ABSTRACT

Many developing countries have, from the sixties onwards, switched over from centralised planning to decentralised planning with people's participation. Growing imbalances have highlighted the need for multi-level planning and micro level planning (MLP) in India. The Panchayati Raj (PR) system provides an institutional framework for operationalising MLP.

The panchayat is an ancient Indian institution. After Independence, the PR was brought under the Directive Principles of State Policy. The early attempts to implement the PR system failed due to lack of resources and statutory backing. The 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1992 seeks to rectify this. The Act provides for PR institutions at village, intermediate and district levels and empowers them to prepare and implement development plans.

The Ninth Five-Year Plan underlines the need for planning from the village level. The Tamilnadu State Planning Commission has prescribed the steps for preparing development proposals. The UNIDO has suggested a scientific methodology for preparing project proposals. These can be used in Indian Village Panchayats with needed modification and simplification for local relevance.

To effectively discharge their duties in preparing and implementing micro plans, the Village Panchayat Presidents (VPPs) require adequate knowledge and skills. So they need to be trained and capacitated. The present study attempts to design a strategy for training the VPPs in MLP.
The objectives of the study are: to identify the training needs of the VPPs; to evolve a tentative training strategy; to organise a training programme and evaluate the efficacy of the tentative training strategy; and, to design a refined training strategy for further use.

This study was undertaken in the 14 blocks of Dindigul District, Tamilnadu. All the elected Presidents of the 306 Village Panchayats of the District became the target respondents. The 279 VPPs who attended the review meeting convened by the DRDA became the sample respondents answering a questionnaire on the socio-economic profile of the VPPs. Half of the VPPs viz., 153, from seven blocks in 3 different clusters, became the selected respondents for identifying the training needs of the VPPs. For assessing the favourable training climate, the 14 Schemes BDOs of the district, 16 trainee BDOs on a visit to Gandhigram Rural Institute (GR1) from Karnataka State and 15 experts from the staff of GPJ became the assessing respondents.

In the light of the data collected, a tentative training design was prepared for a 3-day training programme. Of the selected VPPs 32 were invited to the training programme. Of these 19 participated fully in the training programme.

The training was conducted during 19-21 December 1997 in GR1. Pre-training motivation was provided. The training programme was fine-tuned according to the expectations of the trainees. The training was monitored closely.

The end evaluation revealed that the training strategy was largely efficacious, but could be improved. The tentative training strategy was refined accordingly and the model training strategy was designed for further use.