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PRIA

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Micro Planning for Self Governance A Framework for Action

PRIs viewed as institutions of self-governance and not mere implementors of externally determined development programmes. People centred, bottom up comprehensive planning to be the basis of self-governance. Emphasis on active participation by women and other weaker sections in decision making so as to enhance their roles, status and leadership in local self-governance.

Promotion of transparency and accountability in governance through PRIs.

Why Micro Planning for Self-Governance?

The current top down approach to planning implies a disjunction between who plans and who implements and this has resulted in the failure of Planning. Micro planning in the context of PRI is necessary to remove the disjunction between decision making levels and the implementation levels and to make planning functional.

Why Micro Planning with PRIs?

Gram Panchayats are representative bodies at the base level of governance, with statutory functions and identity and decision-making frameworks. They can be held accountable to the people they represent through the statutory defined relationship with Gram Sabhas. Also, Gram Panchayat have a structured relationship with other levels of governance and officialdom which can enable them to negotiate and bargain in respect of processes of development outside their immediate area of jurisdiction/decision making.

Objective

To develop and operationalise a concrete model of bottom up planning with Gram Panchayats which demonstrates:

1. Direct improvements in the community through operational development on the ground, brought about by people acting as agents of their own development (involving a change in people's self-perception and self-image).
2. Changes in the demonstrated behavior patterns of institutions at the lower level, (e.g. Gram Sabha) and higher level (e.g. Panchayat Samities, Zilla Parishad, Government Departments) so as to have an impact at the community level, and
3. The need for shifts in policy which have an impact at the community level.

Micro Planning Tasks

1. Micro Planning Facilitators Teams

3 month orientation with the community in the area selected for micro-planning. Utilise to:

Build rapport, clarify the goals/objectives of mission, define the roles (who will contribute what) and arrive at a situational analysis (what is the existing situation) along with the community. This activity should also yield base-line information against which the impact of micro-planning can be evaluated.

Possible items for developing situational analysis:

Population--male/female, age-wise, sex-wise segregated, able bodied, disabled, life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, family size (occupational groups, income groups, caste groups etc.)

Source of income and livelihood (estimates for community rather than household); food/cash crops, livestock, cottage industry, fishery, skill levels, access to training/technology, common resources (forests, grazing, water) labour force participation (male/female).

Public Facilities:

Anganwadi, schools, health centres, public distribution outlets, storage, access roads (including condition of each facility: good, fair, non-functional).

Privately owned assets (capital used for production): tractors, milling machinery, shops, repair shops, produce processing facilities. The condition of such assets.

Functioning and capabilities of community members (different for male/female) Literacy, educational attainment, dropout rates

Health: Nutrition-malnutrition (indicators) levels {stunted, wasted, underweight, anemic}

Morbidity patters (illness, periodicity, seasonality) and public health (including sanitation) systems.

Drinking water--sources, control, access

Reproductive health care--female fertility, system of births, maternal mortality (causal chain)

Household/family system; joint, extended, nuclear

Customs, conventions, marriages caste, kinship, beliefs

Norms of behaviours

Gender: division of labour and roles for male/females

Access to services-health, education, clean water, sanitation, housing

Government schemes and programmes

Projects (sector wise, date started, date completed, status)

Institution (e.g. co-operative, types of assistance rendered, results)

Services (extension, child nutrition, mother's health)

Problems encountered in implementation

Impact

II. Workshop on Micro Planning with PRI (Gram Panchayat specific)

Start - at the end of the micro planning facilitators period of orientation with the community

Facilitated by-- Micro-planning facilitators team and Gram Panchayat

Design

Session 1 -- How would you like the community to be five years hence?

Brainstorming individually, specific, practical and realistic (concrete not abstract vision); organise/categorise the answers in small group discussion; and consensus after discussion in the whole group.

Session 2 -- What prevents the community from achieving its goals?

Small group discussion on problems/obstacles identification. Large groups discussion to determine why problems have not been solved till now? Root causes, interlinkages of process exposed leading to decisional statements/actionable causes.

Session 3 -- What can the people in the G.P. area do to overcome the problems? Within the next 15-18 months?

Individual brainstorming, followed by small group discussion on categorising the answers as per "common intent". Whole group discussion to arrive at strategic direction in which the community needs to move.

Session 4 -- What project/schemes can the Gram Panchayat undertake with local resources in view of (3) above?

Small group discussion-Feasibility, resources required, how to obtain them, past experience, conditions for success, linkages necessary and linkages available; large group discussion to review and select and establish anticipated accomplishment in quantifiable terms.

Session 5 -- Steps for implementing schemes/projects?

Who? Where? What? How?

Small groups to discuss and identify practical tasks and responsibility. Resources required how to mobilise! Seasonality.

Present to the large group.

Follow up by presentation before Gram Sabhas and other groups (e.g., Mahila Mandala) in order to inform and involve.

Wall charts depicting the schemes selected, their schedule for implementation, expected outcome, responsibility of implementors etc. displayed at prominent locations (including Panchayat Office). Pictorial imaging for illiterate members of community (explore possibility of using kala jathas/cultural groups using traditional local method of communication to inform and involve community).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Documentation: record keeping by facilitator as well as the implementors:

1. Wall chart depicting the GP's plan along with pictorial representation,
2. Complete report on the workshop proceedings prepared by facilitators and distributed to participants as well as to RSOs/VAs overseeing the micro-planning exercise.

3. Facilitators work book-base line data collected during orientation prior to workshop, record of follow up meetings and monitoring visits (including discussion, progress etc.)
4. GP's record of meetings on micro-planning and its review-enabling GP members to observe and evaluate their own progress.

Monitoring

Formal follow up meetings of Gram panchayats at 3 months intervals: information on each project is shared, the problems are reviewed and ways to overcome them are discussed leading to practical plan of implementation. The status of the project is also reflected in a Financial Report presented to the meeting.

Facilitators visits informal monthly discussions with elected representatives and other groups in order to encourage thinking on overcoming operational problems and to update information. Also, to conduct a physical progress check on the projects so that the facilitator can frame more specific questions pertaining to implementation.

Bi-annual meeting of Gram Sabhas to review the status and progress of project undertaken by the Gram Panchayats as part of micro-planning exercise.

Annual meeting of Gram Panchayats to evaluate and review the progress made and select new projects (initiate a new project cycle).

Evaluation of participation

In attempting to evaluate the results of the participatory process which underpin the micro-planning exercise, quantifiable methods are of very limited value: it is necessary to develop qualitative case-studies that bring out the patterns of participation within the Panchayats, consequent upon the micro-planning exercise and workshop. In other words, case studies could help establish whether the micro-planning workshop acted as a catalyst for development in the Panchayat it would be possible to compare results with other Panchayats or to compare activities which took place before micro planning was taken up within a Panchayat. Case studies could also help bring out whether the receptivity of the Panchayat community to external assistance had increased as a result of the micro-planning exercise (i.e., a Panchayat's ability to absorb and utilise, more meaningfully, the resources earmarked for developmental works in the Panchayat by the Zilla Parishad/government departments/centrally sponsored schemes). A qualitative analysis of the micro planning process could also reveal the factors, other than participatory process which influenced project implementation-extension services, external inputs, training etc. The activities taken up after the micro planning exercise could themselves, be analysed in terms of whether they were:

- i) The direct result of the micro planning exercise, or
- ii) Whether they existed as ideas identifies needs within the Panchayat earlier and were accelerated by the micro planning exercise,
- iii) Whether they were the unanticipated results of Micro planning.

Strategic Issues in Micro-planning with PRIs

1. Micro-planning with how many Panchayats?

While the Gram Panchayat has been designated as the unit of micro-planning, organisations may vary in their approach as to the number of Panchayats they would take up for micro-planning. Considerations which could govern the choice and number of Panchayats would include factors like:

- Whether the different Panchayats represent varied contexts—economic, social, cultural, geographic? In other words, is there going to be useful learning possible by taking up more than one Gram Panchayat?
- Whether the organisations own resources are utilised optimally in undertaking micro-planning with Panchayats? Taking up Panchayats without reference to resources and time required may lead to spreading the resources too thinly and may lead to ineffective microplanning.

2. Women Participation

Statutory provisions for reservations for women in Panchayat bodies notwithstanding, women have genuine difficulties in participating meaningfully in the socio-economic and political processes of change. The micro-planning exercise with panchayats has to evolve mechanisms to ensure that women are able to participate fully in decision making. The formal mechanism in this regard could take the shape of a minimum number of women as the quorum for a meeting/workshop, without which the meeting/workshop would have to be adjourned. Also, in order to enable women in the Panchayats/Gram Sabha to articulate their concerns, their needs and their proposals, enabling mechanism like women groups (e.g. Mahila Mandals) would have to be organised/mobilised. The team of facilitators would necessarily be critical to this process and it would therefore be necessary to equip them for this objective with appropriate gender sensitisation and analytical skills.

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