

CHAPTER 4 PLANNING

The 74th Constitutional amendment (1992) mandated constitution of District Planning Committee (DPC) in each district with a view to prepare village level micro plans and their consolidation into block level and district plans in a consultative, participative and bottom-up manner. The Planning Commission prescribed (November 2008) the Manual for District Planning which required activity mapping for the DPC by setting district priorities, leading the district visioning exercise and overseeing participatory planning process. It was important particularly from the point of view of increasing accountability of local governments and people, as well as optimally using resources. The vertical planning process was required to be transformed into a horizontal planning process, where local governments and other planning entities work together and explore the possibilities of planning together. Review of the process for preparation, approval and implementation of integrated district plans in Boudh district revealed the deficiencies as discussed under:

4.1 Delay in formation of District Planning Committee

The Government of Odisha enacted the required legislation to set up the DPCs in October 1998, i.e. after five years of the constitutional amendment. Even after passing of the Odisha DPC Act 1998, the Government took another two years in framing the Odisha DPC Rule 2000 (December 2000). The DPC was actually formed in Boudh district only in March 2003 which indicated that it took about 10 years in the process to form the DPC after enactment of the 74th amendment. Planning and Co-ordination Department stated (November 2012) that it would take some time since it was new system. However, the delay in formation of DPC ultimately deferred implementation of planning process in the district.

4.2 Inadequate number of meetings by DPC

The DPC met a total of six times during 2007-12, at the rate of one meeting every year and one additional meeting in 2010-11 only to approve Annual Plan. The Planning Commission commented that the DPC in the state performed as a Committee, met occasionally to hurriedly endorse without adequate appreciation to plan prepared by the Departmental officials. The position was still held relevant in case of DPC Boudh. As could be seen from the proceedings, the role of DPC was confined to approval of plan only and had never discussed the output and outcome of the programmes implemented in the district as per the plans approved in its annual meeting and the difficulties encountered during implementation.

The Collector stated (September 2012) that adequate number of DPC meetings was not held due to non-availability of Hon'ble Minister, who was the chairman of the DPC. The reply was not tenable as the meeting in absence of Minister could have been conducted by the members present in the meeting by choosing one from among themselves to preside over the meeting of the Committee.

4.3 Delay in approval of Annual Plan

The Annual District Plans were to be approved by March of the previous year so that the projects could be implemented from the commencement of the next financial year (April) after necessary scrutiny and approval by the Government. But as could be seen from the table below, there was delay even up to 229 days in approval of the Annual Plan reckoning 31 March of the year as the last date for approval of such plans.

Table 3: Delay in approval of Annual Plan

| Year | Date of approval | Delay (in days) |
|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2007-08 | 24.09.2007 | 176 |
| 2008-09 | 24.09.2008 | 176 |
| 2009-10 | 16.11.2009 | 229 |
| 2010-11 | 09.04.2010 | 08 |
| 2011-12 | 21.09.2010 | - |

(Source: Deputy Director, Planning)

Even though the plans were sanctioned late, the line departments went ahead incurring expenditure without approval. It clearly indicated that the plans were approved in the DPC only as a compliance measure rather than providing guidance and direction to the implementation of the various projects.

The Collector stated (September 2012) that the delay was due to non availability of the Hon'ble Chairman of the DPC during 2007-10.

4.4 Ineffective functioning of the DPMU

Though District Planning and Monitoring Unit (DPMU) acting as the secretariat to DPC was set up (June 2010) by P&C Department, it was not properly institutionalized due to absence of adequate staff and experts. It was to function with two cells, i.e. Planning Cell and Analytical Cell. The existing staff in District Planning & Statistical wing had constituted Planning Cell, but the Analytical Support Cell which was responsible for providing high-end analytical and conceptual support to the DPC was not functioning as the required expertise like economists, livelihood expert, town planning expert, regional planning expert, geographical specialist etc., were not posted. Though the P&C Department created such posts in September 2010, those were not filled up (November 2012) even after a lapse of 25 months of their creation. The Cell was required to prepare District Plan in convergence with other flagship programmes.

The P&C Department replied (November 2012) that since it was a time consuming process, the analytical cell of the DPMU might take some time for its operationalisation. In absence of technical support, district planning had been conducted by a private Technical Support Institute (TSI)⁵, who was discharging the works required to be done by the Planning Cell. However, convergence approach in planning was missing as the District Plan was prepared by the TSI.

⁵ Agricultural Finance Corporation Ltd. (2007-09), Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (2009-11), Multi Applied System (2011-12)

4.5 Awareness programme at GP level not conducted

Awareness programmes were to be conducted at GP level through wall print, film, folk media etc to enable Non-Government Organisations (NGO), Self Help Group (SHG) and the people at the gram panchayat level aware about planning process and ensure their participation in the planning process to identify issues to be included in planning. We could not find any document/evidence in the DPMU to the effect that the TSIs conducted such programmes.

The Collector in his reply stated (September 2012) that it was not a fact that the District Planning Authorities were not involved in generating awareness programme during planning process. However, we could not find any evidence in the DPMU that the TSIs conducted such awareness programmes thereby indicating that general people were not involved in district planning.

4.6 Non involvement of DPMU in planning process

Plans were to be prepared after taking stock of the needs/gaps at the GP and Block level and after prioritizing the issues/ projects. But, DPMU headed by the Dy. Director Planning of the district was not even aware of the *modus operandi* followed by the TSIs in identifying the issues and problems at the grass root levels and their prioritizations for inclusion in the district planning.

The Collector replied (September 2012) that the Dy. Director highlighted the purpose and process of planning in workshops but there was a meagre involvement in empirical/ analytical part of the district plan since the same was being prepared by TSIs. It clearly indicated that the DPMU, a body responsible for preparing plan for the entire district discharged its role by holding seminars and workshops only on planning without getting involved in the actual plan process.

4.7 Lack of convergence in planning

Comprehensive District Plan was required to fill the gaps in resources by convergence of resources from other flagship programmes of the State and the Centre. We noticed that an Integrated District Planning converging all developmental sectors was not prepared and vertical planning was still followed in lieu of horizontal planning as anticipated. Issue/sector wise planning based on needs, gaps, priorities and earmarking outlays by converging funds from different schemes for identical purposes was completely missing. Proposals for planning for other developmental sectors as prepared by individual line departments without any convergence approach were simply approved in the DPC in a routine manner as done earlier in sectoral i.e., vertical planning process.

4.8 Absence of village level planning under different sectors

Village level planning under different developmental sectors was completely absent. The district level plans were prepared without village level plans. Scrutiny revealed that no Village Health Action Plan required to be prepared by Village Health Sub Committee as per National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was prepared. In Education sector, the Village Education Committees did not prepare village education plan as required under SSA.

Similarly the District Agriculture Plan was devoid of planning at village levels involving farmers. In absence of village level planning, assurance on the district level planning addressing the actual needs of the people at the lowest level could not be derived.

There was a delay of 10 years in formation of District Planning Committee after it was mandated. The Committee also held meetings inadequately. Further, planning was found to be inadequate and ineffective as it failed to involve the citizens at Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti level in the planning process resulting in possible overlooking of the GP-level gaps and priorities. District planning lacked convergence with other schemes for integrated development of the district. The Planning Commission's efforts to prepare a horizontal plan involving all sectoral offices remained unachieved as the entire process was undertaken by Technical Support Institute (TSI) which was required to be done by the Planning Cell. In the above background, the efficacy on the functioning of the District Planning Committee could not be established.

Recommendations

The Government may take the following steps for effective planning process.

- Institution of District Planning Committee (DPC) should be strengthened with adequate posting of planning and professional persons.
- Participatory planning involving Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Blocks as envisaged by the Planning Commission should be ensured.