



DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION AND PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1980s more than 60 governments, mainly in developing countries, have experimented with some form of decentralization. Defined as the transfer of powers and resources from higher to lower levels in a political system, decentralization can take three forms. These forms can stand alone or work together-

- De-concentration, or administrative decentralization, occurs when agents in higher levels of government move to lower levels.
- Fiscal decentralization occurs when higher levels of government cede influence over budgets and financial decisions to lower levels.
- Devolution, or democratic decentralization, occurs when resources, power, and often tasks are shifted to lower-level authorities who are somewhat independent of higher authorities, and who are at least somewhat democratic.

CONTD.-

For democratic decentralization to work well, elected bodies at lower levels must have substantial powers and resources (financial and administrative), and strong accountability mechanisms must be created—to hold bureaucrats accountable to elected representatives and elected representatives accountable to citizens.

Several other features are helpful but not essential to effective democratic decentralization -a free press, multiparty systems, a lively civil society, experience with democratic politics, and respect for laws and formal rules. It helps if wealth and property are widely and relatively equitably shared, and if a middle class exists but does not exercise unyielding hegemony over poorer groups. It also helps if the region is free of severe social conflict, and if there is an effective government administration.

CONTD.-

When democratic decentralization works well, people at lower levels of government acquire a sense of ownership of development projects. Elected authorities are able to make decisions that address local needs long overlooked by development programs designed in capital cities. As local residents come to identify with local development projects, they tend to maintain, repair, and renew them more assiduously. Such enhanced maintenance makes development more sustainable.

-In India 3F (fund, function and functionaries) transfer to PRIs is a popular term as devolution of powers or democratic decentralization.

- In economic planning it is seen as District and Block level planning, mainly experimented in Kerala successfully.

BASIC CONCERNS

Enhancing Financial Capacity and Mobilizing Local Resources.

Ownership by Governments.

Ownership by People.

Holistic Development.

Partnerships.

Transparency or openness.

Accountability.

Probity.

Inter-governmental Finance.

NEW ERA IN DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION

The Constitutional Amendments of 1992 inserted Parts IX relating to panchayats and IX A relating to municipalities in the Constitution. Articles 243-243O and 243P - 243ZG of the Constitution are in the nature of basic provisions supplemented by laws of the respective States, which define the details as to the powers and functions of the various organs. All States have enacted new Acts or incorporated changes in their existing Acts in conformity with the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

Through 74th CAA, 1992 the provision of District Planning Committee or DPC was made by Article- 243ZD.

NEED OF DPC

The need for integrated local area plans, based on specific endowments and needs of each area, was stressed from the beginning of planned development in 1950s. However, there was little progress towards this process. The Constitution 73rd and 74th Amendments, therefore, mandated local planning at the village panchayat, intermediate panchayat and district panchayat levels as well as in urban local bodies and their consolidation into a District Plan in each district. Later, the Planning Commission emphasized that the 'district planning process' should be an integral part of the process of preparation of State's Eleventh Five Year Plan.

NEED

District Planning Committees (DPCs) need to be constituted as per Article 243 ZD of the Constitution in all the States except Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. All the States must accordingly enact legislations for constitution of the DPCs and issue notifications bringing them into effect. The status with regard to the constitution of the DPCs is different in each State in India.

In Rajasthan the State Government has constituted District Planning Committees in all the 33 districts in accordance with Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1996. They have also issued guidelines for functioning of these DPCs and also for District Planning.

COMPOSITION OF DPC

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

In Rajasthan a $\frac{4}{5}$ th of the total number of members of the committee shall be elected members.

It is headed by the Zila Pramukh and administratively supported by the Chief Planning Officer.

FUNCTIONS

Consolidation of the plan is carried by the Chief Planning officer of the district.

Matters of mutual common importance between the municipal bodies and the Panchayats.

Planning according to spatial particularity.

Sharing of water and other physical and natural resources.

Integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation.

- extent and type of available resources whether financial or otherwise;

- District Plans have been prepared for all the 33 districts in last decades by taking help of experts as and when required. There is no separate district budget within the Annual Plan of the State.

Source- World Bank, UNDP and NITI Aayog documents.