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**PRIA**

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## Micro planning intervention A Report

## INTRODUCTION

Now a days, we are witnessing a shift in the paradigm with emphasis on maximizing economic growth through urban industrial development and integrated rural development by ensuring people's participation at all stages of planning with a view to make the optimum use of local initiative energy and resources. Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation occupy a central place in the Overall Strategy of planned development especially at the regional and local levels.

Social planning enables better perception of basic issues at the grassroots level where it becomes feasible to prepare and implement programmes directly attuned to the needs and problems of target groups in order to strengthen lower level institutions. Three years ago, PRIA, New Delhi and Network of Regional Support Organizations (NCRSOs), had initiated a Joint Action Programme of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). As a pan of JAP, SST initiated Micro Planning intervention in two Gram Panchayats of Kasya Block (Dist. Kushinagar) in May 1996, in collaboration with a local VDO, Nari Vikas Sewa Samiti (NVSS). Kasya.

The main objectives of the programme were as follows:

- 1) To involve the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat representatives to ensure maximum participation in the programme.
- 2) To identify village problems and initiate systematic participatory planning process and action.
- 3) To prepare an action plan with Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha and submit to the local administration.

As part of the intervention strategy two Gram Panchayats had been selected: i) Pipra, ii) Madhopur Mathia, in Kasya Block (Kushinagar district) with the help of the local NGO.

Gram Panchayat Pipra is around 10 kms from Kushinagar having a population of nearly 1000. The Panchayat Pradhan belongs to the Scheduled Caste. Ramabati is an illiterate woman and was elected as a Pradhan for the first time from reserved seat. She did not have any knowledge or information about the Panchayati Raj Act. She did not even know how to organise and conduct the Panchayat Meetings. So she felt a need that there should be some outside agency who could guide her to perform well as Pradhan and organise meetings of GPs and GS effectively.

Shakuntla Devi, Pradhan of Mathia Madhopur GP is a teacher and belongs to OBC Mathia Madhopur GP is around 14 Km from Kushinagar. This GP is divided into two hamlets: one is Mathia, and other is Madhopur.

The former Pradhan, her son, was not popular. He used mainly muscle power and held authority and sway over the whole Panchayat. Taking opportunity of being elected. she wanted to run affairs the way enshrined in the act and not dedicated to by her son. However, not knowing the act well, she desired the intervention of an "outside" VDO to assist her in her endeavor.

## Assessment of Situation

It became quite evident after the few initial rapport building meetings with the Gram Sabha, that the Gram Panchayat meetings were not held regularly. The Pradhan of the village said that the meetings were not held regularly because of the absenteeism of panchayat members. On the other hand, the Panchayat members stated that the meetings were irregular because of the Pradhan's negligence: even the time and the date of the meetings were not properly communicated. In ultimate analysis, it was round out that the relationship between the Pradhan and the few members got maligned.

## Direction for Future Intervention

Our intervention started with taking stock of the situation with an overall understanding that the Panchayat members and Pradhan were not on good terms. Further, we analysed the root cause of these issues.

Hence, it is important for all of us to collectively and (in a participatory manner) discuss a strategy for effective functioning of the Panchayats. Obviously, the first step was to organise meetings and have a dialogue. Initially these meetings were over loaded with conflicts and it was considered a platform for problem solving. But after initial struggles the members started discussion on issues which are related to Panchayats and also related to their village's development. During the later stages, the participation of women became a major driving force for our future planning and course of action.

## Ward Meetings

Attending ward meetings was a very interesting event. Initially, we initiated the meetings, but afterwards the Panchayat members started attending the meetings regularly as well as initiating the meetings themselves.

As a result, the leadership qualities of the villagers came to light. The dependency on us started decreasing gradually regarding conducting the meetings. The ward meetings became the life-blood of people's development thinking process. Earlier, the people had very little discussions on development issues. Hence, it became a main plank for development issues to be dealt with seriousness and start a dialogue with all the different stakeholders who were involved in the development of their village.

Jai Shankar Prasad, who is a Panchayat member, lives in the centre of the village. His house is a pucca home and outside his house is a tree which was the meeting place for panchayat members. Many meetings have taken place under the tree. But he was never present in any of the meetings. We visited him and wanted to talk to him but even after compulsion he didn't say anything. It was evident that the people had not developed any trust with the panchayat members. The women in the same village were much more organised and they wanted to do something for the problems in the village. They may at times started raising several issues and problems with members as well as pradhans. This was the result of the rapport building process and a good relationship was established with the villagers. Through, the panchayat members were less active in Madhopur, there were small groups viz, Youth Clubs, etc. who were active and organised. They were ready to take up development plans in their own village.

This was the time when we realised that the community now needs facilitation in preparing a realistic plan for their village.

The participation of the people were more or less satisfactory till now but as we mentioned that we would be facilitating a plan for their village, most of the people of the village really got involved into the whole process of planning, the people were ready to take initiatives and share their knowledge and information.

## The Micro Plan: Steps initiated

Making door to door visit in the first day collecting people (men and women) at one place for meeting. At the same time the Pradhan, Panchayat Members were also contacted. Immediately, a meeting was called with all the villagers for briefing on the six days programme. It was very easy for the villagers to understand the whole planning process because the plan was already shared with them during the ward meeting/panchayat meetings. The villagers were eager and enthusiastic to participate in the whole process. The whole programme was planned to start next day. A team of five members were constituted. The following exercises were taken up on the first day.

- 1) Time fine
- 2) Trend analysis
- 3) Social Mapping
- 4) Resource Map

Second day

- 5) Seasonality
- 6) Institutional Linkages
- 7) Health PRA
- 8) Livelihood Analysis

Third day

- 9) Gender Analysis
- 10) Transect walk;
- 11) Wealth Ranking

The presentation were done in front of the community. This helped in cross-checking all the data collected during previous days through PRA process. The mistakes were rectified in front of the community and the final analysis was derived with the help of the community. This helped the PRA team to learn new things about the community. This also helped in deferring the old concept about PRA. A lot of informations were generated on various issues like agriculture, diseases, food habits, major problems, gender issues, seasonality, education, expenditure pattern etc.

## Categorisation of Problems

Heralds	Education	Environment	Social	Economic	Physical
Stomach diseases (women's inheritance)	Lack of education among women	Latrine Contaminated drinking water	Low status of women Increase in population	Low wages to women labourers Seasonal unemployment	India Marka II hand pumps are out of order Water contamination on roads
Problems of women and child health	Lack of education among SCs	Problem of water drainage	Low participation of women in decision making	Lack of employment opportunities in the village	Lack of electricity
Deficiency of Vitamin A	Lack of awareness	Lack of drainage system Water seepage	Groupism Lack of trust		No panchayat bhavan

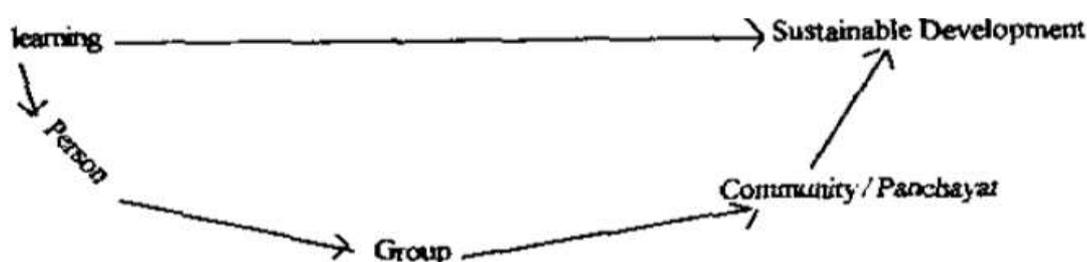
Prioritisation of problems	How prevalent	How serious	How many people effected	Community Participation	Total	Prioritisation
1. Lack of education in women	10	9	9	7	35	I
2. Low wages to women	8	8	7	2	25	VI
3. Community Latrine	10	10	9	3	32	III
4. Sifen	10	10	10	5	35	IV
5. Unemployment	8	7	8	4	27	V
6. Women and child health	7	9	9	8	33	II

## Action Plan

The plan was not implemented yet. but the plan report were sent to SIRD. Concerned Govt. dept., Academia etc. But certain off shoots as a result of the micro plan prepared are visible, viz formation of self-help groups of women.

## Learnings

1. Panchayat' is such a powerful concept that it is truly a vehicle of development. A defunct Panchayat. when activated with meetings held at regular intervals. reveal surprising enthusiasm. motivation and creativity bringing to light the tremendous potential. the people possessed
2. Strengthening the Panchayats is a community initiative. It also influences the learning of the community in the following manner-



3. We learnt how to involve people at every stage of planning so that they own the end result.
4. We learnt the inter personal relationship of 'Panchayat representatives. Village and other actors.
5. We also learnt how we can establish relationship with local administration and other actors of the Civil Society.

## Scaling up

We had taken Micro 'Planning Process on an experimental basis to understand the process and their implications.

We believe that the leanings have been quite useful to us and from our consultative workshop in which all our partner VDOs participated, a plan of action has emerged. Each VDO will, after obtaining training in Micro Planning, select one Gram Panchayat in their operational area and carry out a Micro Plan, in which we will be assisting/facilitating them on a regular basis. This exercise is expected to be over by the end of 1998.

## Sustainability

As the panchayats above falls in the operational area of NVSS, we have submitted the plan, to them to follow-up. However, it seems nothing much has been done after that by NVSS.

However, we believe the commitment and the involvement of the community of both the villages and we are also encouraged by the commitment of the Pradhan and members of these two panchayats that they are ready to take up this initiative for their development. NVSS is in the process of just helping the panchayats to procure funds from blocks and DRDA.

After the initial involvement NVSS is likely to phase out from these two villages. During our intervention, we have seen potential groups and individuals in the community who are ready to take initiative for their own development.

## Summary

Now, we can say that 'Panchayat' is a powerful institution to promote Social Change. In Micro Planning intervention, we have taken two villages on an experimental basis and we learned new lessons and stages of microplanning. We would like to see that this process is extended and carried out in other Panchayats on a large scale, so that Panchayats can prepare their own Village development plans and the community can involve themselves in the implementation and evaluation phase.

In this process, all the community members, including Panchayat members are involved in planning process and they will be aware about the local resources, energy and local initiatives. The community is empowered to use the local resource for its development so that the community does not depend on the resources from Govt. or any other funding sources. A people-centered development plan is possible if the panchayats are strengthened to take up more initiatives. People have knowledge, experience and they know the optimum utilisation of their available resources.

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