

Jana Prerit Abhiyan

People's Plan for a Samarth Bastar

1 Introduction

1.1 Concept of Samarth Zilla

The process of development followed in India has resulted in lop-sided spatial development along with a rural-urban divide which has led to large scale migration and rural poverty- induced urbanisation. We thus witness rural areas, without basic infrastructure or amenities, stripped of their capacities to provide decent livelihoods to the people on the one hand and overburdened urban areas with growing slums where the urban poor live in dismal conditions.

Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) New Delhi undertook a research study in order to develop a framework for integrated district development and planning, called the Samarth Zilla framework that uses a regional approach. It borrows substantially from Sustainability Livelihoods Framework (SLF) so far as to include five types of capital (i.e. Natural, Human, Social, Physical, and Financial) and the constraints by which these five types of capital are bound. (For an overview, please refer to RGICS, Policy Watch Vol. VIII Issue 6.).

The Samarth Zilla framework aims at building an institutional eco-system to make the district more capable (Samarth) of providing decent livelihoods and a good quality of life to its inhabitants.

The study was undertaken in two districts each in eight states viz. J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Assam and Tamil Nadu. Two districts selected for study in Chhattisgarh were Bastar and Bilaspur.

The framework was planned to be developed in three phases viz. i) the policy observatory phase entailing which is largely field based to capture ground realities ii) the policy repertory phase in which is problem identification, analysis and solution development iii) Policy Laboratory or Policy Lab to test finally selected policy prescriptions in a real-life situation, wherever feasible.

1.2 Background of the Jana Prerit Abhiyan for Samarth Bastar

Bastar district of Chhattisgarh was chosen for testing the implementation of the concept of policy laboratory. The Policy Lab is to play the role of an independent actor in analysis, action and advocacy. Analysis would be based on observation, consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and research. Action entails the pilot testing of possible solutions and evaluation of results besides capacity building before scaling up. Lastly, the Policy Lab would take up

advocacy for scaling up through pentagonal partnerships or the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The idea of Panchmukhi Samvaay, framed by Shri Vijay Mahajan, keeps community in the centre of a pentagon as the target of intervention. The objective is to bring social, economic and cultural change without exploiting nature. In fact, it believes that the re-generation of natural capital will catalyze the process of community level change. The ultimate objective of this framework is to not create from nature but to create with nature. This aim of the progress can be achieved by meaningful collaborating effort by five different types of institutions. These five segments create five corners of the pentagon or five faces (Panchmukhi).

These five segments are (1) Government; (2) Corporate Sector and the market; (3) Civil Societies; (4) Capital Market and (5) Knowledge Institutions. The collaborative action by these five segments is the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The Panchmukhi Samvaay provides pragmatic structure for the implementation of sustainable livelihood framework.



The Panchmukhi Samvaay provides for proper resource management required the interactive support and functioning of five key stakeholders. The government is the largest player in the development sector with its immense power of resource allocation, including its role in policy formulation and implementation. The market because of its fundamental concern with ROI and efficiency, plays a role in the purchase, sale and distribution of goods and services, including providing necessary technological support for implementing key development programs. Civil society institutions (CSI), including but not restricted to NGOs, play a balancing role between the two. Moreover, it is only the embedded NGO - as a part of CSI - which can mobilize and organize the forest dwellers, develop norms of working, and train the on aspects of restoration and livelihoods. The knowledge organizations, such as think tanks, universities and other research and policy planning bodies are required because managing large scale program planning and implementation would mean drawing on concepts, theory and technical knowledge. Finally, one would require vast amounts of financial resources for project implementations; and since no single donor has this capacity, one would need mainstream capital, apart from funding support from multilateral agencies. Moreover, the very inflow of mainstream finance would bring upfront the financial viability of any such project.

These five segments bring in institutional and financial sustainability to facilitate environmentally sustainable progress. This idea of Panchmukhi Samvaay attempts to bring effective models of

community development. The term effective here constitute three dimensions namely efficient, equitable and sustainable. Efficiency is required to minimize resources and maximize output. On the other hand, the equity is crucial to include socially and economically disadvantaged in the process of change. The sustainability further requires meeting three prerequisites. Any sustainable model must have financial sustainability, institutional sustainability and environmental sustainability.

In keeping with this approach, widespread discussions were held with various stakeholders in Bastar district as also in some neighbouring areas to get an insight in the dynamics of the development process. Discussions were held with people from all walks of life such as agriculturists from villages, progressive farmers, members of women self-help groups, forest dwelling communities, local artisans, businessmen including officials of the chamber of commerce, young entrepreneurs, students, agricultural scientists, lawyers, members from academia and the media, officials of non-profit organisations and social workers, officials of Farmer Producer Companies and co-operative societies, retired officials, social and political leaders and government officials, including the District Collector and the Chief Conservator of Forests. Visits were made to the Horticultural University, the office of the Coconut Development Board, office of TRIFED etc.

Besides individual discussions, a meeting was also convened in Jagdalpur on the 24th June, 2019 where the RGICS team from Delhi and Chhattisgarh interacted with a cross section of people in the spirit of the consultations under the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The meeting was chaired by Padmashri Dharampal Saini, the renowned Gandhian educationist working in Bastar for over four decades. The discussions were led by Shri Vijay Mahajan, Director, RGICS who invited the participants to express their vision of a Samarth Bastar and give their suggestions. The deliberations in the meetings were marked by an enthusiastic response from the participants to the initiatives proposed under the framework. The discussions led the foundation for continued action. It was committed that RGICS would continue the discussions, observation and analysis and would submit a document incorporating a plan with suggestions for people's action for a Samarth Bastar district.

This document is being presented in keeping with the commitment and is the result of the discussions with people from all walks of life from Bastar and the neighbouring areas.

We express our deepest gratitude to the various people who contributed to this effort by offering their time, ideas and support in various other forms.

1.3 Methodology of this document

The document has been developed using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Panchmukhi Samvaay Framework. While the sustainable livelihood framework provides the conceptual base for planning community development initiatives, the Panchmukhi Samvaay provides the pragmatic structure for the implementation of sustainable livelihood framework in the current context.

In the analysis of the various sectors and resulting suggestions, the methodology adopted has been to make a brief note on the current state of affairs of the sector followed by an outline of the potential for development and the various possibilities. A brief enumeration is then made of

the various schemes and arrangements currently being implemented for the sector. This is followed by an analysis of the factors considered to be reasons for the under-achievement, under three broad categories viz. pattern of control over the resources, institutional capabilities relating to the sector and the adequacy of financial provision available for development. Based on these, finally, steps suggested for action are presented. This methodology is followed for each of the areas selected for focused action.

At the end of the analysis of the various areas of focus, suggestions are made for the way forward by way of a series of steps which could be taken for facilitating community action.

1.4 Areas of focus for Samarth Bastar

The plan for a Samarth Bastar through people's initiative would require action on several fronts. Some of the areas of focus as a part of working towards a Samarth Bastar are outlined below:

- Agriculture and Allied Sectors
- Forests and Forest Produce
- Responsible Tourism with People's Participation
- Entrepreneurship Development
- Public participation, community action and governance
- Health and nutrition
- Education

1.5 What areas are excluded, and why

Ideally, a district plan has to incorporate action-oriented goals and targets spanning a wide range of areas which together combine to make a comprehensive document covering the entire gamut of activities and sectors within the district. However, this plan to make Bastar a more Samarth district envisages action by the people to address development challenges through engagement with the government and other constituents of the Panchmukhi Samavaay.

This document, therefore, is not intended to be a comprehensive plan covering all sectors such as government programmes, lending by banks and financial institutions, infrastructural arrangements required and planned, initiatives by educational and research institutions etc.

Out of the five types of capital considered under the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, physical capital is an important segment for Bastar due to the pressing need for better infrastructure. However, since planning for infrastructure and the resources required etc. is an area where only the concerned authorities are capable of the specialised functions, this important segment has been excluded. Similarly, mineral deposits are an important resource of the district of Bastar. However, since planning for the extraction of minerals and their deployment is a specialised and exclusive function of the concerned authorities, this area has also not been covered. In short, the focus has been less on influencing government programmes but more on community action for sustainable development, no doubt with government support wherever required.