organised for the health committee and the ANMs in the area.

The issue of hand pumps and the problem of safe drinking water

As the water table in Mathia Madhopur is very high, the hand pumps can only be installed at a height of 14 feet. As a result, the dirty water stagnating on the roads also seeps into the supply of water feeding the hand pumps. Out of the four 'India Mark' hand pumps that have been installed three are not working, needing repair. Due to impurities in the drinking water incidents of stomach related illnesses in the village are very high. Therefore the men as well as the women were willing to take action quickly. The storage tanks were cleaned, the length of pipes increased and the existing pipes were repaired. Small groups of people were trained in the use of chlorine tablets, how to boil and strain water for the purpose of purifying it.

The Third Year

Community toilets

The lack of toilets in the village is a major problem. The people have to use fields and sides of roads to relieve themselves. The drinking water also gets polluted due to this practice. Sites were selected far from the water body areas, funds were generated, the JRY and the community contributed towards this project and for cleanliness plus repair purposes a cleaner was appointed.

Seasonal unemployment and low wages

The problem of seasonal unemployment and low wages paid to women were rated as the last priority of the people. It was hoped that the problem would be resolved in 6 months to 1 year. For this purpose activities like embroidery, knitting, printing and carpet making were looked at. Organisational help was sought in training the women in these skills.

The Gram Panchayat, the people of Mathia Madhopur with support and assistance from a local organisation and the SSK took the responsibility of the entire planning process. The process has amply demonstrated that the local people have the capacity to identify and plan for their needs, therefore it is not necessary for planning to be done only by "experts" sitting in state capitals or the centre. The issue of planning is crucial for the success of PRIs and capacities for the same can be developed through trainings and regular support from the administrative machinery at all the three tiers.

5

Rajasthan: Micro Planning Initiative

UNNATI: Organisation for Development Education

Based at Ahmedabad, Unnati aims to extend educational support to developmental agencies to promote the perspectives of participatory principles, social justice, gender equality and local self-governance in the process of social development. It provides intensive support to small groups engaged in addressing livelihood issues and facilitating educational processes among the functionaries of NGOs and people's organisations in Gujarat and the desert region of Rajasthan through structured training programmes, informal interactions and distribution of educational materials. Unnati derives inspiration and strength from the association with grassroot groups.

Participatory planning exercise in Rajasthan was carried out in 4 panchayats of Jawaza block, Ajmer district. These were Naikalan, Durgawas, Kabra and Jawaza. These panchayats fall under Jawaza Panchayat Samiti. Jawaza is situated about 75 km from the historic city of Ajmer and 23 km from Beawar Tehsil. The profile reveals that the ST and backward communities dominate the caste structure. Though Ajmer district has been declared fully literate, yet the research data of a local NGO reveals that the literacy rate is only 32%, while the female literacy rate is a mere 23%.

The topography is undulating and prone to erosion. The southern part of Jawaza Block has an undulating terrain and very little land that can be cultivated because of high erosion. The region receives a rainfall of 500-750 mm, characterized by variations in quantity, timing and intensity followed by periodic drought.

Agriculture and animal husbandry are the mainstay of the economy. The land is generally barren and unfertile. The people are dependent on the natural resources, but due to increasingly prolonged drought and unfavourable climatic features the people's survival is threatened. Only 33.7% of the cultivable area is irrigated. The agricultural produce is dependent on timely rainfall and is further

affected by the size of operational holdings. For a large family, which is dependent on small holdings, given the current state of production, it is difficult to meet the food grain requirement. As a result, people are left with no other option but to migrate to adjacent cities in search of wage employment. Women play a supportive role to their husbands in agriculture and animal husbandry related activities. They have a very low status in society and are not allowed any communication with men outside their own family. In most cases the purdah system is still prevalent.

People do not have access to government health services and other facilities due to remote locations, ignorance and other socio-economic and cultural factors.

The criteria for the selection of these panchayats is:

- The Rural University Experiment in educational innovations has prepared the base for carrying out planning with the participation of the people. The people have a sense of involvement and understand the value of co-operative effort. They also appreciate the need for long term planning.
- This was the field area of a local grassroots NGO, Magra Mewar Vikas Sansthan (MMVS) who worked in collaboration with Unnati.
- The presence of Artisan Alliance Group and other local NGOs of the weavers and leather workers, who helped in initiating the process with the community and the panchayats.

How the Process Functioned:

Step-1: Building linkages

In the initial stages of the project, meetings were held with the panchayat functionaries of each panchayat separately. The PRI functionaries were briefed about the project thoroughly in order to avoid suspicion, fear and misunderstanding on their part. During this time the right to information campaign had been launched by Mrs. Aruna Roy on the issue of corruption at the panchayat level. As a result the panchayat representatives had some doubts about the micro planning exercise. However, the relationship between the Magra Mewar Vikas Sansthan (MMVS), and the local organisation was of great help in overcoming the initial doubts and fears. Later the facilitators also met with the government officials at the block and district level.

Meetings were held with the people of each village to inform them about the panchayat level planning exercise. The attitude and response of the people was positive. It seemed that the people had no faith in the panchayat. Separate meetings were held with the women in order to understand their point of view. Like the men, the women too had no expectations from the panchayats. The majority of the women complained about serious corruption in the panchayat.

Step-2: Understanding the background of panchayat functionaries

A series of educational programmes were undertaken with the panchayat members - the purpose was to gain insights for a future course of action.

- About 40% of PRI members of four panchayats are totally ignorant about the finances, sources of funds for the panchayats and taxes levied by the panchayat. Of the women members 80% of them are ignorant about matters related to panchayat finance.
- Only 5% of the PRI members were aware about the role of the Gram Panchayat.
- Only 10% of the PRI members were aware about their role as people's representatives.
- Not a single member or sarpanch was totally aware of the Panchayati Raj Act.
- Of the PRI members 75% do enquire about the needs and problems of the people and the village.
- Indira Awas Yojana and JRY are the two most popular government schemes.

Step-3: Assessing the needs of the village

The needs of the participants were assessed in the four panchayats. In order to involve different sections of the community, especially the poor, Dalits and the women, separate exercises were undertaken. These were mainly PRA exercises like season based service maps, social maps, wealth and matrix ranking, resource mapping etc. After this a series of meetings were held in each panchayat to share the information and findings with the people in the presence of the elected representatives. The people were asked to express their opinions/viewpoints in these meetings. Separate meetings were held with the women to take into account their point of view. From these series of discussions with the community members the main problems faced by the villagers emerged very clearly. These were related to education, health and irrigation. After this the sector specific planning exercise was initiated.

Step- 4: Sector specific planning exercise - people's conference

Based on the "felt needs" of the people, it was seen that importance has to be given to three sectors during the planning phase, namely, primary education, health and irrigation. In order to carry out sector specific planning, "Peoples' Conferences" were organised, based on the Future Search Conference methodology. However, this method was modified to make it more suitable for the rural people who are not accustomed to meetings attended by a large number of people.

Micro Planning for Primary Education

A series of meetings with teachers and PRI representatives were undertaken on the issue of the drop out rate and low enrolment. The aim was to undertake a dialogue with all the people concerned, villagers, students, panchayat members, teachers, school administration and block and district officials of the education department on the above mentioned issues.

The Preparation for the People's Conference

The various categories of the people concerned became very anxious when they were told about the conference. They had doubts that a group made up of very different kinds of people, may not lead to any positive interaction or there might not be any interest in it. In order to remove these doubts and create a positive attitude towards the events, the team met these people individually and also established a personal contact with each one of them.

About 70 people were invited to the meeting. It was ensured that the total number of each category of the stakeholders was not too large so that they could dominate the exercise. It was also determined that the women and weaker sections from the villages were adequately represented. After the selection of the participants, they were contacted personally, the objective of the conference was highlighted and how it is related to their work and development.

Such a conference or meeting cannot be arranged without proper planning. In this case the process of identification of the participants began almost two and a half months prior to the conference.

For this process some prior information about the person is essential. It is important to know something about the person's background and interests, as it is on this basis that the person's interest in the program can be awakened.

The participants that were invited to the conference were:

- The Sarpanch and two ward members from each of the four panchayats
- Parents (at least 2) from each panchayat
- Students (at least 2) from each panchayat who have studied or have been drop outs from the primary school.
- Teachers of primary schools as well as heads of the primary school unit.
- Education Extension officers from Jawaza Panchayat Samiti.
- District officials like Divisional Commissioner, DEO, Dy. Director of Rajasthan Education Board.
- NGO representatives

A request was made to the Panchayat Samiti office and the BDO to send official letters to all the sarpanchs and the teachers identified to attend the conference. A letter from the Divisional Commissioner's office was sent to the BDO to extend his co-operation. This official sanction gave legitimacy to the conference.

There was a second meeting with the invitees just before the conference. This was considered important, in order for them to take the conference seriously and speak about their needs and problems as well as the major issues.

Arrangements for the Conference

A three-day conference, residential in nature requires a great deal of attention to practical details. The meeting hall was arranged in a way that made it possible for a large number of participants to interact

freely with each other. Board and lodging arrangements were also made at the venue of the conference. The conference was organised at the district headquarters.

The Conference

About 70 participants attended the three-day conference. Participants included the primary stakeholders like the panchayats representatives, Gram Sabha members and teachers. For each group of participants one person was selected as a facilitator. The facilitator's role was to help the group to interact and hold discussions on the concerned issues. His role was also to help to take down the points of discussion faithfully, for the benefit of the groups that were illiterate.

The Divisional Commissioner chaired the inaugural session. The discussion revolved around issues of primary education, concerns, issues and what needs to be done about them.

The meeting began, with discussions within the groups formed by participants belonging to similar backgrounds. They were able to talk openly about the various issues of concern. Later mixed groups were formed to discuss how to deal with the areas of concern. These discussions helped in arriving at a proper understanding of the problem without blaming other groups as to being the cause of the problem. Once the cause of the problem was identified, potential solutions and the responsibility for the resolving of the problems emerged. The focus shifted from looking for 'problems in people' to looking at 'problems per sector.' This process resulted in objectivity and a positive approach towards solving the issues.

This positive attitude helped the people to look within themselves and discover their own ability to solve problems. For the first time people felt that their views and opinions had been taken into consideration.

The main issues of concern that emerged from the participants' discussion have been given below:

- Low enrolment
- High drop out rate
- Lack of motivated teachers
- Lack of quality education
- Absence of the minimum level of learning
- Lack of ownership towards education

For each of the 6 identified issues, the participants listed three to four causes. For example the causes of the "lack of quality education" were:

- Corruption in recruitment of teachers
- Involvement of panchayat representatives in the affairs of both the schools and teachers
- Lack of preparation on the part of the teachers

After this possible solutions were suggested for each of the causes cited for the six areas of concern.

This was done in mixed groups.

- Proper recruitment procedures for teachers

- Teachers to maintain cordial relation with the parents
- Syllabus should be restructured

The mixed groups seeking solutions were more effective because they continued with their policy of not blaming each other. Based on the discussions and the list of suggestions a micro plan was developed for primary education. In this plan, each participating group identified their roles and acknowledged their responsibilities:

- Students will attend their classes regularly, keep their campus looking neat and clean and help their younger siblings to learn.
- Parents will send their wards to school, call at least 4 meetings to find out the problems of the teachers for the smooth running of the schools. They will also help the teachers in getting the basic facilities related to primary education in the village.
- Panchayat representatives will arrange for housing facilities for the teachers, call ward-wise parent meeting, form village committees to monitor school functioning, honour good teachers, establish linkages with concerned government officials to ensure that the teachers are not involved in other government duties.
- Teachers will help to develop an effective learning environment, organise rallies for more enrolment, organise and celebrate major events in schools, develop innovative teaching methods.
- The NGO representatives will provide new learning methods and models by subscribing to newsletters and journals and forwarding them to the teachers.

The Impact of the Conference

After a month and a half of the conference, it was found that the enrolment rate had gone up substantially. The people along with panchayat members had conducted meetings in many villages and had constituted village education committees. It was praiseworthy to note that in one village, Dhola Dhata I, a village education fund had been formed with about Rs.2000/ to meet the local expenditure of the school. Teachers felt refreshed, full of energy and were more punctual in attending to their duties. The panchayat started taking an active interest in the education sector. In the village Dhola Dhata II, the Panchayat Durgawas members ensured the attendance of all the boys and girls in the village. In a few cases it was seen that the panchayat members had solved the problems of the teachers in their area as well.

Micro Planning Used in Rural Health

The second issue taken up for micro planning was rural health services. In the process of implementing PRA it was found that though services of health personnel were available, the rural health facilities were very poor. The worst sufferers were the women and the adolescent girls. There were a large number of unregistered practitioners who were easily available to the people. A community dialogue on the issue was initiated, it was felt that another Peoples' Conference should be organised for the

formulation of a micro plan related to the health sector.

The steps taken for this conference were the same as that for primary education. It was organized at the Tehsil headquarters and lasted two days. In this case the District Health Officials and CHMO were asked to give official orders and instructions to all doctors, nurses, ANM, and health workers belonging to the four panchayats.

The participants were identified in consultation with the community and panchayat members. Those invited to the conference were:

- Government PHC doctors and health workers
- PRI representatives
- Villagers (male)
- Villagers (female)
- Adolescent girls in the villages
- Traditional practitioners and dais (untrained helpers, midwives)

In the initial round of the conference, diseases occurring seasonally were analysed by the participants and the reasons behind the poor condition of rural health were also studied in detail. These were the suggestions given by the participants:

The doctors and health workers

- Doctors and the health staff should not be asked to perform other administrative tasks apart from their duty.
- Health workers, nurses and ANM should sit in the sub-centre instead of attending to cases, individually.
- Voluntary efforts should be promoted in the village.
- Volunteers (male and female) should mobilise people towards using the health facilities available to them.
- Doctors should visit the health sub-centre at least once a month.

The panchayat representatives

- Co-operation and co-ordination of PRI members, panchayat and other participants is essential.
- A village health committee should be formed.
- The committee should act as a pressure group.
- The people should be trained to pay attention to cleanliness and safe drinking water.
- Effective means of communication between the village and PHC, Jawaza must be found.
- There should be a quarterly planning and review by the panchayat and health committee about the existing situation.

The task of the male villagers

- Forming Health Committees in villages
- Organising immunization camps in their respective villages.
- Ensuring cleanliness

The task of the female villagers

- Making sure nurses visit the panchayats regularly.
- Make women aware of minor diseases and reproductive health concerns.

The traditional practitioners and dais

- Ambulances should be provided for villages in remote areas at subsidised rates
- The dais (midwives) should be provided with essential kits to conduct safe deliveries
- They should be given a fixed honorarium .

Based on these suggestions, a joint action plan was prepared by all the participants :

The “Joint Action Plan”

- Four panchayats will constitute a Health Committee by January 1997.
- Meetings will be held so that a village health fund can be organised.
- Villagers and the panchayats will ensure cleanliness
- Every participant will use his/her influence to make it possible for children to be immunised.

The Impact of the Conference

In Naikalan and Jawaza panchayats, meetings were conducted by PRI functionaries with the focus on the issue of health and measures that needed to be taken to ensure cleanliness in the villages. A health committee was formed in Jawaza panchayat and a donation box for surplus medicine for those who couldn't afford them was placed in the PHC, Jawaza. In Naikalan and few other panchayats, the doctors have begun to visit the sub-centres regularly, to attend to their duties for the first time.

Micro Planning on the Issue of Irrigation

The area is known for its uncertain and erratic rainfall, deforestation, increasing population, low levels of literacy and the dependence of the majority of the people on minor agricultural activities.

The irrigated area is 33.7 per cent of the net sown area, out of which 86.3 per cent is irrigated by dug wells, and tube wells, the yield of which is again dependent on rainfall and the size of the landholding. Thus, the present irrigation system is inadequate. The panchayat planning process revealed that there is ample scope within the budget provided for the panchayat to improve the existing irrigation system.

The panchayats have enough scope for the creation of a network of facilities for irrigation as well as reviving the denuded natural resources. Government schemes like JRY, Jiwan Dhara, Akal Rahat, EGS etc provide funds for construction as well as repair of check dams, lakes, wells, anicuts etc. The irrigation network created by the panchayat under the above mentioned schemes was found to be either defunct or not serving the purpose. The people's opinion regarding selection of sites and the nature of the network were not taken into consideration.

The Process of Correcting the Problems of Irrigation

Group meetings were conducted in each village of three panchayats, namely Naikalan, Kabra and Jawaza. PRA techniques were used for gathering information. Villagers drew resource maps of the villages locating the present irrigation network as well as its present condition. They were also asked to give their opinion about improving the irrigational facilities in terms of coverage and frequency. Some of the suggestions were construction of new anicut check dams and the digging as well as deepening of wells. These were also mentioned in the resource maps. The entire process was conducted in large community meetings in every village in the presence of PRI functionaries of the respective panchayats.

The entire information was collected and tabulated by using PRA methods. The purpose was to prepare consolidated irrigation plans priority wise, taking into account the common knowledge of the people. The Sarpanchs of these three panchayats committed themselves to incorporating this plan in parts in the annual development plan of the panchayats in relation to the resources available. In every village a group of people were sensitized about the plan of their village and were asked to raise the issues in Gram Sabha meetings.

Follow-up support for plan implementation and some insights

- All the panchayats were exposed to the new techniques and methods, so that they could get the people's consent to address many local level difficulties.
- Insights derived from these sector specific plans has helped the local NGO, MMVS to start new programmes in the region.
 - ◆ The people began to have faith in the micro planning process.
 - ◆ All participants to come together.
 - ◆ Mobilising the disadvantaged and the poor.
 - ◆ Providing them with an opportunity to interact and share.
 - ◆ Facilitate sharing of problems and developing action plans for solutions.
 - ◆ Constant follow-up on action plans.

As a follow-up support, a method was developed so that each group could support and help another group in carrying out participatory planning, thus taking the process beyond the NGO. Group to group linkage was the main follow-up support planned in the process.

6

Bihar–Micro Planning Initiatives

CENCORED (Centre for Communication Resources Development)

CENCORED based in Patna, Bihar is an active centre for providing training workshops, seminars on various issues from Organisational Development, Panchayati Raj, formal education, self-help groups, micro planning etc to voluntary organisations, government organisations and grass-root level workers. It provides educational resources, follow-up, evaluation and other support services. The organisation's mission has been promoting people centred development with the focus on participation and partnership.

Participatory Planning in Bihar

The participatory planning exercise was carried out in panchayat Belthi Rasulpur, Bochaha Block, Muzaffarpur District, Bihar. The panchayat is situated in the north-eastern part of the block at a distance of 12 kms from the block-head quarters and 21 kms from the district head quarters. Situated on the banks of the Bagmati river, this area is prone to floods, and the crops are often affected by them. The panchayat has 10 villages out of which one is practically uninhabited, with only two houses. The total population of the panchayat is 6,933, out of which there are 3,687 males and 3,246 females. The panchayat is largely dominated by the scheduled caste, backward classes and minority groups i.e. Muslims. There are a total of 1,165 households. The economic condition of the panchayat is poor. A total of 405 people or (32% of the families of which 20% are SCs) have been identified as living below the poverty line. Most of them are agricultural labourers. They do not have proper housing facilities. Often two or three families live in one thatched house. Under the Indira Awas Yojana scheme of the central government 54 houses have been constructed for the homeless. However, out of these 36 are damaged and are not fit for living.

The panchayat has 7 primary schools and 2 “madrasas”. All the school buildings have permanent structures, with two rooms each for the five classes. The total number of enrolled children is 862, out of which 461(53.5%) are boys and 401(46.5%) are girls. Around 891 boys and 748 girls do not go to primary school. The panchayat has a very low literacy rate, only 22%. Female literacy is even lower. Only 150 (8%) adult females out of the 1,733 are literate.

The Bihar Education Project is operational in Muzaffarpur district. But despite all efforts, the Village Education Committees (VECs) are not functioning properly. The VECs exist, but since no meetings have been held, no decisions have been taken regarding the enrolment of students or the development of schools. Moreover, most of the VEC members are not aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Criteria for selecting the Belthi Rasulpur Panchayat

- The panchayat is socially and economically backward.
- The majority of the population consists of scheduled caste and religious minority groups.
- The area is prone to floods and water logging.
- It has a low literacy rate.
- The government programmes are not given priority.

The process of rapport building

- Rapport building with the people of the panchayat was facilitated. This was done to create a favourable environment for carrying the planning process forward with people’s participation. In order to gain the confidence of the villagers Mahila Gram Sabha, Voter Awareness Campaign, or Matdata Jagran, village meetings and cultural activities were organised.
- Another entry point was the identification of veteran leaders and organisation of orientation camps for their understanding about the need for micro planning in the context of the new Panchayati Raj.

Key informants were identified.

An orientation programme was organised for key informants, dealing with the following topics:

- The new Panchayati Raj Act and its objectives.
- The importance of the Gram Sabha.
- The base upwards planning process and the need for participatory planning.
- The objectives of participatory planning.
- The identification of problems and prioritisation.

A training about PRA tools and methodologies was organised for the micro planning team. PRA exercises were carried out in all 9 villages, each divided into 7 clusters. These clusters were: Belthi Rasulpur, Rahsi, Mushhari, Baharpur, Fatehpur and Bazidpur, Boraha, Roshi, Chaknuran and Chal Belthi. These orientation camps and PRA training helped in building the confidence level of the villagers and their opinion leaders.

PRA tools were used for data collection. After the collection of base line data, the key informants

analysed and prioritised the problems.

The key informants organised a meeting for the purpose of identifying local problems and needs.

Some of the main problems identified have been given below.

- 1) Roads have been badly damaged by recurring floods, especially in the months of June to September.
Most of the roads in the panchayat area are built in low-lying areas.
- 2) 32% of the families who live below the poverty line do not have proper housing facilities. Most of these families are SCs. Old Indira Awas houses are poorly maintained.
- 3) Education, there is low enrolment, especially of backward and dalit children.
- 4) There is caste discrimination amongst students and between teachers and students.
- 5) Water accumulates in the school campus during the rainy season
- 6) Non-functional VECs and lack of monitoring

Village Planning Meetings

On the basis of PRA base line data, a meeting was organised to carry out the planning process along with the community members. Amongst the participants were government officials like Block Development Officers (BDOs) and District Education Officers. Women made up 70% of the total people attending the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting the facilitator's team familiarised everyone about the qualitative and quantitative information generated during the data collection phase through PRA exercises. After this, representatives of each village presented the particular problems that people are facing, their causes and effects. These problems were noted down and solutions were sought in consultation with the people present. During the plan formulation, the facilitators focused on government welfare and development programmes. The government officials present in the meeting also contributed in the planning process. After listing down the solutions for the various problems, the facilitator introduced a process called "alternative search", wherein the people selected appropriate alternatives according to their needs, capacities, possibilities and government provisions. The participants identified the strategy, activities, assignment of responsibilities and the time schedule for each solution, in each village. An example of one such strategy prepared by the people in a village planning meeting has been given below:

Village Mushari Village Planning Meeting

Problem	Solution	Govt.	BEP	Community	VOs
Roads 1) Mushari chowk to Boardih (kaccha road) 2) Kaccha road from Nissar Ahmad's house to Boardih	Brick- soling needed Brick- soling needed	BDO statement passed through JRY. This work will get completed in the same year Will be done the next year	—	— Village committee will request local MLA/MP for funds	— —
Education Water logging in the school campus during the rainy season	Soil filling	—	BEP rep. will put up this issue in the VEC meeting	Community will pressurise VEC to organise meeting	VO
Housing 60 SC families are living below the poverty line	Benefits of Indira Awas Yojana for the poor	This will be given priority the following year	—	Nisar Ahmad will take part as a group leader. Community members will apply to local MLA/MP for funds	

Learning Experiences

The process of participatory planning was a rich learning experience for the CENCORED team. The entry point strategy of the team was appropriate and timely, like organising Mahila Sabha, matdata jagran before Lok Sabha elections, organising meetings in every village and selection of key informers and community opinion leaders. All these activities helped in building a good rapport with the villagers.

During all the PRA exercises women's participation rate (especially SC and BC women) was much higher in comparison with the male members of the community. However, very few men and women from the higher castes participated in the planning exercise. Women's active participation can be further enhanced and built upon. Their capacities can be built to attend Gram Sabha meetings, identification of problems and their solutions, community development processes etc.

The micro planning process is a good way of information sharing and conflict resolution.

The village planning meetings were more like Gram Sabha meetings. Thus the people got an idea about the Gram Sabha and showed a lot of interest in taking part in it, since it gave them an opportunity to present their needs and possible solutions for community development.

Kerala–Micro Planning Initiatives

SAHAYI- Centre for Collective Learning and Action

Sahayi, was established in 1991 as a support organisation with its headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram. The meaning of this word is apt, the ENABLER. Through a variety of support interventions of training, information sharing, skill up-gradation, consultancy, advocacy, networking, research etc. SAHAYI seeks to enable the voluntary and other actors in the development field, to clarify their vision, sharpen their skills and hone their capacities for improving the effectiveness of their interventions. It also works with the civil society and local VOs at the local panchayat level to help them to participate actively in the local governance process.

1. WEST KALLADA GRAM PANCHAYAT

A micro planning exercise for participants was carried out by Sahayi in West Kallada, Kollam district in Kerala. It was a collective attempt of the people of that area to analyse and understand the basic socio-economic-environmental problems and issues of their area and formulate suitable action plans for their solution.

The area selected by the panchayat for participatory planning is West Kallada, one of the six panchayats in Sasthamcotta block in Kollam district in Kerala. This panchayat was formed in 1952. The panchayat covers an area of 13.36 sq. kms and has a population of 17,522, out of which there are 8,455 women and 8,677 men. There are a total of 9 wards. There are 22.53% Dalits included in the total population. The population density is 1,312 and the total number of households is 3,651. The literacy rate is 92% women's literacy rate being very close to that of the men. The panchayat is bordered by Sasthamcotta panchayat in the north, Sasthamcotta and Kizhake Kallada panchayats in the east, Munrothuruth panchayat in the south and Thevalakara and Mynagapally panchayats in the west.

West Kallada was the first capital of the ancient kingdom of Kollam, dating back to the first millennium A.D. Irrigated by the Kallada river on one side and the Sasthamcotta fresh water lake on the other, the

panchayat is blessed with abundant water running through the numerous canals and into the backwaters, fields, ponds, wells of the area. Most of the terrain is believed to have been originally linked to the Arabian Sea, and is 10 metres above M.S.L.

The criteria used for the selection of this panchayat:

- Sahayi had established a rapport with several sections of the community and also with the elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat.
- West Kallada, a not very accessible, under developed village with the backward communities in the majority, was receptive to carrying out the participatory planning exercise
- There was a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of the area.

The Major Issues and Problems of the Area

- The main occupation, of this area traditionally has been paddy cultivation. But socio-environmental changes over time have made half the arable land suitable for growing mixed crops. The excavation of clay from the fields for brick industries, has rendered the land unfit for farming and is a health hazard because of the high acidity in the water that collects in the trenches after the clay has been removed. Excessive clay mining has already damaged the local environment.
- Though nearly total literacy exists, yet there is lack of corresponding social awareness and consciousness regarding the environment, so that the local administration has never been able to tackle the socio-economic problems of the area, mainly chronic unemployment and poverty.
- Caste discrimination, divisions on political party lines, low status and low participation of women, lack of holistic approaches, increasing trends of consumerism and alienation from native culture are serious social factors that stand in the way of the area's total development.

The Process of Orientation and Training:

This was a part of the preparatory stage before taking up the data generation exercise. Much importance was attached to this stage and a lot of time and energy was spent on it. A series of orientations and trainings were given to the key participators of the programme, mainly the PRI and NGO representatives and community leaders.

Sahayi in West Kallada was responsible for creating an awareness about the PRI, as early as 31st July, 1995. This included consultations, seminars, and dialogues meant for the members of women's groups and the youth clubs. A total of 20 orientation/ consultation/ training events on Panchayati Raj and participatory planning was held from 31st July 1995 to 18th August 1997. Most of these were organised exclusively for the participants of the program in West Kallada, while some were common events in which the community members of West Kallada also participated. These awareness generation, skill development and planning exercises covered a vast area of themes related to panchayati raj and micro planning and were guided by resource persons from the Sahayi team and outside. Some of these eminent persons were Mr. M.P. Varkey, retired Deputy Director of panchayats,

Prof. T.S.N. Pillai, Dean of Social Work in Sankaracharya University, Kaladi, Dr. G. Antony, Reader, Department of Management, Cochin University.

The most important training intervention of Sahayi was the State Level Training of Trainers (STOT) in January 1996. In which the people of West Kallada participated. It was unique not only in the matter of duration, but also involving participants from all over the state and several eminent resource persons as well as a balanced combination of theory and practice. The main objectives of this training event were:

- To deepen the understanding of the participants about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, with emphasis on the role of voluntary organisations.
- To facilitate understanding and development of skills related to planning and PRA methods.

The training, with the formal inauguration of the PRI project by one of the state ministers and supplemented by numerous participatory sessions and exercises, including the field testing of PRA methods. The training is remembered by one and all as a landmark of learning, particularly in the area of participatory approaches in planning.

This training influenced the micro planning experiment in West Kallada for the following reasons:

- The state level event was organized in West Kallada panchayat, giving an opportunity to the people and the local leaders to interact with delegates from all over the state.
- A few of the prominent prospective participants of the micro planning exercise under consideration were present during some of the sessions. Among them were the President and some members of the panchayat.
- The presence of VIPs including the Minister provided effective publicity for the PRI project and served as a tool of mass education. The treatment of topics was an in depth study, comprehensive, intense and relevant to the realities of the "field.". Theory and practice were creatively interwoven.
- It created an opportunity to stay with the local people at their homes and observe the realities of their lives.
- The programme helped in creating a general awareness among the local people on panchayati raj and the relevance of grassroots level planning through continuous interaction between the participants and the facilitators.
- Greater enthusiasm was generated among the PRI members and participants by using participatory methods for local level planning.
- The participants, including local leaders/PRI members could understand how PRA methods can be used as a tool for empowering people.
- The STOT was followed by a series of capacity building exercises and trainings aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of the participants in the planning activities. These were mainly:
 - Follow-up orientation courses about the PRI
 - Training in the application of PRA and other methods related to participatory planning
 - Training in aspects of leadership and management (as applicable in the field of planning)

Report Building

Sahayi's first orientation and awareness programme about the PRI began with its linkage with the people of West Kallada in July, 1995. This was done prior to the formal launching of the PRI programme and before the panchayat elections, to orient and motivate the people for maximum participation in PRI related activities including the elections. The response of the people was warm and enthusiastic.

The introduction of the PRI programme in August 1995, strengthened the rapport building process with Sasthamcotta Block it was chosen as the venue for the micro planning demonstration/ intervention. West Kallada was one of the panchayats of the Block.

These activities were undertaken during this phase:

- Contacts were established with government officials, panchayat functionaries and community based organisations (women's groups and youth clubs).
- Literature in the form of handbills was printed and distributed.
- Important and influential people were met and invited for the inaugural function of the PRI intervention. A minister of the government of Kerala was present at this function
- The response of the local people, leaders and officials was positive and encouraging. Several villagers came out that day to watch and participate in the function.

Participatory Data Generation

The data generation is a crucial and important phase of the participatory planning exercise. The data has to be reliable and the people's participation is vital.

In order to help this process a list of the key participants from the panchayat was prepared. The list included the names of government officials, heads of institutions, local leaders, knowledgeable elders, retired teachers etc. The list was constantly revised to include more persons who could contribute to the data generation process.

Groups of two or three facilitators visited people and held informal discussions, during which time the relevant data was selected. They had prepared a check-list as a guideline for including various socio-economic issues. The data generation was initially focused on two issues, namely, agriculture and animal husbandry. During the discussions one of the team members took down notes, which were then consolidated on reaching the field office.

In addition to dialogues with individuals, focus group discussions were held with groups of women and youth groups. Discussions with mixed groups were also conducted. The "tabulation method" was used to cross-check and verify the information provided by the people. The facilitating team also used the "observation method" for refining the quality of the data and the information generated.

"Resource mapping" was another method used in the process. The purpose was to ensure people's participation for information generation and for providing opportunities for learning.

The data generation process was followed by compilation of the data and sharing the outcome with

groups and individuals. This helped in developing the interest of the people and getting them involved in the process.

However, during this phase, some obstacles and limitations had to be dealt with. Just as the Sahayi team had completed the long and difficult process of educating, motivating and empowering the people's representatives with information and skills and was about to initiate the data generation process, the State announced the Peoples Campaign Programme for the 9th plan sponsored by the government of Kerala. The government organised a programme for mass education and training of the resource persons to be followed by participatory data generation and preparation of plans, which had to be done in a short span of time, so that the consolidated plans could be submitted to the Planning Commission.

The lessons learnt for future planning

- There was a need for an on-going orientation and training for the community members to keep them actively involved in the panchayat planning process.
- The realisation of the relevance and importance of micro planning and PRA methods in the planning and implementation of development projects in our country.
- The need for adaptation of methods and procedures. Flexibility, openness of mind, patience etc. become very useful and necessary in such situations.
- The facilitating team needs to be well equipped and properly guided. The team needs training and exposure in this field.

2. THE PROBLEM OF THE SCARCITY OF DRINKING WATER

For the people of Ampalakunnu, a tiny settlement on a hillock in the Ambalavayal Panchayat of Wayanand district in Kerala, the date 7th August 1998 is unforgettable. It is the day on which every person in the settlement forgot their miseries and danced for joy! Water was gushing out from the faucets in their hamlets! It was the day when the decades old problem, scarcity of drinking water was solved in the spirit of community participation.

Ampalakunnu, a hill settlement of the 10th ward of the Ambalavayal panchayat, inhabited by approximately 100 families, the majority of which were living well below poverty line, has been deprived of safe drinking water for over three decades. A characteristic of the small community was that mostly women were at the head of the groups of poor, widowed or abandoned women. The women had to walk long distances to fetch safe drinking water. When there was a lack of clear water the people used to drink unsafe water, leading to chronic illness and depression. All their appeals and entreaties to the authorities, through the decades, had fallen on deaf ears.

Arshabharat, a local voluntary organisation, started its development interventions in 1986, with the introduction of literacy and non-formal education programmes, but till 1994 they were not in a position to seriously attend to the problem of drinking water scarcity.

The participation of the local people in the planning and implementation of development programmes has been a strong point of Arshabharat ever since its establishment as a rural development agency. However, it was because of the insights gained from the participatory training courses of SAHAYI that enabled the Arshabharat team to deepen their understanding and hone up their skills in the field of participatory planning. The core team of the organisation had attended a series of participatory trainings, including the PTOT, leadership development, PRA. The insights gained during the training have to be tested against the field realities and supplemented with personal experience.

Arshabharat was fully convinced that the solution of the problem did not depend on the generosity of the government functionaries or the charity of outside agencies, but in the creative unity and participation of the local people, equipped with sound theory and rich practical experience in the area of participatory development. Arshabharat decided to try to mobilize the people and facilitate participatory processes among them for solving their chronic drinking water problem on a sustainable basis.

- The first step they took was to organise awareness sessions on the importance of safe water for the health and hygiene of the families and their overall development.
- This was followed by the formation of a committee to study the problem and plan their course of action. Through meetings and discussions the people were made to accept that no outside agency could help them to solve this problem on a permanent basis. The people had to depend on their collective wisdom and devise their own means to do so. It took some time for the message to sink into the minds of the people. Initially they were passive, but by the third meeting some of the participants asked a question, “Can we can do something”? They suggested that they could perhaps arrange food for the workers, and help to carry materials to the work area.
- Since the settlement was on a hillock, sinking a well in the settlement was ruled out. The alternative was to dig a well in the field at the foot of the hill and pump the water into an overhead tank on top of the hill and distribute it through a pipeline system. The total cost of the entire operations was estimated at Rs350,000. This also included expenses related to buying small plots for the well and the overhead tank. But the question was how to generate this amount?
- Thankamma an elderly woman, had some land in the adjacent lowlands/fields. She had many grudges against some of the families, she declared, “No one need entertain dreams of drinking water from my land”. M.M. Augustine and his team of activists from the organisation were able to overcome this obstacle. Combining humour with wisdom they said: “ You want to take revenge on those who have hurt you, don’t you? But what sweeter revenge is there than seeing them drink the water taken from your land?” Eventually the woman was won over and she offered to donate two cents for the construction of the overhead tank. Meanwhile the local politicians interfered and there was trouble again, caused by Thankamma going back on her promises. This unforeseen hurdle was overcome through a series of community meetings and dialogues. Now that the problem of the land was resolved, the question of construction and other costs came

up. After lengthy meetings with the community, it was decided that Arshabharat would meet the expenses of the well and the tank. The cost of the pump set, pipes, etc. would be met through the voluntary contributions of the people. On this understanding a well was dug in the two cents donated by Thankamma. But after digging to a certain depth the land turned out to be rocky. It was decided to sink another well nearby, which luckily had no rocks and had permanent springs of water. The two wells were then joined together at the bottom, so that the water from one would fill both. Subsequently the overhead tank was constructed on the top of the hill. But then a fresh problem arose. Through whose land will the pipeline be laid? Nobody was willing to allow the pipelines to be laid on his land. Once again the Arshabharat team had to swing into action using every bit of wisdom and experience learned in participatory development strategies, trying to convince the people of the need and beauty of sharing for the common good. Finally an agreement was reached and the main pipeline was laid along the property boundaries of two families. The people contributed voluntary labour and part of the costs amounting to Rs.35,000/-.

Construction was completed according to schedule and the inauguration of the scheme was celebrated with great rejoicing by one and all. The management and maintenance of the people's drinking water scheme was entrusted to a committee of women, who were doing their work very well. Every month Rs.5/- is collected from each family towards the meetings and the maintenance expenses.

Thus through the people's participation an urgent need of the community has been met. All the families in this hamlet, the most backward ward in the panchayat, have access to plenty of water, not only for drinking, but also for washing, gardening and the needs their live stock.

It took about two years for the problems to be finally solved, of which one year was spent in education and planning. The participatory methods taught by SAHAYI through the PRA sessions were at the base of the success of this endeavour by Arshabharat.

3. BREAKING BARRIERS OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THROUGH MICRO PLANNING (A CASE OF 'LABOUR FORCE' IN KUNNATHUKAL GRAM PANCHAYAT IN KERALA)

Kerala, a land richly endowed with agricultural resources, has always been and still is primarily an agrarian economy. The state has been held up as an example for successfully carrying out land reforms. The reforms enabled the re-distribution/ transfer of land from landlords to tenants and further more the tenants could now claim rights over land for housing sites. The income of the farmers and so also the bargaining power of the labourers increased. At the same time, Kerala was also witnessing a considerable decline in agricultural production and productivity. There was a shift in interest from paddy cultivation to less labour intensive crops like tapioca, rubber, plantain etc. The labour class had also organised itself into powerful trade unions and their strength enabled them to bargain for higher wages. The strong unions formed by the labour class and their improved bargaining powers have strongly contributed to the change of interest to less labour intensive crops. In many ways, the forming

of powerful trade unions has succeeded in changing the attitude of the labourers towards the old feudalistic system of the landowner-tenant relationship. However, a new system where a healthy relationship exists between the farmers and the labourers, is awaited.

Kunnathukal, is a Gram Panchayat situated at the southern tip of Kerala. The panchayat, at the border of Kanyakumari district, has a population of 33,648 and an area of 26.85 sq. km. It has all the features of a larger state as far as the agricultural situation and labour problems go. As in other parts of the state, the panchayat is dependent on agriculture with paddy once again being the major crop cultivated on the land.

The Agricultural Scenario in Kunnathukal Gram Panchayat

The basic problem of the village as elsewhere, in the agricultural sector, was the decrease in production and productivity in paddy cultivation. The problem took on massive proportions and the solution was nowhere in sight. Statistics revealed that within a span of a decade or so (1980s to 1990s), the panchayat witnessed a drastic decline in paddy cultivation from 315 ha to a mere 8 ha. The area of cultivable waste-lands increased to around 300 ha. This should be seen against a scenario where more than 80% of the population have land holdings ranging from 10 cents to 5 acres and above. Land owners lost interest in cultivation due to various reasons like high labour costs and subsequent rise in production costs, acute labour shortage during the harvest season, etc. Besides these, the agricultural sector was facing other problems like marginalizing of agricultural holdings, poor irrigation infrastructure etc. In due course, landowner's either shifted their interest to less labour intensive crops or left their lands fallow. We have seen the situation of the farmers, the situation of the labourers was equally depressing. Whereas the land owners were experiencing acute labour shortage during the brief harvest season, the agricultural labourers were facing severe unemployment during the lean season, resulting in partial employment and poverty, low social status etc.

A Decentralised Planning Process Initiated

Like the rest of Kerala, this tiny village had been living with its problem for many years. There seemed to be no practical solution in sight, given the intense political unionisation of the labour sector. It was in this context that micro planning or decentralised planning initiated through the People's Plan Campaign for the Ninth Plan in Kerala could be applied. The PPC was a concentrated effort of the then ruling LDF government in Kerala, in bringing about democratic decentralisation of the planning and development process. To start with, the government decided to set aside 35 to 40% of the expenditure of the Ninth Five Year Plan towards projects and programmes prepared by the local self-governing institutions. In this new mode of decentralised planning, the district is no longer treated as the basic planning unit. Instead, the planning process begins at the grassroots level with the maximum participation of people together with elected members, non-official experts, volunteers etc. The officials are expected to work alongside with non-officials in the whole process. The campaign thus opened up

opportunities and created an enabling environment for the panchayats to take up innovative and developmental work as per the felt needs and priorities of the local communities.

Thus, with adequate funds coming to the panchayats for development work, they were enabled to take up comprehensive work in their areas. For this, people were mobilized in large numbers for Gram Sabhas as these provided the forum where the developmental needs and problems could be debated and problems prioritised. Any program is sustainable only if it is need based, i.e. based on the felt need of the people rather than when the need is imposed on them from the higher levels of government. In the planning stage of every Gram Sabha, the people are divided into groups, sector-wise, like agriculture, animal husbandry etc. to discuss the problems, as they come up. Similarly such Gram Sabhas were conducted in all the wards of Kunnathukal Gram Panchayat too. During these Gram Sabhas, the people in the agricultural sector-wise groups highlighted the problems of labour unemployment, shrinking of areas of paddy cultivation etc.

Analysing the problem and the resources made available through the plan fund, the panchayat members and the agriculture officer of the line department introduced the concept of a labour bank to the villagers. Consultations were held with the Gram Sabha members regarding the concept, they approved of it.

The Thozhil Sena (Labour Force)

The main purpose of the labour bank or the Thozhil Sena was: to step up production and productivity in the agricultural sector by providing local labour and giving assurance of employment and social status to farm labourers, promising healthier farmer-labourer relations, partial mechanisation in the farm sector to reduce cost of production and physical exertion of farm labourers, social security to labourers etc. As is seen, the purpose of the programme was not just addressing the problem of unemployment. It had a perspective on social justice as well in that the programme went further to enable the growth of healthier farmer/labourer relations. In fact the focus and aim of the programme was that for the farmer, cultivation should not be a great strain.

The Thozhil Sena consists of 300-500 agricultural labourers, whose services are available on demand by the farmers, for the cultivation of crops like paddy, tapioca, coconut, plantain and vegetables. The details of work like labour norms, work time and wage rates are prefixed by a committee at the panchayat level involving representatives of farmers and labourers. The committee also provides a forum for the farmers and labourers to discuss their needs and problems. The farmers need not haggle over the wage rates any longer. The payment for the work done is made at the panchayat who will then pay the labourers. Thus the link between the farmers and the labourers is forged at the panchayat level in such a way that neither side is exploited.

To monitor and supervise the farm operations, farm help societies have been formed at each ward of the panchayat. This society consists of farmers, members of the Thozhil Sena, neighbourhood groups, agricultural development committee, a key resource person/ a member of the block level

expert committee etc. The functioning of the farm help society may be likened to that of a mini agricultural office as it provides all the services of the agricultural office, including dealing with the problems of farmers and labourers, receiving applications for the services of the labour force and other agricultural materials. They also function as a resource centre for providing labour, seeds, fertilizers, agricultural implements etc. Discipline, in the functioning of workers is ensured by the system.. If the farmer has any complaints regarding the labourer, he needs to complain to the farm help society, who will deal with the issue. The basic idea being that cultivation should not be a problem to the farmer. This is pertinent when one considers the fact that cultivation was indeed a burden to the farmers, especially with regard to labour.

Moreover, the labourers are assured 20 days employment per month throughout the year, which is a great boon to the labourers. During the lean season, the services of the labour force are used in the service sector like house construction, infrastructure work and as and when the need arises in other development work, so that they are not unemployed for long periods. With funds being provided to the panchayats for various activities, the panchayats are also in a position to assure labourers of employment. .

With regard to the budget, the panchayat reserved the entire amount which it had allocated for the agricultural sector for the implementation of the programme. In the financial year 1999-2000, Rs.1.55 million from the plan fund and Rs.0.15 million from the agricultural department fund was set aside for the purpose, thus making a total of Rs.1.70 million.

The Methodology

The methodology adopted in the whole exercise was a participatory one, where the panchayat and the agricultural officer took pains to identify and enlist the cooperation of various participants. Various participatory methods were employed in the process. As said elsewhere, the problem was identified and prioritised by the people in the Gram Sabha. Taking the matter further, the panchayat and the agricultural office held focused group discussions with representatives of important organisations of farmers and labourers in the area, members of the agricultural development society and the task force working on agriculture, to analyse in detail the problems and opportunities in the agricultural sector. Based on this, the concept of a labour force was invented by the panchayat and the agricultural office.

In order to spread the message of the labour force and the call for people's participation, regular public meetings were convened. Once the people showed a positive attitude to the concept, the work of putting the concept into action began. Regular programmes were organised for the citizens regarding the concept and the absolute necessity to keep the whole programme free of politics. However, the cooperation of political parties and trade unions in the area was enlisted. At the beginning , extensive consultations were held with the leaders of farmers and labourer's unions, who in turn had discussions with their respective members, and their cooperation was enlisted. Next, the panchayat and agriculture

office members had discussions with the members of the leading political parties in the locality, to ensure their cooperation also. The effort made for the above two steps are commendable, since trade unions and political parties can play a decisive role in making the programme a success.

After a consensus was reached by the high level committee, work details were finalised. As the programme was still at a experimental stage , it was decided to put the concept into operation with a limited number of labourers. The people were asked to select the eligible labourers from each ward, based on previously agreed guidelines. The rest of the labourers were assured that they would be selected in the following years. To provide technical training to the labourers, the panchayat took the help of Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, the faculty of the Agriculture University and the agriculture officer. A three day intensive training was given to the labour force members on the new concept, the use of new machines and the need for upholding discipline, sincerity and commitment to the new cause.

Obviously, the planning, operation and sustenance of the project was not an easy one. As mentioned earlier, the People's Plan Campaign provided an enabling environment for panchayats to take up development initiatives. However, this alone could not assure success. It needed people with some control (in this case, the panchayat) with initiative, with creativity and a vision to make use of the opportunity and take up activities based on the "felt needs" of the people and an awareness of the resources, for the all round development of their village. Above all, it needed the political will, which was provided here by the panchayat president and the elected members. This proved to be a major factor in handling as delicate an issue as labour and that too with the cooperation of farmers and labourers. Equally significant were the services of the agriculture officer, who was one of the major brains behind the programme. This healthy cooperation and collaboration between the panchayat and the agricultural officer is praiseworthy, especially at a time, when the panchayats were at loggerheads with the officials of the line departments.

Promotional Factors

- *The felt need/pressing problem:* The whole exercise was based on the felt need of people especially the farmers and labourers. People were thus in favour of the programme.
- *Participators involvement:* The panchayat members and the agriculture officer took care to identify and enlist the cooperation of all those people who were directly or indirectly associated with the programme. The inclusion of members of all political parties and farmer and labourers' unions helped in avoiding any obstacles arising from those with vested interests.
- *The formation of people's organisations:* In each ward of the panchayat, farm help societies were formed which function as mini agriculture offices and provide all the services of the agriculture office. Supervision and management of the whole programme is done by these people's organisations.
- *Work details:* Like labour norms, volume of work, work time and wage rates were fixed only after consultation with representatives of farmers and labourers.

- *Linkage with panchayat:* The whole operation is managed by the farm help societies and the labour force, the coordination of the labour force activities are the responsibility of the panchayat and the agriculture office. The Gram Panchayat president and the agriculture officer find representation in all the committees, formed for the programme. This has helped in sustaining the programme and preventing any situation where the labour force/ farm help society start functioning parallel to and therefore undermining panchayats.
- *Assured employment:* Since the linkage has been maintained with the panchayat, 20 days employment per month for the labour force members was assured even during the lean season as their service could be utilised in other projects of the panchayat, such as construction etc.
- *The coordination between the panchayat and agriculture office:* Without the healthy coordination between the panchayat and the agriculture office, it would have been difficult to implement a programme of this kind.
- *Political will:* It was the sheer political will which enabled the Government of Kerala to transfer more than one-third of their state budget to local bodies, which in turn motivated the local bodies to take up comprehensive work in their areas. Similarly, it was the political will of the panchayat president and elected members which paved the way for such an initiative and that too with the cooperation of trade unions and political parties in the local area.

The Challenges Faced

- *The initial doubts of farmers:* the concept of a labour bank was regarded with some doubts and suspicion by the farmers in the initial stages. The fear of unionism is very real in the minds of people, the panchayat had to deal with this issue as the major challenge. The majority of the farmers feared that the labour force would eventually grow into a labour union. They feared that their applications to the farm help societies requesting services of the labour force could be used as a document by the labourers in later years to claim a portion of their income from the produce. Thus in spite of the fact that local labour was available through the labour force, the farmers continued to depend upon outside labour.

It needed a lot of effort on the part of the panchayat and the agriculture office to convince the farmers of the potential benefits of the programme. A team of panchayat members and the agriculture officer had continuous discussions with the farmers. To counter the fear of labourers using their documents against them, the team suggested that they put only their name on the application without their address or signature. The team also detailed the benefits of using up to date machines, lowering the cost of production. For example, the team asked the farmers to pay just Rs.800 to the agriculture office for harvesting a hectare, the normal rate for which would be Rs.2000/-. The few people who took up this option were very happy and the success of the programme paved the way for others to make use of the services of the labour force.

- *Resistance from labourers and vested interests:* An education programme for labourers was required,

as some of them were under the impression that they would be paid lower wages in the labour force. The people in general and the labourers in particular were made aware of the broader purpose of the programme, particularly that of assured employment.

The creation of farm help societies provided a check to the siphoning of funds by middlemen and influential people, since in the new set up, all benefits in the agriculture sector can be obtained only through these societies. Naturally, they started attacking the services of the labour force. But by then, the people were convinced enough of the efficacy of the programme not to fall prey to such mischief.

The greatest challenge, however, came when a leading local daily allowed the publication of a series of articles by vested interests against the programme. Despite repeated requests by the panchayat president to the editor of the newspaper, the articles continued. The panchayat members, agriculture office, farm help societies and the local people then took a mass decision to boycott that particular newspaper. The boycott continued for two months. A competing local daily took advantage of the situation and tried to increase its own circulation. Realising their folly, the first newspaper sent a team to study the actual facts. After which, a half page article was printed in the newspaper praising the programme. The people from the newspaper began a campaign, going from door to door to regain their readership.

Outcomes of the Labour Force Experience

An immediate outcome of the whole process was that a healthy partnership developed between the farmers and the labourers. Through the concept of the labour force, a new identity was given to the labourers. It brought in a new culture where the labourers are now assured of continued employment, dignity of labour and work security.

A major outcome of the experience has been the increase in the area under paddy cultivation. Around 60 acres of fallow land have been brought under dry land cultivation and 13 ha of land under paddy cultivation. The cost of production has reduced by 40% due to mechanisation. The interest of the farmers and labourers in agriculture has been revived. Around 1300 farmers have made use of the services of the labour force till now. The major advantage being that the farmers can benefit from the subsidy immediately after the completion of work. Before, they had to shuttle between the government offices with their vouchers. But now they need to approach only the farm help societies for any work to be done. Similarly those labourers who had kept away from the programme have shown a new interest. There are nearly 400 applications from local labourers to join the force.

Moreover, the labourers were registered under a group insurance scheme worth one lakh rupees. Those labourers who had 150 days of work to their credit were given a festival allowance of Rs.500 during the Onam festival season. The labour bank provides the workers with credit coupons of various denominations to enable them to buy provisions at a village store, run by the women's self help group 'Samata', formed as part of the initiatives undertaken as part of the People's plan.

The situation now can be contrasted to earlier days when the agricultural labourers had to look for

employment in other sectors and outside their village, due to lack of regular employment. They can thus save the additional cost to their living expenses (if they had to work outside the village) and can spend their savings on the family. In addition, the flow of money from the village is checked as local labour is now readily available in the village itself. The money is now circulated in the village itself thus contributing to village development.

The involvement of people in each stage of the process and in the management of the programme has resulted in generating the support of the people in general and the labour force members in particular. They have developed a sense of the “we” feeling. Participation and support of the people were the major factors which enabled the project to overcome all challenges. People are now more aware of the agricultural schemes available and benefits now tend to reach the target group.

With the success of the programme and a revived interest in agriculture, neighbouring panchayats have started replicating the efforts of the Kunnathukal panchayat. Various other panchayats have also requested the services of labour force members.

The Creation of a Labour Bank

Perhaps the most positive outcome of the experience has been the creation of a labour bank. In this system, the farmers can avail the services of labourers from the bank on a loan basis, when they do not have enough initial capital to invest. The loan needs to be repaid only after the harvest, in the form of wages with interest at 12.5%

The Follow up

The panchayat is now making efforts to conduct a survey of the agricultural land and the practices used by every farmer and storing the same in the computer. The farm help societies are expected to give reports regarding these aspects so that the data can be updated. The major purpose is to provide technical advice to the farmers on modern and scientific practices of farming. For this, efforts are continuing, to identify unemployed students in the area who have undergone vocational higher secondary education to form a core group, so as to provide technical advice to farmers.



“Do-able” Micro Planning (2000-2001)

The learning from the experiences gained in facilitating micro-planning over the years has enabled PRIA and the partners to modify the approach and facilitate micro planning to provide for the maximum participation of women and dalits, facilitating plans, to be realistic (in terms of time and funds) and enhancing people’s ownership by mobilizing people’s contribution.

With the purpose stated above, an experimental “do-able” micro planning module was developed. Different partners in the states in which this experiment was conducted adopted various steps in completing the plans and implementing them within one to two months of the time period, with people’s participation and contribution.

Given below is a brief outline of the states in which the “do-able” micro planning was initiated:

State	District	Block	Gram Panchayat	Prioritised Issue	Total Cost	People's Contribution
Haryana	Fatehabad	Ratia	1 (11 wards)		Rs.1,70,000	Rs. 7,925
Himachal Pradesh	Sirmaur	Paonta Sahib	1		Rs. 7,00,000	Rs.1,05,000
Madhya Pradesh	Morena, Gwalior, Datia, Tikangarh, Panna, Sehore & Jhabua	11	16	Toilets Well and tube well	Rs.1,83,700	Rs. 41,320
Rajasthan	Jaipur Sitapur	Govingarh	1 (17wards)	Well, Tank and Hand pumps Detailed PRA's prioritisation was taken up in each ward for drawing up plans	Each ward had its own budget	People's contribution was in the form of labour and kind
Uttar Pradesh		Kasmanda	1 (5 hamlets)	Various issues in different hamlets	Each hamlet prepared its own plan with budget	People's contribution was in the form of labour and kind

The Steps Taken in Preparation of People Centred Plan

Step 1. Elected members underwent an orientation to the concept of micro planning (focus on economic, environmental and social needs) in a panchayat meeting of a one-day duration. The role-playing method was also used.

Step 2. Ward/ Tola/ Muhallah level meetings were held simultaneously, for understanding the concept of micro-plans focusing on economic, social and human development, rather than on infra structural development. The timing of the meetings were organised to the convenience of the elected members (ward panches) as well as the community. The major issues of the ward were identified in these meetings along with the causes and the probable solutions (Methodology–large group discussions). One or two youths (volunteers) were identified and they facilitated the preparation and implementation of the micro plan along with the panch. A discussion on the need for contribution in kind or cash from the community was initiated. (This step covered half a day or about two hours in each ward)–the total duration would depend on the number of wards/ tolas/ muhallas/ purvas).

Step 3. The consolidation of the major issues of wards, causes and probable solutions at the panchayat level was encouraged, and a rough plan was prepared on that basis. The people responsible for preparing the rough plan were the elected members, the panchayat secretary, ward level volunteers and other Government officials (This took one day.)

Step 4. Preparing the People Centred Plan under the following heads (one day)

- Introduction of panchayats (a brief description of the location, the terrain and the, socio-economic status– Map of the panchayat can also be inserted)
- Issues and priorities of wards
- Consolidation of priorities, probable solutions and appraisal of available resources
- Plan based on solutions with their implementation and responsibility
- Proposed budget with community contribution
- Conclusion/the way forward

Step 5. Resolution passed by Ward/Gram Sabha (one day)

Step 6. Getting it typed and making multiple copies (one day)

Step 7. Recording it on a panchayat board

Step 8. Submission and follow-up by elected members to the Block Development Office, Block Samiti and District Panchayat Officer, other tiers of PRI (Zila Parishad), MLA, MPs and DPC (Banks/ NABARD/ SHG etc.)

Some points were to be kept in mind:

- Scale of preparation– Ideally the efforts for a People Centred Plan covers the entire panchayat or even a ward, but if it is not possible due to various reasons, then to demonstrate the result, a mohala/ tola/purva or part of a ward may be considered
- Linkages with the two higher tiers– In the process of the preparation of the People Centred Plan involving members of the top two tiers was made mandatory as it would help in developing linkages

among the three-tiers and mobilizing the resources available to the other two tiers (This can also serve as the basis for further negotiations with other institutions for example DPC)

- **Conflicting interest groups**– In every panchayat, there are conflicting interest groups prior to starting the People Centred Plan. Care was taken to involve them as well.
- **Generally** it was found that soon after the first meeting, elected members, volunteers and government officials were enthusiastic about coming to the ward level meetings. It was important to conduct ward level meetings immediately because of the heightened enthusiasm.
- **Secondary Data**– Prior to intervention for the People Centred Plan, secondary data was collected. This helped in correlating the problems with probable solutions.
- **Initiation of Meetings**– All the meetings was initiated by those elected at the ward or panchayat levels or by the members of the CBOs
- **Learning Materials**– Some learning materials were distributed during the meetings in order to promote a better understanding in the community. An easy-to-do People Centred Plan process, with objectives and outcomes was distributed. Special attention was paid to writing this material in a simple, brief and comprehensive manner.
- **Media**– The media should be contacted prior to the intervention. This helps to replicate the process elsewhere.
- **Involving the whole community** in the implementation of the plan is of vital importance, the people from the junior most rungs of the community as well as those in more powerful positions have to be involved in the resource mobilisation of a people centred plan. This way the people are not just acting on orders of people in more influential positions.
- **Sustainability**– Wherever there is a need-based process in action which could solve at least some problems of the tola, mohalla or purva, the people centred plan could be sustained. However, it must be positioned in the Gram/ Ward sabha and Gram Panchayat processes.
- **Distance**- The challenge of undertaking People Centred Planning in remote/ far flung areas of the block is to be taken up.

Development of a model: The method of doing it may differ from place to place, depending upon the situation and circumstances. PRIA and their partners carried out this experiment in 16 panchayats in Madhya Pradesh, 2 panchayats at Haryana, 1 panchayat each in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh they have helped in developing this model.

Uttar Pradesh

Do-able Micro Planning in Hamirpur Gram Panchayat, Sitapur District, on Rural Infrastructure Development

A proper infrastructure is an essential part of today's activities – consumption, production and distribution. Whenever the infrastructure fails it very quickly and radically reduces the communities' quality of life and productivity. Conversely, improved infrastructural services enhance welfare, foster economic growth and hence benefit the communities. Providing a sound infrastructure and its services to meet the demands of households and other users is one of the major challenges of social justice and economic development. In the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) a large part of the area is backward and one of the major factors behind this is the lack of a proper infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Regions like rural eastern and central parts of UP suffer from a severe lack of infrastructure (both physical and social) and inaccessibility of the community to health centres, schools and markets mar the quality of life in these areas.

With this background, keeping in mind the sorry state of the infrastructure in the major parts of the state of UP, the first and foremost responsibility of any institution, especially the institutions of Local Self-Governance, is to cater to the local issues related to economic development in that area. And if the development, directly or indirectly, is dependent on infrastructure then development of infrastructure, physical as well as social, calls for a heightened focus. Of course, this does not mean that the focus from other developmental issues takes a second place, it is just asking to be looked at urgently.

Why PRCs Undertook Infrastructure Development

As already noted, in rural Uttar Pradesh, one finds a lack of infrastructure like roads, link roads, drainage, hand-pumps, health centres, schools, etc. This has necessarily affected the life of the communities. There are villages, which are in the interior (far from the main roads), and one has to walk or ride a bicycle for about 20 km's to get to the local market or town. There are no health centres nearby, nor proper roads for conveyance and to transport the sick. The households are, in many cases, unable to send their wards to school just because there are no proper roads linking the hamlets to the school. The children have to take routes, which are unsafe where they can be attacked by wild animals. Some

times children have been severely injured. These situations call for the immediate attention of the panchayat.

The community has an important role in the development of the infrastructure, as it is the responsibility both of the individual and the community alike to modify their physical surroundings in order to improve their productivity and protection. On examining the expenses in the financial year 2000–2001 in 15 Gram Panchayats (GPs) of the Kasmanda block of Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh, it was revealed that more than 90% of the total funds in every panchayat have been spent on infrastructure alone. However it is apparent that this amount has not been sufficient for the infrastructural needs of the community. With substantial funds being allocated to cater to the community's need, one has to see that the resources are utilised efficiently and effectively. The urgent needs of the community are properly articulated and the marginalized groups are also given their due share, the Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs), an informal agency working to make the functioning of the panchayats more effective, (within the powers which it possesses), is perhaps in the best position to ensure the fulfilment of the above requirement. Hence, the PRCs as facilitators came into the picture to promote (in consultation with panchayats and the community) effective planning in the development process.

The Process

The process of building the capacities of panchayats to undertake the development of infrastructure in the rural areas started in the year of 2000. A well thought out strategy was behind the whole idea. The different activities undertaken—information distribution, Gram Sabha mobilisation, and capacity building initiatives, were all focused towards the micro planning processes. Hence, the above activities at the field level were carried out in such a manner that one activity led to another activity and eventually it led to the central activity, that is, the micro planning through which the development of infrastructure was facilitated.

Initially, the capacity building program emphasised the process of planning at the local level. The information distribution process also gave a focus to the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Raj Institution (UPPRI) Act related to planning at the local level while at the same time attention was paid to providing information to the panchayat members as well as members of the Gram Sabha on basic issues like quality standards, fixed by the government pertaining to the construction work. Thus, the attempt was mainly to sensitise the community about the significance of the issue of infrastructure as well as the panchayat members about how to go about addressing the issue. Similarly at the Gram Sabha level also various meetings were conducted to generate a thought process among the community members about the importance of preparing an ex-ante plan before the actual implementation of the activity is carried out. In the micro planning process the focus was mainly to articulate the need of the different hamlets and bring it to the fore at the Gram Panchayat level. The next step brought the prioritisation issue to the forefront, necessarily the most complicated and the important step in the planning process, as without decisions, which infrastructure development to take up first would be the

question. Decisions had to be taken regarding alternative solutions and selecting the one best suited for the problems prioritised. The budgeting part had been attended to earlier, the last being the implementation strategy for the whole plan.

Benefits of the Strategy

One of the major benefits of the strategy decided for the promotion of infrastructure was the building of a favourable environment amongst those in the community involved in planning. A favourable and healthy environment for a particular activity always facilitates the process and it was true here also. When the resources ran short the community came forward and provided support in the form of labour and money. With this kind of community support the implementation becomes easier.

The above process helped us in developing a series of infrastructure plans in a number of Gram Panchayats- Ganeshpur, Kaima, Daudpur, Kaima, Padui, Mahabara, Sabada, Lathia, Ahilaspur, Doth, Antamau, Samaspur Sailwara, etc. to name a few. In all the above Gram Panchayats social as well as physical infrastructure, as per the need of the community, was facilitated by PRCs.

The implementation of the plan for the benefit of the groups that had been marginalized helped in promoting a sense of confidence in the panchayat and their own abilities to take up the development activities through locally available resources. The example of Ganeshpur, Kasmanda block of Sitapur is one of the cases where people undertook the construction of a school and appointed an educated unemployed young person as a teacher. All this was done with the monetary support and labour supplied by the community members of Ganeshpur, which is mainly inhabited by the scheduled castes. The Gram Panchayat made this endeavour possible. The panchayat members soon recognised the need of the community for planning and implementation and took up the process of finding the solution to the problem.

In Lathia Gram Panchayat, within the same block of Sitapur, the women folk undertook the construction of the link road on their own, with only the moral support of the panchayat. This action on the part of the women had an encouraging effect on the women in the neighbouring areas of Siddha Ahilaspur Gram Panchayat. With women actively participating in the process of implementation especially where they contributed in terms of labour, it led to a boost to their confidence in that they could also lead such a process if proper support by the community is provided to them.

The overall benefit of the entire process is the advantages that the panchayat came to recognise, of community participation in the process of microplanning. It enabled planning in accordance to local needs, knowledge and resources pooled within the community.

The Challenges Faced

Prioritisation of the problems has always been a challenge and this proved to be true in the areas where issues had to be selected. As it is well known, the need of different kinds of infrastructure in different hamlets will arise and to satisfy all of them is difficult keeping in mind the limited resources at

hand. Hence, prioritisation becomes essential. Prioritisation created a lot of tension among the inhabitants of the different hamlets but later a consensus was reached through persuasion and facilitation by the PRCs.

Infrastructure development is one of the most important issues for a panchayat and care should be taken that it does not become the only one. As the need for infrastructure is predominant in the initial period the panchayat allocates more resources for it. But the purpose of involving the panchayat and the community alike in the initial stages, with the help of the PRC, it was hoped, that through the process of discussion, prioritisation and planning on an issue, it would contribute to making the concerned committee active and inculcate a sense of ownership among Gram Sabha members and panchayats. It is expected that if the above development takes place the panchayat will be able to take up other issues related to social development. PRC's role at this juncture becomes very important, as it has to facilitate the functioning of panchayats in such a manner that the shift of focus of PRC from the physical infrastructure to social issues is smooth. This is an urgent agenda for the PRCs in the times to come otherwise the panchayat will become just an implementing agency of government schemes.

The prioritised problems at the Gram Panchayat level are as follows:

Brick road at Govinpur: Length- 1km: Cost	Rs. 1.5 lakh
Brick road at Kusmaura: Length- 300m: Cost	Rs. 30,000/-
Brick road at Hamirpur: Length- 500m: Cost	Rs. 50,000/-
Installation of handpump at Debiapur: Cost	Rs. 50,000/-
Installation of handpump at Govindapur: Cost	Rs. 2000/-
Construction of well at Kusmaura: Cost	Rs. 5000/-
Education problems in Kusmaura and Govindapur	

2

Madhya Pradesh : Planning for Drought Relief

Background

It is being increasingly recognised that unless the people are involved in directing and controlling the process of development no real (human) development will take place. And in order for this to happen more powers regarding decision-making, resource allocation, budgeting, etc. need to be given to the villagers. Therefore, the decentralization of governance and development planning is a condition for the realization of hitherto untapped growth potential.

The concept of giving power to the people in order to ensure their involvement and participation in the development of their panchayat has been given definite shape with the passing of the Constitution (the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act) in 1993. The Amendment provides power to the panchayats to prepare plans for social and economic development as well as implement schemes for the same. It also gives space for citizens' participation. But despite the provisions allocated to the panchayats, people's participation is still lacking in the planning from the base upwards. The main reason being that the capacities of the panchayats to make plans as well as facilitate people's participation is weak. The question is how can panchayats facilitate people's participation? How can they be made a part of the planning process? It seems to be a dilemma for the panchayats as there are no existing examples for them to replicate.

To add to this, Madhya Pradesh has been experiencing a drought situation. The panchayats' attention is on how to tackle this issue. Samarthan, Centre for Development Support, a non-governmental organisation for the past 6 years, has been quite active in supporting voluntary initiatives in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, to promote participatory processes and people-centred development. Giving the issue of drought, priority, Samarthan, in Madhya Pradesh along with the panchayats facilitated sixteen micro planning processes with an aim to create a model for the panchayats for future planning initiatives. These initiatives took into consideration people's participation throughout the process. Also,

the constant involvement of the government and other agencies was insisted upon as it was felt that their presence would provide an impetus to the process of planning from the base upwards.

The objectives of the micro planning initiative

- To provide examples of participatory planning in the direction of decentralized governance.
- To find alternatives at the local level to combat the problem of drought.
- Capacity building of panchayat representatives and Gram Sabha Committee members.

Capacity Building on Micro Planning

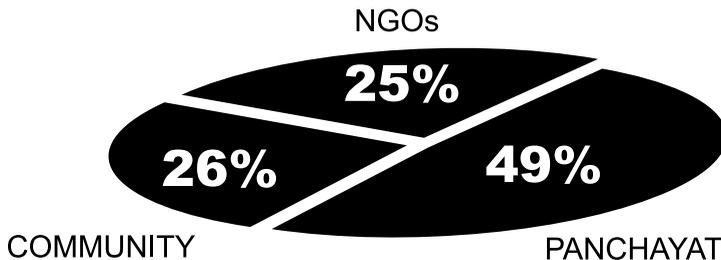
A four-day workshop was organized in the month of April 2001, among Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) members and the community on micro planning in order to create a common understanding about planning from the base upwards. Seven community-based organizations along with the local people also took part in the training. As part of the training, on an experimental basis, a village was chosen to put to the test, the steps required for micro planning. The issue on which the planning was initiated was drought, as the village was experiencing water shortage. The whole process saw a positive participation among the people in planning for water storage systems. Noting the success of the micro planning initiative in addressing issues of drought, Samarthan along with the seven organisations that took part in the training decided to take up the drought issue in the area of its intervention i.e. Madhya Pradesh, through Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs). The aim was to put forward successful examples of addressing developmental issues through micro Planning. To take up this initiative the whole state was divided into four parts (Bundelkhand, Chambal, Malwa and Mahakauchal). With the seven organisations and Samarthan, microplanning was implemented in around sixteen panchayats across seven districts namely Murena, Gwalior, Datia, Tikamgarh, Panna, Sehore and Jhabua.

The Selection of Panchayats:

The organisations involved in micro planning selected the panchayats based on certain criteria. Knowledge of contextual situations—socially, politically and culturally was of paramount importance in the selection process as it helps the people to participate more easily. The panchayats that were chosen for micro planning shared the following characteristics:

- The process of micro planning was initiated in those panchayats where the organisations have been working for a period of 1-3 years.
- Almost all the panchayats had a population between 1,500–2,000 people and a proportion of scheduled castes and tribes.
- Among the panchayats selected half the number were represented by women, the other half by men.
- The basic means of livelihood are agriculture, animal husbandry, milk production and daily labour.

Percentage of contribution mobilised for the bottom -up planning



The Process of Micro Planning

The involvement of people was ensured right at the initial stages of micro planning. It was decided that to build a common understanding among the people about planning small group discussions could be held with women, dalits, adivasis, youth members and panchayat representatives to find out the requirements of various groups. For creating a positive environment, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was conducted, so that involvement of various sections could be assured. Efforts were made for the involvement of PRI representatives. Street plays were performed to mobilize and inform the people about the process of micro planning as well as motivate them to attend Gram Sabhas. These steps enabled to build rapport and faith of people in the process of micro planning. After these stages, a special Gram Sabha was called where discussions were held on

- Selection of issues,
- Prioritisation of issues to be tackled,
- Identification of alternatives to tackling issues,
- Resource mapping,
- Determining the monetary aspect/support, panchayats, community and organisation
- Division of responsibility,
- Time-frame,
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

The PRC and the organisation facilitated the discussions along with the panchayats in taking up the issue of drought, prioritising activities of putting up hand-pumps, digging wells, widening the depth of existing wells, tanks, tube-wells, etc. The issue of resources was explored as to the amount allocated to the panchayats, and what the community can generate. During the discussions special care was taken to see that women and dalits also participated.

Resources being Utilized in the Process of Micro Planning

The availability of the resources in the process of micro planning was explored under three broad heads A) The availability of resources from the panchayats, B) The availability of resources from the community and C) resources being given by the organization to fill in the gaps. Overall, the panchayats gave a total of 49% of the amount and 29% of the contribution being given by the community in the form of labour and cash. Seen above is a pictorial division of the funds procured from the three broad heads.

Achievement in the Process of Micro Planning

- The recognition by the panchayat members of the value of people's participation in making the process of planning easier and enabling community mobilization of its resources.
- Increase in the ownership of Gram Sabha members, through the formation of committees at the Gram Sabha level such as the Working Committee, Financial committee, Monitoring committee, Stakeholder Committee and Ad-hoc committee. The formation of such groups has brought recognition to the panchayats and has seen an increase in the frequency of visits from various government officials to view the actual implemented plan in the area.
- In the panchayats of Khari, Behrua, Gherughati and the main panchayat of Sehore, Dimni, Bhabra & Panna Block there has been 100% contribution from the panchayats.

Challenges

- The panchayats being divided on the basis of caste and mohalla, the PRC staff had to deal with the challenge of prioritisation. Most of the people were giving more importance to the mohalla level plan rather than a common plan for the whole village. This process was time consuming as it took a lot of persuasion on the part of the PRC and the Sarpanch to convince the people that a common plan would benefit the citizens as a whole.

Lack of cooperation from panchayat secretaries also made it difficult to elicit information initially from the panchayats where the micro planning was going to be facilitated. Keeping the government machinery, the secretary involved and informed about the processes soon won their support.

Haryana

Do-able Micro Planning Experience in Alika Panchayat, Fatehabad District

Background

PRIA has been working in the Zilla of Fatehabad for the last two years. Fatehabad is a newly created zilla, it came into being in July 1997. Originally it was part of the Hisar district of Haryana. It consists of five blocks, 231 Gram Panchayats, 104 Panchayat Samitis and 13 zilla parishads. The most intensive work has been done in the Ratia block.

The Ratia block consists of 61 Gram Panchayats wherein there are 530 ward panchs and 61 Sarpanchs (20 women Sarpanchs and 174 women panchs). The experiment of micro planning took place in Alika Gram Panchayat. Alika Gram Panchayat is situated 20 kms from Ratia.

The Process

Step 1: Selection of the Gram Panchayat: The Gram Panchayat Alika was chosen on the following grounds, the facilitating organisation had already established a rapport with the Sarpanch. The relationship between the Panch (ward members) and the Sarpanch was favourable. The community members had a high regard for the Sarpanch (Bhagwant Rai). Also for the past 10 years the Sarpanchs have hailed from the same family.

Step 2: A discussion with the Sarpanch of the Selected Panchayat: A discussion took place with the Sarpanch with regard to what micro planning is, and why it is beneficial to conduct such a planning with people's participation. This was done prior to taking the issue of micro planning to the people.

Step 3: Meeting with the Gram Panchayat: After the Initial meeting with the Sarpanch, the Sarpanch of Alika agreed to have a meeting with the rest of the panchayat members, on 24th June 2001. The issue of micro planning was taken up for discussion with the members, stressing the need of the people's participation and resource mapping.

Step 4: Ward Meetings and Prioritisation: In these meetings, information in simple terms about micro planning was given to the community members. The local community based organisations were given an orientation prior to these meetings, for the facilitation process among the community to begin. The discussion among the community members was also focused around the major/ pressing issues or concerns that needed to be addressed in their wards or villages. Eleven wards were covered through the facilitation of the panch and the community based organisations. Each ward was asked to pick one major priority.

Prioritised issues

Ward number	Ward meeting Date	issues
1 & 2	25 th June 2001	Toilets, electricity, drinking water, house construction for the poor, waste management. Priority: Toilets
3 & 5	26 th June 2001	Pukka houses, waste management, toilets, upgrading the status of the school, drinking water outlets, electricity, school staffing, pukka roads. Priority: Toilets
4	29 th June 2001	Drinking water, drainage system, cement gullies, electricity, staffing in school, library, playground, government shops, internet connections, Panchayat Bhavan. Priority: Cement Gullies
6 & 7	27 th June 2001	Electricity polls, drinking water outlets, waste management, pukka houses, toilets, Harijan chopal. Priority: Toilets
8 & 9	28 th June 2001	Drinking water outlet, waste management, drinking water problem, toilets, electricity connection, staffing for School. Priority: Toilets
10 & 11	29 th June 2001	Drinking water, toilets, bus stand, pukka road, school compound, school walls need painting, Anganwadi, Daani roads. Priority: Toilets

Step 5: Finding a Solution to the Prioritized Problem: For this purpose the whole Gram Sabha was collected as ward level meetings brought ward level priorities and each ward wanted their priority to be the focus of attention. It was pointed out that except for ward number 4 all the wards had the issue of toilets as a priority. This was regarded as the top priority after the Gram Sabha meetings as around 80% of the people's houses had no proper toilet facilities. Ward 4 members and the other people were in agreement.

The Implementation Phase

Ten wards of the village convinced one ward to unanimously resolve one of the grave and pressing problems of sanitation. In addition the panchayats also prepared a joint proposal requesting the administration and the technical wing to prepare an estimate for community toilets. This meeting also decided upon the community's contribution in resolving the problem and encouraged participants to undertake responsibilities to collect the resources.

Two plans were approved as to solving the problem of toilets. One was that if each household had to have a toilet built then 700 toilets had to be constructed. Minimum cost for these toilets was coming to Rs. 3,000/-each adding up to 21 lakhs. Seeing that the cost was high the second plan recommended that five toilets be constructed in and around the Gram Panchayats with proper water facilities and flushing. A person would be appointed to look after the sanitation and cleanliness of these toilets. These toilets would be equipped with drinking water for animals and a washing area for women to wash their clothes (a 22 ft long chabutara). This latter plan was accepted. The ward members and volunteers were asked to collect Rs.20/- from each household.

A community meeting followed the meeting of the invited officials. This meeting apprised the officials about the developments undertaken in relation to do-able micro planning. The community's contribution stood at Rs.8000/- and the Zila Parishad members promised a matching grant of another Rs.8000/- (sourced from EAS Grant). The SDO from the Electricity Department promised to solve the problem of the lack of electric supply to the village panchayat. Village members volunteered to take five electric poles and wire from the department and set it up in the village panchayat. People volunteered to lend tractors and a trolley and the fuel was paid for by the panchayat's own income. Another experience with similar processes took place in Jalloli village of Pavitta Sahib block of the Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

Himachal Pradesh

Do-able Micro Planning Process in Jalloli Village Panchayat

Jalloli village located on the main road, connecting Delhi to Shimla, was identified for the do-able micro planning exercise. The panchayat met with the criteria adopted for conducting the base-upwards planning exercise, with the exception, that it is situated on the main road. The willing co-operation of the Sarpanch and other panchayat members provided a conducive platform to launch the process, a felt need area with greater likelihood for success, prompted PRIA to choose the panchayat. The rationale behind selecting this panchayat was that a successful model of planning might pave the way for replicating the same in other panchayats with ease.

To begin with, secondary data was collected about the village's composition (caste and class), facilities and resources available in the panchayat. Following this exercise, the Sarpanch, already familiar with the concept, consented to have a meeting with his other panchayat members. The meeting focussed on orienting the members about the micro planning concept and seeking their support as well as commitment. Through this meeting, the ward members found a significant meaning added to their role, that of assuming leadership roles and spearheading the planning process in their respective wards. In this one meeting alone their doubts and apprehensions were addressed to gain their unconditional support. The Sarpanch was not too confident about the co-operation of certain members of the panchayat, they were individually contacted by the team members from PRIA. Subsequent to the panchayat meeting, the ward members organised meetings in their respective wards with the ward people. Once the concept of micro planning was explained to the people/participants, they were facilitated to discuss their problems and were finally able to prioritise the problems from a whole variety of problems presented.

The women members outnumbered the men in the meetings due to heavy field work carried out by the men in the agricultural season.

Here the unanimous need of the people, more specifically, women was with regard to the village tube well. The drinking water was unfit for consumption and the depth of 100 ft did not meet the

requirements of four villages benefiting from the tube well. The system of drinking water was outdated and could not keep up with the increased demand of the growing population. The volunteers estimated that the present requirement could be sufficiently met with an increase in the depth of the tube well to 400 ft.

A Core Committee was constituted drawing volunteers from each ward as well as panchayat members and retired servicemen. A common meeting of the village was called with representatives from all the wards. This meeting was instrumental in preparing a plan elaborating on tasks, delineating responsibilities, and possible resources for the same. Volunteers estimated the total cost at 2 lakhs and jointly decided to source Rs.50,000/- from the panchayat fund, Rs.20,000/- from local contributions and the rest from the government scheme.