

DEVELOPING A MICRO PLAN

To initiate a process on planning it will be a good idea to first refresh your thoughts on development. You will lead the way to create a community consensus on what is development, even though it has different meaning for different people. The people living in the same village may have different development needs like the tribal and *dalit* (Scheduled or lower caste in India) may want to preserve forest and land for long term sustenance while others may support setting up of a tube well or labor cooperative to meet economic needs of the village. People living in the same family also have differing needs to be fulfilled. For some men building road means development as it creates economic opportunity, whereas women may want water source nearer to home to save time, children may want quality schools near their homes.

In your work you need to create an environment where every ones view is respected as valid and it is addressed in your planning. The process of meeting every ones development needs through a plan will create better opportunities for every one. This will happen if you get people to think together on what is their picture of a better village. What do they need to do in the next 3 to 5 years to bring about that change? Whose help will they need to bring the desirable change? How will they work together to achieve a common goal?

The 73rd amendment of the constitution has empowered the *panchayats* (village council) to plan to develop the villages under their jurisdiction and allocated powers to elected members to prepare and implement local area development plans (micro plan).

One of your first task is to ensure that every one is aware of the legal sanction that village resources like forest, water, land, and services like *anganwadi's* (child care center), health centres, *panchayat* building etc belong to the village. It is the right of the villagers to have access and control over these resources. These resources should be optimally utilised through controlled use by the villagers. The ownership of this resource demands participation in sustaining them for every ones use. This is what we call participatory development. The concept of Participatory development includes both economic and human development. If planning utilizes principles of participatory development it will contribute towards:

- Unleashing self help capacity of citizen and elected members so that they demand and provide support to the services like sanitation, roads, water sources, electricity, transport etc. for betterment of villages
- Developing the economy of the village through increased livelihood of villagers.
- Increasing social harmony and satisfaction among the villagers that results in cooperation.

Participatory development through planning influences the resource allocation for specific programs that are planned through community consensus.

What is a micro plan?

The plan for the smallest unit of administration (*Panchayat* in India) is called a micro plan. In this method the *Gram Sabha* (Village Council) members of each ward plan for their won ward. These ward level plans may be called peoples plan. These people's plans are put together to make a *panchayat* level plan and are called micro plan. The problems faced by



villagers are solved through solutions that they feel comfortable with. Each problem is solved at the local level with the participation of the *Gram Sabha* members, elected representatives, government officials and others.

The micro plan is a process that builds the capacity of the community to analyse their own situation and work on it to create a better future. The common goals need to be arrived at by understanding what development means and what will be the common priority for everyone. The need for micro plan arose, as central planning alienated the local people from village assets and resources. In this planning the people used the roads and buildings till they were serviceable but when repairs were needed people did not give time labor or resources for its repairs. The reason was that they had not participated and contributed in its creation. As a result they did not feel either accountable or responsible towards its upkeep. If village resources are owned by the village through its representatives, and its development is planned with the people they can be sustained and protected from harm

Planning for rural areas has always been a question before a planner and most of the time they become part of some District/Regional plan. No clear-cut emphasis is laid on villages as separate entity rather some strategies for rural areas are proposed in these plans. This has been changed in the Panchayati Raj System.

Constitutionally, the control over natural resources (land, water, forest etc) have been given to *panchayats* and powers related to implementation of development programmes and administration also lies with the *panchayat*. *Panchayats* are thus a development institution at grass root levels that plans and implements the proposals. Your work is to link *Gram Sabha* members through participatory development and micro planning with the elected *panchayat* members.

Micro planning process facilitates *Gram Sabha* members to arrive at their action agenda engaging government, elected representatives and other key actors in the process of village development.

The micro plan will involve that you:

- Organize the *Gram Sabha* members and the *panchayats* to go through the stages of mapping resources in the geographical spread of the *panchayat*.
- Analyze the cause and effect of the problems and motivate all to think of solutions.
- Prepare the plan and the budget together.
- Get it sanctioned in *Gram Sabha*.
- Submit it to different departments

The end result of your micro planning work will be that the village community will decide for itself what kind of development they want. They will not be dependent on or take orders from others, on what should be done to make the village life better.

What will your micro planning process be like?

PRIA experience shows that developing a micro plan builds capacity of community to analyse their own situation and work on it. Some micro planning processes have taken two years while others have completed planning in a span of three months. The framework provided in



this manual will take you through your journey of developing a *panchayat* specific plan that will derive its strength from the leadership this process initiates. The duration and timing of each process you take on will differ, as the common goal for each practicing micro planning community is different.

The three phases of the process are:

- Pre-planning
- Planning and
- Post-planning

The steps in each phase indicate a possible method to approach a micro planning exercise. However your experience will be unique, as you will base it on the needs your community will express and work on.

The objectives of your micro plan may include:

- Building capacity of people to prepare their development plan for implementation.
- Increasing information base about the area and its people to utilize available resources.
- Identification of root cause to solve problems.
- Increasing decision-taking capacity.
- Improving socio-economic and legal environment of the village
- Enhance negotiation abilities.

You can achieve all the above objectives by mobilising elected members at the local level and existing groups in the village like youth groups, women’s groups, farmers’ groups, etc. Remember to fully involve and inform the district and block. They may help you to get resources, as they are obliged to make the local self-governance institutions stronger.

Micro planning is also known as:
Bottom-up Planning: Planning starts at lower levels unlike the "top-down" planning process.
Participatory Planning: Participation of community at every stage of planning process.
Local Planning: The spatial unit of planning is a village or gram panchayat.

In individual discussions, group meetings and workshops staggered over a period of time you will facilitate the community members to apply micro planning tools to collect ward-level information and analyze data to arrive at solutions of problems. You will assist people to prepare the people’s plan or ward level plan. The plan emerges from the solutions offered and accepted by the community and more importantly their taking responsibility to work

upon it. Once people have collectively decided on their plan to work on specific areas of work then the peoples’ plan becomes a micro plan.

Micro plan is a means for future development of village communities. Your micro plan process will build existing strength of each ward by promoting collective strength of the *panchayat*.

Pre-planning phase

Getting started, environment building and organizing orientation workshop to develop a common understanding on micro plan.

Step 1 - Identifying the *panchayat*: The choice of the *panchayat* may depend upon many factors like the location (A roadside village or it being too distant from the main road), issue (affected by drought or floods prone, or facing a particular set of problems), and leadership (led by dynamic leader or having a charismatic leadership).

After deciding on the *panchayat* where you will work you need to create an environment where key people will listen to you and your ideas on village development. It is a good idea to call for key people in the *panchayat* to plan an orientation on micro-planning. It is important to know the geographical spread of your *panchayat*, its disaggregated population data and the resources of the area. Primary information can be gathered from the community. You may use a transect walk or time line tool (explained later) to build rapport as well as gather introductory information. Some of this information will be available with the block office. You can also get information from official data such as census and other reports. Get to know the productivity of the village that includes main occupations, wage rates and food production and other resource base with the *panchayat*. You may like to begin by organising an orientation programme for the elected *panchayat* members on their role in micro planning.

Step 2 - Working with the elected representatives to include the excluded: You must invite participation of those un-represented or under represented to ensure that all wards and all section are included, like women, children, elderly, disabled, minorities, tribal sections etc. If need be hold separate meetings with different ward leaders and representatives of women, children and government.

Step 3 - The orientation workshop: The primary objective of this workshop is to create a common understanding about micro planning for key people. While organizing the orientation workshop take care that you have met the traditionally excluded people as well as those who are influential. You must invite local level government functionaries. Block Development Office need to be informed about the microplan processes and Block Development Officer is also invited. The invitation needs to be sent much in advance as generally government Officials are engaged in various activities. These meetings will prepare the people who have attended to commit resources and time if need be. All along the process now onwards keep inviting or informing local government officials regarding the different processes /steps of micro plan. This orientation workshop will briefly cover the following:

- Difference between the centralized planning and decentralized planning
- Why is micro -planning process beneficial for the village?
- What are the processes and steps of micro plan?
- Role of *gram sabha* and elected members.
- Role and relationship of different communities in the village.
- What further information and resources are required?
- What are the sources of *panchayat* funds?
- Discussion on way forward
- Developing a Peoples plan: Who will do what by when for ward level plan?

A steering committee can be chosen to take on tasks from here on.

Planning Phase

Step 4 - Identify problems and solutions: You along with the steering committee members are responsible for collecting the following information for each ward, with the help of communities.

Problems	Problems in priority	Cause	Solutions for each problem

There is a need to prioritize the problems and then select one or two key problems in each ward to focus attention on a list of solution for a particular problem. The steering committee facilitates people work on solutions rather than be involved in the problems. The steering committee will need further information, technological, economic inputs backed by positive affirmation of all involved to transform into the micro plan.

Information and data collection: In this step you will conduct the series of meetings with all wards of the *panchayats* separately to achieve results through community solutions. The purpose of these meetings is to prepare teams to collect information so that your plan becomes stronger with available facts. Tools to do so are explained later. The process of data collection brings different groups of people closer to each other and aware of resources that need to be sustained, utilized, shared and multiplied.

The kind of information you may need to collect may include:

- What does the village *panchayat* have: Natural resources- water (surface and ground), forest, land, Human resources: Age, sex, education, health and economic status
- How are the resources utilized: Livelihood (occupations and unemployment) services like schools, health centre, *panchayat ghar* (village assembly building), roads, houses, fields,
- Information on assets (public and private) like livestock, machines etc.
- Information on agriculture, land and labor needs
- Information on social groupings
- Information on past village development schemes (government contribution and community contribution) Some information on the village resources may be general other information may be specific to the community needs expressed.

You may also need information for a specific purpose like to use the drought time to create watershed management structures like anicuts, check dams and engage the *panchayat* in deepening wells and perhaps this may need recording the migration and resource flow from the village. It will also be important to know what existing schemes and development plans are in progress or already sanctioned in selected *panchayat* and what allocations have been already made for under the area development plan, health plans, women and child welfare schemes etc.

Step 5 – Collating the *panchayat* data: Ward level information could be collected either sector wise i.e. health, sanitation or education and this can further be complemented by information on human groups (status of women, farmers, labourers, children etc.) or occupation and education profile of the village.

Key Solution Identification

Ward no	Problem of the ward	Solution of the problem	Who are the affected person	Who is the worst affected and how	What is the number of households or persons that may benefit from the solution

For each of the problems the community suggests the solution. The solutions will guide further on what information needs to be collected for the next step, i.e. finalizing the micro plan. Since this is a crucial stage for the formulation of a micro plan, you may choose to sit in different groups to get clarity on each sector and also sit with separate gender and generation groups for the community problem analysis and identification of development priorities and solutions.

Information from each ward should later be put together on the basis of similarities and differences. These should be listed separately such that each can be acknowledged during listing priorities. Information is collected for the purpose of analysis. While collating data on problems find out the root cause to focus on the right solution. The solution tree diagram tool can be used for this. Individual ward information can be shared within each ward level meeting to arrive at a consensual analysis of the collective strength and gaps of the ward such that development plans can be supported by the base line data.

Sharing collated information in ward meetings

- Call for a meeting when information is collected.
- The tabulation of ward wise data can be done by a small group of people but it is essential to share all findings with the community soon afterwards in a large group meeting.
- The focus of the large group meeting will be to create a common consensus on the socio-economic situation of the village as a whole and the problem that need to be addressed.

Step 6 - Finalising the Micro plan: After data is collected the process of incorporating the peoples plan into micro plan for the *panchayat* can take place. The steering committee should invite the key community members, and government officials like Block Development Officers, relevant District Education/ Health/ or Agriculture officers for a meeting to share the qualitative and quantitative data and this can be followed by the wards representatives presenting their analysis of the data.

Organise a *panchayat* level meeting covering the following:

Revisiting solutions of the identified problems: In the earlier stages of this process you will have already have listed the problems at different levels, to also make people understand that some issues can be solved individually, other through help of our neighbourhood and some can be collectively solved through the *panchayat*. It will be good to remember what has been done till now, so that your peoples plans moves forward.



Prioritizing the solutions: Since resources are limited all the solutions can not be worked upon together, therefore, key solutions need to be identified. Methods like wealth ranking, checklist etc. can be used at this stage to assist prioritization.

Identification of solution and strategies: On the basis of the PRA base line data, the problems prioritized the solutions and strategies need to be listed.

Identification of resource base: Even without seeking professional expertise resources can get collected if we are clear about how much our micro plan will require and who we can ask for help.

The process by now would have created a people's solidarity to work upon building political will. The political will of people in power like the MLA and the MP's is also needed to ensure financial and human resources for the micro plan. They should therefore be approached.

Post planning Phase: Implementing and Review

Step 7 - Decide how to manage the Implementation of the Micro Plan: Even though making the plan work is every one's responsibility to manage and implement this phase, you need to continue to involve key people in this phase also. The active participation of village committee, women's group children's groups and others can facilitate you in this phase.

Agreeing to the implementation cycle- Owning responsibility: In a meeting you could plan of who will do what and by when can be listed. This should also follow by a session on what supports are needed. The steering committee takes on reviewing responsibilities. This review work can take place during a meeting to agree on the expected outcomes from the planning. This will let people know what to look for during follow up and evaluation.

Step 8 - Review and monitoring: You will need to keep the situation alive by calling a meeting to review the micro plan. It is best to set a time frame for periodic meetings.

- Ask the steering committee to chair the meeting to review the plan of action.
- Revisit the goal and objective of your plan.
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- Run through the micro plan to see what took place as planned and what evolved during the implementation cycle.
- Review what you need to do less of / more of / differently.
- Publicly acknowledge contributions of the community and the others
- Use media to publicize good practice

Tools for micro planning

You may like to use some of the participatory tools PRIA and its partners have utilized to carry out the micro plan. Some tools are related to information gathering while others can help generate collective understanding. This list of tools is only illustrative and can be used in the order of steps as per the needs of the context and issue.

Step 1

Transect Walk

Time line

Step 2

Relationship matrix



Social Mapping

Step 3

Stakeholder analysis

Resource Mapping

Service Mapping

Step 4 & 5

Problem analysis and seeking solutions through a tree diagram

Step 6

Trend analysis

Sector wise planning.

Step 7 & 8

Large Group Discussion

Focused Group Discussion

There is a danger in using tools in a rigid way. You must remember that micro planning is a process to empower people to own village resources and plan for its sustained growth. Thus being work centered may take you away from the central purpose of creating ownership of all and social harmony. As the initiator of this process you need to be responsive to changes in the situation as the planning and implementation progresses.