

Unit -4
Local Development
Planning- Process, Priorities
and Outcomes

Units of Certificate in Panchayati Raj Institutions in India (Local-Self Governance)

Unit 1: Panchayati raj institutions

- Evolution of the panchayati raj
- Democratic decentralization-conceptual & analytical framework
- 73rd constitutional amendment act & state conformity acts

Unit 2: Democratic mandate

- Panchayat elections-constitutional provisions
- Key trends in panchayat elections
- Sixth round table Resolutions
- Pre election voters' awareness campaign (PEVAC)
- Gram sabha- conceptual overview
- Statutory provisions
- Functions of gram sabha
- The status of gram sabha meetings-an overview
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- Enabling factors in the functioning of gram sabha
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Unit 3: Strengthening financial capacities of PRIs

- Devolution of financial powers to panchayats- constitutional mandate
- Fiscal decentralization in practice
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Unit 4: Local development planning- process, priorities and outcomes

- Decentralised planning in india
- The planning process in PRIs
- Development priorities and PRIs
- Participatory local planning

Unit 5: Equity, entitlement & social justice

- Persisting inequalities
- Equity, entitlement & social justice- constitutional foundations
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- I. Role of panchayati raj institutions in NREGS.
- II. Role of panchayat in primary education- focus on girl child education in the context of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.

4.1 Introduction

The concern for decentralised planning emerged primarily from the realisation that benefits of the top-down model of development planning have not actually percolated to large segments of the rural community, and particularly the marginalized citizens of society such as, the poor, illiterate, women, and dalit. Their needs and priorities are not adequately reflected in the planning. Decentralised planning, therefore, is the precondition not only for ensuring balanced socio-economic development, but also for facilitating direct participation of marginalized citizens in the planning process. This unit will enable you to understand various issues related to the process, priorities and outcomes of local (rural) development planning.

Section 4.3 is on 'Decentralised Planning in India'. In this Section the significance of planning for development is underscored. A brief historical context of decentralised planning is given and the existing multi-level development planning structure is described. You will also come to know the recent initiatives taken to strengthen the role of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) in the planning process.

Section 4.4 is on 'The Planning Process in PRIs'. In this Section first the constitutional provisions are explained, and then the functional domains of PRIs to include development planning relevant to local level needs are elaborated upon. The planning processes at each level of panchayats are also described. This section will help you to comprehend the structure, functions and current status of district planning committees.

Section 4.5, 'Development Priorities and PRIs', will enable you to situate the PRIs' role in the implementation of various development priorities (centrally sponsored schemes). In this Section first the significance of PRIs in planning and implementation of specific centrally sponsored schemes that impinge upon its core functions is discussed. The centrality of panchayats in working out details and in the implementation of two specific central programmes viz., National Employment Guarantee Scheme and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are also reviewed.

Section 4.5 'Participatory Local Planning' will help you to understand the potential of peoples' participation in micro planning to influence the outcomes of planning in their favour. In this Section we shall discuss the significance of local level planning with people's participation. We shall also review the initiatives undertaken by NGOs and the state to facilitate people's participation in planning. We shall highlight some of the crucial issues in participatory local planning.

4.2 Learning objectives

After reading this unit you should be able to

- Understand the significance of decentralised planning;
- Learn about the planning process at each level of panchayat;
- Gain insight on the linkages between planning at each level of panchayat;
- Know the significant role panchayats play in the planning and implementations of centrally sponsored schemes;
- Comprehend the advantages of local level planning with people's participation.

4.3 Decentralised planning in India

Growth and distributive justice are generally the underlying concerns of development planning. Plans are designed consciously to attain the goal of balanced socio-economic development. Planning helps in (a) identifying the priorities and targets for development; (b) collecting the identified list of available resources; (c) use of available resources in a rational manner; and (d) deciding the ways additional resources could be mobilised. A malady-remedy analysis of the situation helps in selecting appropriate programmes and preparing draft action plans with detailed strategies to achieve set targets within a specified time schedule to attain the pre-determined development goals.

The concern for development planning, the world over, emerged in the post second world war period when problems of population explosion, unequal distribution of resources and poverty became obvious, particularly in the developing economies of third world countries. India was no exception to this emerging concern.

4.3.1 Historical background

The task of even development in India becomes difficult largely due to the following factors: (a) inequalities of incomes, (b) ownership of assets, (c) poverty, (d) regional imbalances due to non availability of resources, geographical and ecological factors. Planning, therefore, is the imperative to address the challenges of disparity. Set up in March 1950, the Planning Commission in India laid down the broad framework policies for development. The planning commission makes assessment of needs and existing resources of the country, augments deficient resources, equitably allocates resources as per the determined priorities, and formulates plans. By creating opportunities for growth, it aims to promote a rapid rise in the people's standard of living, particularly, the poorer or disadvantaged sections of the population.

The first Five Year Plan (1951-56) recognised the need for planning at each national, state, district and local community level. It was, however, not very clear on the operationalization of the decentralised planning exercise. The Community Development Blocks established in 1952 were one of the first attempts at decentralised planning.

The Second Five Year Plan highlighted the need for the establishment of the District Development Council, drawing up of village plans and peoples' participation in planning. Again the attempt at decentralisation of planning did not succeed, for a proper enabling framework was not devised, both for planning and for integration of development activities at the micro level. In 1957, as per the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Committee, village, block and district level panchayat institutions were established in many states. But these panchayats were neither assigned any meaningful role or resources nor given any place in the planning framework.

In 1969, the Planning Commission following the report of the Administrative Reforms Commission in 1967, communicated guidelines to the states for formulating district plans with a detailed concept and methodology of drawing up such plans within the framework of annual, medium term and perspective plans. The report of the Administrative Reforms Commission had recommended the preparation of district plans for those areas where the process of development was likely to yield quick results. It had also emphasised that district authorities be given a clear indication of the resources available to them so they are able to

prepare purposeful plans at their level. The guidelines on district planning led to several states formulating district plans during the Fifth Five-Year Plan. However, except for Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, the district plans were not integrated into the annual plans of the states.

A Working Group on Block Level Planning headed by Prof. M.L. Dantwala (1978) recognised that the cause for a mismatch of financial allocations with location specific needs was due to the remoteness of planning agencies from the actual scene of action at the district level. As the block level provided the vital link between clusters of villages and the district level and then to the regional, state and national levels, it recommended the block as the appropriate sub-state planning level for proper appreciation of the felt needs of the people. The Planning Commission issued guidelines on the formulation of block level plans in line with these recommendations.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) got off to a good start in the early sixties. However, with the exception of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and West Bengal, these institutions failed to function, either, because they were superseded or were allowed very little freedom to operate. In fact, in between the Third and Fourth Plan periods in many states, panchayats were superseded. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) on Panchayati Raj recommended in its report that panchayats ought to be strengthened as agencies capable of undertaking local planning. A Working Group on District Planning headed by C.H. Haumantha Rao (May 1984) pointed that different streams of funding the district plan undermined planning from below. As states had to prepare their annual plans within the framework prescribed by the Government of India, they, in turn, prescribed rigid guidelines, which allowed little scope for flexibility to District Development Councils in the preparation of their annual plans. Substantial funds were also retained at the state level and sectoral departments formulated schemes without consultation with the District Development Council.

The G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985) reviewed the administrative arrangements for rural development. It recommended that the district panchayat should be the principal agency to manage all development programmes at the district level. The Sarkaria Commission on centre-state relations highlighted the need for the participation of people's representatives in the planning and administrative machinery at the local level. A notable recommendation was the creation of a body akin to the Finance Commission at the state level for the devolution of resources to the districts on an operational and objective basis.

Since the late eighties, changes in the policy climate due to liberalisation and opening up of the economy, changed the centralised blue print approach of development planning. Some aspects of decentralised planning could be seen in the form of a drop in budgetary allocations to many state departments; reduction in state involvement in service provisions and development interventions; and transferring of selected administrative and planning responsibilities to local governments. The panchayat's involvement in rural development was enlarged during the Sixth and Seventh Plan period. Greater involvement of panchayats was institutionalised with the launching of the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) in 1989-1990, under which there was a substantial flow of funds to the village panchayats. In addition, village panchayats were required to prepare an inventory of assets and give details of the projects taken up under the JRY. The works to be taken up were decided in the meetings of the gram sabha. Non-state actors such as non-government organisations (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs) and private agencies also began to participate in the provision and delivery of public goods and services to the community. The trend was first a top-down to

bottom-up approach in development, through encouraging and ensuring stakeholders' participation in the development process.

The pragmatic requirements of 'good governance', and decentralisation in the management of public affairs during the nineties further led to a paradigmatic shift in approach to planning. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act took a significant step forward. It pushed the agenda of decentralised governance by legally establishing locally elected political structures viz., PRIs and transferring the allocative and implemental decisions to them. The functional domain of local government also expanded to include development planning in the provision of securing livelihoods, basic amenities, services and infrastructure relevant to local level needs of the community. Decentralisation of planning and management functions suggested active citizen participation in the planning of allocation, utilisation and control of public resources and in ensuring accountability of the institutions of local governance to the local community (Ramchandran: 2006).

The details of the history of attempts to promote decentralised planning from the First Plan onwards to the late nineties are summarised in the table below.

Decentralisation - Chronology of Attempts and Committee Reports

Year	Item	Ideas & Concepts
First Plan, 51-56	Community Development Blocks	To break up planning exercise into national, state, district and local community levels
Second Plan, 56-61	District Development Councils	Drawing up of village plans and popular participation in planning through the process of democratic decentralisation
1957	Balwant Rai Mehta Committee	Village, block, district panchayat institutions established
1967	Administrative Reforms Commission	Resources to be given/ local variations accommodated, purposeful plan for area
1969	Planning Commission	Formulated guidelines; detailed the concept of the district plan and methodology of drawing up such a plan in the framework of annual plans, medium term plans and perspective plans
1978	Prof. M.L. Dantwala	Block level planning to form a link between village and district level planning
1983-84	Centrally Sponsored Scheme/ Reserve Bank of India	Strengthen district plan/ District Credit Plan
1984	Hanumantha Rao Committee	Decentralisation of function, powers and finances; setting up of district planning bodies and district planning cells
1985	G V K Rao Committee	Administrative arrangements for rural development; district panchayat to manage all development programmes
1989-90	Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY)	Institutionalisation of panchayats in rural development. More flow of funds to village panchayats; village panchayats to prepare an inventory of assets and give details of the projects taken up under JRY; role of gram sabha envisaged; The works to be

		taken up under JRY to the decided in gram sabha meetings.
1992	The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution	Constitutional status to local panchayat, universalised platform for decentralised planning from below

(Source: Ramchandran V. (2006) Planning at Grassroots level. An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five-Year plan. Report of the Expert group. New Delhi. Ministry of Panchayati Raj. p 13)

4.3.2 Multi-level planning structure

Planning for development in India operates in a democratic framework through a federal system; involving concurrent planning at the macro level (nation), meso (state) and micro (district, block, village) level.

Economic and social planning is in the union and state governments' concurrent list. However, due to a pluralistic socio-economic environment and the large size of some states, planning at micro-levels, extending beyond the Union and states, is also required. The planning, flow of resources and decision-making functions across various levels is referred to as multi-level planning. This implies that the flow of resources and decision-making functions are in a hierarchical order, i.e., from centre to state to district and then to lower levels. A multifaceted structure of existing development planning based on the politico-administrative structure is shown in Figure 4.1.

Planning level	Political/ administrative territorial equivalent	Abstract territorial equivalent	Planning concept
Macro level (national plan)	Nation	Central	Policy, sectoral planning
Meso level (state plan or sub-national plan)	State	State	Resource/ sectoral/ budgetary planning/ regional planning
Micro level (local plan)	Local District Block Village	Area Sub-area region Local level	District planning area development Block planning Village plan, planning for target group

(Source: Shalini Rajneesh (2002): Rural Development through Democratic Decentralization. New Delhi. Deep & Deep Publications. p 132)

Development planning in terms of policy, programme and projects is primarily undertaken by the central government and sometimes by the state governments through development administration at various levels. Local governments have little untied funds that they can utilise for development on their own. The top-down and centralised nature of planning and centralised decision making for resource allocation to projects/programmes has little association to local attributes and needs.

Planning for the provision of basic services is largely done by the states with project planning and implementation through their departments or parastatal organisations directly under their control, such as state level boards or corporations. Local bodies are generally responsible for maintenance and delivery of services, while state departments and parastatal agencies undertake capital works.

Resource and investment planning to stimulate growth or development of an area has always been the prerogative of central and state governments and organisations under their ambit. Local agencies have neither the powers nor resources to undertake planning for the areas under their jurisdiction.

Executive personnel in various departments and organisations with substantive formal knowledge and expertise and /or bureaucrats with formal administrative experience and skills discharge the planning responsibilities. The planning process, therefore, is expert oriented with no direct involvement of people (Mishra & Mishra: 2000: 4-5).

Thus, over a period of four decades since the beginning of planned development, there have been several suggestions and attempts at decentralised planning. The conditions required were also outlined and repeated. However, the increase in the number of ministries, departments and parastatal organisations at the centre and in the states and the planning, preparation of programmes and methods of funding have stood in the way of decentralised planning becoming a reality.

4.3.3 Recent Initiatives

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened seven Round Table Meetings with the State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj from July 2004 to December 2004 to decide the points for action therein. The second Round Table at Mysore, held on 28 and 29 August 2004 considered the issue of decentralised planning. The recommendations of the second Round Table regarding decentralised planning were briefly as follows.

- The constitution of District Planning Committees (DPCs) in every state, by the end of the financial year (2004-05), as per the procedure laid down in Article 243ZD (2). All states ought to make provision, by law, outlining the functions and procedures of DPCs;
- District planning ought to take into account the area's resource endowment, people's felt needs and their relative absorptive capacity;
- Each level of panchayat ought to prepare a perspective Five Year Plan and annual plans as provided for in the Constitution, which would be consolidated by the DPC;
- The state must specify institutions, organisations and individuals to assist panchayats, municipalities and DPCs in preparing plans in accordance with Article 243ZD (3)(b);
- States must indicate the extent and type of available resources to each panchayat level and municipalities as per Article 243ZD, in order to facilitate planning;
- States must, to the extent possible, provide resources as untied funds to panchayats and municipalities. Where grants are scheme specific, guidelines for implementation ought to be broad and simple;

- The central government could consider establishing a mechanism to pool all central government and Finance Commission's resources, for channelising them to panchayats;
- States must strengthen the finances of the PRIs so that planning at the district and sub-district level is based on an indication of the resources available and those that would be made available for the activities devolved on them;
- States ought to consider incorporating a panchayat sector in each departmental budget within their budget;
- The Planning Commission, in consultation with the Central Ministries concerned, could work out appropriate arrangements for incorporating a panchayat sector in each departmental budget;
- A distinction must be maintained between administrative grants and development grants in allotting financial resources to PRIs;
- State governments could consider incorporating in their state laws provisions for Standing Committees in panchayats for the planning and implementation of allotted subjects, with an earmarked budget. Standing Committees could handle implementation from conception to approval, calling of tenders, finalisation of vendors, conducting supervision of on-going works and certifying the issue of utilisation certificates.
- In local planning, priority ought to be given for basic minimum needs; provision of services; facilitating Rural Business Hubs. The Planning Commission may ensure that the 11th Plan begins with and is founded on District Plans prepared in accordance with Part-IX and IXA of the Constitution (Ramchandran: 2006).

4.4 The planning process in PRIs

4.4.1 The Constitutional provisions

Article 243(G) of the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act) states that subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the legislature of the state may, by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self government with respect to the following.

1. The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
2. The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to matters listed in the 11th Schedule.

Article 243 ZD states that there shall be constituted in every state at the district level a DPC to consolidate the plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole (Rai: 2001).

Article 243G enjoins that panchayats, at all the three levels should prepare plans for 'economic development and social justice'. Since in the Constitution the panchayat's specific responsibilities of have not been clearly spelt out, it has to be contextually inferred from the

different provisions of Part IX of the Indian Constitution, and from the provisions relating to the directive principles of state policy and fundamental rights of citizens. For instance, the objectives of the PRI's development plans should be to promote the national goal of ensuring and enhancing the basic capabilities of all citizens and thereby widening their social opportunities. The public interventions required are to be addressed at the level of individual villages and households. An examination of the 11th Schedule shows that 16 subjects/functions out of the 29 listed relate to social sectors, covering education, health, women and child development, social security and social welfare. At least 10 functions relate to the livelihood of rural people such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, rural industries and so on, where public intervention at the micro level will enhance production and employment opportunities.

Article 243 ZD implies initiation of a time-bound planning process and the adoption of a planning methodology that would give adequate scope for the plan proposals to emerge with people's participation at the gram sabha level, which will then become integrated horizontally and vertically into comprehensive area plans and then finally "nested" into the state plan and the state budget (Oommen: 2004).

NOTE BANK

Check your progress II

Notes: (a) Use the space provided below for your answers
(b) Check your answer with the possible answer provide at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by Article 243 ZD?

2) Name some of the social sector related subjects/functions as listed in Schedule XI.

4.4.2 Village level planning process

The most critical level is the village or gram panchayat (GP) as it is closer to the people and is enjoined to interact with the gram sabha (Article 243A). The delivery of several basic services and 'planning for economic development and social justice' (Article 243G and 243W) can work effectively and equitably only at the village level. Further more, in almost all states only the GPs are endowed with revenue-raising powers.

Operationally, at the village (gram panchayat) level an integrated development plan would be prepared with the involvement of resident communities. It would incorporate strategies and actions for the provision of basic services (e.g., water supply, sanitation, health, education, housing etc.) and interventions for development for its residents incorporating special considerations of the poor and marginalized groups. The planning process would entail the following.

- Identifying and prioritising needs;
- Assessing local potential;
- Considering local alternatives and identifying appropriate strategies and actions;
- Allocating available resources;
- Exploring possibilities for augmenting them from internal as well as external sources through taxes, user charges and contributions, and borrowings;
- Translating plans into programmes/projects such as, *Anti Poverty Programme, Gender Justice Programme; Special Component and Tribal Programmes and Programmes for Social Security*; and
- Deciding on the implementation process.

Ideally speaking, the planning exercise ought to lead to a five-year plan for the period corresponding with the national plan period, and annual plans that define and prioritise areas and schemes from such a plan. The longer-term plans would capture the overall picture of the panchayat and allow people to understand what planning and governmental funding could hold out for them. Once a five-year plan is prepared, the annual plan could be drawn out from it.

For proper planning at the village level, effective and functional gram sabhas are essential. Meetings at the gram sabha level would be necessary, leading to the emergence of a draft plan, with schemes and projects listed in priority. Gram sabha meetings would have to be representative of all people living in a GP to discuss the local development problems and local development programmes.

4.4.2.1 Role of gram sabha

The anticipated tasks/functions of a gram sabha vis-à-vis local development planning include (a) preparing and proposing panchayat development plans; (b) making recommendations and suggestions to GPs on development programmes both of the preceding financial year and the current year; (c) seeking clarifications from the elected members of the GP about plan, income and expenditure, (d) identifying beneficiaries for the implementation of developmental schemes; and (e) rendering assistance in the implementation of developmental schemes pertaining to the village.

However, reality is different. Gram sabha meetings are few. Attendance in such meetings is low, especially of weaker and disadvantaged sections. Several states have devised consultative mechanisms below the gram sabha, such as ward sabhas and mahila sabhas to ensure that every socio economic section is properly represented in the gram sabha.

The report of the Expert Group, appointed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (10th May 2005) to recommend concrete steps for making planning at the grass roots level a reality, has suggested that the following steps should be taken on a campaign footing to ensure good participation in gram sabhas and ward sabhas.

- Dates for meetings to be determined in advance by the panchayats;
- Notices to be printed and distributed and adequate awareness created through the display of fixed notices in public places, particularly about the gram and ward sabhas' responsibilities in plan formulation;

- Special interest groups such as self help groups (SHGs) etc., to be contacted for attending the ward and gram sabhas;
- Information to be given through NGOs, libraries, schools, Anganwadis and cooperatives functioning in the area about ward and gram sabhas;
- Campaigns through the National Service Scheme and Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) volunteers, NCC cadets and college students could be undertaken;
- House visits through squad work, particularly mobilised through the ward members;
- The GP nominating two facilitators one male and one female, identified unanimously for each ward sabha. These facilitators could also be earmarked for special training at the block/municipal levels;
- Having a proper structure for the gram and ward sabha with the scope to break up into smaller groups for discussion;
- It would be useful to meticulously keep records of the meetings, such as attendance registers with details; photographs, etc., where feasible (Ramchandran: 2006: 23).

4.4.3 Planning process at the block level

The gram panchayats' plan are aggregated and collated at the block panchayat and then sent to the district panchayat. The sanctioned action plans and funds by district panchayats are routed through block panchayats to gram panchayats. Additionally, block panchayats also undertake planning for services to be provided across GPs such as connecting roads, minor irrigation projects, watershed development, high schools, junior colleges etc. An important role of a panchayat at this level is to act as a facilitator in the various steps of planning at the GP level. The panchayat members at the block panchayat by negotiating priorities across village in the gram panchayat plans, in a representative manner, can contribute to transparency in the governance process.

The tasks of the block panchayat as regards planning would be to:

- Prepare five year and annual plans in accordance with activity mapping and covering inter village-panchayat issues, through a participatory process following the steps listed in the case of GPs (as appropriate);
- Maintain multidisciplinary technical teams (which could include NGOs) for assisting GPs in the planning and implementation. This would especially synergise inter-tier coordination for watershed development and Rural Business Hub initiatives. There is a urgent need to equip each intermediate panchayat with a planning support unit;
- Maintain and manage multi-panchayat cadres, such as teachers, engineers, watershed managers, social forestry supervisors, Anganwadi supervisors, and intermediate level health supervisory workers;

- Feedback from GPs regarding works outside their purview, such as inter-village road building and multi panchayat irrigation structures could be included in Intermediate Panchayat Plans (Ramchandran: 2006).

4.4.4 Planning process at the district level

The district panchayat's role is one of preparing plans in accordance with activity mapping and overall coordination in planning, providing capacity building and technical support, to lower levels of panchayats. The district panchayat has the responsibility to provide for equitable development of backward regions within the district. This will be done through guidelines as well as differential allocation of resources to low levels of panchayats under special component plans and programmes in the earmarked fund. The district in preparing its plans, particularly needs to take into account gender issues, tribal sub-plans and special component plans for the development of Scheduled Castes (SCs).

It is also essential that the District Panchayat plan also looks into several issues that may lie outside activity mapping, but are critical to the overall development of the district as a whole. While all of them cannot obviously be tackled at the district level, the plan could cover measures that would help to promote them. For instance, the District Panchayat plan could address issues related to agricultural land, forest land, credit and usury, livelihood, primary health care and nutrition etc (Ramchandran: 2006: 27).

4.4.5 District planning committee (DPC)

The process of decentralised planning got a greater fillip with the passage of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Article 243ZD of this Act envisaged the constitution of a DPC at the district level in every state to consolidate the plans for economic development and social justice "prepared by the panchayats and municipalities in the district and also prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole".

The Constitution enjoins upon the state governments to constitute DPCs to prepare composite plans covering both urban and rural areas. There is, however, confusion as to whether the DPC should be a separate and permanent office or it should denote only a meeting, which is periodically called and which can be serviced by a part-time secretariat. There is a feeling that the DPC should not emerge as yet another layer of bureaucracy to vet people's plans. Yet, the DPC without the status of a permanent institution cannot function effectively as a constitutional body. It requires an adequate secretariat to service it at the district level. The State Legislatures have been vested with powers to make laws to determine the composition of the DPCs and the manner in which the seats in the DPCs shall be filled. However, it has been stipulated that not less than four-fifths of the total members of such a committee shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the panchayats and municipalities in the ratio of rural and urban population of the district. The manner of selection of chairperson of the DPCs has been left to the states.

4.4.5.1 Components of district planning

The important aspects of decentralised planning are (a) Strategies for rural development, (b) Determination of spatial and temporal sequences of activities and their coordination, (c) Infrastructure for essential services, and (d) Social institutional framework. These four

elements are correlated in such a way that failure on any of these four elements is likely to influence not only the process of planning, but also the way benefits accrue to various sections of the population. Another important aspect of rural development strategy and decentralised planning is to maintain proper coordination, not only among different sets of functionaries, but also among different sectors of the rural economy. For this, both forward and backward linkages are to be maintained among the panchayat functionaries.

District planning requires an integration of various components.

4.4.5.2 Functions

4.4.5.2.1 Preparation of draft development plan

One of the major functions of the DPC is to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole, after taking into account the plans prepared by the panchayats and the municipalities in the district. While preparing the draft development plan the DPC should keep in view matters of common interest between the panchayats and the municipalities including spatial, sectoral, cross-sectoral and vertical integration plans within the district.

4.4.5.2.2 Consolidation of panchayat plans

The DPC would consolidate the plans prepared by the panchayats in the district and prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole. The area plan prepared by the panchayats and consolidated by the DPCs would be assimilated and harmonised into the state plan. Each state, in turn, would devise its own mechanisms and procedures for performing all these tasks. Consolidation, however, goes much beyond compilation and connotes a degree of value addition through the integration of local plans.

4.4.5.2.3 Integration of resources

There are several schemes, both centrally sponsored and state sponsored, which panchayats can utilise, integrate into local plans and to which they can contribute additional resources. This would comprise of the following two aspects.

- **Integration with State Plans**

There are several State Plans, which, if implemented, can be strengthened by increased allocation from panchayat funds. In some cases a component having a complementary nature could be added to the State Plan Scheme. For instance, the panchayat taking up the wiring of BPL (Below Poverty Level) houses could complement the drawing of electric wires to villages.

- **Integration of Centrally Sponsored Schemes with Local Plans**

It is important that in the interest of efficient use of resources, there ought to be only one development plan for the local government prepared through a common planning process and not a set of separate plans prepared in accordance with the guidelines of each programme. Thus once priorities and works are identified and prioritised through a single planning process, components pertaining to a particular sector could be taken up through schemes, including Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) while still keeping within the guidelines of those schemes.

4.4.5.2.4 *Integration with local resources*

Planning can provide for local investments to be catalysed through local resources or initiatives. For example, panchayats could catalyse Village Knowledge Centres and Rural Business Hubs. This is also possible by extending the concept of PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) to encompass the concept of Rural Business Hubs. By this, we do not mean that panchayats ought to run industry locally, but that it catalogue local skills and natural resource endowments and facilitates the development of business linkages.

4.4.5.2.5 *Rural urban integration*

In the light of increasing urbanisation, the DPC can contribute a great deal in the integration of urban-rural plans. It can work out mechanisms of joint programmes to be financed by the state government institutions and joint contributions by urban and rural local bodies.

4.4.5.2.6 *Capacity building for planning*

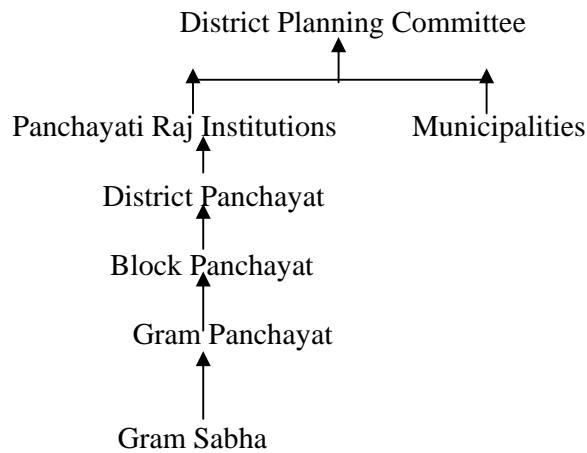
The DPC has the important task of building capacity for decentralised planning in the district. A major impediment to proper planning is the lack of personnel providing planning support and the availability of good and comprehensible information at the intermediate and GP levels. The DPC could play a coordinating role in capacity building efforts at the district level. The contents of a capacity building programme should include the background and ethos of participatory planning, the operational processes involved, issues relating to gender and disadvantaged sections of society, building of awareness regarding rights of women, children, disabled, dalits and tribes, right to information and responsibilities of citizens. All elected panchayat representatives and office bearers at each level of the panchayat, all panchayat secretaries, other staff such as field staff of line departments and accounts and auditing staff could also be trained. Training should promote greater interaction and cross learning with other people's organisations like cooperatives, NGOs, SHGs and users' associations (Ramchandran: 2006).

4.4.6 **Challenging issues**

The above discussion on planning in PRIs clearly draws attention to significant shifts towards the decentralisation and localisation of development planning in terms of *scale* (from national and state to settlement as village, town, city and the local region as village, block and district); *level* (from centre, state to the town, village, block and district); *content and scope* (local development planning); *process* (from state initiated/directed/controlled and expert centred to participative and citizen-community determined) and *goals, needs and priorities* (locally determined). The mandated change, therefore, envisaged effective planning and development for greater citizen participation in the process, democratic control over allocation of public resources and accountability of public agencies to the local community (Misra & Misra: 2000).

A multifaceted structure of development planning in PRIs is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2.
The Planning Structure in Panchayati Raj Institutions



We must, however, remember that Constitutional provisions are only enabling, and their effectiveness depends on how well the powers and functions are devolved to PRIs, and how efficiently they are discharged. The field realities reveal that progress towards decentralised local development planning has been far from satisfactory.

4.4.6.1 Devolution of powers and functions

Autonomous and effective decentralisation underscores an urgent transfer of the three F's - functions, funds and functionaries to PRIs. The progress in this area, with the exception of Kerala, has been halting, piecemeal and in several cases even retrograde. In Kerala the progress in regard to administrative autonomy leaves much to be desired.

There is excessive state government control over the functional domain of PRIs in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Even in West Bengal, widely hailed as a good example of decentralisation, PRIs function more as agents of the state government than as autonomous institutions. Bihar's Panchayat Act, 1993 assigns several functions to the PRIs, but "subject to such conditions as may be prescribed from time to time". Moreover the Bihar Act defines the Zilla Parishads as superior bodies over the GPs endowed with the power to suspend the executive orders of GPs. Even Gujarat with a long tradition of the Panchayati Raj system "has not been very successful in providing to its village level institutions, the functional and financial autonomy which is integral to self governance". While erosion of autonomy is bad enough, the worst cases are those states where the PRIs continue to be dominated by Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) (e.g. Haryana). (Oommen: 2004:6).

Generally speaking the GPs are not adequately strengthened financially and technically to deliver functional assignments. In some states several of the basic civic services, which traditionally belonged to the panchayats like street lighting, provision of drinking water supply, sanitation and drainage, primary health care etc., have not been entrusted to them. Instead, some of these services, if at all provided are provided by the state departments. In Haryana, GPs practically deal with only drinking water and construction and maintenance of roads to the exclusion of all others (Oommen: 2004:6).

Almost all the 29 subjects assigned to PRIs are state-concurrent; there is need for role clarity to avoid duplication and overlapping. While any effort to strengthen the reach and quality of basic services through GPs is to be welcomed, unless there is clear role clarity between the state on the one hand and the three-tiers on the other in regard to functional assignments, decentralisation can result in only more confusion, delay in implementation and add to the difficulties in evolving an efficient transfer system. Several states have repeated the 29 subjects as functions of the three tiers. Some states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have broken the 29 subjects into activities and sub-activities. Clear functional mapping therefore is a necessary condition to ensure efficient decentralisation. (Oommen: 2004:7).

No state seems to have anticipated the expanding needs of decentralised governance and made appropriate changes in the revenue assignments to local bodies. The intermediate and district panchayats are not given substantial taxing powers. Only GPs are endowed with taxing powers. The taxes assigned to GPs are, however, not elastic or very productive. Even where taxes are assigned, the autonomy of the PRIs in exercising them is considerably restricted by rules, restrictions and conditions.

4.4.6.2 Existing institutional and organisational arrangements

There are multiple channels of transferring resources some of them parallel agencies (e.g. District Rural Development Agency) transgressing the functional domain of PRIs. For instance, besides the CSSs, there are 26 sectoral programmes falling under the 29 subjects of the XIth Schedule, which the Central Ministries handle. States too have marginalized the PR. The state government of Andhra Pradesh handles the Janmabhoomi, the Village Education Committee, and Economic Restructuring Project etc. The Gram Vikas Samiti of Haryana, the Joint Forest Management Committees of Gujarat, Rajasthan's Watershed Programme, the Water Use Groups and Site Implementation Committees of Uttar Pradesh and the District Government in Madhya Pradesh are other cases in this context. Multiple channels of resource flow and development efforts only lead to inefficient planning, corruption and waste of resources (Oommen: 2004:8).

4.4.6.3 Constitution of DPCs

The current status of DPCs in the states presented in Table 4.4.1 reveals that the steps taken to operationalise the provisions of Article 243 ZD by the states have been far from satisfactory.

In most states DPCs are yet to function. They neither consolidate nor prepare draft district developmental plans. Very few of them are preparing district plans even though some of them allocate funds to the district sector. In some states the DPCs are not constituted due to the existence of District Planning Bodies/Boards set up before the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force. In the absence of a well functioning district planning machinery, taking decisions on the priorities of a district is often left to officials, guided by DPCs, which consist largely of elected representatives of legislatures and MPs and some nominated members, sometimes including elected representatives of panchayats.

Table 4.4. The Current Status of DPCs in the States/Union Territories (UTs)

Serial No.	States/Uts	Status of constitution of DPCs
1	Andhra Pradesh	Not yet constituted
2	Arunachal Pradesh	Not yet constituted
3	Assam	Not yet constituted
4	Bihar	Constituted in all 38 districts. Chairman of ZP is the chairman of DPCs.
5	Chhattisgarh	Constituted. Minister is chairperson of DPC
6	Goa	Constituted. President of ZP is the chairperson of DPC
7	Gujarat	Not yet constituted
8	Haryana	Constituted in all 19 districts.
9	Himachal Pradesh	Constituted in 12 districts. Minister is chairperson of DPC.
10	Karnataka	Yes. In all districts. President, ZP is chairman of DPC.
11	Jharkhand	Panchayat elections yet to be held.
12	Kerala	Yes, Chairman of district panchayat (DP) is chairman of DPC.
13	Madhya Pradesh	Yes. District in-charge ministers are chairpersons.
14	Maharashtra	Not yet constituted.
15	Manipur	Yes in 4 districts. Adhyaksha, DP is chairperson
16	Orissa	26 Districts. Minister is chairperson of DPC.
17	Punjab	Not yet constituted.
18	Rajasthan	Yes. Chairman of DP is chairman of DPC
19	Sikkim	Yes.
20	Tamil Nadu	Yes. Chairperson, DP is chairperson
21	Tripura	Not yet constituted.
22	Uttar Pradesh	DPCs are not notified or constituted, even though legal provision exists.
23	Uttaranchal	DPCs are not notified or constituted, even though legal provision exists.
24	West Bengal	Yes. Chairperson, DP is chairperson of DPC.
25	A&N Islands	Yes. Chairperson of DP is chairman of DPC.
26	Chandigarh	Not yet constituted.
27	D&N Haveli	Yes. Chairman, DP is chairman of DPC
28	Daman & Diu	Yes. Chairman, DP is chairman of DPC
29	Lakshadweep	Yes. Collector cum Dev. commissioner is chairperson.
30	Pondicherry	Panchayat elections yet to be held.

(Source: PRIA & Ramchandran V. (2006) Planning at Grassroots level. An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five-Year plan. Report of the Expert group. New Delhi. Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Pp 33-34)

4.4.6.4 Institutional frameworks for planning at the various levels

PRIs in most states have ignored the constitutional mandate to plan for economic development and social justice. Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh,

Bihar and West Bengal are a few states that have statutorily recognised this. Yet, in no state except Kerala, has this important mandate been made into a detailed bottom up planning process.

Planning is of poor quality and is generally a mere collection of schemes and works. Many of the works suggested by elected panchayat members themselves are in an ad-hoc manner. Integration of gram and block panchayat plans into the district plan, even when done, tends to be mere summation and not a synergistic integration. This is further distorted by placing funds with MPs and MLAs, whose utilisation falls outside the pale of any planning. For instance, in Madhya Pradesh, the task of planning and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice has been given to ‘district governments’ created by delegating various powers and responsibilities of the state to DPCs and calling them subordinate agencies of the government for this purpose. It is difficult to consider this process as bottom up planning. In Bihar, the statute gives powers to the Zilla Parishad to plan for economic development and social justice, but this power remains only in the statute books. In Karnataka PRI planning continues to be “essentially a top down process”(Oommen: 2004: 7).

4.4.6.5 Infrastructure and resources for decentralised planning

The planning process requires a clear perception of needs and priorities of a particular area and the resources that would be available in a given time frame to provide for those needs. Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, rural communities are still not fully equipped to handle the task of planning. Also, a few PRIs are equipped with minimal infrastructure, resources and capabilities to undertake most of their new roles.

NOTE BANK

Check your progress II

Notes: (a) Use the space provided below for your answers.
 (b) Check your answer with the possible answer provide at the end of the unit.

1. Name some of the key functions of DPC?

2. What risks are present in the absence of a well functioning DPC?

4.5 Development priorities and PRIs

4.5.1 Centrally sponsored schemes and Panchayati Raj Institutions

From a national point of view the Government of India takes up several programmes dealing with matters that are to be delegated to local governments. Centrally Sponsored Schemes are the dominant instrument through which these are delivered. Currently eight flagship programmes have been identified for which the bulk of the resources are allocated. These are Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-day Meal Scheme, Drinking Water Mission, Total Sanitation Campaign, National Rural Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Services, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission. Except for the Urban Renewal Mission, these schemes fall within the core functions of panchayats.

It has been said by many for years now, that there are shortcomings in the design and implementation of CSSs. For instance, there is no consistent approach to institutional mechanisms for implementation even in schemes that are related and address the same broad objective; and most are independently planned and implemented, and operate self-contained fund flow and monitoring systems, leaving little scope for convergence with other schemes at the local levels.

Decision-makers often face a dilemma, whether general purpose or specific purpose grants serve national priorities better and the extent of untying, clubbing, or rationalisation required, would fall outside its terms of reference. On the one hand, there is the concern that unless funds are tied to schemes with conditionality, expenditure at the local level might not be in the direction of desired and accepted national priorities. On the other hand, there is the problem that the immense diversities at the local level are not taken into account and local governments are not given space to attempt integrated area development taking local conditions into account.

The Planning Commission set up a high powered Committee to look into the issue of rationalisation of CSSs. It made suggestions on selected national programmes that touch upon the panchayats' core functions. It felt that along with these flagship programmes, a few more central programmes could be considered as important from the point of view of giving a clear and precise role to panchayats in planning and implementation.

For our analysis, we have clubbed together both flagship and the other schemes that address the same broad objective as given below.

Category	Schemes
Poverty Alleviation Schemes	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) • Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
Education Schemes	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, • Midday Meals Programme, • Adult Literacy
Water and Sanitation	Drinking Water Mission • Total Sanitation Campaign
Health	National Rural Health Mission
Women and Child Development	Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Rural Housing	Indira Awas Yojana
Rural Roads	• Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana • Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana
Rural Electrification	Programmes of non-conventional energy

(Source: Ramchandran V. (2006) Planning at Grassroots level. An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five-Year plan. Report of the Expert group. New Delhi. Ministry of Panchayati Raj p 61)

The Expert Group also made the following recommendations with respect to ensuring the centrality of panchayats in the planning and implementation of central programmes.

- All centrally funded programmes and schemes that fall in the domain of states and local governments may be referred to by a common terminology. The term “centrally sponsored” is simple and well established enough to be used to describe all such transfers.
- Each ministry operating CSSs pertaining to matters listed in the 11th Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution ought to undertake an activity mapping exercise on the roles assigned to levels of government, including panchayats, in the activities of that ministry. This exercise should follow the principles of subsidiarity, by which tasks are placed at that level where it is best performed.
- The powers for approval, administrative sanction, review and monitoring of CSSs will need to vest with local governments as appropriate, at different levels. This would include laying down processes that ensure democratic decision-making with respect to planning and implementation.
- The role of line departments in supporting panchayats ought to be spelt out. While panchayats are given clear-cut roles in planning and implementation of schemes, methods of providing technical support by line departments have to be laid down.
- There has to be a clear statement by each Central Ministry dealing with the core functions of panchayats, such as Ministries of HRD (both Departments of Education and Women and Child Welfare), Rural Development and Agriculture that all line department functionaries at the grassroots level, function under the control of panchayats.
- A large number of different parallel bodies have been set up under various schemes to undertake the same tasks as panchayats and compete with them for performing these functions. The justification that parallel bodies are required to exist as recipients of funds is no longer tenable as panchayats are entitled to hold their own funds in accordance with Article 243H. Yet, it is argued that they are needed for sectoral focus and attainment of targets. To the extent they are considered inevitable, parallel bodies ought to be brought under panchayats to assist them.
- The planning methodology in the CSS guidelines ought to be strictly in alignment with those prescribed in Article 243 ZD of the Constitution.
- As part of efforts to deepen peoples’ participation in the implementation of CSSs, there has been a tendency for line departments to create stand-alone committees or groupings of stakeholders to oversee implementation, certify completion, monitor, maintain assets created, distribute benefits etc. Their creation and promotion takes precedence over the devolution of functions and powers to panchayats. While the strengthening and promotion

of such autonomous social groups is required for augmenting social capital and deepening democracy and for greater involvement of concerned stakeholders, setting them up as substitutes for panchayats has to be discouraged. Panchayats are local governments performing a range of governance and development functions and are accountable to the entire population of a panchayat. Besides, both for financial and social accountability, it is important that these bodies are made to function within the ambit of the Panchayati Raj system. Panchayats and these bodies have to learn to work together for common good instead of functioning as rivals. In ensuring a harmonious relationship between the panchayat and such groups, it is best to conceive these groups as sub-systems and as a further step in democratic decentralisation. They could draw their powers and resources from panchayats, either by positioning themselves as Standing Committees of the panchayats or as subcommittees of the gram sabha, performing specific tasks that are delegated to them. Either way, the design elements should ensure synergy, harmony, sustainability and financial accountability of such arrangements:

- The obligation to make voluntary disclosure of all information ought to be made an integral part of CSS guidelines. Arrangements will also need to be made for reviewing whether these obligations have indeed been met by the panchayats concerned (Ramchandran: 2006: 57-61).

4.5.2 National rural employment guarantee scheme

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 assures 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act has come into force in 200 districts of India with effect from February 2, 2006.

This Act is an important step towards the realisation of the right to work. It is expected to enhance people's livelihoods on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. This work guarantee can also serve other objectives - generating productive assets, protecting environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.

4.5.2.1 Important provisions of the act

- Every state government shall make a scheme, within 6 months from the date of commencement of this Act, for providing not less than 100 days of guaranteed employment.
- Central government may, by notification, specify the wage rate not less than Rs.60 a day. Until such time a wage rate is fixed, the minimum wage fixed by the state government under Minimum Wages Act, 1948 for agricultural labourers, shall be considered as the wage rate applicable to that area.
- If an applicant is not provided such employment within 15 days of receipt of his application seeking employment, she/he shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance.
- At district level CEO of the district panchayat or the Collector or any other district level officer may be designated as District Programme Coordinator by the state government to assist panchayats in discharging their duties.

- At every panchayat at intermediate level, the state government shall appoint a Programme Officer to assist the panchayat in discharging its functions.
- The GPs shall be responsible for the identification of projects in the gram panchayat area to be taken up under a scheme as per the recommendation of gram sabha and the ward sabhas and for execution and supervision of such works.
- The gram sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all the projects under the Scheme taken up within the gram panchayat.
- The state government shall determine appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms at the block level and the district level for dealing with any complaint by any person in respect of implementation of the scheme and lay down the procedure for disposal of such complaints.
- The central government and state government shall establish a National Employment Guarantee Fund and State Employment Guarantee Fund respectively.
- All payments of wages in cash and unemployment allowances shall be made directly to the person concerned and in the presence of independent persons of the community on pre-announced dates.
- The scheme shall not permit engaging any contractor for the implementation of the projects under it.
- The focus of the scheme shall be on the following works in their order of priority: a) Water conservation and water harvesting, b) Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation), c) Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works, d) Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) or to the land of land reform beneficiaries or that of the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India, e) Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks, f) Land development, g) Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas, h) Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access i) Any other work, which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the state government (PRIA: 2006:).

4.5.2.2 Role of PRIs as envisaged in NREGA

The panchayats at each level will be the 'Principal Authorities for planning and implementation of the schemes under the Act (Section 13(1)). Where Part Nine of the Constitution does not apply, local councils/authorities as mandated by the state concerned shall be invested with corresponding responsibilities.

The Act authorises the gram sabha to recommend work to be taken up under REGS, to monitor and supervise these works and to conduct social audits of the implementation of the scheme. In addition, central guidelines suggest that the gram sabha should be used extensively for facilitating the implementation of the scheme. The gram sabha should as a forum for sharing information about the scheme, help people to apply for registration. In addition, the gram sabha has a crucial role to play in ensuring transparency and

accountability. This involves, for instance, verifying applications for registration and conducting social audit.

The GPs have a pivotal role in the implementation of REGS. It is responsible for planning of works, registering households, issuing job cards, allocating employment, executing 50 percent of the works, and monitoring the implementation of the scheme at the village level. The implementation of the scheme involves a considerable organisational burden at the level of the GP. This involves registering families, issuing job cards, receiving applications for work, maintaining records, allocating employment etc., apart from planning and executing the panchayat tasks.

The intermediate panchayats are responsible for planning at the block level, and for monitoring and supervision. It can also be given the responsibility of executing works from among the 50 percent that are not to be executed by the GP.

District panchayats will be responsible for finalising the District Plans and for monitoring and supervising the REGS in the district. District panchayats can also execute works from among the 50 percent that are not to be executed by GPs.

Let us see in detail the role assigned to panchayats in NREGA and operational guidelines under three broad categories of planning, implementation and monitoring.

Planning:

- Planning is critical to the successful implementation of REGS. The main objective of the planning process is to ensure that the district is prepared well in advance to offer productive employment on demand.
- The GP is required to forward proposals for REGS projects to the Programme Officer for scrutiny, who will prepare a plan for the block by consolidating the proposals of the GPs and the intermediate panchayats. The intermediate panchayat has to approve and forward the block plan to the district panchayat.
- Each REGS district is expected to prepare a District Perspective Plan for 5 years with the village as the unit of planning. This Perspective Plan will enable districts to assess the causal factors of poverty and possible interventions. While the Perspective Plan will provide the framework, the Annual Plan will be the working plan that identifies the activities to be taken up on a priority basis.
- For preparing the Annual Plan the GP shall convene a meeting of the gram sabha to estimate the demand for labour, and to propose the number and priority of works to be taken up in the next financial year. Based on the recommendations formulated in the gram sabha (and the ward sabhas, if applicable), the GP will prepare an Annual Plan and forward it to the Programme Officer (PO). The gram sabha will also identify 50 percent of the works in its area that it may wish to take up. The Programme Officer will scrutinise the Annual Plan for its technical feasibility and will then submit consolidated statements of proposals with his/her observations to the intermediate panchayat. The intermediate panchayat can return a work proposal only if it is outside the parameters of the Act and ask for a valid proposal. The intermediate panchayats will forward it to the District Programme Coordinator. The District Programme Officer (DPO) will scrutinise the plan

proposals of the intermediate panchayats, examining the appropriateness and adequacy of works in terms of likely demand as well as their technical and financial feasibility. The DPO will consolidate all these proposals into a District Plan proposal to be discussed and approved by the district panchayat. The district plan will comprise a block-wise shelf of projects. Through out this exercise, the priority of works indicated by the GPs will not be changed.

- The DPO will coordinate the preparation of detailed technical estimates and sanctions and will communicate the sanctioned plan to the PO. The PO will forward a copy of the Block Plan with the shelf of projects to be executed in each GP as well as projects that may be interned to the GP. The entire process must be completed by December of the preceding year.

Implementation:

- GPs will receive and verify applications for registration. For this purpose a gram sabha shall be convened and a door-to-door survey may also be conducted.
- The GPs will issue job cards to every registered household after verification. Application for work should be generally submitted to the GP, but workers will have a fallback option of submitting the application directly to the PO. For performing all these duties central guidelines suggest earmarking one day of a week as 'Employment Guarantee Day'. If a request for work is made to the GP, it should offer employment on the works executed (or to be executed) by it. If, under any circumstance, it is not possible, the GP may also allocate employment in a work to be executed by any other implementing agency in its jurisdiction. If a request is made to the PO and the PO allots work, she/he must inform the GP so that the data on works and employment are coordinated at that level too. The PO will send a copy of the muster roll of every work to those GPs from which workers are employed and in whose jurisdiction the work is executed.
- 50 percent of the works in terms of costs will be allotted to the GP for execution. For panchayat works, the GPs are the appropriate authorities empowered to 'start' works (by issuing work orders).

Monitoring

- The gram sabha will monitor all the works at the village level as well as the employment provided to each person who has applied for work. It will also monitor the registration and issue of job cards and the timely payment of wages.
- The GP will monitor works executed by other implementing agencies, muster rolls maintained by them at worksites, and the payments made.
- The intermediate panchayat will monitor the registration of households; employment provided to each applicant, progress of unemployment allowances and quality of works.
- REGS related accounts of the GP should be presented for scrutiny at the biannual social audits of the gram sabha (PRIA: 2006).

4.5.2.3 Experiences so far

4.5.2.3.1 State operational guidelines/ schemes

NREGA makes it mandatory for states to formulate state schemes, but states like Uttaranchal, Haryana, Rajasthan and few others have yet to prepare and notify such schemes. In fact Haryana, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Kerala have not issued state specific operational guidelines so far. Even in those states where schemes have been formulated and/or operational guidelines have been issued, some aspects of these schemes and guidelines may have possible negative implications on the implementation of NREGS.

4.5.2.3.2 State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC- State Council)

In several states such as Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal, the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) has not been formed yet. In Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Executive Council of the SEGC has been formed.

The Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh REGS have transferred all the powers of the State Council to the Executive Committee, which is mentioned as a state level empowered committee. All decisions of this empowered committee are considered final. The provision of such a committee may severely undermine the status of non-official members of the State Council including representatives from PRIs, as the Council may be used merely as a rubber stamp.

4.5.2.3.3 Supremacy of administrative officials over PRIs

The Madhya Pradesh REGS and Chhattisgarh REGS Circle Officer (*Tahsildar*) and Deputy Circle Officer (*Nayab Tahsildar*) have been given the power to decide over an appeal against the sarpanch's decision on objections against entries in a job card. Any such decision would be final. In case of doubt over proposed modification in job cards by the GP, the Sub Divisional Officer (Revenue) would take the final decision. In most of the states the District Collector has been made the District Programme Coordinator. NREGA makes panchayats the 'principal authorities' and it would have been in the spirit of the Act if the CEO of the Zilla Parishad were made District Programme Coordinator for REGS. All such provisions, which give government officials overriding powers, are against the process of decentralisation and devolution of powers mandated by 73rd CAA.

4.5.2.3.4 Financial support

Different states have fixed different limits for administrative expenses. While Rajasthan keeps 2 percent of the total expenses, Andhra Pradesh REGS fixes it at 6 percent. A realistic uniform percentage or range of percentage can be arrived at and prescribed. As PRIs have been made the 'Principal Authority' for planning and implementation of the scheme, a substantial part (60-70%) of such amount should be allocated to PRIs.

4.5.2.3.5 Gaps in the implementation

A study conducted by PRIA with its partner organisations on the implementation of NREGS have pointed to the gaps in the implementation of schemes, such as, elected representatives

had low awareness about the processes. Issuing of job cards was delayed. Human resources to implement the scheme were inadequate. The grievance redressal mechanism was weak and information was not made public (PRIA: 2006).

4.5.3 The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a programme for universal elementary education to reach every child in every hamlet in the country in a prescribed time frame. The Constitution was amended in 2002 to make education every child's fundamental right. To give a special impetus to the girl child's education, additional programmes like the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Bal Vidhyalaya (KGBV) were initiated in 2003.

SSA is an effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The SSA programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through the provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode. Other interventions for elementary education have been integrated in the fold of SSA such as, Operation Blackboard, Mahila Samakhya, National Programme of Nutritional Support for Primary Education, Strengthening Teacher Education, Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education, District Primary Education Programme and Lok Jumbish Project.

The SSA is a time bound mission aimed at universalisation of elementary education and bridging of gender and social gaps by 2010. It aims at providing better educational facilities, particularly in respect of opening of new schools, construction of school buildings, appointment of teachers and provision of free textbooks. SSA covers 598 districts (of 602 in the country) in 34 states/ UTs. The importance of the scheme can be gauged from the fact that budget allocations have steadily increased, from Rs. 5,079 crores in 2004-2005 to Rs. 7,156 crores (2005-2006) and Rs. 10,041 crores in 2006-2007. The scheme addresses the educational needs of about 20 crore children in 11 lakh habitations, 8.84 lakh existing primary and upper primary schools and non-formal education centres including Education Guarantee Schemes and Alternative Innovative Education centres.

4.5.3.1 Objectives of SSA

- All children to be enrolled in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternative School, 'Back to School' camp by 2003;
- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010;
- Universal retention by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

4.5.3.2 Role of PRIs as envisaged in SSA

SSA defines a partnership between the central, state and local governments, involving PRIs. The passage of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment placed education in the purview of local governance. It has been recognised again and again that centrally driven programmes and

policies cannot be successful in achieving Universalisation on Elementary Education (UEE) until and unless community participation is not ensured. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment also talks about sharing education related responsibility among various levels of government. Education as one of the important functions of the 11th Schedule has been devolved at the panchayat level. Since the GP is the government at the local level, it becomes a constitutional mandate of the panchayats to ensure effective education.

SSA envisages developing district educational plans with a focus on participatory planning and disaggregated target settings. It gives recognition to the concept of partnership in education by establishing links with the community through PRIs.

The programme explicitly calls for community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralisation. The community ownership would be augmented by involving women's groups, Village Education Committee (VEC) members and members of Panchayati Raj institutions.

The SSA programme framework emphasises deep community ownership in implementation, through School Management Committees, village and urban and slum level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools. This participatory approach is to be captured in a village education programme, prepared in consultation with GPs also and would form the basis of the District Elementary Education Programme. However, the implementation framework positions GPs as one of the many participants in the process, along with individuals, SHGs, and representatives of NGOs etc. At best, the linkage between the local School Management Committee and the panchayat is expected to be through making the sarpanch a member of such a committee. There is no linkage with the Standing Committees in panchayats. No role has been envisaged for the intermediate and district panchayat in its implementation.

The stated objectives of the programme can be achieved in a more efficient and sustainable manner if an organic relationship can be fostered between community-based organisations and GPs through a clearer institutional design that complemented the strengths of each. For instance, it is essential that GPs oversee the process of household and school surveys for the collection of data by the district and block Team, because there is already extensive data available at this level, such as BPL data, NREGA registered families, all of which can be dovetailed so as to create a very powerful database that will enrich village level planning. Specific changes would need to be made regarding the following aspects.

- The GP ought to be central to the micro-planning exercise prescribed in the implementation framework. The Gram Panchayat Standing Committee that deals with education can specially handle the task. The village education programme will become part of the integrated plan of the GP concerned.
- There could be further decentralisation to deal with SSA on a school wise basis to village level education committees, but they must have a clear relationship with the panchayat. These could function as sub-committees of the gram sabha, and can report to the concerned GP's Standing Committee.

- Such Gram Panchayat Standing Committees need not consist solely of GP members. Members of the gram sabha, such as mothers of children studying in schools can be co-opted into these committees as required.
- The guidelines should ensure that the accounts of the VECs are captured into the accounting system of the GP. Thus the SSA would become a line item in the GP's budget even if expenditure were actually incurred at the Standing Committee/sub-committee level. The frequency of reporting of accounts can be prescribed by the Education Department.
- There is no need for parallel bodies at the district and intermediate levels. A Standing Committee of the concerned panchayat can regularly monitor the subject.
- There is a strong case for the streamlining of fund flows. Thus funds can be sent from the state level institution directly to the panchayat level concerned, which has been shown to be feasible. In the case of SSA, this would predominantly mean the GP.
- Monitoring reports prepared at each panchayat level will need to be placed in the public domain, where it can be accessed by all, including the monitoring agencies of the Education Department, such as District Institute for Education Training (DIETs). (PRIA: 2006)

4.6 Participatory local planning

4.6.1 Significance of local level planning with people's participation

4.6.1.1 Bottom up planning

It is now being realised that unless people are involved in directing and controlling the process of development, no real development can take place. This is because the needs of the people, resources, ecological setting, social milieu, and traditional knowledge of people is local specific. Bottom-up planning or micro planning entails planning at a local unit - involving people in planning and decision-making related to development. An encouraging beginning has been made in carrying out participatory micro planning exercises at the ward and village level. Panchayats are constitutionally mandated to prepare plans for economic development and social justice. Every panchayat has to prepare a plan taking into account local needs and local conditions, which may become the basis for the state plan and finally the national plan.

4.6.1.2 Promotes peoples' participation

This process of planning mobilises community participation. In the late 1980s and beginning of 1990s, several government-assisted projects emphasised on community-based planning and management. After the new economic policy, decentralisation of the planning process was widely advocated. As the costs of operation in big projects were increasing, hence, involving beneficiaries in planning and managing the projects was an appropriate and cost effective measure. Several collaborative projects, such as the as Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) were initiated. These projects gave user rights to the beneficiaries, who were given the project on "*patta*" basis. PIM was started

in most of the states where farmers formed Water Users' Associations (WUAs). These bodies entered into an agreement with government departments, and functions related to planning, distribution and tax collection were entrusted to the beneficiaries themselves. These community-based projects promised the involvement of people at every stage of planning, right from designing to the implementation stage. In actual practice, however, they were not truly participatory. The local planning was indeed elaborate, but was done entirely by outside experts, both government as well as NGOs. Today, people's participation is at the core of panchayat-level planning (Kanan: 2001: 10).

Local planning involves many stages. Informal meetings are organised at the ward level or village level to orient the people and get them involved in the planning process. This is referred to as environment building and is important as it builds the foundation for all future activities. This is followed by situational analysis, where the community analyses the village situation. Resource mapping, and other Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises, household surveys, etc. form important activities during this phase. The next step is community problem analysis and prioritisation. In this process, individuals and groups come up with their specific problems and needs, ensuring full participation of all the groups (class, caste and gender), and synthesising specific needs. These needs are prioritised and then village or ward-level plans are prepared that detail out the project, which needs to be undertaken in order to solve problems as perceived by people. The various ward/ village level plans are synthesised to prepare a GP level plan. After the panchayat-level plan is prepared, it is presented before the people in the gram sabha meeting, which is chaired by the GP president. The gram sabha approves the village plan and then it is the responsibility of the GP to mobilise internal resources (as per the plan) as well as other resources, including funds from the state and central government, to implement it. It has been found that during the planning process as well as implementation, the gram sabha keeps an eye on the gram panchayat. Even an ordinary villager feels part of the village development plan. Local planning thus facilitates the process of strengthening the gram sabha by enhancing people's participation in gram sabha meetings.

4.6.1.3 Local resource mobilisation

Historically, planning was undertaken as a means of resource allocation at the macro level. The experience otherwise shows that if resources are available from outside, then these are not utilised properly. The general attitude is that anything that comes for free is not worth worrying about. By turning local planning into an exercise of mobilising local resources, technology, knowledge, wisdom, organisation and skills, a sense of ownership develops amongst the community members.

Local plans pay close attention to the possibilities of mobilising resources from within the village for a particular project. When resource mobilisation plans are integrated with the local plan, villagers are able to exercise greater control over the resources. Box 4.1 gives an example of resource mobilisation by a GP in order to undertake development programmes as planned by the community.

Participatory planning and resource mobilization in Jamunia Tank Panchayat

Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat is located at a distance of about 40 km from Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. The gram panchayat is headed by a woman belonging to the backward caste. It has 12 panchs (ward members), out of which four are women. Samarthan, a partner of PRIA, started the process of local planning in Jamunia Tank Gram Panchayat in 1995. It began with rapport building

and awareness generation. Orientation programmes were organised to create an understanding of Panchayati Raj and local planning among PRI members and the community. Meetings were organised at the ward level to create awareness and orient people. This was followed by community problem analysis. Women and dalits were encouraged to identify their problems and needs. In the gram sabha meeting, the problems and needs as felt by the people were identified and prioritised and a plan was prepared taking into account available and possible resources. The gram panchayat was asked to build linkages (outside the community) to tap resources. The people, especially women belonging to the SC community who were directly affected by this problem, articulated the need for a village drain. The gram sabha had prepared a plan for the construction of the drain and had prepared a budget of Rs. 93,000 for the same. The gram panchayat was asked to mobilise the resources. The community volunteered to contribute Rs. 50,000 collected on the basis of landholdings. Those who could not give money would contribute labour. The gram panchayat thereafter implemented the plan, and also negotiated with the state government to arrange for the rest of the money. Every member of the gram sabha had a sense of owning the project. They constantly monitored and evaluated the work. People organised themselves into groups such as mahila mandals, youth groups, etc.

(Source: Manoj Rai, Et al (2001) The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective. New Delhi. Samskriti)

4.6.1.4 Ensuring accountability

Local planning can be a framework for monitoring the work of elected representatives and ensuring accountability. Participatory planning involves people in the process of problem identification, prioritisation and plan preparation. The whole process develops a framework of agreement within the gram sabha about development priorities. Villagers sit together to prioritise the community problems, prepare a list of resources available and ask the GP to implement the plan. The phase of plan implementation provides a more rigorous framework for the panchayat to be accountable to the gram sabha. A plan allows the villagers to scrutinise and judge the GP's performance. When it is publicly displayed, the ordinary citizens are able to judge what the elected representatives (the gram panchayat) have done. (Rai: 2001).

The following table reveals important aspects of local level development planning

Aspects	Planning at micro level
Goals	Resourcefulness and well being of people in the village
People	People as subject of development
Professionals and Planners	Role of professionals is catalytic Emphasis is on community
Key Actors	Community, NGOs, CBOs, and VOs
Technology	Appropriate technology brought out from local knowledge and skill
Information	Local knowledge is information and integration of knowledge is done through a transparent process
Administration	Decentralisation and devolution of decision-making process
Enterprises	Visible size of enterprises on sustainable basis
Norms	Norms are formed according to the prevailing situation
Scale	Scale is smaller, i.e., village or gram panchayat

(Source: Kavita Kanan (2001): Micro Planning: A Conceptual Frame Work. Participation & Governance.Vol. 7 No 22. November. p 8)

4.6.2 Initiatives facilitating people's participation in planning

4.6.2.1 NGO Initiatives

NGOs have attempted community-based planning mechanism in a more realistic and practical manner. Here, an attempt made by PRIA and partners to initiate the micro planning process at the village level is worth mentioning. These local planning exercises were carried out at the GP level with the participation of villagers and the organisations working in the area. The main objectives behind these exercises were as follows.

- To develop, operationalise and facilitate a concrete model of bottom-up planning with GPs, where people act as their own agents of development. The local plans will address the actual needs of the people.
- The panchayat plan should be made for economic development and social justice - through optimal utilisation of scarce resources in different production sectors, with special emphasis on women, poor and people belonging to the backward classes.
- To serve as a hands-on training session for the villagers, panchayat representatives as well as local NGO functionaries with regard to the process of local planning.

The role of NGOs, therefore, is primarily to stimulate the process and take up activities such as training of GP members, publication of simplified materials on how to do PRA, publication of manuals on local planning, setting up of Panchayat Resource Centres, etc. They also have a significant role in providing simplified models of planning that can be taken up by the government to scale-up the planning process as described below.

Participatory local planning in Kehar Gram Panchayat, Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh

Kehar Gram Panchayat, in Sadar block comprises of six revenue villages and 11 wards; four of them headed by women members. The pradhan or chairperson of the gram panchayat is male.

PRIA, in collaboration with a local NGO, Rural Technology and Development Centre (RTDC), initiated efforts to facilitate local planning processes in Kehar Panchayat. The intervention began with the formation and training of a core team of eight members, which comprised of PRIA and RTDC staff as well as some gram panchayat members and members of Nehru Yuva Mandal. A gram panchayat meeting specially called for the purpose of local planning followed this. The pradhan who is also the Chief Executive of RTDC convened this. The gram panchayat members were oriented about the purpose, need, importance and relevance of carrying out local planning in the panchayat with peoples' participation. A team of volunteers was identified from all the wards, who were subsequently trained in and oriented to local planning. Educational material in the form of posters and write-ups was also prepared. Organising ward-level meetings in each of the wards initiated the local planning process. These meetings were organised by the volunteers and convened by the pradhan along with the ward member. Members of the core team were also present to facilitate the process. All these activities were a part of the first phase of local planning, which formed the basis for subsequent activities.

This was followed by situational analysis where village-level data was collected and analysed. This was done by household surveys as well as resource mapping To identify people's problems at the ward level, ward meetings were held in each of the 11 wards. The problems as identified by the people were noted down at the individual, village and panchayat levels, and then prioritised. After this in the same meeting, plans were formulated on the basis of priority identified by the people at the village level to begin with. The planning process included identification of activities to be carried out in order to overcome the problems identified by the people, materials and money required and distribution of responsibilities. This exercise was carried out in each ward.

In order to finalise and implement the plans, Village Development Committees (VDCs) were formed. The VDC was given the responsibility of formulating a detailed action plan for its village. The plans,

finalised by all the VDCs were submitted to the gram panchayat and the Panchayat Development Committee (PDC). It was the responsibility of the PDC to consolidate all the village plans to formulate the gram panchayat plan, which was finally approved by members of the gram sabha.

The whole process of planning took almost a year (1996-1997). The priorities included drinking water, roads, a veterinary hospital, Ayurvedic dispensary, etc. The plan was worth Rs. 1.17 million. The gram panchayat's own resources were meagre. The community contributed Rs. 0.19 million. The plan was submitted to the district administration as well as the state government. However, in the beginning the administration was not willing to listen. When the gram panchayat met with the state and central governments, the district administration was directed to help the gram panchayat. The district administration provided a sum of Rs. 65,000. Line departments were persuaded to implement parts of the plan like constructing the link road, providing drinking water facilities, etc. The gram panchayat used money allocated to it under different schemes like JRY, TFC grants, DP, LOP and other state/central schemes.

As the gram sabha was involved in the planning process from the beginning, it kept pressurising the gram panchayat members for the implementation of the plan. The gram panchayat in turn was under tremendous pressure to mobilise resources and to negotiate with the block, district and other governments for the plan's implementation. After a lot of negotiation and discussion between the gram panchayat and the administration, the gram panchayat is implementing the plan with the help of community contribution and resources from the government.

(Source: Manoj Rai, Et al (2001) The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective. New Delhi. Samskriti)

PRIA and its partners in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Orissa have undertaken participatory planning initiatives. The process brought to the fore, multiple issues and concerns related to the functioning of PRIs, role of government machinery, voluntary organisations and the community.

Participatory Local-Planning Process Facilitated by NGO

PHASE: I Preparation by NGO	PHASE: II Action at Village Level and facilitation by NGO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of unit/area of planning. 	Ward level meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of core team of NGO members and a team of volunteers: Orientation and training, capacity building. 	Identification of ward level problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building alliances with local CSOs 	Prioritisation of needs at ward level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating and persuasion 	Aggregation and synthesis of ward level needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of stakeholders and involving them in planning process. 	Identification of resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting government support 	Preparation of plan by gram panchayat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building trust: information dissemination, repeated interaction 	Approval of plan in gram sabha meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving the common people 	Technical consultation by gram panchayat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough understanding of community problems and dynamics 	Operational plan preparation by gram panchayat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection and interpretation of data, Community problem analysis and prioritisation-identification of problems, 	Resource mobilization by gram panchayat/gram sabha

prioritising, identification of activities	
• Ready Core Team	
• Interaction with gram panchayat/gram sabha for initiation of village development local-plan	Implementation of plan

(Source: Manoj Rai, Et al (2001) The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective. New Delhi. Samskriti)

4.6.2.2 Initiatives of state- people's campaign for the ninth plan in Kerala

Kerala is perhaps the only state in the country where the government has given due recognition to the planning process with people's participation in the shape of the People's Campaign. This programme was formally inaugurated on August 17, 1996. More than a lakh people turned up for the training programmes and thirty lakh people all over the state participated in the special gram sabha and municipal ward meetings to discuss the planning issue.

The primary objective of the People's Campaign has been to motivate and empower local self-governments to take up the new challenge of development planning. It was sought to be achieved by mobilising people regardless of their political affiliations, religion, caste or gender to help the local governments in all stages of development planning from plan formulation and implementation to maintenance.

In order to give meaningful direction to the process of decentralisation, the Kerala government proposed to transfer 35 to 40 percent of the budget outlay to local bodies to help them prepare and implement their own need-based plans. The plan campaign had six distinct phases.

Phase I- Gram sabha/ward committees

In decentralised planning, the first step was to discuss the problems of development and identify local-level needs. This was to be done in gram sabhas. In order to facilitate proper gram sabhas, resource persons were trained at the state, district and local levels. After the inaugural function of the special gram sabhas, the participants were divided into 12 different groups to discuss various aspects related to 12 areas of local development. Trained resource persons facilitated the discussions. From each group one or two representatives were selected for participating in the development seminar that was to follow at the panchayat /municipality level.

Phase II- Development seminars

During the second phase, development seminars were conducted in all the local bodies. The discussions in these seminars were based on the 'Panchayat Development Report', which provided the necessary background information for sector-wise discussions based on the panchayat /municipality's socio-economic status. In the seminars, solutions for various problems identified in the gram sabhas/ward conventions were arrived at.

Phase III- Task forces

In the third phase, task forces were constituted for all sectors in order to convert the solutions suggested in the Development Seminar into projects/proposals in a format that would be

included in the plan. The task forces were to undertake a detailed review of the suggestions made at the seminar and prepare projects and schemes along with the necessary details such as technical cost, benefit, time frame, etc., as mandated by the State Planning Board.

Phase IV- Panchayat plan

The fourth phase of the campaign was to formulate the local bodies' plans.

Phase V- Annual plan of higher tiers

The fifth phase of the campaign was the integration of the local plans and formulation of block and district-level plans. The block and district panchayats also organised seminars to discuss their draft plans.

Phase VI: Plan appraisal

The sixth phase of the plan campaign was the appraisal of technical feasibility and financial viability of the projects and plans. Since the DPCs did not have sufficient technical expertise, Voluntary Technical Corps (VTCs) were formed for this purpose.

One of the positive outcomes of the campaign was the revitalisation of gram sabhas. As a result of the planning campaign, the people in the village came together to discuss their needs and priorities and on its basis, panchayat-level plans were made. The campaign helped in the process of mobilising a large number of people to attend gram sabha meetings and get involved in planning. This led to a feeling of optimism and created a positive attitude amongst the people replacing the hitherto indifferent and 'nothing will work' attitude of the people.

The campaign also provided some opportunities for the PRI members to do some work for their ward. This gave them a sense of satisfaction and enthused them to aim higher.

Besides Kerala, the government of Himachal Pradesh has also emphasised the need and importance of panchayat-level planning. Training on local planning is being provided to a select group of people in each block who will then facilitate the planning process in all the panchayats within the block. This group consists of block level officials, elected gram panchayat presidents and NGOs. In Andhra Pradesh, the state government proposes to plan for each habitation (67,505), by involving students and universities, in identifying infrastructure facilities or lack of it. This would be placed before the gram sabha, where it would be prioritised and sent for approval to the GP and the other two tiers. The co-ordination work would be done by the District Development Review Committees (DDRC)/DPC. Policy makers are now recognising the importance of training GP members to take up this task of aiding planning from 'below'.

Other than NGO and government initiatives, there are cases of elected panchayat bodies also getting involved in promoting bottom-up planning. One such instance is that of village-based people's planning carried out by Medinipur Zilla Parishad in West Bengal.

Village-based people's planning in West Bengal

Following its success in the Literacy Campaign, the Medinipur Zilla Parishad evolved a unique framework for the formulation of a village-based people's plan (VBPP) with the guidance and assistance of the State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development, Administrative Training Institute and Medinipur Planning and Development Society. Later, the Zilla Parishad in collaboration with IBRAD organised several training camps and workshops for panchayat and development functionaries, with a view to educating them on VBPP and also on agriculture and climate-based regional planning. The following steps were identified in the formulation of VBPP.

- Identification of a place for forum or discussion;
- Identification of problems and issues for discussion. Identification of local resources/assets through planning map;
- Formulation of problem solving measures through effective and efficient use of local resources/assets;
- Prioritisation of these measures;
- Programme formulation.

The Medinipur Zilla Parishad also brought out a pictorial booklet in Bengali containing necessary details regarding VBPP, such as collection of data, steps in planning, the role of various agencies and people in plan formulation, etc. The first step towards VBPP was the setting up of Ishwarchandra Janachetna Kendra for each gram sansad. The members of this centre include villagers or members of the gram sansad, teachers and students of literacy centres. Apart from development and planning, the centre also provided the forum for all discussions.

(Source: Manoj Rai, Et al (2001) The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective. New Delhi. Samskriti)

4.6.3 Issues in participatory local planning

From our hands-on experience in carrying out participatory planning with gram sabha and GP members, it has been realised that there are many issues or areas where greater emphasis needs to be given in order to achieve the goals.

Sustained participation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making and implementation of plans is an important area of concern. Their participation is usually dependent on positive planned interventions by say, voluntary organisations.

People have got so used to the top-down planning that they do not want to get involved in a process unless they see some direct gain from it. Furthermore, those people who already have access to resources and services try to control the participatory planning processes, which especially takes into account concerns of the poor and the marginalized.

Access to information and resources is an issue of concern, given the fact that the dominant castes or class controls it. In both cases, women have minimum access.

The process of participatory planning is intensive and it raises peoples' expectations. Since plan implementation is linked with the time-consuming process of administrative sanctions at the block and district levels, the results are usually delayed. This brings about a sense of frustration and apathy in the community.

Development activities at the panchayat level are focused around construction activities - something that gives publicity to the PRI members. Hardly any discussion takes place on other aspects of development, particularly those addressing the needs of women and

marginalized sections of society.

There is a multiplicity of organisations working for different kinds of development purposes at the village level - NGOs, community based organisations (women's groups, youth groups, farmers' associations), government line departments and above all, the elected GP that serves as an executive body of the electorate or the gram sabha. This has often provided a conflicting situation, with the GP being kept out of a number of development-related and other activities.

Lack of enabling conditions - Realistic local planning is still a distant dream. Though constitutional recognition has been accorded to the DPC, which will facilitate decentralised planning at the district level and below, favourable conditions have not yet been created.

Elected representatives as well as the gram sabha members have been assigned various functions including planning, but not much attention has been paid to capacity building or the available mechanisms to undertake planning and implementation.

Many of the GPs feel frustrated because of their inability to implement local plans. Their own village resources - both human and economic - are beyond their control. Control of development resources remains with local administrators and officials, who do not wish to share power with PRIs. The government and line departments are indifferent to GP demands.

There are certain contradictions in the existing planning process. According to Article 243-ZD, the DPC will prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole based on the consolidation of the plans prepared by the panchayats and municipalities. Under Article 243-G, panchayats prepare plans for economic development and social justice. As such, these plans should be treated as final, but when they get consolidated it becomes a 'draft' plan. Another contradiction is that the Constitution does not mention as to how the district plans will be integrated in the state plan. Theoretically, state plans could be prepared independently - totally ignoring the district draft plans. However, this goes against the very concept of planning from below. In our terms it would mean that the district plan prepared by the DPC under Article 243-ZD would have to be integrated into the state plan. The Ninth Plan, which was framed long after the 73rd and 74th Amendments and became effective along with the corresponding state acts, did not provide a clear operative statement on this issue.

State civil servants and politicians - ministers, MLAs and MPs dominate DPCs. Most states have set up DPCs, constitutionally mandated bodies that operate at the district level. The composition of the DPC and responsibilities do not vary greatly across states. The precise mandate of these bodies is often not clear beyond integrating district level urban and rural development plans.

4.6.3.1 Recommendations

Currently, panchayat-level plans are mostly prepared in those panchayats where NGOs are involved. The whole process involves a great deal of effort and time and it is not possible for NGOs to scale-up their facilitating roles in each and every GP. Local planning should become the people's agenda. Gram sabhas/gram panchayats and line departments need to be sensitised on the importance of local-planning processes. The unit of local-planning exercise should be the ward/village rather than the GP as a whole. The whole process of village-level planning also needs to be demystified. What is required is a packaging of local plans, which

can be replicated by non-experts. The planning process must discourage over dependence on funds from outside. The gram sabha should come forward and mobilise its own (natural, physical and human) resources. However, GPs need support from above as well. Government support in this direction is very crucial.

In the course of the last few years in developing participatory plans for panchayats, certain lessons have been derived. Based on the observations and problems faced during the participatory planning process and also during the implementation phase, a few suggestions are outlined below.

- At the panchayat and community level, in order to have effective participation of the people in the planning process, gram sabha meetings have to be held regularly and with the required quorum representing all sections of the community, including women, dalits and other backward classes. For this, first the meetings can be held at the ward or village level and then at the panchayat level. This will ensure participation of a much wider section of the community.
- Pictorial representation of the panchayat plan is to be displayed as a hoarding at the entrance to the panchayat or at a central place.
- In order to save time and energy for participatory planning, the panchayat along with gram sabha members should take the initiative to collect essential data from each ward and update it from time to time. This could be done through various participatory methods such as ward meetings.
- To ensure the inclusion of views and opinions of all sections of panchayat, smaller meetings at ward/village level can be organised for better attendance and participation so that the panchayat plan is more authentic and holistic.
- The data along with the various maps and drawings, list of beneficiaries, plan documents, budget, should be kept in a public place like a *panchayat ghar*, for everybody to see and refer to. Alternatively these documents could be kept in Panchayat Resource Centres or Village Information Centres set up for the purpose.
- For horizontal spread of participatory planning, exposure visits can be arranged for PRI representatives and other interested individuals to panchayats where participatory planning initiatives have taken place.
- District and block level *melas* can be organised by the voluntary agencies in collaboration with the block and district level administration to spread the concept of participatory planning.
- Orientation of NGOs and other community-based groups on participatory planning for the horizontal multiplication of the process.
- Capacity building of NGOs on the various planning techniques like PRA, people's conferences and other relevant methods. Also, building their capacities of facilitation and guidance to PRIs and community-based organisations.

- Village and block-level government officials can take the initiative in carrying out participatory planning in their panchayats and the assessment of their performance could be linked to the number of panchayat plans they have contributed to and the follow-up. These government officials can be made accountable to the GP.
- Incentives in the form of awards can be given to those government officials who have contributed in the preparation of people-centred plans.
- Government training institutes, who are providing training to elected panchayat members and concerned government staff, can include a course on the process of participatory planning in their study curriculum.
- States must be directed to constitute DPCs as per the constitutional provisions (Rai: 2001).

4.7 Summary

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts have suggested far reaching roles for PRIs in the arena of development planning for basic services provision, development programmes and area development. The Acts envisage that the shift towards localisation of development planning would result from greater citizen participation in the process. In this unit we began with a historical retrospective of decentralised planning in India to get an idea of how pragmatic requirements of 'good governance' led to a paradigmatic shift in approach to planning. We examined the constitutional provisions specifying the PRIs' roles in development planning. We also presented planning processes at each level of panchayats. We discussed District Panchayat Committees to help you understand the inter linkages between lower levels of planning with the state and national plans.

Planning for economic development and social justice is a mandated function of panchayats. However, due to the existing methods of working practices within the institutions and attitudes, no significant progress could take place. In order to make planning at the grass roots level a reality, it is essential that centrality be given to panchayats in working out details and in implementation of development programmes. Hence, in this unit we also discussed the importance of the PRIs' centrality in the planning for and implementation of specific centrally sponsored schemes that impinge upon its core functions. We focused on two specific programmes, namely NREGS and SSA to review in-depth the PRIs' role in their implementation.

An encouraging beginning has been made in carrying out participatory micro planning exercises at the ward and village level. Much of it has been undertaken with the initiatives and facilitation of NGOs. In this we have also highlighted the various facets of participatory local planning to help you understand the advantages of people's participation in local level planning; and learn about the issues in participatory local planning.

4.8 Glossary

- **Distributive Justice:** Distributive justice means that the gains from increased prosperity are distributed in an egalitarian manner across class, castes and gender in the society. This would cover policies to reduce disparities within a given society.
- **PURA:** Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas for creating rural wealth and prosperity. The model envisages a habitat designed to improve the quality of life in rural places and makes special suggestions to also remove urban congestion. Physical connectivity by providing roads, electronic connectivity by providing reliable communication network and knowledge connectivity by establishing professional institutions and vocational training centres will have to be done in an integrated way so that economic connectivity will emanate. Such a model of establishing a circular connectivity among the rural village complexes will accelerate the rural development process by empowerment.
- **Patta:** Land title deed

4.9 Required readings

- PRIA (2006) *Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in NREGS*. New Delhi. PRIA (unpublished report)
- PRIA (2006) *Role of Panchayat in Primary Education: Focus on Girl Child Education in the context of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*. New Delhi. PRIA (unpublished report)

4.10 Recommended for further reading

- Rai Manoj (Et al) (ED) (2001). *The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective*. New Delhi. Samskriti.
- Ramchandran V. (2006) *Planning at Grassroots level. An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five-Year plan. Report of the Expert group*. New Delhi. Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

4.11 Answers to check your progress

Check your progress I

1. Article 243 ZD states that there shall be constituted in every state at the district level a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.
2. 16 subjects/functions out of the 29 are related to the social sector, such as education, health, women and child development, social security and social welfare.

Check your progress II

1. Preparation of (a) A draft development plan, (b) Consolidation of panchayat plans, (c) Integration of resources (d) Integration with local resources (e) Rural urban integration (f) Capacity building for planning.
2. In the absence of a well functioning district planning machinery, taking decisions on the priorities of a district is often left to officials, guided by district development committees, which consist largely of elected representatives of legislatures and Members of Parliament and some nominated members, sometimes including elected representatives of panchayats.

4.12 References

- Kanan Kavita (2001): *Micro Planning: A Conceptual Frame Work. Participation & Governance*. Vol. 7 No 22. November.
- Mishra Kajri & Mishra Debiprasad (2000): *Visioning Local Planning and Governance: Post 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts*. Working Paper 143. Anand. Institute of Rural Management.

- Oommen M.A (2004): Basic Services, Functional assignments and Own revenue of Panchayats-Some Issues in Fiscal decentralization for the consideration of Twelfth Finance Commission in fincomindia.nic.in/speech/oommen.pdf
- PRIA (2006): *Role of Panchayat in Primary Education: Focus on Girl Child Education in the context of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Consolidation of Learnings 2005-2006.* Unpublished Study Report. PRIA. New Delhi
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- Rai Manoj (Et al) (ED) (2001). *The State of Panchayats. A Participatory Perspective.* New Delhi. Samskriti.
- Rajneesh Shalini (2002): *Rural Development through Democratic Decentralization.* New Delhi. Deep & Deep Publications.
- Ramchandran V. (2006) Planning at Grassroots level. *An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five-Year plan. Report of the Expert group.* New Delhi. Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Readings