

Need for Capacity Requirements for Preparation of District Planning

Dr.R.Aruna Jayamani¹, Dr.R.Chinnadurai²

¹ Assistant Professor, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad

² Associate Professor, , National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad

How to cite this article: R.Aruna Jayamani, R.Chinnadurai (2024) Need for Capacity Requirements for Preparation of District Planning, 44(3), 1177-1182

ABSTRACT

District planning in India is a vital process that aims to promote balanced regional development, ensure efficient use of resources, and address the unique needs of each district. However, the effectiveness of district planning largely depends on the capacity of various stakeholders involved, including local governments, administrative bodies, and community organizations. District planning capacity building faces challenges due to limited resources, lack of political will, and inadequate training opportunities. This paper highlights the importance of capacity requirements necessary for successful district planning in India.

Key Words- Decentralization, District Planning and capacity building

INTRODUCTION

District planning in India is a process that aims to promote balanced and sustainable development at the district level by addressing local needs and priorities. It involves formulating plans that integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives to ensure the holistic development of a district. District planning acts as a bridge between grassroots-level planning (village and block levels) and state or national-level planning, ensuring that local aspirations and challenges are taken into account in the broader development framework. It empowers local governments, focuses on addressing marginalized groups, and incorporates environmental considerations to ensure sustainable resource use and climate change resilience. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to India's Constitution mandate Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies as decentralized governance units. District Planning Committees (DPCs) consolidate plans from Panchayats and Municipalities into a comprehensive plan, while state governments provide guidance, financial support, and technical expertise. The plan involves participatory approaches, technology use, capacity building, and innovative financing to ensure inclusive and reflective planning, enhance skills, and mobilize resources for district development, utilizing digital tools, GIS, and data analytics. Capacity requirements are foundational for effective district planning in India. Strengthening capacities across human resources, institutions, data management, financial planning, and community engagement is crucial to create plans that are realistic, sustainable, and aligned with local needs. These requirements include effective resource management, data collection and analysis, stakeholder engagement, coordination and collaboration, technical expertise, monitoring and evaluation, adaptability and innovation, legal and regulatory understanding, sustainability and environmental considerations, and institutional strengthening. Strengthening capacities across human resources, institutions, data management, financial planning, and community engagement is crucial to create plans that are realistic, sustainable, and aligned with local needs. Addressing these capacity gaps will lead to more effective, inclusive, and resilient district planning that can drive balanced regional development and improve the quality of life for citizens.

District Planning

“District Planning is the process of preparing an integrated plan for the Local Government in a District taking into account the resources available and covering the sectoral activities and schemes assigned to the district and below through local governments in the state.” Decentralised District Planning comprises of different planning units comprising district panchayat, block panchayat and village panchayat, municipalities, line departments and

parastatals would prepare a plan for execution of each of their functions and responsibilities after consultations with people.

The main aim 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 at any level or Municipality 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 is a two-way interactive exercise, the district being viewed as a convenient local area. As now practised, 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.

Need of the Study

It is a matter of concern that even after the lapse of 25 years since the amendments were made, decentralised planning is yet to become effective in the country. While most states carried out amendments of their respective state acts in conformation of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, the implementation of the provisions was not uniform. In all the states DPCs were formed according to the act but the functioning of DPC and preparing of development plans are negligible. Many reports make the mention on the spirit of decentralization in planning has not been reflected in the district planning. The present study was examined the capacity requirement in the context of district planning in preparation of district planning. It also tried to bring workable strategies for effective preparation and functioning of the DPCs.

Decentralised Planning Studies – findings

There are a number of studies conducted at national and local levels, concentrating on decentralised planning and the resultant developmental activities in the state.

B.P.S. Bhadouria expresses his views on decentralisation. To him, decentralised planning enables better perceptions of local needs, provides the rationale for taking planning to the grass root levels, ensures effective participation of the people makes better informed decision making possible, leads to a better exploitation of local resources and potentials, aims at better co-ordination & integration among programmers & create greater awareness pertaining to their well-being and welfare in general. He suggests a combination of "top down" and "bottom up" planning process for establishing, receiving and delivery mechanism at the local, regional levels to meet the needs of masses and thereby reinforcing national and indigenous capability towards self-reliance.

Inamdar and Kashire made an attempt to examine the nature and process of district planning in Maharashtra State, through a case study of one district planning process adopted in Maharashtra state, deviates much from the prescribed model in the state, which facilitates co-ordination and participation to a great extent. They remark that the gap between theory and practice has adversely affected the scientific nature of planning process in the state. The authors were not impressive with regard to the popular participation.

Lack of scientific approach towards district planning was considered as an important feature of the district planning system in Gujarat. Abdul Aziz tries to evaluate the decentralised planning experience of Karnataka after the implementation of Karnataka Zila Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1985. The author is impressed by the mechanism created by panchayat raj institutions to allow the people to participate in the planning process and provisions for inter-departmental co-ordination, reduction in the misidentification of funds by them, effective utilities etc:-

The study also throws light on the new institutional framework occurred due to the implementation of decentralised planning, and the resultant desirable changes in the rural areas particularly in the housing, education and health facilities of the villages studied. The major conclusions he derived are many of the districts are dissatisfied with the present criterion of allocation of district plan fund, as it was allocated without giving a better scope for Zilla Parishad in handling the financial resources for the development of the district, heavy electricity and non-plan expenditure calls for the development work of Mandal Panchayat is hampered by limited and inexperienced staff in the office, failure to give sufficient attention to gram sabha at village level which is the bedrock decentralised planning, at grassroots level.

Studies connected with the Planning Commission's report on district planning (by the Working Group on District Planning headed by C.H. Hanumantha Rao May 1984), brought out the fact that planning from below was undermined by different streams of funding the district plan. As States had to prepare their annual plans within

the framework prescribed by the government of India, they, in turn, prescribed rigid guidelines, which left little scope for flexibility to District Development Councils in preparation of their annual plans. Substantial funds were also retained at the State level and schemes were formulated by sectoral departments without much consultation with the District Development Council. The Working Group recommended the following steps to achieve the objective of meaningful district planning:

- For good district planning, functions, powers and finances need to be decentralized. States should outline the sharing of functions with districts.
- Each district plan must reflect the basic objectives of the national plan and the divisible plan outlay ought to be distributed to districts on the basis of population, area and level of development.
- District Planning Bodies consisting of a Chairman, Member-Secretary and about fifty members, in which the Collector is the Chief Co-ordinator should be set up.
- The District Planning body should be assisted by a Chief Planning Officer assisted by Block level planning officers and technical experts from various disciplines

The main reasons for the failure of decentralised planning and development of economy are attributed to three main reasons by Hanumanth Rao. The cause he specified are:-

- 1). Exploitation of the benefits which are meant for poor people in the rural area by the rural elites in the local self-government.
- 2) The non-congenial impact of Social-structure and property relations existing in the country, on the rural people.
- 3) Political unwillingness of the state to decentralise the power to pass it to the lower level. These factors make the process of decentralisation difficult and painful in almost all states of India. So the author strongly recommends for the removal of these factors at any cost.

Decentralised Planning Priority Economic Issues by Rao V.M (1989) has indicated that decentralized planning in India is still in the preliminary stages of experimentation. He explained the issues of planning in the areas like planning for growth, planning for needs and promotion of people's participation.

Decentralization of Planning: Need of the hour Rama Shankar Singh,(1990) analyzed the need for decentralized planning and suggested for implementing various social welfare schemes carefully and efficiently, decentralized planning in the district level is needed. The process of removal of poverty and eradication of unemployment is to be necessarily speeded up. He concluded that all efforts are needed to be directed towards achieving these goals for which the administrative machinery, the local government, institutions and the leaders of local society are needed to be brought together on planning.

People's Plan of Kerala Surendran, (1997) - examined the three tier magnitudes of the people's plan of Kerala with Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat. He suggested the integration of the political will of the different parties is a primary requirement for the success of the people's plan and people have to ignore their differences, whatever it may be, and extend their support to the development issues.

Status and Functioning of District Planning Committees in India, PRIA (2009) - District planning can be successful only when it is owned up to by all the stakeholders – both people and planners alike. Hence, all round awareness and education is a necessary precondition to make it effective. The larger purpose of integrated planning can also be derailed by the people themselves, who do not take into account the larger regional picture and pursue partisan individual interests. Thus prior to the planning exercise, the people also need to be oriented towards holistic planning with a regional perspective.

The detailed review of literature has enabled the researcher to conceptualise the research problem and understand the process and preparation of District Planning across the country. It is found that across India, the active participation of DPC members, sectoral departments and stakeholders in the process of preparation of District planning is not seen so significantly. It is to be noted that, a good number of studies are made on importance of decentralized planning in general. But there are very few studies on the aspects of preparation of integrated District plans and role of DPCs. Hence, it is worthwhile to take up a study on the Examination of the Reasons for the failure to Prepare District Plans with a integrated perspective. This would certainly enrich the existing body of knowledge on Decentralized Planning at grass root level

Design of the Study - The study was conducted in Nine states, It covered members from District Planning Committees (DPCs) from 9 districts. Field data were collected through personal interview interacting with the

DPC members. The study also collected required data on perception of people through semi-structured interview schedule. The study also collected People's satisfaction on prepared district plan and status of inclusion of projected needs in GP plans and their integration in to district plan. Further, people opinion were collected through focused group discussion and presented to strengthen the data description. Sectoral department officers, special invitees of DPCs and officials of ZPs were also involved in discussion for collection of particulars related to sectoral planning.

Educational Qualification required or not to become member of DPC

Response	Total
Yes	76.1
No	23.9
Total	100

The table present data of responses related to 'whether specific educational qualification required or not' to become member of DPC. In such cases, suggestions on the type and level of qualification required for the DPC members also presented and discussed.

The responses reflect that, all the respondents from Jharkhand, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal reported positively to fix minimum educational qualification as eligibility criteria to become member of the DPC. Same views were supported by 56.3% from Kerala and above 70% from the states of MP, Punjab, Rajasthan and 46.2% from UP. The proposal was rejected by around 44% in Kerala, 27% in MP, 25% from Punjab, 54% from UP and 27.3% from Rajasthan. There were significant percentage of study population suggested to have minimum education and experience.

Undergone training on the role of DPC member

Response	Total
Yes	36.3
No	63.7
Total	100

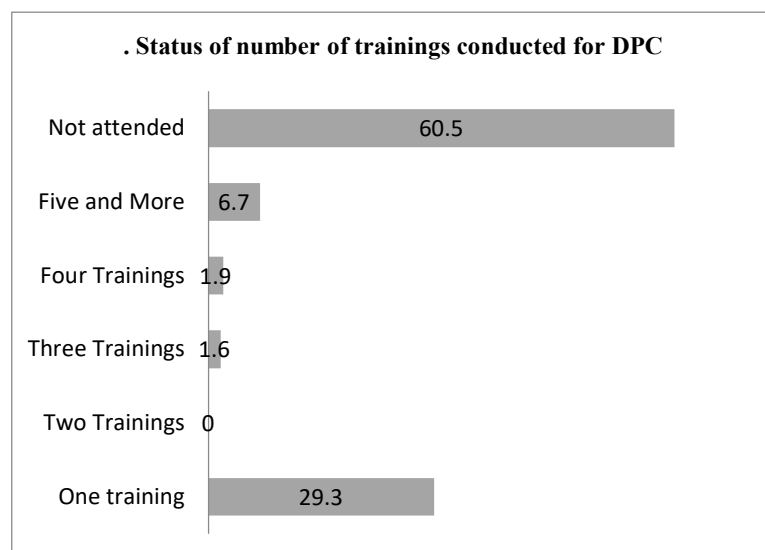
The data describes the status of Trainings attended by the sample respondents as members of DPC. On aggregate, only 36.3% agreed on attending trainings related to district Planning. This training is in the context of orienting the DPC members on their functional responsibility and other constitutional provisions role clarity.

As a member of DPC attended Capacity building Programmes - The data deals with the question related to DPC member participation in capacity development programmes. It consists of long duration trainings, workshops, interactions, exposure visits and Planning related skill development programmes conducted by State/Central government institutions. According to the views of all the members were attended capacity building programmes in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In total around 40% people were agreed their participation in the capacity building related Programmes. But, 60 % people have not attended. It was reported in Jharkhand and West Bengal all the members were not attended trainings. The states like Punjab and UP more than 78% people have not attended any Training. Karnataka also shows majority members i.e. 66.7%, 42.3% in MP and 45.5% in Rajasthan responded as not attended trainings on planning skills.

Status of number of trainings conducted for DPC

The data represents on number of trainings attended by the sample respondents which reflects, 29.3% respondents. The remaining respondents who attended training reported around 1.6% for three trainings, around 2% have attended four trainings and 6.7% mainly from Kerala attended five and more trainings. It is concluded; majority members attended one training on orientation on PRIs and DPC role.

Duration of Trainings - The



duration of training attended by DPC members shows that 60.5% of the respondents altogether reported for one day training attended. Around 11.3% respondents have attended two days training and very few only reported attended for five days training programme.

Usefulness of the trainings - The usefulness of the trainings based on the views of members who have attended trainings. Overall views of 23.4% majority from Kerala reported excellent and much useful for their contribution to the district planning and understanding about the planning process. There were 18.5%, majority from Tamil Nadu rated the training as very good. 56.5% majority from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and UP rated trainings attended by them were good. It reflects trainings and other related capacity building programmes played vital role in increasing level of contribution of the members in terms of ideas and other functional delivery.

It is understood only 7.4% of respondents were covered under national level capacity building institutions. There were 43.5% respondents majority from Karnataka, Kerala and UP attended trainings in state level training institutions and other networking institutions. Majority people i.e. 49.2% have attended training Programmes conducted by district training institutions. The majority respondents from all the states suggested to conduct more number of training programmes to build the capacity of the DPCs as requested by (91.4%) representing from all the states.

Suggestions for Capacity Building

- ❖ As it has been reported by various studies of similar in nature and also from the findings of present study reported need for capacity building for the members to increase the domain knowledge and relevant planning skills for effective participation and contribution for better district plan.
- ❖ It was reported by the majority of the elected members, District planning is a massive exercise which needs, not only domain knowledge and also skills on how to plan for development of the district. The both knowledge and skills are lacking to the majority of the elected members which are not mandatory requirement for contesting in the election at various levels of PRIs.
- ❖ In India predominantly rural areas which rely on agricultural and sectoral departments and also agro based rural industries and service sectors. The skills on identifying the problems, potentials, strategies, projects and budgeting based on the local resources and various funding sources is posing enormous skill requirements for the people who are involved in district plan preparation.
- ❖ In this context there is dire need to conduct a series of capacity building trainings to the DPC members by the regional, state level and national level capacity building institutions specifically meant for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

References

1. Report of the committee of Panchayat Raj Institution (Chairman Ashok Mehta) Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Government of India, New Delhi 1978)
2. GOI, 1984/85 Report of the Working Group on District Planning (Under the chairmanship of C.H. Hanumantha Rao) Planning Commission, New Delhi)
3. GOI/1986 BGVK Rao Committee, 1985, The Committee was jointly set up by the planning commission and department of rural development, under the chairmanship of GVK Rao.
4. Anil Kumar Jain, *Economic Planning in India*. Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi 1986
5. Sarup Anand, Brahme Sulabha, *Planning for the Millions*, Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi, 1989
6. B.P.S. Bhadouria (ed) *Decentralised Planning for Development in India*, common wealth publishers, New Delhi, 1998.
7. N.R, and Kashire, V.K., *District Planning in India, A Case Study of Maharashtra*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1986.
8. Aziz, Abdul, Charles Nelson and Davendre Babu, "Power to the People: The Karnataka Experience", in Abdul Aziz and David Arnold (ed.) *Decentralised Governance in Asian Countries*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996.
9. Cheema G.S and Rondinelli D.A. *Decentralisation and Development Policy in Developing Countries*. Sage Publications. New Delhi. 1983 P. 81

10. B. S. Bharghava and N. Shivanna, “Administrative Innovations at the grassroots: The Case of Middle tier in the Panchayat Raj System of Karnataka.” *ISDA Journal*, Quarterly Journal of Institute for the Study of Developing Areas, Trivandrum, Vol. 2 (2) April-June, 1992, pp. 99-138.