

# Micro Planning: A Conceptual Framework

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*Planning for development appeared as a concern the world over, in the post Second War period, when problems of population explosion, unequal distribution of resources and poverty became more pronounced, especially in the developing economies of the world. Planning is basically a decision making process through which certain development goals are achieved. Today it has become indispensable, and India is no exception. Many a times, the planning process is questioned when it does not lead to the desired results and therefore, this is one of the fields, which has witnessed a wide range of changes over time. In this article, an attempt has been made to capture the changing concepts of planning and the emergence of micro level planning as an effective technique. Further, the write-up focuses on the role of micro planning in local resource management and its relationship with PRIs.*

## Paradigmatic Shift in Concept of Planning

In India, planning as development strategy was adopted after independence and therefore, the planning commission was set up. In the initial years of planning, the focus was on sectoral resource allocation, while the spatial dimensions of development were ignored. Although the first and second plan did mention the need for 'dispersal' and 'diversification' of economic activities, the regional disaggregation and decentralisation of the national development plan was not attempted. The Fourth Plan onwards, an attempt was made to address the regional imbalances in development; the approach remained sectoral and centralised. In the 70s and 80s the spatial dimension emerged on the Indian planning scene and emphasis was laid on backward area development and infrastructure planning in urban areas. The directions for planning over the years have been centrally undertaken development programmes, the allocation of resources to states by the Centre, special allocation of funds for backward areas

and encouraging private investment in certain sectors. This flow of resources takes place through a channel across various levels, which in planning terms is referred to as "Multi-level Planning". This implies flow of resources and decision-making functions in a hierarchical order, i.e. from center to state to district and then to the lower levels. The master plan approach, both for urban and regional planning has been adopted, and in most of the states, development authorities are being set up for planning, while local governments act as mere implementing authorities.

In the name of local level planning, district planning has been evolved, which is again based largely on a "Programme approach" and does not result from a careful assessment of local resource potentials, constraints and local capacities. Although they are mostly land-use plans, each of the sectors has its own plan and the interrelations between all the sectors do not get operationalised over geographical space. The district plan does not emerge as a coherent set of programmes reflecting the conscious and deliberate set of priorities which is the essence of rural planning.

## Conventional vs New Planning Approach

The Conventional planning approach which was largely based upon theories and principles of physical planning could not address the local dynamism of development. Generally master plans and comprehensive regional plans are made for a period of 20 years and by the time the implementation phase comes, the pace of changes occurred in reality is higher than what was predicted by planners. The case of the Delhi Master Plan is a good example, which even after revision does not fit in the existing situation, because Delhi experienced much higher growth of population and economic activities than what was anticipated by the planners.

Conventional planning approaches have been criticised also due to lack of people's participation. In this approach, objections of people are invited only after the draft plan is

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