

*Draft*

**Status and Functioning of  
District Planning Committees  
in India**

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*Sadly, it is true that even after 15 years of enactment of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts, constitutional body like District Planning Committee is not functional in most of districts of our country. But at the same time it is also true currently constitution and functioning of DPCs has become an important issue at all levels: national, state and local. DPCs have been constituted in many states and efforts are being made to make them truly functional. So, degrees of differences in functional status of DPCs vary from state to state and even from district to district. In such situation our colleagues in different state and district offices of PRIA and its Partners, despite many odds, were able to tie many loose knots to provide information on different aspects of functioning of the DPCs. We appreciate their efforts and express our sincere thanks to all of them.*

*We would like to place on record our gratitude to Dr Rajesh Tandon, President, PRIA for his visionary and methodological guidance during all phases of completion of this study. Our colleague Dr Aradhana Srivastava deserves special mention for her untiring efforts in coordinating this study nationally and then converting different pieces of knowledge into this report.*

*We understand that any such study has its limitations. This study is not an exception. But to minimize these limitations we have used multiple sources and methods to ensure that information provided in this report are correct, consistent and updated. This report is being presented in its draft form to get feedbacks from our august readers to help us improve this study further.*

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## Executive Summary

The renewed effort towards activating the decentralised planning process in the country through DPCs is visible in the Planning Commission's instructions for district planning under the Eleventh Plan and guidelines for access to Backward Regions Grant Fund. In the light of these developments, PRIA undertook the current study to check the status of the DPCs which have been so far formed across the states in the country. The study is based on secondary as well as primary information from states where PRIA has a presence. Some of the key findings that have emerged from the study are as follows:

- DPCs are not functional in most of the states. In a few states they are not even constituted, while in most states they are constituted but not in constitutionally desired ways (Minister as Chairperson or all members nominated by State Government).
- Several states such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra & Himachal Pradesh have Ministers as Chairpersons of DPCs. This severely hampers the participative nature of the planning process in the DPC.
- Among the states considered in the study, DPCs are functioning effectively only in Kerala, and to some extent in Karnataka and Rajasthan.
- DPCs have not been able to effectively enable rural-urban linkages. Coordinated planning is not taking place, and any joint project planning has not necessarily resulted in integrated project implementation.
- Block level integration of rural and urban plans was not being achieved which may be important especially in the case of small towns which have strong links with the rural hinterland.
- Inter-sector coordination was not realised and often resisted on account of being inconvenient and against the status quo as well.

Based on these findings some of the major recommendations for strengthening DPCs and the district planning process have been put forward.

- The DPCs need to be given adequate financial support, permanent office and secretariat in order to enable them to perform their tasks effectively.
- There is need for capacity building of members on the role and functions of DPC and on the tenets of integrated planning for social and economic development.
- A campaign approach can be adopted for orienting people towards participatory planning. Alongside the local bodies also need to be trained and equipped to implement the decentralised plans so prepared.
- The Rural and Urban Local Bodies also need to be oriented to adopt an integrated approach to planning. While preparation of annual plans they have to keep in mind the medium and long term vision and goals for the district.
- The multiplicity of planning agencies in urban local bodies make the planning process very complicated – these need to be integrated into the ULB itself, as mandated in the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act.

All recommendations of the Ramachandran Committee, only when implemented in sincerity, will enable DPCs to emerge as the nodal institutions for grassroots planning in India.

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

The institution of District Planning Committee as envisaged in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act (73<sup>rd</sup> CAA) is the realisation of consistent and conscious effort towards decentralised planning since the process of planned development began in the country. The desire for decentralised planning was first expressed way back in the first five year plan (1951-56), when it was suggested to break the planning process into national, state, district and local community levels. However, the idea was given a concrete shape with the establishment of the District Development Council to consolidate plans prepared at the village level through a participative process. The newly established Panchayat Institutions at the village, block and district level were to help prepare these plans. However, their role and resources were not clearly defined and as a consequence the planning process at the grassroots level suffered.

The Administrative Reforms Commission in its report of 1967 stressed on the need for meaningful planning at the district level especially focusing on local variations in development patterns. Consequently, the Planning Commission issued guidelines for district planning in 1969, which led to several states formulating district plans. However, the exercise remained disjointed from the annual planning process in most states.

The widespread suppression and curtailment of powers of Local Self Governance institutions across the states through the late 1960s and 70s led to the choking of district planning process as well. The problem was examined again in 1984 through the Working Group on District Planning headed by C.H. Hanumantha Rao. The Working Group recommended greater decentralisation of functions, powers and resources for meaningful district planning. It also recommended the setting up of district planning bodies of about 50 members with Collector as Chief Coordinator. This planning body should be assisted by planning officers and technical experts at various levels. Other notable recommendations on strengthening planning and administration at the district level came from the G.V.K. Rao Committee on Administrative Reforms for Rural Development (1985) and the Sarkaria Commission for Centre-State Relations (1988).

However, all these efforts at strengthening decentralised planning were met with consistent failure due to several reasons. The weak nature of Local Self Governance Institutions was one of the main causes. A second major cause was the continuous growth and multiplication of sectoral departments and parastatal bodies along with vertical planning, development of sector-specific schemes and vertical rather than horizontal flow of plan funds. Given this background of efforts at decentralised planning in India, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments were milestones since they provided the much needed constitutional legitimacy to local governance institutions, defined their functional domains and provided for financial devolution to these institutions. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA also mandated the establishment of District Planning Committee (DPC) as the formal body for

preparation of the District Development Plan by consolidating the plans prepared by the villages and towns in the district.

Article 243ZD of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, on the DPC reads as follows:

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**243ZD. Committee for District Planning.**-(1) There shall be constituted in every State at the district level a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

(2) The Legislature of a State may, by law, make provision with respect to-

(a) the composition of the District Planning Committees;

(b) the manner in which the seats in such Committees shall be filled:

Provided that not less than four-fifths of the total number of members of such Committee shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the Panchayat at the district level and of the Municipalities in the district in proportion to the ratio between the population of the rural areas and of the urban areas in the district;

(c) the functions relating to district planning which may be assigned to such Committees;

(d) the manner in which the Chairpersons of such Committees shall be chosen.

(3) Every District Planning Committee shall, in preparing the draft development plan,-

(a) have regard to-

(i) matters of common interest between the Panchayats and the Municipalities including spatial planning, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, the integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation;

(ii) the extent and type of available resources whether financial or otherwise;

(b) consult such institutions and organisations as the Governor may, by order, specify.

(4) The Chairperson of every District Planning Committee shall forward the development plan, as recommended by such Committee, to the Government of the State.

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It is a matter of concern that even after the lapse of 15 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 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments, the implementation of the provisions was not uniform in all cases. Setting up elected bodies in local self-governance institutions was carried out, and State Finance Commissions were also formed to provide for financial devolution to these bodies. However, formation of DPCs was one of the neglected aspects.

The issue of decentralised planning was discussed in the Second Round Table Meeting of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj held in Mysore in 2004. The recommendations that emerged from the Meeting included the resolution for constituting DPCs in all states by the end of 2004-05. States were also required to outline their functions and procedures, and to identify agencies which will assist in the district planning process. The states were recommended to provide resources in the form of untied funds to Panchayats and Municipalities to strengthen their finances. The Planning Commission was also requested to ensure that the Eleventh Plan is based on consolidation of district plans prepared through DPCs. The Expert Group for Planning at the Grassroots Level chaired by V.

Ramachandran was set up in 2005 and set forth an action plan in order to strengthen participatory planning in the Eleventh plan process. It noted with concern the fact that several states had not set up DPCs even after the resolution taken in the Second Round Table. The Group laid out the modalities of preparing perspective five-year and annual plans at the district level and gave further suggestions for strengthening DPCs. The DPC, as per the report, should be a permanent institution provided with a secretariat to support its functioning. The DPC should be the nodal agency for district level planning, and district planning tasks, including those relating to Central Plan schemes, need to be routed through DPCs. The DPC can take the assistance of technical and academic institutions and experts to perform its functions effectively. The Group laid out detailed guidelines for the district level planning process and the role of DPCs therein.

Planning Commission took action on these proposals and communicated to the States that the approval of Annual plan proposals for 2006-07 will be contingent upon the constitution of DPCs in all the districts. The Annual Plan Proposals must give details of the total fund availability from various sources down to the Panchayat level. They must indicate the detailed deployment of funds received from various sources among the districts and must also explain the criteria followed for allocating the resources. The preparation of annual planning exercise under the Eleventh plan is thus expected to activate the process of district planning across all the states.

Another significant measure to push for the activation of DPCs is the linking of access to the Backward Region Grants Fund (BRGF) scheme. It is a semi-tied fund available to 250 selected backward districts with the purpose of catalysing development by providing infrastructure, promoting good governance and agrarian reforms, and capacity building for participatory district planning. In order to avail BRGF funds, states are required to establish DPCs as per article 243ZD, which will consolidate plans prepared by PRIs and ULBs in the district. These plans will put together resources from various existing schemes and channelise them to Panchayats on the basis of the district plan. BRGF funds will be used by the Panchayats for gap filling and to converge and add value to other programmes, which provide much larger resources to the same districts. The formula for disbursement of BRGF funds within the district will also be derived at the local level. Decentralised planning is thus at the core of this programme.

In this scenario of renewed effort towards achieving effective planning at the grassroots level through the DPCs, it is pertinent to look into the status of the DPCs which have been so far formed across the states in the country. In this report, PRIA presents a detailed analysis of the status of DPCs across different states in India. Twelve states – Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are the states covered for detailed primary investigation into the status of DPC, since PRIA has a direct or indirect presence in these states. The report highlights the gap between what appears on paper and what the actual situation is on the ground for these states. The information is supplemented by secondary studies, where available.

## CHAPTER II

### Status of DPC Formation across States

DPCs should be constituted as per Article 243 ZD in all states except Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and the NCT of Delhi. All states must accordingly enact legislations for constitution of the DPCs and issue notifications bringing them into effect. The Expert Group Report of 2006 also carried out a status check on the constitution of DPCs across the states. Things have not changed significantly since then. Their findings for 19 major states, updated to the present, are listed in the table below:

**Table 1: Status of DPC Formation across States**

S. No.	States/UTs	Status of Constitution of DPCs in May 2006	Status in November 2007
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Not yet constituted.	Elections held in Apr. 2007 but DPCs not functional.
2.	Assam	Not yet constituted.	Constituted in all non-sixth schedule districts.
3.	Bihar	Constituted with President ZP as Chairperson.	No change.
4.	Chhattisgarh	Constituted with Minister as Chairperson of DPC.	All members nominated by State Government.
5.	Gujarat	Not yet constituted.	Constituted.
6.	Haryana	Constituted in all districts.	No change.
7.	Himachal Pradesh	Constituted with Minister as Chairperson of DPC.	No change.
8.	Jharkhand	Local body elections yet to be held.	No change.
9.	Karnataka	Constituted with President ZP as Chairperson.	No change.
10.	Kerala	Constituted with Chairman District Panchayat as Chairperson.	No change.
11.	Madhya Pradesh	Constituted with district-in-charge Minister as Chairperson of DPC.	No change.
12.	Maharashtra	Not yet constituted.	Constituted with district-in-charge Minister as Chairperson of DPC.
13.	Orissa	Constituted in 26 Districts with Minister as Chairperson.	Constituted in all 30 districts with Minister as Chairperson.
14.	Punjab	Not yet constituted.	Constituted with Ministers as chairperson/vice-chairperson.
15.	Rajasthan	Constituted with Chairman District Panchayat as Chairperson.	No change.
16.	Tamil Nadu	Constituted with Chairman District Panchayat as	No change.

		Chairperson.	
17.	Uttar Pradesh	Not notified though legal provision exists.	No change.
18.	Uttarakhand	Not notified though legal provision exists.	No change.
19.	West Bengal	Constituted with Chairman District Panchayat as Chairperson.	No change.

*Source: Report of Expert Group on Grassroots Planning & PRIA*

Most of the major states have constituted DPCs as per the information available. State legislations to constitute DPCs have been enacted in all states considered here. The large and conspicuous omissions, where DPCs have not yet been constituted, include Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand.

In **Uttar Pradesh**, constitution of DPCs by the current government has been delayed on account of a minor change desired by it in the composition of the DPC. Earlier the Minister-in-Charge of the district was the Chair of the DPC, and there were two Deputy Chairpersons – the ZP president and the CEO of the Municipality within the district. The current government wants to remove this urban representation in the post of Deputy Chairperson of DPC. The existing structure for district level planning in the state is the District Planning and Monitoring Committee or the DPMC. The DPMC is chaired by the Minister-in-Charge and the President of ZP also finds a representation in it. The meetings of DPMC are actually chaired by the DM and the Minister-in-Charge is rarely present. It is a purely administrative structure meant for disbursing plan funds and deciding scheme specific allocations. Since the prevailing DPMC system is convenient politically as well, there is no real pressure on the State Government to constitute DPCs. This is the reason why DPCs are yet to be formed in the state, in spite of a high level committee being formed to facilitate its formation.

In **Uttarakhand** as well, the DPMC is the existing structure for district level planning. However, the state government has agreed to the constitution of DPCs and a set of guidelines for DPC formation has been issued. These have been submitted to the Governor for approval. Once the guidelines are approved, the State Government will issue a Government Order on constitution of DPCs. It is thus expected that by the next financial year DPCs will be constituted in Uttarakhand. The DPCs will be chaired by the President of ZP and there will be greater representation of Elected Representatives from PRIs and ULBs as opposed to the prevalent DPMC setup.

**Jharkhand** is a unique case in the sense that the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> CAAs have not been implemented at all, and elections to local bodies are yet to be held in the state. This however does not mean that district planning is not being carried out. There is in place a District Planning Unit headed by a District Planning Officer, again whose job is to allocate plan funds arriving to the district under various Central and State schemes, such as MPLAD and MLALAD. Little effort is made to carry out any concrete planning at any village or town level in the district. The District Planning Unit is not unique to Jharkhand

and exists in most states as the administrative structure for routing of plan schemes at the district level.

DPCs had been formed for all districts in the states for which additional information was collected by PRIA (through both primary and secondary sources), i.e., Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. However, this does not guarantee that the DPCs are functional to the same extent in all districts. Further details on the composition of DPCs and whether they are actually functional, will be analysed in the forthcoming chapters.

## CHAPTER III

### Composition of DPCs

The DPC is generally composed of elected members of the local bodies within the district, both rural and urban, as well as some nominated members. The number of members varies with the population size of the districts. The ratio of members from Panchayats and ULBs is based on the ratio in which the population of the district is divided between rural and urban areas.

An examination of the composition of the DPCs is vital from two perspectives:

- It reflects the degree of inclusion of marginalised sections in the district planning process;
- It reflects the degree to which the DPC is actually a body independent of state control and interference.

Keeping these perspectives in mind, this chapter discusses in detail the various aspects of composition of DPCs.

#### III.1. Elections to DPCs

Most of the states covered in the study show that elections have been held for the constitution of DPCs. However, whether or not they were actually held is another question altogether. Elections have mostly been supervised by district administration or state government – such elections are highly suspect. In Gujarat, for example, elections were supposed to be held but some of the ‘members’ are not aware of their membership in DPC. Similar is the story in Haryana. In Chhattisgarh, in spite of the existing legislation, elections were not held at all. Yet DPCs were constituted.

**Table 2: Responsible Agencies for Supervising DPC Elections**

Supervising Agency/Officer	States
District Collector	Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh
State Government	Gujarat, Karnataka
State Election Commission	Kerala, Bihar
Deputy Commissioner	Haryana, Himachal Pradesh

*Source: Various State Acts / Notifications / PRIA sources*

There is no uniformity of agencies supervising DPC elections across states, and this is not desirable if DPCs are to be uniformly elected structures across states. The State Election Commissions (SECs) are the most desirable agencies for conducting DPC elections, as they are expected to be most impartial. In Kerala, in fact, DPC elections are synchronised with local government elections. This is a very systematic approach.

#### III.2. Composition of elected and nominated members

The DPCs are to have at least four-fifths elected members as per Article 243 ZD. Members should be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the Panchayat at the district level and of the Municipalities in the district in proportion to the ratio

between the population of the rural areas and of the urban areas in the district. The actual pattern, however, varies across states.

Nominated members usually represent the State & Central Government agencies (including line departments). A larger proportion of nominated members could imply greater interference and control in DPC functioning by the State and Central administration. This in effect erodes the participative nature of the Committee, reducing it to just another arm of the State administration. It is therefore not desirable that the proportion of nominated members increase beyond the constitutionally stipulated limit. Table 2 presents a profile of DPC composition across the districts / states for which information was available through primary as well as secondary sources.

**Table 3: Profile of DPC Members across states covered in the study**

State	No. of Members			Chairperson	Other Nominated Members
	Total	Elected	Nominated		
Kerala	15	12	3	President of District Panchayat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Experienced administrator / planner</li> <li>– District Collector (ex-officio)</li> </ul>
Raipur, Janjgir, Raigarh, Surguja & Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh	20	0	20	Minister-in-charge	Mem-Sec: Collector Economic & Statistical Officer CEO (ZP) ERs of Panchayats & ULBs
Madhubani, Bihar	34	34	NA	CEO of ZP	MP, MLAs & MLCs registered as electors in the district.
Karauli, Tonk & Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan	25	20	5	CEO of ZP	Collector, ADM, 2 nominations from MLA, MP or CSO
Haryana - up to 10 lakh population - > 10 lakh population  (based on relevant notification)	20 25	16 20	4 5	<u>25 member DPC:</u> Commissioner of the concerned division  <u>20 member DPC:</u> Commissioner of the concerned division	<u>25 member DPC:</u> Commissioner of the concerned division, ADC of the concerned district, 2 eminent economists/planners and District Town Planner <u>20 member DPC:</u> Commissioner of the concerned division, DC, ADC and

					District Town Planer
Kangra, Himachal Pradesh	25	23	2	Minister from State Govt.	MP; Chair of ZP; Mayor / President of towns in the district; MLAs; DC
Andhra Pradesh (based on DPC Ordinance)	30	24	6	Chairperson ZP	DC, 1 member from Minorities & 3 members from subject experts
Gujarat	-	-	-	Minister-in- Charge of the district	Collector, District Development Officer & others
Madhya Pradesh Category 1 Category 2 Category 3 (based on population)	10 15 20	10 14 18	0 1 2	Minister-in- Charge of the district	Collector (Mem- Sec)
Mandya & Mysore, Karnataka*	19	16	3	President ZP	Mayor of HQ town; CEO of ZP

Source: Information collated at the state-level by PRIA and Partners

\* - taken from a study of Mandya & Mysore DPCs by Ashok S. Sanganal

All states covered in the study, with the exception of Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, have a ratio of about four fifths (or 20 per cent) nominated members in the DPC – this is in keeping with the Constitutional provision. In HP the ratio of nominated members is only 8 per cent, and in Karnataka it is 15 per cent. On the other extreme is Chhattisgarh, where all members to the DPC are nominated. This is in absolute violation of the State's own DPC law which stipulates for four fifths elected members to DPCs.

Through nominated members and special invitees officers of district administration as well as members of the Central and State legislatures find representation in the DPC. Special invitees or permanent invitees generally include local MPs and MLAs, district administration officials also representatives from line agencies like District Cooperative Bank / Land Development Banks. These invitees do not have voting rights in the DPC but participate in its deliberations.

**Table 4: Permanent / Special Invitees to DPCs**

State	Permanent / Special Invitees
Kerala	MP, MLA & MLC (where she/he is registered as voter)
Raipur, Janjgir, Raigarh, Surguja & Rajnandgaon,	-

Chhattisgarh	
Madhubani, Bihar	District Magistrate and the Chairperson of the District Cooperative Bank / Land Development Bank
Karauli, Tonk & Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan	-
Mahendragarh, Haryana	MLAs, MLCs and MPs from the district (each can be an invitee in only one DPC)
Kangra, Himachal Pradesh	MLAs whose constituencies lie within the district and who are registered as electors in the District and the Deputy Commissioner and the Representatives of the Cooperative Bank and the Land Development bank
Andhra Pradesh (based on Ordinance to constitute DPCs)	MPs and MLAs whose constituencies lie wholly or partly in the district; MLCs; Chairmen of Municipalities and Mayor of M. Corporation in the district
Madhya Pradesh (based on DPC Act 1995)	Elected MPs and MLAs whose constituencies lie wholly or partly in the district; President of ZP & Mayor of M. Corporation in district (in case they are not elected to the DPC).
Mandya & Mysore, Karnataka* <sup>1</sup>	MPs, MLAs, MLCs whose names are registered in the district voter's list; Deputy Commissioner

Source: Information collated at the state-level by PRIA and Partners

\* - taken from a study of Mandya & Mysore DPCs by Ashok S. Sanganal

### III.3. Chairpersons of DPC

The Chairperson of the DPC and the manner in which she/he is appointed is also an indicator of the degree to which the DPC is actually an independent body. In this respect three different patterns are observed among states:

- In some states the Chairperson / President / CEO of Zila Parishad or District Panchayat is the Chairperson of the DPC as well, for example, Kerala, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.
- In some states the Minister-in-charge of the district or any other State Minister is the Chairperson, for example in Orissa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. In Himachal Pradesh Cabinet Ministers of the State Government have been nominated as members and Chairpersons of DPCs.
- In Haryana the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the District is the Chairperson of the DPC.

Having the Minister-in-charge for the district or any minister from the State Government as the Chairperson of the DPC ensures that the DPC works only as an arm of the State Government with no capacity for independent functioning. Members in such committees are liable to be dominated by the Minister. No decision can be taken in such a committee which is against the policy of the State Government. Similarly, having the DC as the Chairperson (as in Haryana) is also against the independent and decentralised nature of the body.

<sup>1</sup> Sanganal, Ashok S. (2005), *District Planning Committees: An analysis of the Roles, Responsibilities, Performance and Strengthening Measures – A Study of Mandya and Mysore District Planning Committees*, Administrative Training Institute, Mysore.

### III.4. Secretarial & Support Services

Most states have provided for a nominated Member-Secretary to the DPC, whose function is to maintain the records of the Committee and taking care of other ancillary matters. In some states the DPCs are also provided with secretariat or support departments to help in their functioning, either through new secretariat, or transfer of existing administrative departments to their jurisdiction. Table 4 lists out the nature of support structure provided to DPCs in various states.

**Table 5: Nature of Support Structure for DPCs**

State	Secretary/Member Secretary	Secretariat	Whether functional
Kerala	- Collector (Sec.) - Dist. Level officers of govt. departments (Joint Secretaries)	District Statistical Office & District Planning Office	Yes.  Plan for independent HQ & staff for DPC
Raipur, Janjgir, Raigarh, Surguja & Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh	- Collector (M. Sec)	-	No
Madhubani, Bihar	-	-	-
Karauli, Tonk & Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan	Chief Planning Officer (Sec)	Dist. Planning Cell	Yes
Haryana (based on relevant notification)	Additional Deputy Commissioner (M. Sec)	Dist. Planning Unit headed by Chief Dist. Planning Officer	No
Kangra, Himachal Pradesh	Sec. of ZP (Sec)	-	-
Andhra Pradesh (based on DPC Ordinance)	Collector (M. Sec)	Not defined	No
Gujarat	- Dist. Devt. Officer (M. Sec) - Collector (Sec.)	Arranged by district administration	-
Madhya Pradesh (based on DPC Act)	Collector (M. Sec)	Arranged by Collector	-
Mandya & Mysore, Karnataka*	CEO of ZP (M. Sec)	Dependent on ZP staff	Limited functioning

Source: Information collated at the state-level by PRIA and Partners

\* - taken from a study of Mandya & Mysore DPCs by Ashok S. Sanganal

In some states reservation is provided in DPCs for SC, ST and OBC categories and in some states women have specific proportion of seats reserved for them. In Himachal Pradesh, for example, five seats are reserved out of 25 (or 20 %) for women elected representatives. In Bihar, 50 per cent of seats are reserved for women, which is quite high compared to other states. Chhattisgarh has reserved 3 seats for women. Other states covered in the study, such as Haryana, Rajasthan and Kerala did not have any reservations for women or other reserved categories.

The fact that DPCs have been constituted in the 10 states discussed in the above chapter does not in any way indicate that they have been functioning as well. In fact DPCs have been functioning to various degrees of efficiency with respect to the purpose for which they have been constituted. The next chapter outlines the functions, roles and responsibilities of the DPCs, and the degree to which the DPCs in the 10 states covered are performing them.

## CHAPTER IV

### Functions, Role and Responsibilities of DPC

The DPC is envisaged to play a nodal role in the district planning process by consolidating rural and urban plans prepared by the villages and towns in the district and then preparing a draft development plan for the district on the basis of the plans so received from within the district. DPC is thus crucial to the function of ‘planning for economic and social justice’, which is now a mandated local function, in that it provides the vital link between rural and urban plans as well as sectoral plans. In this respect it is important that the DPCs have an understanding of the planning process and, if required, the assistance of qualified planners and technical experts. As per Article 243 ZD, DPCs should also pay special regard to issues of common interest between Panchayats and municipalities, such as spatial planning, sharing of physical and natural resources, infrastructure development and environmental conservation. Since the states have modeled their own legislative provisions for DPCs on Article 243 ZD, the role and functions of DPCs in the State Acts are similar.

**Table 6: Functions of DPC as given in State Acts**

State	DPC Functions as listed in State Act
Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> <li>- Perform such other functions relating to district planning, as may be assigned to it by the Government, from time to time, by notification in the Gazette.</li> </ul>
Chhattisgarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> </ul>
Bihar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> </ul>
Rajasthan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> </ul>
Haryana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> </ul>
Himachal Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate the plans prepared by the Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samitis, Gram Panchayats &amp; the Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft developmental plan for the district as a whole</li> </ul>
Andhra Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that each local body in the district prepares a</li> </ul>

	<p>Development Plan &amp; consolidate plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities in the district</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole</li> <li>- Review implementation of Development Plan periodically &amp; monitor achievements</li> <li>- Formulate draft five year plans for the district</li> <li>- Make necessary recommendations to the Government concerning the development of the district</li> </ul>
Madhya Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate the plans prepared by the Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samitis, Gram Panchayats &amp; the Municipalities in the district</li> <li>- Prepare a draft developmental plan for the district as a whole</li> <li>- Prepare employment plan for the district</li> <li>- Monitoring, evaluation &amp; review of all schemes and programmes being implemented in the district</li> <li>- Submission of periodic progress reports to the State Government on the district plan.</li> </ul>
Karnataka*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To prepare 20 years vision plan for district</li> <li>- To prepare 5 years development plans &amp; annual plans</li> <li>- To prepare projects and schemes</li> <li>- To coordinate between rural and urban local bodies on consensus building for the overall development of the district</li> <li>- To conduct expert studies in this direction</li> </ul>

Source: Respective State Acts

\* - taken from a study of Mandya & Mysore DPCs by Ashok S. Sanganal

In Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala the chief function of the DPC consists of consolidation of rural and urban plans prepared in the district and preparation of draft development plan of the district. Besides, the DPC shall perform any other functions relating to district planning, as may be assigned to it by the Government. In Kerala, the DPC has also been given a monitoring role. It shall monitor the quantitative and qualitative progress in the implementation of the approved district planning schemes and State plans relating to the district and it shall evaluate the action programmes already completed in the district. In Karauli district, however, the DPC carries out monitoring and allocation of central and state plan schemes as well, in addition to consolidation of urban and rural plans. The Punjab DPCs Act of 2005 also envisages a similar role for DPCs, giving them the responsibility for overseeing implementation and monitoring of development schemes and projects.

#### **IV.1. Consolidation of rural and urban plans:**

Consolidation of rural and urban plans is one of the key tasks of the DPC and is also of great significance in the light of growing problems related to urban expansion into rural areas. The sequence to be followed in consolidation of rural and urban plans can be summarised as follows:

- Gram Panchayats prepare Participatory Plans and send to Intermediate Panchayat

- Intermediate Panchayat compiles information sent by the GPs in the block and along with its own information, prepares a Block Plan and sends to ZP
- ZP compiles information from Block Panchayats and along with its own information, sends to the DPC
- Urban Local Bodies transmit plans to DPC
- DPC compiles information from ZP and ULBs to form Draft Development plan (DDP)

Among the states covered in the study, while the sequence of steps to be followed in consolidating rural and urban plans is similar, it is barely being followed on the ground. In Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the DPCs were simply not functioning, hence they have not been discussed here. In Bihar, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh no meetings have been effectively held since constitution of DPCs, except the formal first meeting for oath taking.

For Madhya Pradesh, no primary information on DPC meetings was available. However, the guidelines for decentralised planning process under the Eleventh plan period are available. According to these the local bodies shall formulate vision documents as well as five year development plans and annual plans. The district annual plans will be based on the annual plan ceilings fixed by the M.P. State Planning Board. The role of the DPC in the district planning process has been well defined. The DPC will finalise sectoral plan allocations for rural and urban areas with the line departments. The DPC should also assess available resources in the district with the help of an expert group. Each local body will also be given a plan ceiling within which its plan will be prepared. DPC will help integrate the rural and urban plans assisted by a planning support group which can include subject experts and local CSOs as well. This integrated district annual plan will then be submitted by the DPC to the State Planning Board. As per field information, this process does take place in the districts. DPCs meet and approve district plans, which are then further submitted to the State Planning Board. However, the plans themselves are weak and lack any integrated approach. Planning has become more of a procedural formality rather than meaningful planning. There is a strong requirement of all-round orientation of all stakeholders in the district planning process in the state, to make it meaningful and realistic.

The plans in Rajasthan are prepared sector-wise and area-wise by the DPCs as per the ceiling on budgeted amount fixed by the State Government. Proposals are invited from heads of various departments and the funds are then disbursed accordingly. 17 sectors have been identified for preparation of district plan. The planning exercise for 2006-07 was carried out at the district level, but it was essentially an officer-based exercise. The plans prepared were stipulated to follow the participatory process, and needed approvals from the local elected bodies. The process did take place, but there is no accounting for its participatory nature. Panchayat and ULB plans were integrated into Block level plans and then forwarded to Chief Planning Officers who consolidated them into the district plans. These were then approved formally by the DPCs.

In Karnataka it is the sole responsibility of the DPC to prepare the district plan. The development plan has to be based on the perspective plan prepared by it. A separate urban unit has to be formed for preparation of urban plans. DPCs can seek the support of experts and technical agencies for plan preparation. Expert committees can be set up for each core area such as health, education, water supply, poverty alleviation etc. The members of these committees can be drawn from line departments, NGOs, private agencies, district administration and elected members. The DPC also needs to periodically evaluate progress of the plans and projects in the district and undertake studies on development indicators. To carry out their functions effectively, the DPCs have been given financial power by providing them with a DPC fund. This fund consists of annual contributions of fixed amounts from various local bodies in the district. The setup for DPCs is thus elaborate in Karnataka. However, little is actually being followed. DPCs are not meeting as frequently as stipulated. More details on this will be provided in the next chapter.

Kerala's approach to initiating the process of grassroots planning was in the form of a year long People's Campaign for Planning launched by the Kerala Planning Board. The Campaign mode helped build mass awareness and participation in the decentralised planning process when it was initiated for the first time in 1996. Development Seminars were held as mass public events for multi-stakeholder consultations. Volunteer Technical Corps comprising both serving and retired officials helped ensure that the people's plans were technically and financially viable. These were then finally cleared by the DPCs. This mass campaign mode helped mobilise people towards a common cause of planning from the grassroots.

As per the current planning procedure in Kerala, at the intermediate level there is a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to vet and verify the plans prepared by GPs and recommend to the DPC for approval. All the plans of GP, Block Panchayat, Urban Local Bodies and ZP reach the DPC and the TAC then vets and verifies the plans. Integration is made at the instance of the TAC and the Plan Preparation Support Group (PPSG). The DPC consolidates the plans received from local bodies within the district and submits the same to the State Government.

It can thus be seen that though the functions of DPC have been clearly defined by the Constitution and have been adopted as such by most states, the functions are not being performed largely because of the DPCs not being functional themselves. The exceptions are states like Kerala, where DPCs are active and functional institutions.

#### **IV.2. Technical Support to DPCs**

DPCs can take the support of institutions as well as technical experts in the process of consolidating plans and preparing the draft development plan. Technical experts can also be nominated as members of the DPC. In Haryana, for example, the district town planner is a nominated member in 20-member committees and an eminent economist is also a nominated member in 25-member committees. Chhattisgarh also provides for the membership of Economic and Statistical Officer of the district as a nominated member of DPC.

In Kerala, as discussed earlier, the DPC is assisted in scrutinising plans and projects by TACs. The TACs have sectoral sub-committees to study the respective chapters of the district plan – for example the Municipal TAC for urban plans, under the guidance of District Level TAC. The DPC also consults with their working groups of technical experts as and when necessary.

In Rajasthan, different means have been adopted by DPCs for technical support. Plan consolidation work is being carried out by the Chief Planning Officer of the district. The DPC can also hire experts as consultants. Heads of all line departments are often invited in DPC meetings (as reported in Karauli). Thus different arrangements have been made for DPCs to obtain technical support for performing their functions.

In Karnataka, as discussed earlier, DPCs can constitute expert committees, and can also hire technical experts if they feel the need. The availability of funds with them enables them to do so with ease.

Issues such as the need for technical support to DPCs and their capacity building will of course emerge and be taken up only when DPCs become functional.

## CHAPTER V

### Mode of Functioning of the DPC

The modalities of conduct of business by DPCs are laid out clearly by States through DPC rules and notifications. Generally DPC meetings are to be held at least once in three months. The quorum for the meetings is also specified, generally being one third of the total number of members. The DPC is supposed to deliberate on issues related to district planning, whether dealing with consolidation of local body plans or vetting project provisions allocated within the district. This chapter discusses the findings from PRIA's primary DPC-level information collected about the reality of DPC meetings and the conduct of business vis-à-vis the legal provisions regarding the same. The analysis also includes information on Karnataka, which is from a secondary source. Information on Kerala (regarding the general procedure followed by DPCs in the state) was also available from a report on the functioning of DPCs prepared by PRIA's partner in the state.

Among the states covered in the study, detailed information at the district level was available for the following districts:

- Chhattisgarh - Raipur, Janjgir, Raigarh, Surguja & Rajnandgaon
- Bihar – Madhubani
- Rajasthan – Jhunjhunu, Tonk & Karauli
- Haryana – Mahendragarh
- Himachal Pradesh – Kangra
- Karnataka – Mandya & Mysore

Out of the above listed states, it emerged in four of them that the DPCs existed only on paper and did not function on the ground. The details regarding the DPCs and the truth behind their functioning are as follows:

#### V.1. Profile of DPCs Constituted but not Functioning

**V.1.1. Raipur, Janjgir, Raigarh, Surguja & Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh:** DPC was constituted in the year 2005 in these districts, as in other districts of the state. No details were available on any meetings held by DPCs. As reported earlier, all members of DPC have been nominated by the State Government, instead of four-fifths being elected, as is stipulated by the Constitution. Interesting insights are available from the members of various DPCs, who participated in a workshop on the role of DPCs in the district planning process, organised by PRIA in Raipur in September this year. Some of the main concerns voiced by the participants are as follows:

- Due to lack of financial powers DPCs lack teeth and are not being taken seriously by the people.
- DPC members are disillusioned because they do not have any say in deciding beneficiaries of various schemes, which often do not reach the right people.
- Panchayat level plans are not being effectively integrated with state plan because of ineffective DPCs and imbalanced plan priorities

- All members do not participate in DPC meetings. Members are often not aware of the annual plans for their districts.
- Decision making within the DPC is dominated by the Minister-in-Charge of the district who is also the Chairperson. All plans are made with her/his approval and suggestions by other members are generally not taken into account. Often decisions are taken unilaterally and then circulated among members for signature.
- As per a DPC member from Rajnandgaon, not a single meeting of the DPC in the district has taken place in the last three years since its formation.
- DPC members are getting increasingly disillusioned since there is a wide gap between their role as described on paper and the role actually performed by them. DPC is emerging as a non-participatory arm of the State administration, which is quite contrary to the role envisaged for the body by the Constitution.

**V.1.2. Mahendragarh, Haryana:** In Mahendragarh, the DPC has been constituted in January 2007 and the list of members is available. However, no meeting has been held since its constitution. Awareness among local government officials regarding existence of DPC was low. The picture is the same in other districts as well.

**V.1.3. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh:** In Kangra, it was noted that the DPC has not met since its constitution in August 2006. The only meeting that was held was when the DPC itself was elected. Thus the DPC is totally dysfunctional in the district. This is the picture not only in Kangra but in the state in general.

**V.1.4. Madhubani, Bihar:** The DPC was constituted in Madhubani in June 2007. The nominated members are yet to be decided upon by the State Government. Since its constitution, the DPC has had two meetings. The first meeting was a formal one for oath taking by the members. Subsequently another meeting was held, but with no specific agenda. The details of the meeting are not available. On the whole the DPC has not been very active since its constitution.

Only three states had actually functioning DPCs, though to varying degrees of efficiency. They are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

## **V.2. Profile of DPCs Constituted and Functioning**

**V.2.1. Karauli, Tonk & Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan:** DPCs are more regular with their meetings in Rajasthan – all three districts could provide information on meetings of DPC. The venue for meetings was fixed and the meetings were held 3-4 times in a year or as per requirement. In Jhunjhunu meetings are held only with the approval of the District Collector. The following matrix summarises the information on DPC meetings available from the three districts of Rajasthan.

**Table 7: Details of DPC Meetings in Karauli, Tonk and Jhunjhunu - 2007**

Meeting details	Karauli	Tonk	Jhunjhunu
Meetings for which details are available	1, held on 25.8.07	2, held on 9.7.07 & 1.9.07	2, held on 15.7.07 & 24.7.07
Venue	Panchayat Samiti Hall	Collectorate Meeting Hall	Zila Parishad Hall
Issue for discussion	Untied Fund utilisation	Both meetings held to discuss Untied Fund utilisation	1. Approval of Annual Plan (2007-08) & 11 <sup>th</sup> plan 2. Discussion on district plan
No. of members present	18 out of 25	16 & 15 respectively out of 25	17 & 14 respectively out of 25
Other attendees	Information not available	Information not available	ERs, Officials of district administration and line departments (14 & 22 respectively in the 2 meetings)
Decisions taken	Proposals have been received from Panchayat Samitis (PSs) on utilisation of untied funds. These are not as per guidelines hence they should be redrafted by the PSs and then finalised by CEO of ZP. One work should be allotted to each Panchayat.	Information not available	1. Details of Sectoral plans within the annual plan & 11th plan were presented before the DPC. The amount budgeted for the district under the 2 plans was approved after some discussion. 2. Progress under each sector plan was discussed with departmental head / representative.

Source: Information collected by PRIA

The DPC meetings have been mostly focused around seconding proposals for utilisation of untied funds available under the district plan. The average attendance in the meetings is 16 out of 25 members, which is more than 50 per cent. Departmental heads from all concerned line departments were also attendees and discussants in the meetings. Detailed minutes of DPC meetings were available for Jhunjhunu and indicate active discussion among participants as well as suggestions to departmental representatives on location of works and nature of activities to be carried out by their respective departments. Since the planning process is carried out on a sectoral basis, participation of various sector heads is vital in order to integrate all agencies in the participative planning process. The planning process in the DPCs is thus heavily focused on 'schemes and works'.

**V.2.2. Mandya & Mysore, Karnataka:** The DPCs in Karnataka were constituted quite early as compared to other states – they were constituted in 2002. However, since then the DPC in Mandya has met only thrice while the Mysore DPC has met 4 times. The five year plans for the districts have not been prepared by them. Financial contributions from all local bodies have also been irregular and only partly received. The only function that the DPCs have performed is approval of annual budgets of the rural and urban local

bodies in the district. Mysore DPC constituted several committees – on agriculture, poverty alleviation, health, education, social justice, infrastructure services and administration. These committees are working towards preparation of 20 year perspective plan for their respective sectors. No such effort has taken place in Mandya. A major limiting factor has been lack of planning skills among the members. Effective convergence of rural and urban bodies as well as line departments for integrated planning is also not visible. The members have voiced the need for support staff and regular financial inflow for the DPC, the absence of which is an inhibiting factor in the performance of the mandated functions by the Committees.

**Table 8: Planning Process followed by DPC: A Comparative Matrix of Kerala & Rajasthan**

<b>Key steps</b>	<b>Kerala</b>	<b>Rajasthan</b>
Plan preparation at the local level	Sectoral sub-groups & working group prepare draft plan which is then approved in Gram Sabha meeting	Sectoral discussions in villages / ULBs on 17 identified sectors – demands not being met by all sectors were also recorded
Rural-Urban linkage	Consolidation only at DPC level by PPSG	Defined by community needs / ensured by Block and DPC
Panchayat level plan	Joint meeting of Panchayat Committee & Working Group draws up final Panchayat plan – this is then again vetted in a Development Seminar with all stakeholders on board	At Panchayat Samiti level sectorally
Approval to Panchayat / Block plan	Vetted by Block Level Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Block level Gram Sabha	By Block officials – through vetting and consolidation of Panchayat & city plans
District plan	All rural plans integrated to District Panchayat Plan; Municipal plans undergo same process	Prepared by Chief Planning Officer of district by consolidating block plans
Final submission	DPC approves plan in consultation with District level TAG and submits to State Planning Board	DPC approves integrated plan and submits to State Government
Institutional Arrangement	PPSG (to finalise sector-specific district plans)	Coordination Committee – state, district & block level
Technical Support	Technical Support Group, TAG, TAC	Expert services; participation by departmental officials

### **V.3. Role of DPCs with respect to Rural and Urban Local Bodies**

DPCs play an anchoring role between Panchayats and ULBs. They help provide the common platform for integrating rural and urban plans. They help identify planning

projects of common interest and spread across both rural and urban areas, which can be jointly planned and funded. This could include extending link roads from rural hinterland to urban markets, or extending water supply and sewerage infrastructure to peri-urban areas. Has this integrating function been effectively performed in the DPCs studied? The answer is not definitive.

In Mysore and Mandya DPCs, no evidence was available on consolidation of rural and urban plans, or any joint planning. The Mysore DPC in fact noted with concern that municipal plans were being placed before the State Directorate of Municipal Administration rather than the DPCs. Mutual coordination and sharing of plans/projects was not visible in both districts. Even if planned with rural-urban coordination, projects had to be implemented separately by rural and urban local bodies, and hence in effect the goal of integrated development was not being met.

In Rajasthan, information available on the meetings held in DPCs of Jhunjhunu, Tonk and Karauli this year does not relate to the process of integrated rural and urban planning. Hence, the anchoring role of DPC is not reflected in the data available. The annual plan of 2006-07 was approved in one meeting of Jhunjhunu DPC, which showed detailed sector-wise allocations. In Kerala, the DPC is acting as a plan scrutinising body at the district level – to what extent does it play a meaningful anchoring and integrating role is not clear.

#### **V.4. Link with Sectoral Plans**

The planning process being carried out in the district is largely sectoral and the DPCs play an instrumental role in integrating sectoral plans for a unified district plan. Different states have provided different instruments to do so. In Rajasthan, it was observed in all 3 DPCs that officials from all line departments were invited to the DPC meetings and hence participated jointly in the discussions on district plan. In this way DPC could monitor implementation of sectoral plans and schemes.

In Karnataka, the DPCs can form sub committees with officials and experts for different sectors to facilitate plan preparation, monitoring and implementation. Mysore has formed 7 such committees but none are functioning. Mandya has yet to form any. This implies ineffective role being played by DPCs in integrating sectoral planning at the district level. The Karnataka study notes that even experts engaged by the DPC for sectoral planning were not necessarily adept in integrating the sectoral plans, and hence needed additional capacity building for comprehensive social, economic and spatial planning.

Kerala has the system of Technical Advisory Committee with sectoral sub-committees to study sectoral aspects of the plans. Integration of plans takes place only at the district level. As per latest state government guidelines, sectoral research teams can be formed under the plan preparation support group to aid the process of preparation of annual plans by all local bodies in the district. All these various means for enabling DPCs to integrate sectoral planning have been devised by the states, but their effectiveness depends on how effectively the DPCs are able prepare district plans. This remains to be seen.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

Decentralised planning has been always been a desirable goal ever since the inception of developmental planning in India. However, never before have we moved more determinedly towards the goal. The recent measures taken by the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to activate the process of planning from below in a participatory manner are indeed laudable. This is more so given the fact that even after 15 years since the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts decentralised governance is yet to be realized in the country. As per the Planning Commission's instructions issued to states on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 regarding decentralised planning, plans must be routed through DPCs, hence they are central to the district level planning process for the Eleventh plan.

The inferences arrived at on the basis of our analysis are as follows:

- The DPC is a vital link in the process of bottom-up planning. However, in spite of the various efforts taken over the years, DPCs are not functional in most of the states. In a few states they are not even constituted, while in most states they are constituted but not in constitutionally desired ways (Minister as Chairperson or all members nominated by State Government). The scenario in ten of the states, on the basis of status and functioning of the DPCs, has been presented in this report in detail.
- States have generally followed Article 243 ZD in fixing ratio of elected to nominated members, as well as in defining the functions and responsibilities of DPC.
- Chhattisgarh is a unique exception to the above case as all the members of DPC in the state are nominated by the state government – this is in violation of the state's own legal provision for DPCs.
- The system of having State Ministers as Chairpersons of DPCs severely hampers the participative nature of the planning process in the DPC. This is corroborated by our study in Chhattisgarh where DPC members reported that decisions were unilaterally taken by the Minister-in-Charge of the district (who is the Chairperson) without heeding suggestions from other members. Hence the decisions often did not reflect the popular opinion. This is a problem common to all states where ministers are chairpersons of DPC, such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra & Himachal Pradesh.
- Among the states considered in the study, DPCs are functioning effectively only in Kerala, and to some extent in Karnataka and Rajasthan. Kerala has in fact emerged as one of the foremost states where decentralised planning is in place and the DPCs are functioning satisfactorily. The decentralised planning process is, however, not devoid of state influence. Local bodies cannot initiate planning process till the State Government issues guidelines for plan preparation. These guidelines often contain sectoral priorities and key issues to be addressed along

- with methodological instructions. These are binding on all local bodies and hence may actually hinder the independent nature of people's planning.<sup>2</sup>
- In Rajasthan, the role of DPCs appears focused towards disbursement of untied funds and implementation of plan schemes. It seems DPCs in Rajasthan are more like 'District Disbursement and Implementation Committees' rather than 'Planning' committees.
  - DPCs have not been able to effectively enable rural-urban linkages. Coordinated planning is not taking place, and any joint project planning has not necessarily resulted in integrated project implementation. Several reasons account for this. Rural and urban local bodies are not working together on a common platform during the planning process to identify common projects / resource requirements. The plans made in isolation cannot be implemented in an integrated manner. Urban local bodies have traditionally been oriented towards the State Directorate / Departments of Urban Development – hence plans are submitted at the State level apex body for ULBs rather than DPCs – the vertical line of accountability still persists in spite of the revised planning process. This problem has been observed in district planning in Karnataka.
  - Block-level integration of rural and urban plans is not carried out – the DPC guidelines recommend direct transmission of ULB plans to DPC. This may be a hindrance to effective integration of plans at the block level, which may be important especially in the case of small towns. These small towns have significant linkages with surrounding rural areas since they serve the purpose of market centres for the rural hinterland.
  - Inter-sector coordination was also felt to be a problem since it was resisted on account of being against the status quo – old procedures are being followed for the sake of convenience as well. For example, the planning process of schemes like NREGA, SSA, NRHM and JNNURUM, wherever undertaken, is often independent of annual planning at Panchayat or Municipal levels.

Several concrete steps need to be taken to further strengthen and decentralise the institution of DPCs. In order to give them a truly representative and participatory shape, it is extremely necessary that practices such as appointing State Ministers as Chairpersons, or nominating all members of DPC, be put an end to. The Government might consider introducing some disincentives for states adhering to such practices. Certain constructive measures that need to be taken in order to strengthen DPCs include the following:

- The DPCs need to be given adequate financial support as well as staff strength in order to enable them to perform their tasks effectively. Converting DPCs into permanent institutions with offices and secretariat will perhaps address this issue to a large extent.
- Capacity building needs that emerge are pressing – the need for members to understand the true role of the DPC and what it seeks to achieve; the need for members as well as experts to understand the nuances of integrated planning for social and economic development and the difference between perspective plans,

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<sup>2</sup> See for example GO (MS) No. 128/2007/LSGD dated 14.5.07 issued by the Kerala Local Self Government Department containing guidelines for the preparation of Annual Plan 2007-08 and XI five year plan.

- five year plans and annual plans; the need for sectoral and departmental heads to understand the significance on integrated planning under the district planning framework. Clarity of roles and responsibilities is required to bring vitality to the DPC as an institution, wherever functioning.
- Institutional capacity building has to be coterminous with capacity building of members and expert associates. In Kerala's initial 'campaigning' mode to shake up the system, it was observed that 'Panchayats could not cope with the administrative or organizational challenges of spending the money (nearly one to one-and-a-half crore Rupees per Panchayat per annum) allocated to them'<sup>3</sup> through the people's plans. The Campaign had risen people's expectations to a level much beyond what the local bodies were equipped to deliver. The Campaign approach is, however, useful for generating awareness among the people's and ensuring participation in the district planning process, and therefore, should be adopted in other states as well. However, it can be taken up after the institutions are equipped to respond to people's plans as well.
  - The Rural and Urban Local Bodies also need to be oriented to adopt an integrated approach to planning. While preparation of annual plans they have to keep in mind the medium and long term vision and goals for the district.
  - The planning function in urban areas itself suffers from ambiguity in the sense that land use planning is often centralised under the town planning department, and the ULB only carries out annual budgetary planning. In some cases parastatals carry out independent planning for the services they provide, especially water supply. In such a scenario it is very important to ensure that all such multiple bodies carry out the planning exercise together, keeping the district long and medium term perspective plan in purview. The ideal situation, of course, would be that the planning function is completely devolved to ULBs.
  - 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.

District planning can be successful only when it is owned upto by all the stakeholders – both people and planners alike. Hence, all round awareness and education is a necessary precondition to make it effective. In this context the last point could be that if all recommendations of the Expert Group on Grassroots Planning are implemented with sincerity, then perhaps by the end of the Eleventh Plan period, DPCs will surely emerge as central cogs of grassroots planning in India.

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<sup>3</sup> Kannan, K. P. (2000): People's Planning, Kerala's Dilemma, *Seminar*, 485.