

Action Research on Community- Based Planning

**Community-based
Planning study tour to
India
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ACRONYMS

BMS	Basic Minimum Service
CAPART	Council for the Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Training
CBP	Community-Based Planning
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
DPC	District Planning Committee
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
ETC	Extension Training Centre
LA	Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIRD	National Institute of Rural Development
NPC	National Planning Commission
OBC	Other Backward Castes
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SFC	State Finance Commission
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SPC	State Planning Commission
VP	Village Panchayat
WPP	Women Prosperity Programme

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COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE IN MAKING THE LINK BETWEEN THE MICRO AND THE MESO

PART A INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to CBP project

Khanya is funded by DFID to manage a project called: "Making the link between micro and meso: Learning from experience on community-based planning (CBP). The project involves action research/learning within and between the four African countries of Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Uganda. The project purpose is that realistic plans have been developed in each country for policy change, implementation or piloting of community-based planning systems, which participating institutions are committed to take forward. The project involves a number of activities encouraging learning including a study tour of participating countries to India. India, and specifically the State of Madhya Pradesh was decided upon because of its advancements in decentralised development planning processes.

1.2 Objectives of the study tour

The objective was that by the end of the visit we will have:

- An understanding of the Indian development situation.
Learned from India CBP experiences and systems in general and areas of success and failure
- Improved individual country and African CBP concepts and pilots.
- Used the study tour as a strategic contribution to advance the learnings from the CBP project in the 4 countries.

1.3 Approach and methodology

A participatory action research approach is being used in the project to enhance local processes. The Tour Team was led by James Carnegie with assistance from Joe Marumo. All team members were allocated specific responsibilities and there were regular team meetings and workshops to review progress and learnings.

PART B CURRENT SITUATION IN INDIA

2 INDIAN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

2.1 Socio-economic profile

Key statistics provided by government records show that the Indian landmass is 3,287,782 sq.km with a population density of 273 per sq km. 26.1% of the population live in urban areas while 74% is rural. The sex ratio is 927 females per 1000 males, and the infant mortality rate is 79 per 1000 births. The overall literacy rate stands at 52% for males and 64% for females respectively. The average life expectancy is 66 years. The exact population size is unknown, but estimates of the 2001 census showed estimates of 1, 027, 015, 247. The State of Madhya Pradesh is the largest in the country and accounted for some 66 million people. The annual population growth rate is 2.5%. Rural areas with access to portable water is 98%, with 100% electrification. On the other hand, sanitation is limited in many areas, especially in rural settings. Nationally 36.9% of the population live below the poverty line. The road network throughout the country is functional with feeder-roads providing access to rural areas.

2.2 Economy

The Indian economy is predominantly agricultural, contributing 29% of the GDP and employing 64% of the labour force. Food grains make up 63% of the total agricultural output. Other sectors include mining, telecommunications, manufacturing industry, fishing and forestry, tourism and trade. Key export commodities include precious stones, jewellery, cotton yarn and fabrics, handicrafts, cereals, marine products, fabric (and garments) and transport equipment.

2.3 Culture and religion

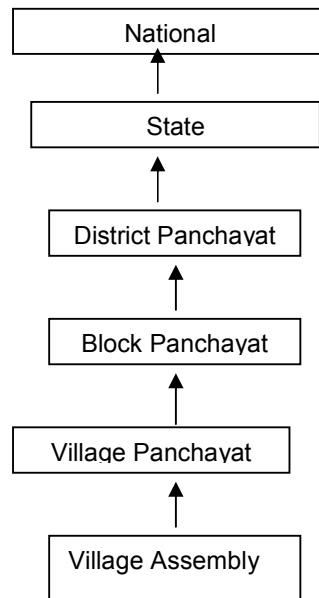
The main religious groups are Hindu (83.6% of the population), followed by Moslem (11.9%), Christians (2.6%) and Sikhs 1.9%. Because of the marginalisation brought by the traditional caste system, India has quotas for other social groups considered below the social level of the dominant Hindu Caste. Culture is mostly religious-based, and dictates very much the way of life of many Indians.

3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES AND POLICIES THAT GUIDE PLANNING

3.1 Planning structures

Until 1991, India had a 3-tier system of government with the centre being the national government, the State and the Village Assembly at the micro level. Other intermediary government levels (District and Block) involved in development planning processes have since been introduced, as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Demonstration of planning structures in India



Previously, government structures tended to consolidate power and authority at the centre, however recent constitutional amendments in India have decentralised power and authority to the grassroots, especially political power, with the Village Panchayat (VP) being *de jure* structures, and playing a vital role in the village planning systems. Sectoral committees at village level have been created to cater for general administration, education, health and social welfare, construction and development, and those receive their mandates from the Wards (the lowest but most important units of development planning in the villages). The main aim of devolution of the planning process was explained as attempting to reduce bureaucracy and to allow people to take responsibility for development. Nevertheless, villages are still dependent on the higher levels of government for financial support. The national government provides a development framework and guidelines, and is generally responsible for ensuring that development happens and that the needs of the people are met. Finances are therefore mobilised at the centre and allocated down to the state, districts, and eventually to the blocks. Detailed financial allocations and management will be discussed in later sections of this report.

Decentralisation aims to strengthen and promote democracy to enable local participation in development processes as well as providing transparent, accountable and responsive governance. Thus the salient features of the 73rd Amendment included the following:

- To provide a 3-tier system of Panchayat Raj;
- To hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years;
- To provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women (not less than 33% of total seats);
- To appoint State Finance Commissions (SFCs) to make recommendations regarding the financial powers of the Panchayats, and
- To constitute District Planning Committees to prepare draft development plan for districts.

In 1991 key changes were made to the structure through two constitutional amendments, *Schedules 73* and *74*. The new decentralised governance model is structured to provide an enabling environment for ordinary people to participate in the planning processes, especially the disadvantaged groups of the Indian society living in rural areas. *Schedules 73* and *74* made allowance for what is known as the *Reservation Clause*. This clause provides for inclusion and representation of women and lower castes in the political structures. The representation is aimed at being proportional to the percentage population of Panchayats at all levels. In terms of the Reservation Clause, 30% of the seats and positions should be reserved for women and 10% for Other Backward Castes (OBC).

3.2 Powers and responsibilities of Panchayats

At district, block and village Panchayat levels, the functions were explained as follows:

- Preparation of plans for economic development and social justice;
- Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to 29 subjects given in the *11th Schedule* of the Constitution (schemes are essentially generated at State and/or National level);
- To levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees;
- To implement policies and programmes as given by either the State or national government;
- To formulate rules, regulations and orders within the legal framework given by the higher authorities. They can also impose penalties and are expected to resolve disputes. Therefore they are executive, political and legislative bodies.

3.3 Levels and composition of Panchayats

A Village Panchayat consists of between 1000 – 5000 voters and 10 – 20 members serving 10 to 20 wards. Voters in the Village Panchayat elect one member per ward to form a Village Panchayat Committee. This Committee is

led by an elected Sarpanch or Village Head. In addition to this committee, residents of each village form committees to deal with local issues – these committees are coordinated by a Village Assembly. The Village Assembly is the lowest form of local government.

A Block Panchayat is composed of 10 – 25 Village Panchayats. Each Village Panchayat elects one member to represent it on the Block Panchayat Committee. The Block Panchayat Committee is headed by a president elected by the committee members.

District Panchayat consists of 10 –25 Block Panchayat. Each Block Panchayat elects one member to represent it on the District Panchayat Committee. This committee is headed by a CEO, who must be an appointed government official (rather than an elected politician).

The concept of Gram Swaraj¹ provides for village self-rule that is expressed through the Village Panchayat. The political representation at the Village Panchayat level is one way in which communities can express their development needs.

As mentioned above, in addition the general functions prescribed by the Constitution, the Village Panchayat also has the power to raise its own revenue by imposing local taxes, conduct social audit of programmes and schemes implemented in the village, review, monitor and evaluate local development plans and ensure that regular Village Assembly meetings are held.

3.4 Village Assembly/Gram Sabha

At the village level, the concept of village self-rule (Gram Swaraj) is expressed through the “Gram Sabha” or Village Assembly. Each village has a Village Assembly which is composed of 7 standing committees, namely for Education, Health, Agriculture, Public Property, Infrastructure, Security and Social Justice. The specific roles and functions of these committees include:

- Ownership of minor forest produce;
- Approval of development plans;
- Selection of beneficiaries under various programmes;
- Consultation on land acquisition;
- Management of minor water bodies;
- Control of mineral leases;
- Regulation/control of sale of intoxicants;
- Prevent alienation of land and restore unlawfully alienated land;
- Management of village markets;
- Control institutions and functionaries in all social sectors.

¹ “Gram Swaraj” literally means “village self-rule”. This concept was originally conceived by Mahatma Gandhi.

Each committee may have up to 12 members and must elect a president. The presidents of these seven committees plus the Village Sarpanch form the Village Development Committee of the Village Assembly. This committee is responsible for coordinating development plans and priorities at village level. The Village Panchayat Committee in turn, consolidates the plans from the various villages under its jurisdiction, in the form of an annual development plan.

According to the *Socio-economic Profile Report* of Madhya Pradesh, the Panchayats substantially remain only as implementing agencies and suppliers of inputs of government-conceived schemes. Resources such as budgets and staff largely remain with the government, and funds are provided to Panchayats tied to specific schemes.

4 PLANNING PROCESSES

The Panchayat system of planning in Madhya Pradesh was started following the Supreme Court judgement on basic delivery structures. Under this system of planning, planning processes are initiated from the village, through the Block up to the District level. The idea behind this system of planning is based on the Gram Swaraj. Figure 4 below demonstrates the linkages amongst key planning structures.

Figure 4 The planning process in practice – from village to state level

LEVEL	Reactive Planning	Needs Based Planning (annual planning)	Perspective Planning	Implementation	Key Challenges
<p>Village Panchayat Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Letter is received by the village panchayat from block panchayat detailing ad hoc funding available for specified purpose . -Within 7 days sarpanch (elected VP head) sends out notice of meeting and an agenda to members regarding letter. -Panchayat members sign to indicate receipt of notification. -Meeting to discuss letter is held (quorum of 50% + 1 required). -At meeting members: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i.)discuss possible activities in the panchayat that funding can be used for; ii.)determine how money will be spent; iii.)notify villagers if labour will be required (waged/unwaged); iv.)keep minutes of discussion; v.)report back to block regarding how money will be utilized. <p>Potential sources of funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Govt dept Missions; -Ad hoc "tied" funding from State; -Donors/NGOs; -Own revenue – house/ water taxes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -December: Gram Sabha meetings held -At least one member of each household in village encouraged to attend meeting -Village needs and priorities for the coming year are discussed. -Village Assembly committees (7) meet to discuss how issues will be addressed and in which areas of the village. -List of agreed issues/action presented to village development committee. -Village development committee (chaired by sarpanch) consolidates plans and prioritises issues. -Consolidated plan presented back to village assembly for approval -Approved plan is presented to the panchayat. -Sarpanch and panchayat consolidates individual village plans in the form of an annual plan. -Panchayat annual plan - sent to block for funding by end January. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some NGOs are assisting villages to prepare more longer term plans and visions (= "perspective plans"). -NGOs identify local volunteers (usually women) to help facilitate a development process with villagers. -Volunteers are trained in participatory methods and principles. -A relationship is established with villagers – emphasis is placed on establishing empowering and independence relationships (eg. "getting them to think for themselves vs forcing them to think") and an exit strategy is agreed – to prevent dependency. -Volunteers start discussions around easy/manageable issues – usually with groups of women eg. starting small savings groups/watsan ed etc. -Once trust and confidence has been established (women feel they can control of own lives) volunteers move on to discuss more difficult issues and activities. -Vision mapping is then conducted with different groups of villagers to determine how they see their village in 3 – 5 years time. -Discussions are held at the Gram Sabha to determine how these visions will be achieved and what issues will receive first priority. -Volunteers work with women to improve their confidence and help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Implementation of projects is done by Village Panchayat (VP) Committees for projects below 3 lakh. -Local skills and unskilled labour is sought from the villages that form the VP. No formal tendering process is carried out for these projects. -Implementation of projects conceived through reactive planning e.g through Rajiv Gandhi Education Mission, is done by the VP. Sarpanch is in charge of implementation of all the projects and is the accounting officer. -Operations and maintenance is done by the VP for all projects. -Social audits done by the VP but not in a systematic and prescribed way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -VPs are self-accounting and implementing agencies for their own projects. -Quality assurance of projects not guaranteed for project implementation without competitive tendering and technical supervision. -High level of local skills development and job creation within the VP. -Community contributions are high. -Level of ownership of investments very high. -Reporting system on VP level projects is still undocumented. 	

LEVEL	Reactive Planning	Needs Based Planning (annual planning)	Perspective Planning	Implementation	Key Challenges
Block Panchayat Level	<p>-“Tied” funding is received by the block for distribution to village level based on need and population size.</p> <p>-Letter is sent to relevant village panchayat detailing amount and specific purpose.</p> <p>-Block monitors village financial records and meeting minutes to ensure money is spent appropriately.</p>	<p>-All VP annual plans and proposals are consolidated by the block.</p> <p>-Block then produces its own annual plan based on the VP plans.</p> <p>-Block annual plans are submitted to the district by end May.</p> <p>-Based on funding criteria (pop size and VP need) VP annual plans are assessed and successful activities approved – this process incorporates political negotiations by VP block representatives.</p> <p>-Results of the negotiations are fed back to the VP.</p> <p>-Funding is allocated to the VP for approved activities.</p> <p>-Block monitors expenditure and financial records related to approved activities and allocated funding.</p>	<p>them find ways of expressing themselves in these meetings.</p> <p>-Local resources are mobilised to implement initial activities.</p> <p>-As villagers gain confidence and become more self reliant – larger projects are tackled and external partners/assistance is sought.</p> <p>-VP adapts visions and submits annual plan block</p>	<p>-Implementation of projects above 3 lakh is done by the Block Panchayat on behalf of the VP.</p> <p>-Block performs monitoring role for projects that are conceived through reactive planning process. Does not participate in implementation directly. Only implements when requested by VP for projects that are slightly more complex for the VP.</p> <p>-Water services like hand pumps are maintained by the technical depts. At the Block.</p>	<p>-Block Panchayat implements most projects through own technical departments. No reported system of tendering.</p>
District Panchayat Level	<p>-“Tied” funding – reserved for specific activities is received from the State for specific activities.</p>	<p>-Receives and consolidates all block annual plans.</p> <p>Allocates funding received from the state/central govt to blocks – based on pop size.</p>	<p>-NGOs and villagers document and disseminate experiences more widely.</p> <p>-NGOs use case studies to advocate the use of these alternative ways of planning and to influence policy formation.</p>	<p>Not yet discussed</p>	
State/ National level	<p>-Ad hoc funding is provided to district for specific activities eg. Construction of infrastructure/</p>	<p>-State gives directives to districts re its development priorities (usually over a 5 year timeframe) eg. MP</p>	<p>-NGOs use case studies to advocate the use of these alternative ways of planning and to</p>	<p>Not yet discussed.</p>	

LEVEL	Reactive Planning	Needs Based Planning (annual planning)	Perspective Planning	Implementation	Key Challenges
	maintenance of infrastructure. -Various Govt depts. Establish Missions which provide funding for key State priorities eg. Education Guarantee Scheme.	State is in its third year of drought – a key development priority relates to construction of water conservation measures (dams, catchment management etc). -Provides funding directly to districts	influence policy formation.		

4.1 Village level

Each village elects a Village Assembly to facilitate the village level planning process. The Village Assembly (Gram Swaraj) is a statutory body that can sue and be sued. The Village Assembly prepares plans at the village level through its 7 sub-committees. The Assembly meets every month with a quorum of at least one third being women. Decisions are unanimously reached. The planning process has the following essential features:

- Planning at the village level starts with ward meetings (usually attended exclusively by male household heads). During these meetings issues are raised and priorities set;
- Those priorities are then submitted to the Village Assembly for adjudication;
- Sub-committees of the Village Assembly consider the priorities and submit ideas for solutions to the Village Development committee;
- The Village Development Committee sends its consolidated plans/priorities to the Village Panchayat.;
- The Village Panchayat assesses priorities, discusses options and develops an integrated annual plan for the whole Panchayat;
- The approved plan of the Panchayat with budget is then forwarded to the Block Panchayat and then to the District.

The Block Panchayat cannot alter the plans submitted by the Village Panchayat. The Block only exercises a monitoring role over the Village Panchayat. The Village Assembly sometimes receives direct projects or programmes from the Block Panchayat for approval and implementation. In such cases it is the responsibility of the Block Panchayat to ensure that funds are made available for the execution of the projects or programmes.

4.2 Block level

The Block Panchayat receives plans forwarded by the Village Panchayats under its jurisdiction. It then does an assessment on all and consolidates them into an integrated annual plan for the Block. Projects and Programmes that are beyond the jurisdiction of the Block are forwarded to the district for approval. It is the duty of the Block Panchayat to ensure that funds are made available for the execution of the projects and programmes approved by the Village Assemblies.

4.3 District level

At the district level, the District Planning Committee (DPC) embodies all the plans from the Block Panchayats into an integrated annual plan for the district. These plans are prepared based on inputs from the Village Panchayats and Block Panchayats. The approved plans including departmental budgets are sent to the State Planning Commission (SPC) for approval.

4.4 State level

At the State Government level, district plans are received, discussed and voted upon by the State Planning Commission. However, 30% of the State funds by-pass the District and Blocks and go directly to the various Village Assemblies for project implementation.

4.5 National level

At the National Government level there is a National Planning Commission (NPC), which is responsible for overall national planning functions. It receives plans and proposals from all State Governments, and considers them for funding.

PART C LEARNINGS AND GAPS

5 PLANNING PROCESSES IN PRACTICE

5.1 Village level

Despite legislation enforcing reservations (30% women to occupy all posts and positions and attend gatherings) the status quo continues to restrict women – especially daughters-in-law² - from overtly attending and contributing to village meetings. In addition to the lack of participation of women in general meetings, the participation of elected women-members is also being restricted by cultural norms. Legislation requires that women must fill 30% of posts and positions, but this does not ensure that women actively participate. Despite the fact that women are elected, it is their husbands who represent them by proxy at meetings and gatherings, and make decisions on their behalf³.

² According to existing customs village “daughters” – those women/girls born and raised in the village - may attend and participate in meetings, while daughters-in-law are not permitted to attend meetings. Instead these “outsiders” and women from scheduled castes/tribes may only stand at the back or on the fringes of gatherings. However, women generally are discouraged from actively participating by their husbands and elders.

³ The study team visited four villages and met with the Panchayat Committee in each case – but it was only at the last village that one woman elected representative was met. All meetings were attended exclusively by men – despite the fact that at least 30% of all members were female.

Box 5.1 Kurawar village in Madhya Pradesh

The village has a population of 12 388. Its economic base is agriculture with prominent crops being soybean, peas gram, corn, wheat, millets and vegetables. The village boasts a big market, a Primary and Middle schools, cluster resource centre and a service class such as teachers and police officers. Other infrastructure in the village includes a Cooperative bank, Panchayat office, post office and various shops. The village has 200 voters and supports the ruling party. The Village Panchayat is made up of one Sarpanch and 20 elected members, 30% of whom are supposed to be women. However, no women were present in the meeting during the team's visit. Instead, some women showed curiosity at what was happening during the visit, but remained behind walls and in their houses. Children were frequently told to leave the vicinity of the meeting and only older boys were allowed to sit in and listen to the discussions between the Panchayat and the visitors. Most people in the village belong to a Scheduled Caste. There are no village Assembly Committees formed yet, because of failure to obtain the required quorum in village meetings (Wards) i.e 20% of households and 30% women present.

However, various alternatives are being encouraged by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to provide space for women to participate actively in village meetings:

- Focusing on projects/activities that reinforce confidence and build capacity amongst women;
- Encouraging older women to talk in meetings, as this is tolerated to some extent;
- Using teams of adolescent, school-going girls to introduce messages about health and other issues that women want raised. This is tolerated and helps to empower the youth;
- Encouraging meetings to be held in early mornings or late afternoons when women are not likely to be working in fields as waged labourers;
- Focus on overcoming beliefs and perceptions that women have about themselves and men have about women, as this is at the core of women's inability to participate actively to influence the development process;
- Mutually agreeing on an exit strategy between an NGO and community – this reinforces the establishment of a healthy, independent relationship with the community from the start of the interaction.

Other challenges

In order to obtain the required quorum at village meetings (attendance of 20% of households and 30% women present) village leaders arrange meetings to co-inside with the distribution of handouts e.g. pension, ration cards. Thus the planning system becomes associated with the passive receipt of handouts versus active participation and empowerment.

The current system (needs based and reactive planning) emphasises a reliance on handouts. Plans tend to focus on the identification of problems which can be "solved" by tangible development products (e.g. taps, toilets, buildings) or external funding – rather than fostering an empowering

development approach which focuses on the mobilisation of local energy and resources. The provision of ad hoc “tied” funding ensures that the control of decision making remains at higher levels, and reinforces the reactive nature of village plans.

The annual planning process most frequently utilised at village level (needs based planning) tends to focus on short term needs versus long-term transformation processes. However, it is clear that the “perspective planning” process has a greater impact on livelihood improvement and empowerment/involvement of a wider cross section of the community.

Despite the fact that the Village Assembly is responsible for conducting a social audit of all activities conducted in the village, monitoring impact tends to focus on checking whether minutes of meetings are up to date and that financial records are accurate. This focus on administrative issues will not ensure that activities implemented have an impact on social justice and empowerment (as intended by the legislation and guidelines). Ongoing technical training and support is required to assist people to exercise rights and to institutionalise participatory self-governance.

5.2 Block Level

Officials and members at this level need to have a sound understanding of the participatory and empowering spirit of the legislation in order to support the implementation of an effective system of self-governance. The lack of understanding and unwillingness to devolve power and decision-making control to lower levels leads to the maintenance of centralised control and the inequitable status of women.

Allocation of funding to Village Panchayat level is strongly influenced by political patronage (i.e support of the ruling party), linkages and caste membership – thus checks and balances need to be in place to ensure some level of equity in access to and the distribution of resources.

Some villagers mentioned the lack of feedback regarding their annual plans and proposals and the apparent disconnect between plans and ad hoc funding received. Block level officials and members also need to be accountable to lower levels to ensure the transparent and equitable distribution of resources.

5.3 District Level

Officials at this level, who are responsible for the design of the self-governance system, need to have a clear, agreed vision and to be able to communicate the spirit of participation and empowerment integral to this process, to others. They also need to be able to motivate lower level officials and politicians in order to ensure that an effective system is implemented,

versus the mere top-down allocation of ad hoc resources according to patronage and political lines.

Villagers should demand greater responsiveness to priorities at village level and accountability if they are to influence district level resource allocation. Short term, needs-based annual planning cycles will not achieve this on their own. Longer term transformation strategies need to be incorporated into the planning and resource allocation process.

5.4 NGO support at village level – a possible alternative

Samarthan is a local NGO based in Madhya Pradesh. The organisation was founded in 1995 and is centred on the promotion of participation in development and decentralised governance. Some of the study team members visited a village in which Samarthan is working to gain a deeper understanding of how this organisation supports self-governance and empowerment at a local level.

The village visited was Semilkhurd - Sehore District (294 villages/127 Village Panchayats) south west of Bhopal. Samarthan has been working at Semilkhurd for approximately 6 months, piloting an alternative “perspective based planning” process. The village is headed by a female Sarpanch, although her husband is more active on her behalf regarding panchayat issues. However, both are very committed to the development process in their community and get actively involved in village projects. This has been very helpful in terms of facilitating development activities.

Samarthan started its activities in the village when identifying three villages to participate in an alternative development planning model. Initially a small group of local volunteers were identified to facilitate this process. Criteria for selection included being born in and currently living in the village – this is important as the Samarthan methodology emphasises local ownership and capacity building, a process, which should not be initiated/dependent on outsiders. However, the volunteers all received a thorough grounding and training from Samarthan in participatory methods and working principles.

After one month’s training, volunteers began working in the village. One female volunteer, Minna, mobilised a group of 20 women to start their own savings group. This type of activity was chosen because it was relatively easy to initiate and showed rapid results. Within two months the women had saved up Rs. 400 and were able to start planning how they would utilise the money. The other key result of this type of activity is that it served to establish trust between the volunteer, the NGO staff and the women. This was important in the establishment of healthy and independent relationships that will form the basis of a more self-sufficient and sustainable development process. As Minna, noted, “We try to get people to think for themselves – not force them to think.” This also reinforces the message that Samarthan is not there to provide handouts, but to see what people can do for themselves.

Once the savings group was functioning well and the women were feeling more confident about their ability to take control of their own lives, Minna then started looking at other problems that the women were facing. Samarthan emphasises the importance of working at the villagers' pace and establishing healthy, independent relationships – rather than overpowering people with technical information and large activities that might leave people feeling overwhelmed and reliant on external assistance. Thus, due to the positive experience of the saving programme, the women were able to engage more confidently in discussions about new issues and to start thinking about their lives less as victims and more as responsible individuals.

At this stage the volunteers conducted a vision mapping exercise with different groups within the village to determine what people would like their village to look like in 3 – 4 years time. Due to the establishment of healthy, independent relationships with Samarthan, these visions tended to focus on what villagers could do themselves – and not on what they expected the government, outside agencies to do for them. The Village Assembly then discussed how these visions could be achieved, what would be tackled first and how resources could be mobilised within the community. The Sarpanch and her husband played an important role in guiding and following up this process of local planning and action.

Several activities have been started already, including:

- Addressing an urgent shortage of water–villagers identified an appropriate place for a small dam to be built, organised tractors from the village to dig a deeper dam and built an earth wall to trap the water. This dam is now full and used by farmers to water their animals during the dry season – when water has been in short supply;
- Mobilising donor funding to build a primary school, using locally made bricks and materials;
- Constructing a VIP toilet for the primary school using local labour and materials;
- One key element of these activities was that they were all planned and carried out by the villagers with minimal outside intervention. This was important as it served to boost people's confidence and reinforce the realisation that they could do things for themselves and did not need to wait for outside interventions and funding to address their problems or achieve their vision.

Having had this positive experience the villagers were then ready to consider slightly more ambitious projects, and they are planning to enlarge their dam and collaborate with a neighbouring village to construct a more permanent cement dam wall. The two villages will contribute materials and labour. In this way Samarthan hopes to widen the influence of the village assembly and the control that people, especially the women, can have over their own lives. This incremental approach of building confidence and changing attitudes to development is integral to the way in which Samarthan operates. It is also an important element of establishing an empowering and inclusive development process. Such learnings need to be integrated into our own practices.

6 FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCES

This section describes the financial, human and material resources available to the Panchayats to undertake planning and development. It covers the various local and external sources of revenue, the budgeting and utilisation of funds and mechanisms in place to ensure financial management and accountability. Capacity-building in the form of training and other support mechanisms are also explored because of the impact that they have on community-based planning.

6.1 Sources of Revenue

Local Taxes

The government's planning framework assumes that the bulk of the improvement in public services will have to be undertaken by local authorities under the decentralised system. Greater revenue generation is anticipated through local efforts of the Panchayats, particularly for Basic Minimum Services (BMSs). The Village Panchayats obtain taxes from market fees, user fees for water and electricity, property tax and contributions to projects in the form of labour and local materials. For example, in Kurawar, Rs.15 is charged for water connection, while Rs.1200 is charged for water supply per month. In the case of electricity, however, it appears that the Panchayat collects the tariff for street lighting and passes it on to the Electricity Board, with added levy for its own financial security.

While the government determines the tax rates, the Panchayat has a right to apply the rates to suit the conditions of each area. There is no evidence of tax registers or registration of properties, nevertheless measures have been put in place to enforce payment of taxes by all eligible tax payers. Penalties for failure to pay one's dues result in disconnection from bulk services and denial of certificates of caste, domicile and family cards. Genuine desperate cases however, are exempted from payment or allowed to pay in instalments.

The rate of success in taxes and rates collection is relatively high, reaching up to more than 80% in most areas. Defaulting or non-payment is judged carefully, because the population recognises the usefulness of paying taxes and difficult situations residents may face from time to time. The amount collected from local revenue sources per annum for a sizeable village like Kurabal (one of the villages visited, with population size 12 388) ranges from Rs.3.0 – 4.5 million per annum.

Government Grants

The State Development Council has recommended transfer of a minimum 33% of the State budget outlays for District sector schemes relating to two types of grants: a grant for infrastructure and development and a grant for self-employment or specific functions such as payment of salaries or pensions. The Village Panchayat has flexibility in the use of infrastructure grants, but the self-employment grant is tied to the specific purpose for which it is released. However, government also proceeds in some cases to earmark the infrastructure grants. For example, last year, the villages in Madhya Pradesh were instructed to use the money only for drainage and water infrastructure. The funds flow from National to State to District to Block and ultimately to the Village Panchayat. In addition, Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Legislative Assembly (LA) are given some funds by the centre to support development programmes at village level. MPs may be given up to Rs. 20 million under this scheme.

Contribution by NGOs and Private Sector

In most of the areas visited, there was no contribution by NGOs to the budgets and plans of the local areas. The local leaders however expressed readiness to work with the NGOs, and requested assistance in attracting them to their areas. Although there is no explicit policy in involving the private sector, private enterprises do engage in various activities, particularly during implementation by supplying inputs and services.

Contribution by communities

Apart from paying taxes, communities contribute to the local plans in various ways:

- During the planning stage, people provide inputs and set the agenda for Village Assemblies, members of the Village Assemblies are also community members and give ideas and help to prioritise projects according to most pressing needs of the area;
- During implementation, community members contribute labour, materials, monitoring, and security for projects;
- The utility user-charges are used in maintenance;
- Political leaders play the role of negotiators and lobby for support of projects at the Block level.

There was no evidence of people or Panchayats borrowing from commercial banks or other sources. However, they are paid royalties on some of their assets such as buildings and land.

6.2 Utilisation of Funds

Budgeting process

The Gram Swaraj gave power to villages for self-government. This includes, among others, powers and authority for budgeting and budget implementation, planning for economic development and social justice. The budget is prepared by the sub-committees of the Village Assembly, assisted by the respective departmental technical officers, and then sent to the higher level for approval. Only approved projects will be implemented. The Panchayats have no indication in advance of the amount of money available to them as grants in the following financial year. It all depends on project proposals submitted and approved.

The financial year runs from April to March. The budget cycle starts in January with village meetings and goes on for a period of 2-3 months. The Village Panchayats submit their annual plans to the Block Panchayat by the end of March. The Block consolidates the plans of different villages and produces a Block plan and budget, and sends it to the District for approval. Budgeting at the Block level takes up to 2 months. The District in turn reviews the proposals and sends them to the State Government for funding. It should be noted that the District does not reject the proposals, but forwards it to departmental technical advisors for comment and assessment.

The budgeting process is an intense political bargaining exercise. Two main factors play a role in the allocation of resources:

- whether the Village Head is assertive in the political and social arena
- and the political activism of the representative at the Block level. The Panchayat member is under pressure from his/her constituency to secure approval of their projects. The party power plays a role because it is those who are aligned to the ruling party whose proposals will be favoured.

Budget Structure

The Panchayat budget has two aspects, the budget for operational expenses and the budget for development expenditure.

Budget for the operational expenses. This includes salaries for staff employed by the Panchayat, maintenance of building structures, paying electricity charges for water pumps, purchasing stationery items, maintenance of water pipes, sourcing technical staff to visit villages and provide advice, salary for Panchayat President and Vice President and transport allowances for Panchayat members to attend meetings. There is no evidence of incentives for community members to participate in Panchayat activities. Their participation is linked with their needs being met.

Budget for development expenditures. This is for two purposes: the basic services ration, used to undertake infrastructure projects and the village self-employment scheme. For example, Piplya-Isobhe village was given Rs.35, 000 in the previous year for this scheme, which was used for construction of a drainage system and repairing of dug wells. The second is the village self-employment scheme, used to pay pension, government staff salaries and other specific expenditures. The village of Piplya-Isobhe received Rs.20, 000

under this scheme last year. The Village has to operate according to the conditions set by government. The priority programme areas of government under the Basic Minimum Services, for which the local authorities are responsible include rural water supply, primary health care, primary education, houses for the poor, feeder- roads and nutrition. There is no medium-term budget framework. The budget is for each fiscal year. It was also indicated that there were no integrated budgets, only sectoral budgets and plans.

6.3 Financial management systems and procedures

Financial records

The Panchayats in various villages assured the study team of the existence of budget books and plans, as well as minutes written of the various meetings held. These would be in the local language. But the copies of the documents were not seen. It was also reported that the Panchayats, particularly the Block and higher levels do maintain cash and other ledger books and produce annual final accounts.

Management and Banking

The day-to-day management of funds is entrusted to the Panchayat Secretary, assisted by the heads of standing committees on the Village Assembly. Village bank accounts are only opened with the strict authorisation of the Block Panchayat. The accounts are subject to inspection by the district inspectors.

Mechanisms to ensure transparency and Accountability

There is an internal auditor at the District level. The District auditors also audit accounts every month. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is an autonomous body, which monitors disbursement of funds in all the units, and is attached to the District. In addition, the Village Panchayat has the mandate to question departmental schemes implemented in their area. They question value for money and social relevance of the projects (social audit). The Village Development Committee, composed of the Village Head and the President of each standing committee of the Village Assembly, is responsible for approving and monitoring the work of all the sub-committees. The public is given information on the performance of the budget and plans. Annual accounts of the Panchayat have to be displayed on public notice boards.

Contracting of services

There is no independent tender board. However, there is a Construction Committee, which hires labour to work on the projects and pays them on a daily basis. They may seek technical assistance from the Rural Engineering Services Department at the Block, or any other relevant government department. In addition, the village appoints up to 2 knowledgeable residents

to carry out the function of purchase on their behalf. They must ensure right pricing, quality and quantity in all the purchases made and services rendered to the Panchayat by private persons.

6.4 Training and Capacity-building

There is no training programme at the village level either targeting the Assembly or the Panchayat. However, there are opportunities for capacity building for Panchayat members. The annual rotational representation of the Village Heads on the Block Panchayat helps to build their capacity for debate and advocacy at higher levels. By the end of the 5-year term, all Village Heads have gone through the rotation.

NGOs are being requested to assist in training the Panchayats and the committees in planning, budgeting and other aspects. This is mainly done by the Ministry for Rural Development (MRD), which provides financial assistance to the NGOs through the Council for the Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Training (CAPART).

NGOs also help in addressing the question of economic empowerment of the women. An example is the Women Prosperity Programme (WPP), which uses the savings and credit approach to extend micro-credit to women. The problem is that NGOs are not yet firmly on ground in some areas.

Women members face a critical problem of low education. Responses from some of the male Panchayat members on women participation include comments such as "...they cannot take full advantage of the opportunities created for them...some of the women are not competent and have to be guided by someone else...". Government has made universal primary education one of its key priorities.

The Ministry for Rural Development extends limited financial assistance to the States to train and create awareness among the elected members of Panchayats and technocrats. The State Government and District also organise Inter-Panchayat meetings, both for elected officials and for appointed officers. These help in capacity building in a practical way. Furthermore, Government provides up to Rs. 2 million for an individual proposal of training courses, seminars and workshops on a demand-driven basis. Such training courses are normally held at reputable training institutes.

Career development of Panchayat officials is facilitated at various training centres. There is a National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), 25 State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs), and 87 Extension Training Centres (ETCs) in the country. These are 100% centrally funded.

Other support mechanisms

They are other mechanisms to support the capacity of Panchayats. These include provision for office accommodation, equipment and furniture, physical assets of the Panchayats, facilities for communication.

7 INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

7.1 Government departments

There are 19 state departments that are operational at state and at district level. Their role at local (ward) and village level is not clear. However at Block level, it was explained that the Block Panchayat manages the services of departments. The secretaries of each of the 19 departments are assigned to the relevant committee of the Block Panchayat, which has overall administrative control of the officials. The Panchayat at this level co-ordinate the services of departments and monitor service delivery. Government officials are accountable to the Block Panchayat and their salaries are paid only if the Block Panchayat is satisfied with their performance.

However, all departments still budget for their own line functions, including the salaries of officials as well as benefits. The Panchayats identify the needs, which are then incorporated into the overall plan of a Panchayat. State departments on the other hand budget according to government priorities. It was not clear how the departmental plans are linked to plans of the Block Panchayats. At the Village Panchayat level, the officials report to the village secretary who is appointed by the State. The Village Panchayat also advises departments on the appointment of staff.

7.2 Women

30% of the Village Panchayat membership is supposed to be women, but no women were present at any of the meetings at all the villages visited. Upon enquiry, it emerged that there is a conflict between the legislative framework and customary practices on the ground. These customary practices, which have been entrenched over many centuries, prevent women from actively participating in professional or government structures. All matters pertaining to governance are solely the domain of men. Women's participation is provided for in terms of legislation, and the villagers accept it in principle and do in fact appoint women in these structures. However, in practice men represent the women representatives, whether they are husbands, fathers or brothers. These are the people who will attend meetings and take decisions on behalf of women representatives. There was an instance where a woman was chased from getting too close to the room where a meeting that was held between the tour team and the Village Panchayat.

At block level, it emerged that the situation is somewhat different, with reports that women are actively participating in the decision-making processes and are even leading some of the committees. However, even though they were present at the meeting (lingering around the door) they did not seem to feel

that they belonged to such meetings, and eventually left as soon as the meeting started.

The reasons presented by informants for the above-mentioned scenario are the lack of skills and high levels of illiteracy amongst women. There are no women empowerment programmes to ensure that women are central to decision-making processes, and they remain marginalised.

7.3 Castes

Indian society is divided into different castes. This division is historical and has been maintained throughout centuries. The so-called Backward Castes constitute the majority in the Indian society, and hardly occupy any influential offices in the country. The government of Madhya Pradesh attempts to ensure the mainstreaming of such lower disadvantaged castes through implementation of *Schedule 74* of the Constitution. As in the case of women, their participation in decision-making processes is deliberately limited. For example, it was observed that in one Village Panchayat, a member of such a caste was denied an opportunity to introduce himself when other members did. This was attributed to the fact that he belonged to a lower caste.

7.4 Traditional Structures

According to information gathered from Deepri Village, the indigenous traditional system was abolished by Britain during the colonial era and replaced with a system which ensured that an individual was hand-picked as a Village Head (Patale) to represent the interest of the colonial masters on the ground. This system survived for over two hundred years and therefore became a norm. The status of Village Heads in communities has however changed from being tax collectors (as was initially assigned by colonialists) to that of respected and powerful individuals. Their present roles and responsibilities include land management and conflict resolution. These roles are performed in consultation with the Village Panchayats. A Patale wields very influential powers that can influence the election of members of Panchayats during elections.

7.5 Youth

There is no structured and formalised framework for the involvement of youth in the planning process. They are not, as with other vulnerable groups, provided for in terms of the reservation clause of the Constitution. They are not therefore seen as a vulnerable group in India. However, in terms of their participation in general, it was reported that 6% of youth participate in planning processes at all levels particularly at village level.

7.6 NGOs

NGOs operated in two of the four villages visited during the tour, i.e Deepri and Semilkhurd. There is no relationship between the NGO and the Village

Panchayat. The two operate as different entities with different plans for the village. The two other villages visited have no contact with NGOs. However, mention was made of the Lions Club, which offers assistance to individuals that are ill at the village level. It also came to light during our interaction with some officials at the Block level that there are no NGOs working within their area of jurisdiction. The private sector is involved only by way of hiring out labour and machinery (construction). It is not involved in community empowerment.

7.7 Government

According to a Central Chronicle newspaper article published on Wednesday, 03 October 2001, the concept of a District government seems to have run into problems. The article mentioned that in districts like Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Jabalpur, Chindwara, Balaghat, Tikamgarh and Chhattarpur the situation seems to be serious. The problems as pointed out by the paper included members of the District government boycott meetings, Ministers-in-charge neglect members and there exists a strong factional rivalry. According to the paper, the situation is hampering development in the regions. Government departments are not integrated. Every department works independently of the others. They are not involved in the planning process of the community. The State officials claim that various departments assist the communities by way of extension, but mention was never made by the communities of such assistance. The state provides funding to the Panchayats and decides centrally how each Panchayat should be allocated funds depending on the size of the population. The State also provides a model of planning to the lower structures i.e. the Panchayat and receives reports of budgets through inspectors who reports to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Block Panchayat.

Some of the key learnings from the Indian systems are that capacity for local revenue enhancement should be given adequate attention as a basic ingredient of decentralisation. It is also clear that community contribution is vital for community based planning. Ways and means should be put in place to harness and sustain community involvement in development programmes that affect them. Government needs to support local efforts with adequate grants that are not earmarked, so as to allow local initiative and prioritisation. A fair and transparent system of equity should be put in place to cater for the relatively weaker areas and communities.

In India, more information is required to further explore issues of corruption and mismanagement of funds (causes, extent and mitigation measures) as highlighted by some of the informants during the team's visit. There are no clear methods of accountability and transparency. The approach to development appears to disfavour those who do not support the ruling party. The caste system appears to be a closed system. Is there a possibility of moving up or down the ladder? How is it catered for in the resource allocation of the Panchayats? The role of traditional leaders in resource mobilisation and utilisation is not clear. Although there is awareness of the need for capacity-building of the Panchayat members, in practice the avenues for training seem

not to be readily available. The role of NGOs and the private sector and the extent to which they are involved in the budgeting and implementation process is not clear at Panchayat level.

The system of local government in India offers fertile ground for the entrenchment of community-based planning. Despite the gaps in financing of the planning processes, it is clear that given adequate support and capacity, the Panchayats are a sustainable grassroots institution to involve the community in contributing resources as well as participating in the implementation and oversight of development programmes at community level.

8 KEY LESSONS AND GAPS

Lessons	Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning is decentralised ▪ <i>De jure</i> planning sub-committees established at village level ▪ Taking into account the pace at which communities wish to proceed is important ▪ The Gram Swaraj concept is noble ▪ Local collection of revenue through Village Panchayats ▪ Transfer and management of funds at local level is useful ▪ Environmental issues have been taken seriously in the past 5 to 10 years ▪ Good rural infrastructural development (telephones, electricity, water) ▪ Agriculture modernisation through irrigation and mechanisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's participation is limited ▪ Legislation aimed at women's empowerment poorly enforced ▪ Too many planning structures confuse and delay processes ▪ Gram Swaraj concept not fully practised ▪ A need to build capacity vertically to support legislative arrangements, especially at village level ▪ No linkages between district plans and the national plan ▪ No tendering process at village level, this may encourage corrupt practices ▪ National and State level governments do not have an obligation to support or build capacity of panchayats ▪ Very patriarchal and male dominated planning systems ▪ Women participate more in Scheduled Castes than in the upper classes ▪ Culture plays a role in limiting women's participation in planning systems ▪ Less inclusion of NGOs in CBP ▪ People could be used more as "a resource" than "a problem" ▪ Government projects are awarded along political lines ▪ No development plans, only project proposals, therefore ▪ No long-term planning at village level ▪ 3-tier system of government, panchayats being used as implementing agents without decision-making powers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge of sanitation in rural areas ▪ Participation in CBP determined by wealth and class ▪ Too many public holidays retard development processes ▪ Development workers sometimes disorganised and not fully committed
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9 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC LEARNINGS

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe still lags behind in terms of giving local governance its rightful place within the supreme laws of the nation. India and indeed, the majority of the African countries that were party to the recent tour have since incorporated the local government sector into their respective Constitutions. The clearest advantage of this fundamental step as demonstrated in the Indian scenario is to enable increased financial and material resource to flow from Government coffers to communities whose development is the primary responsibility of every Government.[It is pleasing to note that after South African Workshop in July /August, the Permanent Secretary for Local Government has now charged the reporting Department with the task to engage relevant authorities in Zimbabwe to make this issue a foremost priority]

India has recently embarked on decentralization (1992) and although substantial resources are parceled out to communities, there does not seem to be formidable monitoring and supervision mechanisms. The impression derived therefore is one of poor co-ordination between development agencies (both Government and external) and the communities on the ground. Coupled with a long bureaucratic chain from State level, this phenomenon does not augur well for effective management of scarce resources and the achievement of meaningful development results. The important lesson for Zimbabwe therefore is to shorten bureaucracy, install credible monitoring and supervisory mechanism, improve coordination between the State and the local structures of administration, and aim for clearly organized development initiatives that have a lasting effect on the people assisted.

In addition, Zimbabwe 's decentralization dispensation needs to be expedited and it is instructive for the Ministry of Local Government too adopt a high degree of command amongst other Government Ministries that have tended to drag their feet on submitting meaningful decentralization proposals for Cabinet approval. The sooner civil servants are transferred to local authorities (together with requisite financial resources)the easier it would be for communities to relate with the technical expertise that is usually wanting at the grassroots level.

In the Indian villages visited, there was very minimal NGO activity but development projects were certainly underway. The lesson therefore is that community based planning does not necessarily need to be steam-rolled by

NGO's as has been the tendency in Zimbabwe but as long as the necessary resources are made available, communities, with adequate supervision, will be able to plan and manage certain aspects of their development affairs as they duly see fit. The magnitude of projects undertaken varies with the technical expertise required and available, with projects that are wholly managed tending to be small in nature.

A pleasing revelation in India was the aspect of communities having been empowered at law to collect revenue at the local level and determine its use but also taking into cognizance certain mandatory obligations as given from the State such as payment of community electricity bills or any such services stipulated by the State such as payment of community electricity bills or any such services stipulated by the State. This occurrence brings to the fore the important principles of community responsibility and commitment in the planning and management processes of their daily lives. In Zimbabwe, achievement of this practical feat would signal a high level of complete devolution from local authorities to grassroots structures but its effectiveness nor orderliness, may not be prejudged. However, the Indian scenario also demonstrate the positive aspect of a statutory balance of power between the States and the communities.

Although the Indian Government has embarked on a decentralisation crusade, there did not seem to be any earnest effort or demonstrable tendency to build the capacity of the communities on which social and development functions were being thrust. This appears to be a serious gap in the transformation processes in India and perhaps also explains why the development scenario generally seems to be indistinct and uncoordinated. In Zimbabwe this sad occurrence was avoided when the country embarked on an intensive capacity building programme at the District and sub-District levels in 1996 with the view to prepare all relevant structures for inheritance of functions hitherto performed mainly by the State. Unfortunately though, the decentralisation process has not proceed at the anticipated pace while at the same time donor funding for the capacity building programme has since dwindled dramatically.

Despite the efforts put on gender equity and participation in the world over, Indian communities blatantly appear to remain culturally conservative and disempowered as regards their women. Villages and offices visited did not seem to demonstrate women participation in matters of development, let alone menial jobs like serving tea. The predominance of men serves to give, amongst, the impression that human resources are severely underutilized as the ideas and views of the fairer sex are not positively exploited despite the official utterances to the effect that there is a reasonable quota system operated within all development structures. This is very ironic and disturbing when considered in the context that India, of all developing nations African and Asian, at least once had a female Head of State! The lesson therefore is for Zimbabwe not to go the Indian way at the grassroots level and infact, further improve on our practical record of increased women participation in matters that affect their direct livelihoods.

The Indian study tour took us between Delhi and Bhopal by road. Both cities and surrounding rural infrastructure, especially the buildings, appeared to be in a high state of despair. Town development planning, let alone maintenance, did not essentially appear to be priorities amongst the Indians. Enforcement of development planning by- by the local authorities (panchayats) was visibly non-existent inspite of the absolute

Significance of such activities to control and manage development effectively. The fact therefore remains that community based planning should not end at planning how to initiate projects but should proceed to aspects of management and maintenance. Zimbabwe will therefore strive to ensure that what little infrastructure is available maintained and managed in a sound manner by uncompromisingly enforcing relevant development by-laws, strengthening planning departments at District. Provincial and National levels are strictly monitoring and supervising the use of capital funds.

On the other hand, availability of such essential services as internet, electricity and telecommunications right in the Indian villages is an achievement worth all envy and Zimbabwe is not spared either.

Promotion of community based planning initiatives in the pilot District of Gwanda through the Core Team as facilitated by Intermediate Technology Development Group and the coordination with the National Steering Committee through requisite reports and the coordination with the National Steering Committee through requisite reports and field visits will be strengthened with a view to replicate positive results around the country as well as seek amends to negative practices. The Indian experience gives impetus to the indispensability of continuous development planning, monitoring and supervision of occurrences on the ground.

Zimbabwe is also of the firm view that if developing countries are to meaningfully track their developed counterparts, it is imperative that they learn from the latter rather than amongst themselves, for they basically operate around the same wavelength in terms of development initiatives and seeking solutions to their abundant woes. Zimbabwe has also had a glimpse into the Australian Land Care Movement, which is essentially a national community based planning and development programme that commands tremendous following across all development sector in Australia (a detailed report by the writer on the Australian experience was passed on to Khanya during the Indian tour and you may be pleased to peruse through it for appreciation). Nonetheless, Zimbabwe is of the opinion that if the Bolivian general state of development would not be significantly different from either the African or Asian context, and for enhanced learning, appreciation and practical community based development manouvres in Africa, Australia or a similarly appealing host ,should be the Project's next destination.

Ghana

India and Ghana have their Local Government structures down to the village level. Unlike India, the sub structures (Area/Zonal Councils and Unit Committees) in Ghana do not have direct funding from the central

government. As a result most of the base structures in Ghana are either dormant or not physically present on the ground. This situation defeats the purpose of community participation in the local government structure. It is therefore necessary to take a critical look at possible ways of funding the sub-structures to make them functional and responsible to their task.

The concept of Village Assembly is not new in Ghana. It is very common in every community in Ghana to have the village chief or head to assemble the community to take decision on issues affecting the community. However this traditional structure does not form part of the local government structure as it is in India. There is no legal relationship between the village assemblies as it is now in Ghana and the local government structure. The inclusion of village assemblies in the local government structure in Ghana will add more weight to community level participation in local governance.

In India, the lowest planning unit is at the village level whist in Ghana, it is at the district level. The India arrangement allows the villages, through their Village Assemblies to identify and prioritized their needs. On the contrary, in Ghana, final prioritization of projects is done at the district level leaving the communities with the role of supplying data and information to the process at the district level and implementing decisions taken at the district assemblies whether it reflect the aspiration of the people or not.

While elections at the village/community level in both countries are supposed to be non-partisan, there is evidence of party politics influence in the election process in both countries. The lesson learnt is that it seems practically impossible to completely detach party political influence from non-partisan local government structures. Already in Ghana, the possibility of extending party politics into the local government system is being given a serious thought. The way forward is to debate the issues publicly to invite more views into shaping the future of local government structure in Ghana.

The election to the lowest structure (Unit Committee) in Ghana is devoid of competition because of the large number of candidates per unit. Most units were not able to raise the minimum required number of 10 candidates representing 500 people, thereby reducing the whole election process into a mere formality of endorsing the candidates. The India practice is that a candidate per ward is elected into the Village Panchayat. To increase the level of competition and the probability of electing the best candidate for the job, reducing the number of candidates per unit should be seriously considered in any future local government reform in Ghana.

Despite the fact that planning authority resides in the Village Panchayats, the elected members serving on the panchayats lack planning skills. So far none of the elected members had training in basic planning techniques Although it is claimed that there are written plans for the panchayats, none of the panchayats visited were able to produce any of such plans. The lesson therefore is that authority has to go hand in hand with skills development and availability. Without these, authority becomes empty. There is no point in providing authority where there are no skills or plans to develop skills to

effectively use the authority entrusted. In Ghana, professional planners are employed at the district level to facilitate the planning process. As already stated, any future attempt to devolve planning authority to the community level in Ghana have to go with plans to develop community-based skills to totally take up the responsibilities.

The planning cycle of the Village Panchayats is one year and is focused on specific projects. The limitation of this approach is that it denies the communities in developing long-term plans that are based on their vision and aspirations. The lesson for Ghana is that, community based planning processes that is based on the vision and aspiration of the people promotes ownership and enhances sustainability of resultant projects.

Access to and sharing of information is very vital to developing an effective planning system at all levels. The availability of internet services to a planning unit is therefore very crucial. It was therefore interesting to note that every village visited in India had access to a telephone and internet services. The picture is a bit different in Ghana, electronic communication between the district and the communities, and among districts is not reliable and in most cases non-existent. The lesson for Ghana is that we need to put information technology at the center of planning processes in the country at all levels. This will not only enhances our planning process but improve our project monitoring capacity.

South Africa

The following are key learnings from the South African team:

- A Village Panchayat exists *de jure*, and represents an empowered community-based organisation to lobby for local needs. In South Africa, an equivalent structure to the Village Panchayat is the Ward Committee. However, fundamental differences are that unlike in India where the Village Panchayats are recognized by law and are an active part within the planning processes, the Ward Committee assumes a predominantly political posture, and are less visible in driving the development processes within wards. There is less effort on the part of the Ward Committee to portray accountability to its constituency, leading to general apathy for communities to participate in development initiatives. Nevertheless, much is currently being done to reverse this situation, especially within the Mangaung Municipality, Free State Province where a CBP pilot is underway. There has been a significant shift in people's attitude regarding their involvement in the planning of the Mangaung Integrated Development Plan. Through advocacy, it is hoped that the lesson from the Village Panchayat model will encourage local councillors in South Africa to be more motivated and encourage their constituencies to take part in the development efforts of their wards.
- In India, some State Government officials have been seconded to the Block Panchayat to assist with needed skills at that level. Those officials are paid by the state but are accountable to the Block Panchayat. If for

example the Block Panchayat is not happy with the performance of a state official, then the Panchayat will not recommend to the state to pay the official's salary. It is therefore clear that salaries of State officials are performance-based. This is in contrast to the South African situation where there exists a huge number of engineers and related skilled officials at Provincial level (equivalent of a State in India). Those officials have very little interaction with local government personnel, and provide ad-hoc assistance to local governments. There is no formal arrangements amongst provinces and local governments in South Africa in terms of sharing of skills, while on the other hand the short-skilled local governments are expected to deliver services to communities. Perhaps South Africa needs to consider the way in which government officials operate at State level in India, and copy some of the elements of that model such as accountability and payment of officials from the Province.

- The Village Panchayat submits proposals to the Block Panchayat and are eventually received at the State level. There exists a dual funding mechanism where funds aimed to development projects are channelled down to the Village Panchayat through the District and the Block, while the other route aims to cut down on bureaucracy and sends the funds directly from the State to the Village Panchayat. This is a useful way of speeding up development interventions. In South Africa on the other hand, there are pockets of development funds such as those from the municipalities, parastatals and the province. There are no clear lines of channelling funds to the communities, and in some cases duplication of services occurs. Again, South Africa can learn from the India way of disbursing funds to the communities.

Uganda

Specific learnings for the Ugandan team are:

- Most African countries are struggling with the notion of community-based planning, and Uganda is no exception. There are fundamental difficulties in making community-based planning work, especially in weaker decentralised processes where limited community participation occurs. The Indian experience has provided useful insight into strengthening structures that represent communities at a local level, through the Village Panchayat system. The fact that panchayats are fully recognised and are part of the planning process provides for a useful platform for ordinary citizens to have a say in the planning and implementation of development initiatives, and Uganda can begin to consider a model similar to the panchayats, but customised to the Ugandan environment and specific needs;
- One of the challenges facing development in Africa is utilisation of technology as a toll to enhance development. This is the situation in Uganda and other African countries. In India on the other hand, technology has been used to stimulate local economic development, especially telephones and electricity. This is still a challenge in the African

community-based planning context, and serious efforts need to be made to include Information Communications Technology in rural development initiatives;

- It is common for states to perceive high population sizes as a problem in attempting to initiate development interventions. It was useful for the Ugandan team to see and learn how the high population size of India is utilized as a “resource” rather than a “problem”. While most of the rural areas have modernised their agricultural practices, many areas have incorporated the traditional labour-intensive agricultural methods with the new agricultural technology, therefore providing employment to the masses who would otherwise remain unemployed. This is a key learning for Uganda, and can be advocated to retain rural skills and help to curb an influx to urban areas.

10 SECONDARY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Matthew, G. (????). Panchayati Raj in India – An Overview.

Buch, N. (????). Panchayats and Women.

Singh, S.D (Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh), Decentralisation: New Opportunities. A consultation by Government of Madhya Pradesh in Collaboration with UNDP. 25-26 August 2001, Bhopal.

Indian Census Report, 1991.

Indian Census Report, 2001.

Madhya Pradesh: Status of Panchayati in India 2000.

Centre for Development Support: Citizens and Governance – Civil Society in the New Millennium, London, UK.

11 ANNEXURES**Annexure 1 Study Tour Participants**

Name	Country	Organisation
Charles Kiberu	Uganda	Bushenyi District Council
Constantine Bitwayiki	Uganda	Ministry of Local Government
Rafael Magezi	Uganda	Uganda Local Authorities Council
Paul Kasule	Uganda	Ministry of Local Government
Kwame Owusu Bonso	Ghana	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Sampson Kwarteng Amoako	Ghana	Asante Akim South District Assembly
Francis Owusu Ansah	Ghana	Adanse East District Assembly
Ernest Tay Awoosah	Ghana	ISODEC
Jacob Chikuruwo	Zimbabwe	Ministry of Local Government
Ronnie Sibanda	Zimbabwe	Gwanda Rural District Council
Sithembile Ncube	Zimbabwe	ITDG
Zongesizwe Zumane	South Africa	Mangaung Municipality
Penny Ward	South Africa	CARE South Africa
Esme Magwaza	South Africa	National Dept. Provincial & Local Government
Nomathemba Kela	South Africa	Free State Dept. Welfare
Joe Marumo	South Africa	Khanya
James Carnegie	South Africa	Khanya

Annexure 2 Study Tour Programme

Programme for visit to India for Community-based planning project

Day	Date	Programme	Travel	Meetings/visits
1	Saturday 22 nd Sept	Leave home country		
2	Sunday 23rd	Arrive India am if possible, leave for Delhi	Stay in Delhi	
3	Monday 24th	Meetings Delhi	Stay in Delhi	Meet Dr NC Saxena, MS Aiyar MP - DFID and Mr Farrington to help arrange meetings, also try and meet Ved Arya from Srijan (John)
4	Tuesday 25th	Travel to Agra and see Taj Mahal - travel night	Leave Delhi 0615 by Bhopal Shatabdi Express for Agra, Agra arrival at 0800. Take GT Express or Bhopal Express late at night for Bhopal	In Agra see Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Aitmatuddallah, and Agra Fort - take a mini bus for the day
5	Wednesday 26th	Workshop - Bhopal	Arrival Bhopal early morning. Check into Jehan Numa and Lake View Ashok	To meet Eklaya, Debate, Samarthan, local DFID, and in Govt - Mr Gopalakrishnan, Mr Sudhir Nath, Ms Ajita Bajpeyi, Mr SC Behar, Mr Shyam Bohre
6	Thursday 27th	Workshop/ meetings		
7	Friday 28th	Meetings - Bhopal and travel to District	Travel to District in four vehicles - two Jeeps/ AC ambassadors each	
8	Saturday 29th	Visit District HQ	Travel to District in four vehicles - two Jeeps/ AC ambassadors each	One group to Hoshangabad, and then onto Kesla, PRADAN campus
9	Sunday 30th	Visit Panchayat	Travel to District in four vehicles - two Jeeps/ AC ambassadors each	Second group to Vidisha or Raisen, stay at Sanchi rest houses
10	Monday 1st	Visit Block	Travel to District in four vehicles - two Jeeps/ AC ambassadors each	
11	Tuesday 2nd	Visit Panchayat	Holiday	
12	Wednesday 3rd	Return to State for questions/ courtesy		
13	Thursday 4th	Workshop - Bhopal	Tourism - Bhimbetka, and Bhopal	

14	Friday	5th	Workshop and writing	Tourism - Bhopal Local	
15	Saturday	6th	Return to home country	Flight from Bhopal to Mumbai 1600 hrs	
16	Sunday	7th	Arrive home		

Annexure 3 Organisations visited

- DFID – New Delhi
- DFID – Bhopal
- Samarthan (Dr Yogesh Kumar) – Bhopal
- Secretary to Chief Minister – Bhopal
- Deepri village – Madhya Pradesh
- Piplya Rasida village – Madhya Pradesh
- Kurawar village – Madhya Pradesh
- Shyam Bhore – Academy of Administration
- Sanket – Bhopal
- Semilkhurd Village – Madhya Pradesh
- Samarthan – Sehore
- CARE India – Madhya Pradesh sub office

Annexure 4 Consolidated Tour Evaluation

Issues/Questions	Score (please circle or cross appropriate number)										Comments	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5		
What is your overall assessment of the study tour?	Very poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Study was relevant. Good learning experience
Overall did we reach our objectives for the tour, then specifically:	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	Yes, though gaps existed due to difficulty meeting govt officials. Not meeting govt officials was disappointing.
▪ An understanding of the Indian dev context	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Some documents were not received. A fair understanding. More time needed for this.
▪ Learned from Indian CBP system/experience	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Partly! Wanted more input from wider range of NGOs.
▪ Improved the pilots (African/country)	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Yes, although in some cases we were beyond Indians. Much was learned from other countries. Organisation at ward level.
▪ Advanced learnings among countries	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Not much to learn from Indian experience. Good comparison of experience among countries.
▪ Influenced CBP processes through advocacy	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	We did except that we could have had more focused groups to achieve this. Not much activity going on judged by ignorance shown by communities.
Did you learn new insights?	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Direct funds to communities achieved but accountability lacking. Definitely, especially the community-led processes.
Was there adequate time for rest/own time?	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Had enough time to rest and shop. Yes, more than enough due to aborted meetings.
Did you enjoy yourself	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Indeed, especially in manner the tour was facilitated by Khanya.
Was there enough tourism in the programme	Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Participants visited tourist sites in Agra.
How would you rate your participation/ and contribution?	Very poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	Made appropriate comments, responses and presentations whenever situation called. Tolerated other views and opinions. Good enough, would have enjoyed

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
How do you rate the participation of others/team?	Very poor						interacting with govt officials.
How would you rate the Khanya facilitation?	Very poor	0 1	2	3	4	5	Because of the democratic and personal conduct, everybody had chance and freedom to make own contribution. Very democratic, considerate and tolerant. Their facilitation was great. They did well in the face of disappointments.
What was the overall organisation like?	Very poor	0 1	2	3	4	5	It was going to be useful to involve govt of India in the organisation. Could have been better had it not been of some disorganisation from Indians' side.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field visits 	Very poor	0 1	2	3	4	5	Too many changes in plan, and disappointments. Tours were too near town, not very rural.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travel from country & in India 	Very poor	0 1	2	3	4	5	Okay within the circumstances. More information about the trip was needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was the per diem adequate? Suggest amount 	Not at all	0 1	2	3	4	5	100USD/day, 200USD/day. You may need more insight into govt rates.
How was the arranged food & accommodation	Very poor	0 1	2	3	4	5	No spices please! Felt very spoilt in fact! Accommodation was hospitable!