

# District Level Planning Process and Implementation: A Case Study of District Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh

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## Abstract

District level planning is expected to result in better planning because the local people have a better awareness of their needs and fuller information on the conditions and possibilities of their areas. The district planners who have more intimate knowledge of the interdependence of activities in the district, would be in a better position to develop integrated programmes which would avoid duplication and can produce the maximum impact with minimum cost. Besides, there is scope for involvement of people in the planning process if the process is decentralized. Moreover, implementation may also be better as a result of more realistic planning and greater involvement of the people. Considering all factors, it seems appropriate to decentralize the planning process in the next few years.

The present study attempts to examine the district planning process and implementation. District planning occupies an important place in the process of countries economic development. Obviously, the success of the plan would depend upon the systemic working of the district planning process. District is one of the most important units of the governmental activities, performance traditional as well as development functions. Various institutions are involved in the developmental process at this level. With democratic decentralization, the institution is not merely concerned with execution of development functions, but also with policy formulation in this behalf.

**Keywords:** framework, development, planning, formulation, implementation and evaluation

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## 1. Introduction

As a matter of fact, the planning process at the district level in a developing-country like India constitutes a very crucial element in its framework of the multi-level planning. The content of such a lower stratum is founded by the placing of planning at the national level as the most important, single unified device of

governmental intervention and participation in the economic system for purposes of eliminating backwardness and making the system push on to develop its productive potential. As such, important fields like agriculture, small industry and a good number of social services, district planning tend to become the instrument for bringing about self-sustaining economic development explicitly pursued by our

organized power system. Moreover, it has to be noted that a district plan has to be a design of development for the district. This very design or model must consist of a cluster of techno-economically enriched projects in all sectors of the economy. In other words, there should be meaningfully interwoven in such way as to ensure optimum outputs from the resources locally available and those supplemented by plan resources.

District Planning is a very important stage in decentralized planning. The experiment in 'planning from above' has practically failed and, therefore, the emphasis is now being laid on "planning from below". The underlying objective is to make the plan more realistic and responsive to the actual needs of the people in a particular area, so that maximum benefit may be derived from the limited resources. Planning for a sub-continent like India has to be a multi-level process, if it is to be meaningful.

To carry out plan formulation, implementation and evaluation, and expand the base for people's participation, the district has been preferred as a viable unit in the decentralized planning process. One of the major drawback of the CD Programme was lack of infrastructural facility and talented manpower. Due to over centralization talented people concentrated at the centre leaving the base devoid of qualified people to direct, organize and enlist involvement of the people. The district is, therefore, supposed to provide infrastructural facility and manpower for effective developmental planning.

## **2. District Planning Process**

In its approach, district planning should be more community-oriented. The process should be as follows:

- 1) Identification of the problems.
- 2) Definition of the problems.
- 3) Collection and analysis of data.
- 4) Definition of the planning task.
- 5) Operational criteria for the plan.
- 6) Constraints in the achievement of the objectives.
- 7) Testing alternative plan programmes.
- 8) Evaluation and forecasting.
- 9) Decision and implementation.
- 10) Periodic review of achievements.

The programmes are to be finalized with thorough understanding of the need of the area. The need inventory can be developed through official data and personal contact. The human and material resources are to be ascertained more precisely, through personal contact. Knowledge about the constraints in approving and executing the programmes has to be obtained. The final plan programme has to be prepared with the help of officials and non-official peoples representatives at the world and village levels, specialists and academicians. This would ensure the correct reflection of the felt needs of the people in the programmes. While evolving the programmes, the objective should be to enlist larger number of people in the gain of development through the optimum use of resources of the area. If the programmes are evolved and executives at the base and the local resources are used to its maximum potential and unemployment may be eradicated within a short period.

The major attack against centralized planning over the years in India, has been lack of peoples' participation and involvement in the planning process. Participation is the channel through which people ensure their effective influence on the decision-making process at all levels of social activity and social institution. Participation of the people lessens the control of powerful classes and groups of people over the decision-making process. A restraint is put to their action and real issues emerge for solution. In order to achieve this participation should not be scattered or aimed at achieving individualist ambitions. It should be an organized effort to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in a given social situation on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control.

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more realistic planning and greater involvement of the people. Considering all factors, it seems appropriate to decentralize the planning process in the next few years.

The present study attempts to examine the district planning process and implementation. District planning occupies an important place in the process of countries' economic development. Obviously, the success of the plan would depend upon the systemic working of the district planning process. District is one of the most important units of the governmental activities, performance traditional as well as development functions. Various institutions are involved in the developmental process at this level. With democratic decentralization, the institution is not merely concerned with execution of development functions, but also with policy formulation in this behalf.

Planning at the district levels is done jointly by the officers of the various development departments working at these respective levels and a number of non-official representatives. These planning authorities at the district level make an assessment for their own resources and needs and formulate the programme/ schemes for the development of their respective areas. The vertical process of planning is further carried down to the village level. But so far it has covered only a relatively few villages. The Indian planning experiment has not succeeded in actual practice for formulate and implement the plan from below.

At the district level, DPDC has been made the apex body responsible for the formulation and implementation of the district plan. Developmental functions, more particularly, the function connected with plan formulation at the district Hamirpur has district planning and development committee, executive committee of the DPDC and Panchayati Raj institutions.

It is a larger body representing various officials and non officials, viz, M.L.A., M.Ps from the district, Chairman of the ZP, Deputy Commissioner and experts as members. The ADM/ADC is the member Secretary of the DPDC. The Designated minister of the district is the Chairman of DPDC.

The planning cell consisting of the Chief Planning Officer in ADC/ADM rank and statistical assistant worked under the Executive Committee Chairman of the DPDC. The planning cell acted as clearing house, and is

entrusted with the responsibility of administrative coordination in respect of district planning.

The Executive Committee of the DPDC compressed the deputy Commissioner as Chairman, member and ADC/ADM the member secretary. A small committee, viz. Executive committee of the DPDC is responsible for the day to day control over planning activities.

### **3. Role of DPDC in Hamirpur District**

The DPDC performs important functions of approving the expenditure, supervising it and approving re-appropriations. It has however, to be noted that all decisions of the DPDC are based on consensus. Voting did not take place in the DPDC. The DPDC is expected to meet twice or thrice in a year, while the Executive Committee of the DPDC is to meet as often as required but at least once in a month. The DPDC meetings are not regular.

The Chairman of the DPDC was a key figure in the district planning process. As a minister he exercised political influence. Since he belonged to the district he also knew the district politics fairly intimately. As the people elected him, he had popular support. All these factors district planning. He maintains continuous communication in regard to the development activities in the district. He could exercise control over the heads of the departments directly as Minister also indirectly through the Deputy Commissioner. As Minister he was also in continuous contact with the district in his charge.

The Member-Secretary of the DPDC and the Executive Committee was also a very important figure in the district planning setup. As member-Secretary, he was responsible for formulating plan proposals with the assistance of the planning cell under him. He kept continuous contact with the implementing agencies. As ADM he could have an impact over every activity conducted in the district. He had also a thorough knowledge of the district.

M.P., M.L.A.s are ex-officio members of the DPDC. They appeared to be quite vocal in the meeting of the DPDC. Some of them were well informed about the development schemes, they had proposed in the DPDC meetings. They also had proposed certain schemes to the departments. In general, they tried to raise questions confined to their own constituency. Overall district level developmental schemes

relating to it could hardly be conceived by them.

The planning cell has to give a margin of fortnight for the submission of the schemes in a statement consisting of information about existing schemes, extension schemes and new schemes. On investigation it was revealed that the officials and non officials found the time limit of a fortnight too short for discussion and conducting meetings for the formulation of the schemes. This has not served the purpose of grass roots participation. In the process, meaningful participation of people's representatives must also could be sought. After proposals are received by the planning cell. They are sorted out department wise and again all of them are sent to the Deputy Commissioner.

The Deputy Commissioner, as chairman of the Executive Committee of the DPDC has to spend considerable time in consulting the heads of departments, agencies concerning plan formulation and execution. As and when the Deputy Commissioner expresses a desire to contact an officer, the latter was readily available for consultation. His function as mediator in fact originated in his predominant position both in the district administration and officer.

After discussion with the Deputy Commissioner, all concerned officials attend the meeting of the Executive Committee of the DPDC. At this meeting, the Chairman and member of the Executive Committee of the DPDC discuss the proposals with department Heads/agencies who have formulated the proposals. The State Planning Minister also discuss the annual plan with the members the Executive Committee.

Thus, the exercise of plan formulation originates at the state level and there after is carried on at the district level, Priorities laid down by the government are the constraints within which the plan has to be formulated.

On the basis of responses of respondents on the various aspects of planning, the questionnaire tries to gauge the role of perception of the leaders and officers in Hamirpur. The questionnaire, which has been structured, relates to their views on the plan formulation and implementation in District Hamirpur. On the basis of replies received from these some leaders and some officers total Thirty Five leaders and officers, the role analysis of the leaders and officers in plan implementation in Hamirpur has been done:

**Table 1.** Present Structure of DPDC Adequate

Response	Officers	Leaders
Strongly agree	2 (13.3%)	4 (20%)
Agree	10 (66.6%)	9 (45%)
Disagree	3 (20%)	7 (35%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

The first questionnaire is regarding the adequate of present structure of DPDC. 20.00 percent of leaders and only 13.0 percent respondent's district officers strongly agreed with the adequacy of present structure of DPDC. The majority of the respondents, 66.6 percent officers and 45.0 percent leaders agreed with the present structure of DPDC is adequate. But 35 percent leaders and 20.0 percent officers disagreed with the adequacy.

**Table 2.** Political Leaders Seek Your Help

Response	Officers	Leaders
Frequently	5 (33.3%)	9 (45%)
Sometimes	5 (33.3%)	1 (5%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	6 (30%)
Never	2 (13.3%)	4 (20%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

This table is regarding the role of political leaders in seeking help of the respondents. 45.0 percent leaders and 33.3 percent officers respondents admitted that the political leaders frequently sought help. 33.3 percent officers and only 5 percent leaders says leaders says that sometimes political leaders seek help. But 13.3 percent officers and 20 percent leaders have never sought help. The majority of the respondents 45 percent leaders and 33.3 percent officers' frequently asked for help.

**Table 3.** Whose Decision should be Final in the DPDC

Response	Officers	Leaders
Political leaders	8 (53.3%)	10 (50%)
Government Officers	6 (40%)	6(30%)
Any other	1 (6.67%)	4 (20%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

This table shows that as much as 50 percent leaders and 53.3 percent officers conceded this right to the political leaders, 40 percent officers and 30 percent leaders believed that the government officer's decision should be final in the DPDC. But 6.6 percent and 20 percent officers and leaders decision should be final any other. Thus, we conclude whatever decision is arrived at is jointly decided upon by official as well as leaders.

**Table 4.** Opinion Regarding Awareness of the New System of Decentralized Planning

Response	Officers	Leaders
Highly aware	0	0
Aware	11 (73.3%)	4 (20%)
Best aware	2 (13.3%)	11 (55%)
Not aware	2 (13.3%)	5 (25%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

This table shows that 73.3 percent officers and 20 new leaders have responded to being aware about the new system of decentralized planning. It was found the 13.3 percent officers and 55 percent leaders opined that they were aware about the new system of decentralized planning, whereas 13.37 percent officers and 25 percent leaders have expressed that they were least or not aware about new decentralized planning system.

**Table 5.** Opinion Regarding Involvement in Policy Formulation

Response	Officers	Leaders
76-100%	1 (6.67%)	2 (10%)
51-75%	9 (60%)	11 (55%)
26-50%	5 (33.3%)	7 (35%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

Table 5 reveals that 6.67 percent officers and 10 percent leaders of Hamirpur District agreed that their involvement in the policy making was 76 to 100 percent. Whereas 60 percent officers and 55 percent leaders felt that their involvement in this matter was 51-75 percent. Only 33.3 percent officers and 35% leaders of the district have expressed that they are less active, 26 to 50 percent in policy making.

**Table 6.** Views Regarding Problems during Implementation

Response	Officers	Leaders
Officiousness	2 (13.3%)	5 (25%)
Excessive political Interference	5 (33.3%)	10 (50%)
Non involvement of people	8 (53.3%)	5 (25%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

While implementing the various policies of government the offices and leaders face diverse types of problems. The responses regarding the problem faced by them are listed in the Table 6.

Table 6 shows that in district Hamirpur, 13.3 percent officers and 25% leaders of the respondents respectively faced the problem of procedural rigidity, 33.3 percent officers and 50 percent leaders faced exercise political control, 53.3 percent officers and 25 percent leaders of the district felt the problem of non-involvement of people during the implementation of policies.

**Table 7.** Views Regarding Coordinator in the Rural Development

Response	Officers	Leaders
Always	5 (33.3%)	2 (10%)
Usually	6 (40%)	6 (30%)
Rarely	4 (26.6%)	9 (45%)
Never	0	3 (15%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

Table 7 shows that 33.3 percent officers and 10 percent leaders of the district Hamirpur always acted as coordinators in the implementation of rural development programmes, 40 percent officers and 30 percent leaders were usually so 26.6 percent officers and 45 percent leaders say that they have never acted as coordinators in the rural development programmes.

**Table 8.** Views Regarding Lack of Coordination during Policy Making and Implementation

Response	Officers	Leaders
To large extent	3 (20%)	3 (15%)



To some extent	7 (46.6%)	8 (40%)
A little extent	3 (20%)	5 (25%)
Never	2 (13.3%)	4 (20%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

The Table 8 deals with the response on account of the lack of coordination in policy making and implementation stages. In Hamirpur district 20 percent officer and 15 percent leaders felt that there was lack of coordination to large extent whereas 13.3 percent officers and 20 percent leaders did not feel any effect, because of the lack of coordination in policy making and implementation stages.

It can be seen from the Table 8 that the majority of respondents felt that lack of coordination affect the results to some extent.

**Table 9.** Opinion Regarding lack of trust and openness among employees, politicians towards people

Response	Officers	Leaders
Low	2 (13.3%)	2 (10%)
Medium	6 (40%)	10(50%)
High	7 (46.6%)	6 (30%)
Very high	0	2 (10%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

The table reveals that 40 percent officers and 50 percent leaders of Hamirpur district held the view that medium lack of trust and openness among employees, politicians towards people. Whereas 46.6 percent officers and 30 percent leaders said that it is high show lack of trust and openness. But only 10 percent politicians are very high lack of trust and openness among employees, politicians towards people.

**Table 10.** Clear vision on the roles and responsibilities of the employees and leaders

Response	Officers	Leaders
Low	2 (13.3%)	2 (10%)
Medium	11 (73.3%)	6 (30%)
High	2 (13.3%)	8 (40%)
Very high	0	4 (20%)
Total	15 (100%)	20 (100%)

13.3 percent officers and 10 percent leaders this table shows that low clear vision on the roles and responsibilities of the employees and leaders. 73.3 percent officers and 30 percent leaders their view agreed with clear the vision on the roles and responsibilities of the employees and leaders. But only 20 percent leaders says that clear vision on the roles and responsibilities of employees and leaders.

#### 4. Conclusion

The findings regarding the role of the officers and leaders in policy formulation analysis, makes it convenient to conclude that development programmes and schemes of the government can't benefit the rural people without efficient and well organized DPDC. Officers and Leaders do not only implement the policies but also play very important role in policy making the present study predicts that officers and leaders at the district and block level were involved in policy making process and the extent of participation was active. It also reveals that the policy formulation process is meant for the development of the state and development is not possible without well defined policies. The majority of officers and leaders at district level have expressed that all members of DPDC should be consulted in the process of policy formulation. The policies formulated for the rural development must be rational. The study also reveals that the maximum number of the officers and leaders have felt the need of reforming of existing policies related to rural development. The majority of the officers and leaders admitted that they get timely information from the government regarding the matter of policy formulation but some times there is confrontation between the executives and political representatives. The study also reveals that political control of the officers, procedural rigidity regarding policy implementation are the major hurdles in the rural development programmes.

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