DECENTRALISED PLANNING USING PLAN PLUS

State Planning Commission
1st July 2013

Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission

The State Planning Commission was constituted in Tamil Nadu on 25th May 1971 under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Chief Minister as an Advisory body to make recommendations to the Government on various matters pertaining to the development of the State. The Chairman of the Commission is assisted by a team of Members, Consisting of Vice Chairman, Full Time Member & Part Time Members who are experts in various fields. The Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Planning, Development and Special Initiatives and the Principal Secretary to Government, Finance Department are the ex-officio members. The Member Secretary is responsible for administration in the Commission.

The Commission has the following technical divisions:

1. Agricultural Policy and Planning
2. Industries, Power and Transport
3. Land Use
4. Education and Employment
5. Health and Social Welfare
6. District Planning and Rural Development
7. Plan Co-ordination.

Main activities of SPC:

The major functions of the State Planning Commission are as follows:

1. Preparation of Five Year and Annual Plans based on the policies and priorities of the Government;
2. Undertake Mid Term review of the Five Year Plan, other special reviews on the Economy and advise the Government on appropriate modification and restructuring of the schemes;
3. Monitor development indicators that influence the Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, etc., at a disaggregated level and suggest correctional measures;
4. Undertake special studies as required for formulation and implementation of plan projects and programmes;
5. Tamil Nadu State Land Use Research Board (TNSLURB) is functioning under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman, State Planning Commission as a permanent body in the State Planning Commission. This Board is intended to promote interaction and study in the vital areas of land use. The State Planning Commission organizes seminars/workshops and undertake studies.
6. Human Development Reports (HDRs) were prepared for Dindigul, Sivagangai, Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, the Nilgiris, Kanyakumari and Dharmapuri districts. The concept of Human Development has been disseminated to all districts through workshops organized in the concerned districts. Proposal for preparation of District Human Development Reports (DHDR) for the remaining districts is under process.
7. State Balanced Growth Fund (SBGF) is operated to bridge the regional imbalances among the districts.

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WORKSHOP SESSION

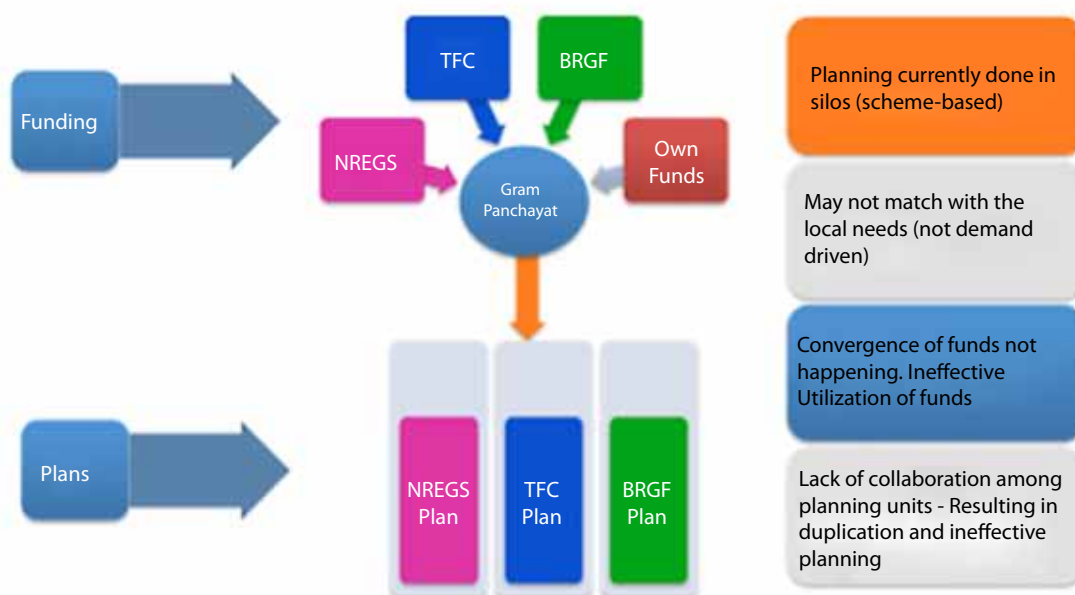|	
Welcome Address	**Thiru. P.Selvarajan,** Head of Division (RD & DP) State Planning Commission Chennai – 600 005.
Inaugural Address	**Tmt.Santha Sheela Nair,I.A.S.,(Retd)** Vice Chairman, State Planning Commission Chennai – 600 005.
Presentation Session – I Preparation of Decentralised Plan using PlanPlus	**Shri. Deepak Chandra Misra,** Deputy Director General National Informatics Centre, New Delhi

Presentation Session – II – Different
Approaches in Decentralized Planning in Tamil Nadu
	(i) **Thiru Jaishankar**
	     UNICEF
	
	(ii) **Prof. G.Palanidurai**
	     Gandhi Gram Rural University
	
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	(iv) **Prof. R.Venkatram**
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Interactive Session	Participants

Executive Summary

Plan Plus is a software tool that facilitates decentralized planning process in local language, captures the planning workflow. With this, flow of funds from different sources could be converged, to assess the overall financial situation of the local body. The rural and urban plans could be converged to generate an integrated district plan. The Plan Plus tool brings about total transparency in the plan approval process. Role based authentication and authorization of plans and programmes can be defined using this software. The platform acts as a decision support tool through the use of supporting GIS and graphs.

In promoting the bottom up approach in planning, the software can help to capture the entire planning workflow starting from identification of needs, to plan approval process and upto final approval by the District Planning Committee. The software has a `government section' and a `citizen section', and is highly generic and can be extended to capture the plans prepared by line departments at the state to generate a State Plan and District Plan. The highlights of the software include:

- Facilitating decentralized planning process in local language
- Capturing the planning workflow
- Converging the flow of funds from different sources
- Converging the rural and urban plans to generate an integrated district plan

Planning As of Now

- Bringing about total transparency in the plan approval process

- Providing role based authentication and authorization

- Acting as a decision support tool through the use of supporting GIS and graphs

The software has been experimented with by a number of states for preparing Perspective Plans, Draft Annual Plans and Action Plans.

In Tamil Nadu, as DPCs have been formed in almost all the districts, the DPC can be entrusted with the responsibility to review and consolidate the plans being forwarded to it as per different planning work-flows (procedures). Organisations like UNICEF can work in partnership with the Government to build the capacity of the officials of local bodies who can collect and enter the needed data for supporting need-based planning rather than scheme-driven activity. It can also help to build interface between the different stakeholders like the District Administration, Line departments, Planning Committees and Local Bodies.

UNICEF has piloted convergent approach in 17 districts across 14 states called 'Integrated Districts' to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related women and child development progress. In Tamil Nadu Krishnagiri district was chosen for such initiative.

The objective of the planning approach is to bring about child friendly planning process at the grassroots level. A 5-day workshop was organised at the district level/ sub district level, village level for initiating plan preparation at the village level with the participation of people. Various activities for the preparation of village plan/ district plan such as Village rapport building, data base creation, assessment of infrastructure and services, problem understanding and visioning were taken up in 4 days. On the fifth and final day preparation of draft plan was taken up. A convergence committee structure was formed consisting of Panchayat level Convergence Committee, Block level Task Force and District level Task Force.
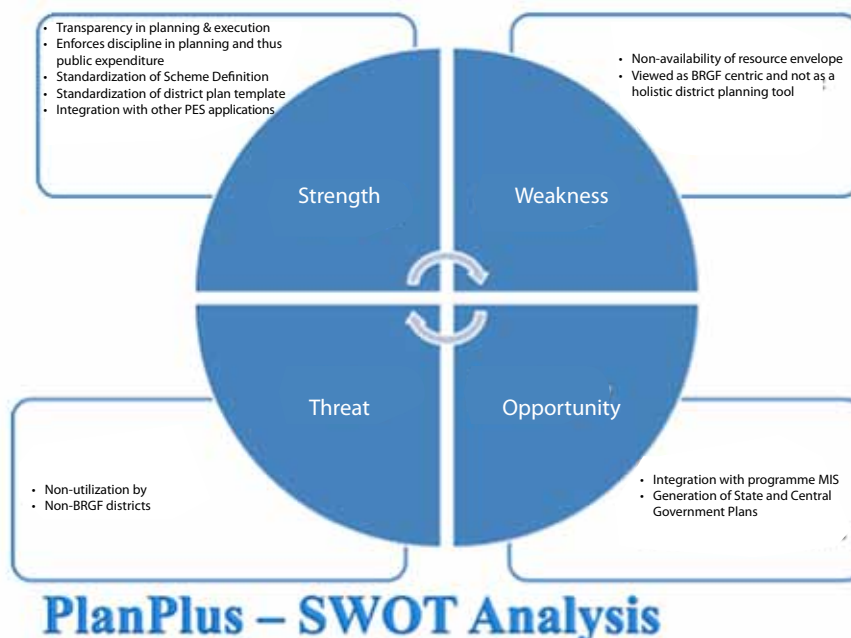
The Gandhigram Rural University has facilitated preparation of village level plans in Tamil Nadu earlier. The various sources of fund flows need to be informed to the village panchayat presidents and the village people. If the people are sensitised on the developmental programmes, the participation would be greater. The people are engaged culturally, politically but not developmentally. If people could be organised to look into their developmental issues, the impact would be much better.

DHAN Foundation has been supporting select Panchayats in 5 Districts to evolve micro planning every year from 2004 onwards. With people's participation sectoral micro plans

on Tourism, Disaster risk reduction, Coastal livelihoods (as part of PTSLP). The methodology adopted for decentralized planning on Need Assessment & Prioritization, Plan Development, and approval from Gram Sabha, Plan documentation, Plan implementation and review. Through Hamlet wise PRA/PALM techniques, the needs and problems, priority list at hamlet level and Panchayat level are drawn. The Plan document contains Problem statement, Objectives, Activities.

Dr. R.Venkatram, from the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, which is the Technical Support Institution for the preparation of Agriculture plans for the State narrated the experience in preparing District Agriculture Plan and State Agriculture Plan. The District Agriculture Plans were prepared for 29 districts excluding Chennai and the Nilgiris

districts, for the development of Agriculture and allied Sectors. The District Agriculture Plan presents the vision for Agriculture within the overall development perspective of the district and financial requirement. The baseline information was collected from the line departments. District officials were sensitized on the preparation of DAP, and who in turn held discussion with block and village level to identify local needs and interventions. Focus Group discussions with line department officials were held to prepare Action Plans and Proposals. The State Agriculture Plan emulated from the District Agriculture plans. The State Agriculture Plan give a brief analysis on the resource base and economic status of the State, SWOT analysis of Agri sector, and discussed the issues for development and recommended Action Plans / interventions

- Transparency in planning & execution
- Enforces discipline in planning and thus public expenditure
- Standardization of Scheme Definition
- Standardization of district plan template
- Integration with other PES applications

- Non-availability of resource envelope
- Viewed as BRGF centric and not as a holistic district planning tool

Strength   Weakness

Threat   Opportunity

- Non-utilization by
- Non-BRGF districts

- Integration with programme MIS
- Generation of State and Central Government Plans

PlanPlus – SWOT Analysis

Introduction

The Twelfth Five Year places significant importance to district planning. The Government has initiated a new programme to addresss regional imbalances in key human development outcomes. The Scheme would address 100 most backward blocks in these parameters, slum areas in urban areas and backward urban areas. Development plans would be formulated and implemented over a period of time. Similarly the THAI scheme, "Tamil Nadu Village Habitation Improvement Scheme" introduced in 2011-12 takes up planning at the Habitation level for providing basic amenities and infrastructure as many disparities are found even within a Village panchayat.

Similarly, village level, block level and district level plans are prepared for agriculture development under National Agriculture Development Programme. Municipalities prepare a City Development Plan highlighting the demands, future growth, population projection, infrastructure needs etc. NABARD prepares a Potential linked Credit Plan. But there is no comprehensive plan that maps the demands and strategies for the holistic development of the village, block, urban bodies and the District.

This reiterates the importance of local level planning for achieving inclusive, accelerated and innovative growth. A dynamic system needs to be put in place to synchronise the available resources and demand of the public in a comprehensive manner.

A web-based tool such as PlanPlus would facilitate such dynamics so that all the available resources could be synchronised in one place and allocations could be made based on the need keeping track on the proposals and sanctions made from time to time.

Session - I
Preparation of decentralised plans using PlanPlus

PlanPlus is software tool for Decentralised planning, developed by the National Informatics Centre, New Delhi. Initially it was developed for the BRGF districts to facilitate preparation of district plans. PlanPlus has been adopted by more than 70,000 planning units in 250 BRGF Districts across the country. The PlanPlus is a highly generic software making it easy to customize it to specific requirements. Provides complete local language support in UNICODE. It captures the state-specific workflows as defined by the State Planning Department. The PlanPlus software is web-based and available 24X7, based on Open source tools and technologies.

The strengths of the tool are

- Transparency in planning & execution
- Enforces discipline in planning and thus public expenditure
- Standardization of Scheme Definition
- Standardization of district plan template
- Integration with other PES applications

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But non-availability of resource envelope and consideration as BRGF centric and not a holistic planning tool are two weaknesses of this tool. The PlanPlus tool could easily be integrated with any management information system, and generation of District, State and Central Government Plans would be possible.

language. The PlanPlus tool supports need-based planning. The tool facilitates Financial, Sectoral and Institutional convergence from different central and state sponsored schemes to address the needs of the people. Integration of plans prepared by various planning units, and consolidation into a single district plan document is built in the system. The tool also facilitates segregation of Scheme and Sectoral Plans. The tool provides support in monitoring

Process of Planning

- Need assessment & Prioritization
- Plan Development
- Approval from Gram Sabha
- Plan Documentation
- Plan implementation & review

The present planning process lacks holistic approach. It is purely on scheme based, hence there might be lack of convergence, ineffective utilization of funds and lack of collaboration among planning units.

The advantage of PlanPlus tool is the facilitation of plan preparation in local

the execution of the plan by providing necessary data to ActionSoft. Analysis and decision support could be possible using the graphs which could be generated by the tool. The PlanPlus tool also helps in the preparation of Perspective Plans and deriving the Annual Draft and Action Plans from Perspective Plans.
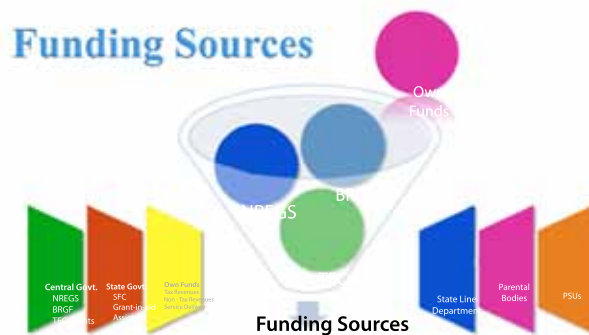
The seven sections in the PlanPlus tool, Requirement section, Resource Envelope Section, Planning Section, Technical Appraisal Section, DPC approval and Report section contemplates the various stages in plan preparation.

In the Requirement section, Information on Wish List, Works (location, proposed cost, proposed duration, asset/beneficiary/output) and Projects are captured. This is sent to the Suggestion box of the respective planning units. The Planning Unit could take a decision whether to take up the suggested need as a work in any of the Plans. The tool provides flexibility to States / Districts to define category of works, to accord authority to functionaries at various levels to view work status / progress of implementation.

The Resource section helps to pool the resources available for the planning unit as well as the different sources of funding for the implementation of a particular work.

In the Planning Process the software automatically includes all works which have been created for the Plan Year. In addition, it also includes spill-over, on-going and resumed works from previous years' plans in the current Plan. Based on the sector of the work and that of the component, the software automatically shows the amount of expected allocation under different components of different schemes. The Planning unit can allocate funds from different schemes/components to different works. One work may be funded by more than one Source of Funding, thereby converging the funds from different funding sources. If any permissible activity is defined under a component, then the planner will have to indicate the activity of the component under which the work is being undertaken. Works may be included or excluded from the plan as per availability of funds. However, works which are on-going or spill-over cannot be excluded. Works funding can be shared by multiple Planning Units. Priority can be set for each work; fund availability is automatically re-calculated. A Planning unit has to answer defined Process checklist based on scheme components from funds that are proposed to be taken up. The software also informs the planner about fund availability under different schemes under different sectors thereby ensuring maximum utilization of funds.

Funding Sources

Technical Appraisal Committee undertakes the technical Scrutiny of the plans submitted by Planning Units and offer comments on cost, duration and methodology.

The Administrative Approval at different stages of planning process, administrative approval may be required at different levels. The privilege for administrative approval can be given to a user for one or more planning units. Based on the workflow, the plan of the planning unit will be automatically forwarded to the approving authority.

The District Planning Committee could generate sectoral views of the Plan (to be reviewed by sectoral committees) and take decisions (scrutinise, review and approve) on each work included in the Plan. The DPC can either approve a Plan (if all works are approved) or return the Plan to the planning unit for review/modification. The DPC can look at the plan unit wise plan report which provides a detailed analysis of the Plan of the selected planning unit.

The PlanPlus tool helps the Planning Units, to prepare a holistic plan based on needs of the people, and know what others are planning in a geographical area. The State Government, get different views of the Plans of each planning unit as well as that of the district as a whole – sectoral view, scheme view, and the investment pattern in the Plan and make course corrections. The Central Government, could continue to get their schematic plans, better utilization of funds through convergence with other schemes. The Citizens could get a Platform to participate in the planning process by voicing their needs, get an opportunity to see what their Government is planning for them.

Session - II
Preparation of Decentralised District Plan

UNICEF shared the experience in their Preparation of Decentralised District Plan. The three types of challenges in design and implementation of development interventions are (i) the level of uncertainty involved (ii) the extent of agreement about project goals or ways to achieve them, and (iii) the extent to which knowledge and capacities are distributed.

In 2005, UNICEF piloted convergent approach in 17 districts across 14 states called 'Integrated Districts' to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related women and child development progress. The key focus of the Decentralised Planning were

- Community Action
- Integrated Service Delivery with equity
- Community Empowerment (Participatory Micro-planning, Energising PRIs -Panchayat Level Convergence Committees)
- Inter-Sectoral Integration – UNICEF/ Government
- Village Volunteer network
- Linking with National Flagship Programmes and State schemes

In Tamil Nadu, child friendly village planning feeding into the decentralised plan was prepared for Krishnagiri. Panchayat Level Convergence Committees (PLCC), Block Level Task Force (BLTF) and District Level Task Force (DLTF) have been made regularly functional.

The objective of the UNICEF approach was to ensure Child Friendliness of the District Plans / Village Plans. A 5-day exercise was conducted.

- DAY 1: Village Rapport Building and Overview: Village Transect, Children rally, Public meeting, Identification of Volunteers and their training in Household Survey.

- DAY 2: Data base creation: Situation Assessment of Women and Children – Household Survey, Village Mapping, Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

- DAY 3: Assessment of infrastructure and services: Awareness on Sectoral Issues – Polling Booth, Weighing & Growth monitoring, Consolidation of Household Survey results.

- DAY 4: Problem Analysis and Visioning: Consolidation Sharing of findings at Panchayat Level with PRIs, Service Providers and Village Volunteers

- DAY 5:
  - Preparation of draft Gram Panchayat Plan
  - Response Plan – Formation of Panchayat level Convergence Committee (PLCC)
  - Issues identified for appropriate response plan at Block/District Level

Convergence Committees at District level, Block level and Village level have been formed. At the Village level, the Committee comprises of Panchayat President, Field level functionaries, community articulated issues/needs and action taken at panchayats level. Issues/needs beyond the scope of panchayats were presented to the BLTF. The Block level Committee consists of the block level officers. The Committee reviews the issues/needs collated by Panchayat level Committee and responses are included in the block level planning. Line Department officials provide technical expertise. The District level Committee includes district level officials. Policy level and common issues brought to District level Technical Forum. The Needs are collated for inclusion in the district plan.

The Planning Commission has issued detailed guidelines which has contributed to systematic approach to District Planning. UNICEF's Integrated District Approach (2005-2012) supported such decentralised planning as suitable in Krishnagiri district. At present the E-governance initiative, elected representatives at all the levels, implementation of SBGF in most backward blocks, THAI Scheme which is based on habitation based planning, family based approach for poverty reduction through Pudhu Vaazhvu provide a vibrant environment to make district plans.

The challenges involved in the preparation of District Plans could be from lack

of understanding of District Planning at grass-root level, which requires Capacity Building programmes. Resource mapping at all levels, involving all Stakeholders actively in the planning exercise, leveraging resources from flagship schemes/programmes, and lack of transparent mechanism to converge funds at block level.

UNICEF can support capacity building of District Planning Officers and Local Bodies in Plan preparation. Its recently set up DPMU as a model in Krishnagiri district to function as the hub with data cell, monitoring cell and planning cell, may be a good supporting unit to the DPC. Based on the lessons learnt from its Decentralised Planning model in Krishnagiri and the sustained up-take of its PLCC/BLTF/DLTF approach by the District Administration there, UNICEF may be ready to support District Planning process in one or two districts.

Session - III
Decentralized Planning at grassroots

The DHAN Foundation has demonstrated participatory strategic planning covering 10 lakh poor families on development themes. It supports select Panchayats in 5 Districts to evolve multi year micro planning every year from 2004 onwards. Sectoral micro plans have been prepared on

- Tourism
- Disaster risk reduction
- Coastal livelihoods (as part of PTSLP)

The Process involved in the Decentralised Plan are

- Need Assessment & Prioritization
- Plan Development
- Approval from Gram Sabha
- Plan Documentation
- Plan implementation & review

PRA / PALM technique would be followed to identify needs, alongwith secondary data on livelihoods, education and health, and also sectoral focus group discussions. The needs assessment leads to the identification problem and issues, priority list both at hamlet level and panchayat level, and shared understanding on needs and issues at Panchayat level among Community and Council. Following the needs assessment, the Plan preparation is taken up including details on

- Problem statement
- Objectives
- Activities
- Time frame, Resources, Responsibility
- Expected Impact
- Objectively Verifiable Indicators & Means of Verification

The Plan document will cover Livelihoods, Education, Health, Vulnerable groups, Infrastructure and Service enhancement. The final Plan would be placed in the Grama Sabha, discussed and approved.
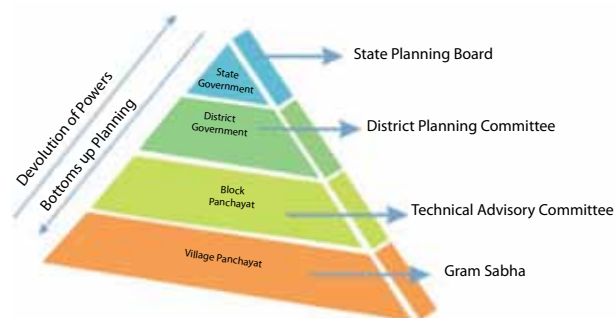
Session - IV
Preparation of District Plan

The Gandhgram Rural University has been involved in the preparation of village plans. The Village Plan preparation has given the scope to explore the benefits of participatory planning. When people do really participate in the planning exercise, one can ensure the development of the local area / community. At present, people are oriented to think politically, but not towards their own development. When such involvement could be ensured in the developmental process, it would be a welcome change. This requires capacity building for the local body functionaries and the officials. The Gandhigram Rural University could associate with the State Planning Commission in the capacity building and preparation of District Plan.

Session - V
Preparation of District Agriculture Plan and State Agriculture Plan

While launching National Agriculture Development Plan, the National development Council advised the State Government

to prepare District Agriculture Plans. In Tamil Nadu, District Agriculture Plans for 29 districts excluding Chennai and the Nilgiris were prepared. The Tamil Nadu Agriculture University was selected as the Technical Support Institution in this endeavour.

As a first step for the preparation District Agriculture plans, basic information was collected from line departments. Stakeholders in the exercise were identified and several discussions were organized. Sensitisation meetings were held for the district level functionaries. Focus group discussions with line department officials were held for the preparation of Action Plan and formulation of project proposals. Consultations were held with the scientists of KVK's and Regional Research Stations for identifying the technology gaps and ways to bridge the gap. Based on these initiatives, a draft District Agriculture Plan was drafted, which was presented to local bodies, line department officials and scientists under the chairmanship of the concerned District Collector. The District Agriculture Plan was finalised based on the inputs from the District level Committee.

The State Agriculture Plan was prepared from the district level Agriculture plans. The State Agriculture discusses about the economic situation of the State and resource base. With a SWOC analysis of the Agriculture Sector, the issues for development of Agriculture are detailed. The State plan delineates Action Plan and required interventions for the State and the districts.

In this process, a few bottlenecks were identified, which impacted on the preparation of District Agriculture Plans. They are

- Inadequate institutionalization of planning units at various levels

- Time - lag in preparation of Decentralized Plans and project formulation

- Lack of proper convergence exercise at various levels

The Plan preparation exercise at the districts and State has provided useful lessons. It is necessary to provide sufficient time frame for the preparation of plans, with necessary institutional arrangements. Strengthening convergence among line departments and with local bodies is essential for planning and implementation. Capacity Building programmes for the stakeholders must be held. Strong network for sharing information needs to be established at the district / sub district level. Timely release of funds, empowerment and devolution of powers to the Departments/ local bodies is crucial for better implementation. Participation by local farmers and other citizens in the village committees in planning, implementation and monitoring would bring desired results. Monitoring and Evaluation cell at the district level and State needs to be strengthened. Appropriate convergence of schemes and budget at three levels namely Village level, Block level and District level is crucial.

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Recommendations

1. In the existing system of plan implementation, most of the schemes exist in silos, planned and implemented as stand-alone schemes, without any convergence, resulting in multiple district plans unrelated to each other. The convergence of related schemes and resources could be possible thorough decentralised and holistic planning approach.

2. Addressing Regional imbalances is one of the important objective of planning and grassroots level planning is integral component of planning.

3. There is a greater possibility to converge different plans, being prepared by different Departments viz., - Agriculture Department prepares Plans at the farm level, Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Department prepares plans at habitation based planning for infrastructure, family level for poverty reduction etc.

4. Decentralised planning approach should include the infrastructural, natural, financial and human resources mapping at the district and sub-district level.

5. Decentralised Planning would transform citizens from beneficiaries of welfare programmes to stakeholders in the development process. This would in turn bring sustainable development.

6. The State Government departments, Academic Institutions, NGOs, other experts can provide technical support to the district planning committees in Decentralised Planning Process.

7. The Planplus software, developed by NIC, which is being used in States like Madhya Pradesh, Jharkand, etc can be used for district planning process in the State.

8. The experience of UNICEF in the preparation of district plans through their pilot work in Tamil Nadu and other States can be tapped.

9. Sensitisation workshops & Capacity Building may be arranged in association with Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Department of Municipal Administration & Water Supply and NIC using Resource Institutions such as UNICEF, Gandhigram Rural University and DHAN Foundation.

10. UNICEF can support Capacity Building of District Planning Officers

11. To start with, State Planning Commission can undertake preparation of Decentralised Plans in two districts, (one BRGF and One Non-BRGF district) on a pilot basis with the help of UNICEF and other stakeholders.

12. Sensitisation of Officials and Local body representatives would have to be undertaken as the first step to initiate the Preparation of District Plans.

13. The State Planning Commission may develop a data base on Districts & Blocks using the data collected for HDR preparation and Perspective Plan proposed to be prepared for State Balanced Growth Fund.

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