



Handout

Module 4: Social Accountability Tool

Participatory Planning



4.1 Participatory Planning

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Participatory Planning

1. Introduction

In order to initiate a planning process we must first refresh our thoughts on development. You must lead the creation of a community consensus on what is development, regardless of its varying meaning between individuals. For examples the tribal and indigenous people within a community may want to preserve the forests and land for long term sustenance, while others may support the creation of a tube well or labor cooperative so as to meet the economic needs of the village. People living in the same family also have differing needs to be fulfilled. For some building road means development as it creates economic opportunity, where as some may want to develop a water source nearer the home to save time.

In your work you need to create an environment where all views are respected and addressed in your planning. The process of meeting every ones developmental needs through a plan will create better opportunities for everyone. Try and get people to think with one another on how they picture a better village. Questions such as, what do they need to do in the next 3 to 5 years to bring about that change? Whose help will they need to bring the desirable change? How will they work together to achieve a common goal? Are great tools to garner effective and useful information.

(SAS-2 / Module IIB / Session: Participatory Planning / Developing a Micro Plan, 2008)

2. Definition

Participatory planning is a **process** by which a **community works actively to fulfill a given socio-economic goal by consciously defining its problems and planning a course of action to resolve those problems**. Usually, experts are needed but only as facilitators. Moreover, no one likes to participate in something that is not of his/her own creation. Plans prepared by outside experts, irrespective of their technical soundness, cannot inspire the people to participate in their implementation.⁷

The term ‘action planning’ refers to the process that guides the day-to-day activities of an organization, program or project. An “action plan” is the **process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done and what resource or inputs are needed to do it**. It is the process of ‘operationalizing’ one’s strategic objectives.

(Janet Shapiro, Action Planning Toolkit, CIVICUS.)

3. Purpose of participatory planning

- (1) Identifying the needs of the people
- (2) Bringing forth a consensus on those needs
- (3) Empowering local disadvantaged groups
- (4) The Integration of local knowledge systems into project design

- (5) Two-way learning process between the project and local people
- (6) Political commitment and support
- (7) Accountability in local governance

(Kurian Thomas and Ramkumar Bendapudi, Knowledge Managers, Centre for Good Governance)

4. Principles of participatory planning

- 1) Development should be seen more as a **change from the bottom up** than from top down.
- 2) The development process should be managed as a **natural organic process** rather than according to plans, goals, objectives, targets and schedules. Goals and targets may change and, therefore, their timing should be **tentative and flexible to make room for adaptation to local conditions**.
- 3) Development programs should **aim to strengthen local organizations** and not central government bureaucracies; they should be chosen according to their ability to increase local development management capacity. Start with a few actions to solve some immediate local problems to **build local confidence and experience**.
- 4) Local institutions support the development process. Wherein religious, youth, community-based and self-help groups playing a major role. It is more important to make sure that the **development process is rooted in a strong local institution** than ensuring that local institutions have a grasp of all the finer technical points. It is comparatively easier to arrange technical services from outside than to bring about social involvement and willing participation in the development process. Strong local institutions are necessary as support posts, independent of whatever technical skills and other background they may have.
- 5) It follows from the above that the **development process must be based primarily on confidence and learning rather than on experts and training**. It is more important for the people who will take decisions at the local level to have full confidence of the people they represent, than to be trained experts. This also implies that technical staff of departments should work in tandem with local institutions rather than simply judge the plans prepared by these institutions.

(European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level. Practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005.)

5. Planning cycle and step

For management purposes it is important to recognize that general planning go through a cycle of phased activities. This is called "*The Planning Cycle*", which consists of four phases that are closely related and largely interact with one another:

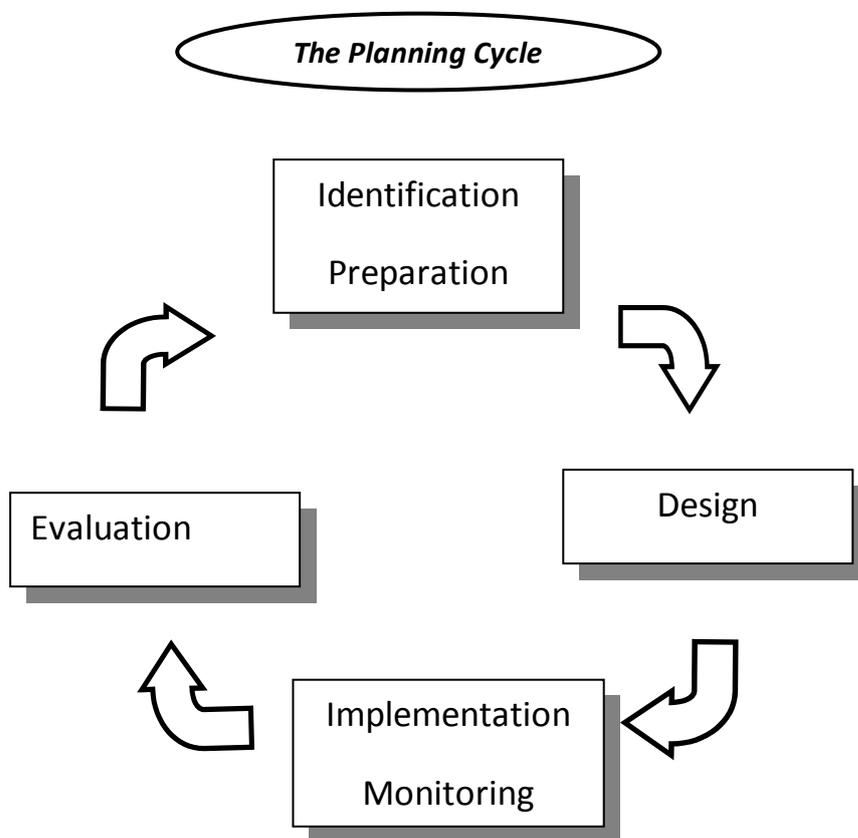
- Identification of problem;
- Design;
- Implementing and monitoring;
- Evaluation.

When developing a plan the first step is to find out about problem and then identify the best possible ways of addressing it. This is done during the first phase.

At the design phase you formulate the Summary Outline of your plan, clarifying what will be done, for whom, with whom and how. A well-designed document provides a guide for implementation and forms the basis for an evaluation.

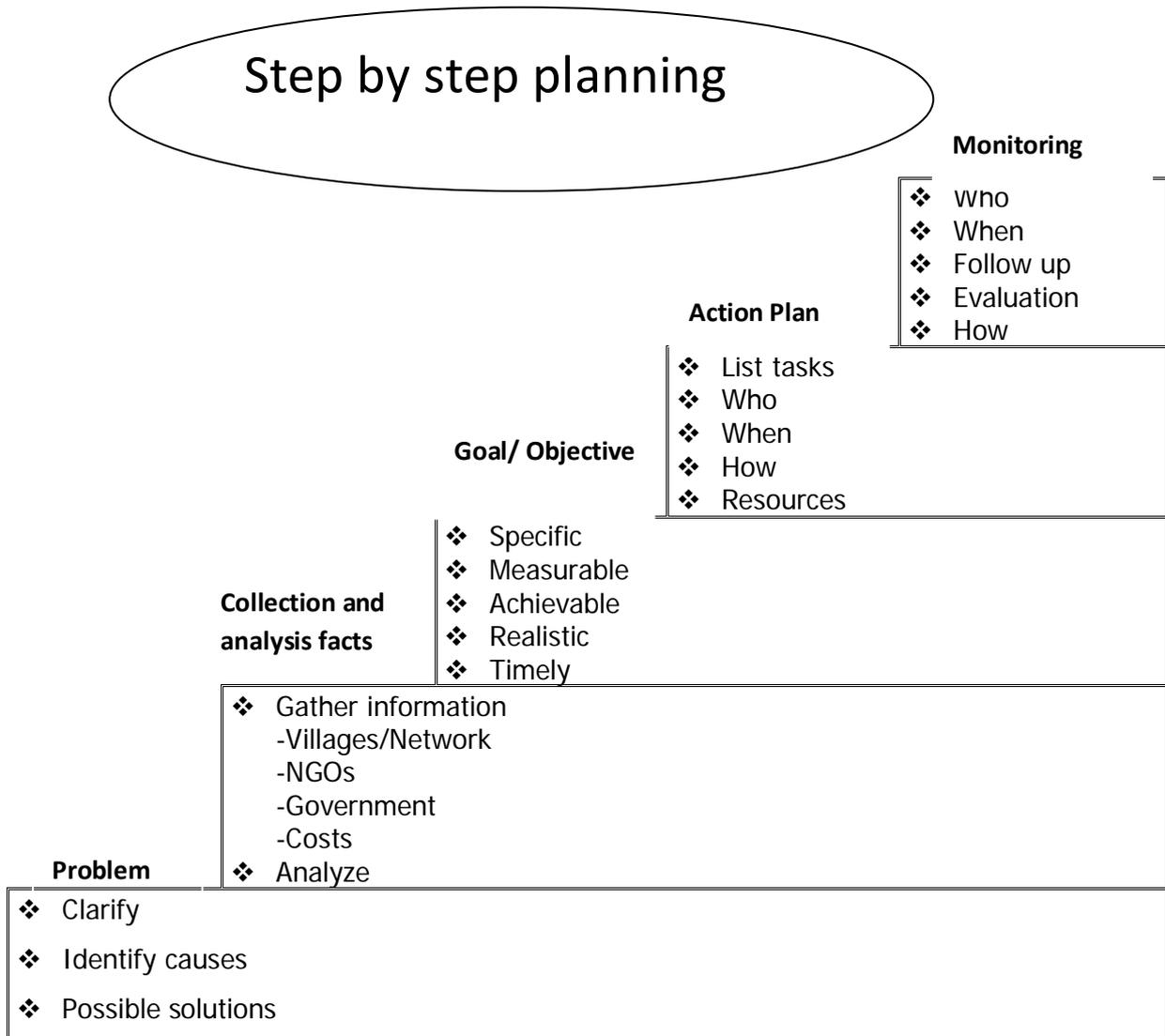
During the implementation phase the project is carried out as outputs are provided, activities take place and outputs are produced. Through monitoring you make sure that the project is carried out according to the plan.

During the evaluation phase you need to find out whether you have achieved the aims of the plan: was it success, what went right and what went wrong? During this stage you need to draw on lessons learned to help improve current and future plans. If all phases of the planning cycle are carried out well the process becomes a spiral.



(Introduction to strategic plan, SILAKA, 2008)

If we wish to set this process out in a linear step-by-step way, then we can identify the following main stages in developing plan:



(Participatory Management and Planning, Training Manual, Prepared by Mr. Tan Visal, PACT, PACT Cambodia, 1995)

6. Participatory Planning and Social Accountability

Participatory planning and budgeting enables citizens to participate in the decision-making process, where local governments formulate their plans and budgets. By channeling the preferences of citizens' on the allocation of local resources, local governments have incentives to be more responsive to local preferences. Participatory planning is not a social accountability mechanism. However, it can create favorable conditions for social accountability if:

- By participating in the prioritization process, citizens become better informed about what the local government has committed to deliver;

- By investing time and effort in the process, citizens also gain motivation to better understand how the local government allocates resources;
It becomes a social accountability mechanism if:

- The formulation process includes specific mechanisms to allow citizens to review and ask questions on the implementation of the previous year’s plan; or citizen committees that participated in the formulation process continue to function during the year and oversee the implementation of the plan.

(Social Accountability Sourcebook, World Bank Cambodia)

7. Key Learning Elements

You must remember that participatory planning is a process to empower people to own village resources and plan for its sustained growth. Thus, they should be involved in all phases of participatory planning to maintain ownership and cooperation.