

CASE STUDY 1

Village level micro planning In India: Vehicle for Integrated District Planning

Village micro planning, as being practiced in India, is a participatory process of community mobilization and need-based planning at the gram panchayat level, which can serve as the starting point for the integrated district plans to be prepared by the DPCs. Micro planning is facilitated by teams of local youth rigorously trained in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques and behavior change communication (BCC). Standard training manuals are ready on PRA and BCC and a state wide alliance of master trainers has also been formed.

Therefore, a definite mechanism is in place for creating large pools of trained youth facilitators at any location and in a time bound manner.

When micro planning is initiated in a district or block, first the local administration is taken into confidence through orientation meetings/ workshops. The local administration identifies some good local NGOs and engages in Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with them for supporting the micro planning process. NGOs in turn organize the PRA/ BCC training for select local youth and later also hire them for facilitating actual micro planning in villages.

The tie-up of local administration, NGOs and youth networks provides legitimacy as well as flexibility to the local arrangement for supporting micro planning activities. A team of three to five trained facilitators visits a village and lives with the villagers for about a week. The team engages with various sections of the village community such as farmers, school going children, adolescent girls, self-help groups, youth groups, landless labour, etc., to facilitate collective reflections on the developmental concerns and problems being faced by them.

Village level functionaries related to health, education etc., are involved in the process.

Active participation of members of the gram panchayat and various village level committees is also sought.

The village micro planning process takes place in four stages: stocktaking, visioning, need identification and preparation of a village plan. The village plan is presented to the village council called *Gram Sabha* on the last day of the process, and is thoroughly discussed and vetted by the Gram Sabha. The participatory process makes a threefold impact: the community gets mobilized, a collective review of village needs and problems takes place and a concrete village plan document rolls out with the approval of the Gram Sabha.

In order to facilitate smooth integration of village plans into the district planning process, certain data-capture formats have been developed, which cater well to the planning needs of major national programmes and schemes for health, education, child development, agriculture, livelihood and employment etc. Each format captures the village level current status of basic infrastructure, common services and individual and family benefits as assured under these programmes. The minimum norms of basic infrastructure, services and beneficiary coverage as laid down under these programmes are used to locate of exact gaps and shortfalls at village level. These gaps and corresponding demands get captured in village plans and can be easily integrated into sector plans because the same sets of norms are followed. Also, intensive village baseline data is captured through a combination of household surveys, social mapping, analysis of gram panchayat records, etc.

In India, a collective effort has been initiated by state institutes of rural development, concerned government departments, NGOs, youth networks and bilateral institutions to establish village micro planning as a common vehicle for bottom-up planning under different sectors ultimately feeding into the integrated district planning.

CASE STUDY 2

Managing paradigm shift in Integrated district Planning- A Success story of India

Madhya Pradesh is a state in India where District Planning Committee (DPC) Act was passed in 1995 and the DPCs were constituted in all the districts. But serious efforts at decentralised planning were made only in 2000-01, with 31.46 percent of the budget portion of state funds being made available for the district sector scheme. In 2009, five pilot districts were identified for showcasing the benefits of integrated district planning and in 2010–11 it has scaled up throughout the 50 districts of the state and a specified amount was allocated in the State budget (2010-11) to strengthening the decentralised planning process.

The road to preparation of plans by all the panchayats and municipalities was not a smooth one; it was full of challenges related to capacities (institutional and individual), resources (human and financial) and clarity of tasks (roles and responsibilities). Bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes among key stakeholders of the panchayats and municipalities, to work as a team to achieve the target, was a serious concern for all the agencies engaged in rolling out of the decentralised district planning process in the state. Besides, the issues related to financing of plans in a big state like Madhya Pradesh is also a challenge. To cope with these challenges the State Planning Commission (SPC) of Madhya Pradesh adopted a multi-dimensional approach when initiating the process of plan preparation.

To initiate the process the SPC organised a state level workshop and provided guidelines for the preparation of decentralised district plans. To undertake the capacity building and training (CB&T) activities for district government functionaries, PRI representatives and representatives of ULBs, it developed an Integrated District Planning Manual and Information, Education, Communication (IEC) training material was also developed.

Thereafter, the SPC promoted technical support groups (TSGs) to provide hand-holding support at various levels during the planning process. TSGs were formed at the village/city, block and district levels. These TSGs met with community members and organised focus group discussions to identify and prioritise developmental issues at the local level.

In order to carry out this massive exercise the SPC entered into partnerships and developed a network of organisations to provide technical support at various stage of plan preparation. To sensitise and build the capacities of district government functionaries, PRI representatives and representatives of ULBs on decentralised planning, the SPC identified 11 state level technical support institutions (TSIs). These TSIs, in collaboration with district administration, organised CB&T activities at the district, block and grassroots levels in consultation with the district officials so that the participation of all key stakeholders was ensured. The Jan Abhiyan Parshid (JAP) was also roped in to impart training on decentralised planning to civil society organisations representatives working at the district level. The JAP identified CSOs that had a good presence in the field and organised training programmes in all the districts.

Decentralised planning software was developed to speed up the planning process and to ensure convergence of various schemes and programmes and integration of plans across different tiers. The software has ensured transparency in the plans prepared as they are available online and concerned citizen can see the plan. Response plans made line departments responsible for stating sincerely what they can deliver this year, in the following years and what was not feasible. The SPC has also provided information about resource envelope so that districts have a broad idea about the budget for the next financial year. This helped the DPCs to fine-tune their draft district development plans. This is a big step towards addressing governance concerns around accountability, transparency and performance management. The SPC has also opened a helpline at the state level. Names of eight individual

experts and their mobile numbers are shared with all levels to ensure that all kinds of queries or problems related to plans are answered at any point of plan preparation.

As a result of this:

- Approximately 70,000 people including government officials and CSOs were trained in the decentralised district planning process
- Citizen participation was ensured in the planning process through the Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha.
- Decentralised plan prepared for 22,931 Gram Panchayats, covering 51,806 villages and 360 Urban Local bodies covering 6000 urban wards.

In the year 2011-12 a total 166816 activities under the decentralised plans were sanctioned and Rs. 886,889.71 lakh were allocated for the year 2011-12 against the initial allocation of Rs. 787,060 lakh