

Memorandum of Understanding
between
District Administration –Vaishali & UNICEF – Bihar
for
Decentralized Planning in Vaishali

Background :

De-centralized district planning has been made central to the planning process in the country by the planning commission. Report of the expert group on decentralized planning formed by the planning commission defines objective of decentralized planning as – *“The object of district planning is to arrive at an integrated, participatory coordinated idea of development of a local area. An essential step in this direction is to ensure that each Panchayat is treated as a planning unit and the ‘district plan’ is built up through consolidation and integration of these plans as well as by considering the development of the district as a whole.”* It also identifies a need to converge the planning being done by sectoral programmes. It mentions that – *“As now practiced, the concept of district planning is considerably diluted by the fact that most department schemes envisage in their guidelines, separate and self-contained ‘planning’ processes.”*

The expert group has further clarified that - *“In order that the plans at different levels are prepared as envisaged, there is need to strengthen the system comprising the machinery of planning and the process of consolidation of plans at the district level.”*

The Planning Commission has also come out with guidelines for preparing district plans and it defines district planning as – *“District Planning is the process of preparing an integrated plan for the local government sector in a district taking into account the resources (natural, human and financial) available including the sectoral activities and schemes assigned to the district level and below.”*

In line with above recommendations , District Administration –Vaishali and UNICEF have decided to initiate a process of integrated decentralized planning in the District to positively impact the lives of women and children in the district .

Village Planning in Vaishali :

In Vaishali, village planning process has been completed in 729 villages (out of 794 villages) of eight blocks. A total of 5412 youth volunteers have been trained and 663 Village Information Centres have been established. Nearly 133 Panchayat Support Groups have been formed so far. As a result of this process following gains (vis a vis challenges in decentralized planning) have been made :

- A strong network of NGOs is present in the district who have a sound understanding of decentralized planning process and necessary skills to facilitate a similar process at grassroots level

- A resource group of approximately 40 facilitators per block has been developed who can anchor and facilitate such a process at village level.
- A network of youth volunteers having understanding of development issues and willing to participate and contribute in development of their villages
- Village plans are available in these villages which mainly focus on 16 indicators related with child and woman well-being. These could be used as starting point for a more comprehensive planning process, including other schemes and programmes.
- The block and district level functionaries have been involved in the process and as a result have been sensitized towards the usefulness of decentralized planning process.

Thus, the ground prepared by village planning process provides an excellent opportunity to take decentralized planning to another level in the district with many of the challenges either wholly or partially addressed already.

Outputs of Decentralized Planning Initiative :

Final outputs of the present decentralized planning initiative are envisaged as follows :

- Village / Gram Panchayat plan prepared as per decentralized planning process suggested under BRGF and Planning Commission, Government of India
- Consolidated District Plan formulated with District Vision
- Village volunteers / panchayat representatives identified in each village to follow up on action plans and monitor key results
- Village Information Center in each village with information on important schemes, IEC materials etc.
- Transparency in government functioning at the community level ensured through Village Information Board on key results and funds received / utilised in the Village
- Gram Panchayat Plan integrated in the GP/Block Plans
- The prepared plans linked with the concerned departments for action

Strategy for Decentralized Planning

- i. Formation of a task force at district level to coordinate decentralized planning
- ii. Formation of a "District Planning and Monitoring Cell" (DPMC) in DM's office to provide technical support to the process and quality assurance and preparing block and district plans. Technical and financial support to be provided by UNICEF for establishing and strengthening this cell. District Planning Officer would be responsible for managing the cell. District planning and monitoring cell would also take up the monitoring of flagship schemes to improve implementation in the longer run.
- iii. Involvement of NGOs having capacities in decentralized planning for facilitating the Panchayat led planning process at panchayat / block level. For this, NGOs who have experience of decentralized planning process may be identified and partnered with. These NGOs will provide resource persons who would visit the villages in designated blocks, and help Panchayats in preparing the plans.

- iv. Panchayat representatives will lead the process at village level and ensure involvement of grassroots level government functionaries like – ANM, AWW, Panchayat Secretaries, School Teacher, Rojgar Mitra, Nyay Mitra, ASHA, and other groups like SHGs, etc., for developing the plan.
- v. Accessing resources available at district level from sectoral flagship schemes (BRGF, NRHM, SSA, TSC, ICDS, NREGS, etc.) for planning and IEC to fund the facilitation of decentralized planning process by NGOs.
- vi. Involvement of PRI structures at panchayat, block (panchayat samiti) and district (Zila Parishad- DPC) level to suggest modifications in the plans

Role of UNICEF :

- Identifying and placing three consultants in the “District Planning and Monitoring Cell” (DPMC) for providing technical support to the process of decentralized planning and helping in monitoring the implementation of flagship schemes
- Meeting the cost of these consultants including travel for next three years
- Meeting the partial running costs like stationery etc. for next three years
- Providing necessary equipment (computers, stationery, etc.) and furniture for making the cell functional
- Helping in identifying the NGOs who have the capacities to undertake decentralized planning

Role of District Administration :

- Formation of task force to monitor the implementation and progress
- Providing space in DM’s office for establishing the “District Planning and Monitoring Cell” (DPMC)
- Operationalising the necessary mechanisms as suggested in the proposal to access the resources available under flagship schemes for funding the decentralized planning facilitation process
- NGO selection and partnership management

District Administration, Vaishali, in partnership with UNICEF have agreed to initiate this integrated approach to decentralized planning, for the sustainable and holistic development of the district, with particular emphasis on women and children. This builds on the past success of village planning.


This initiative aims to demonstrate a working model of integrated and sustainable development in Vaishali, based on the process of Decentralized Planning.

The District Administration and UNICEF jointly agree to implement process of decentralized planning for a period of three years, 2008 – 2010. Specific activities, as

outlined in the agreed proposal, shall be undertaken by District Administration and UNICEF. The details of the process have been shared with the State Government (Development Commissioner of Bihar) and assurance has been provided by state to support the process wherever needed.

The District Administration – Vaishali and UNICEF hereby affirm to make the initiative in Vaishali a success.

This MOU is being signed in presence of Sri S. Vijayaraghavan, Development Commissioner, Bihar.


Dr. Pratima Varma
District Magistrate -Vaishali


Bijaya Rajbhandari
UNICEF Representative for Bihar

Signed on : 9th August, 2008