



South Asia

Regional Knowledge Platform

Discussion Summary

CONSULTATION WITH ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Draft National Rural Housing & Habitat Policy

23rd January 2007

A one day consultation on the "Draft National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy" was conducted by basin-South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform with support from ActionAid International in Port Blair. Though the consultation was the tenth in the series, it was the first consultation in a Union Territory. Prior to this, 9 consultations have been conducted covering the states of Jharkhand, Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Pune, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman and Diu, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The success of the consultation was in terms of quality inputs it received from participants who represented various organizations like PRIs, Government Departments, Educational Institutions, NGOs, CSOs and Media.

Discussion on Rural Housing Schemes

The initial discussion on the social housing schemes of the Union Territory opened a platform for the participants to discuss their own views and critically assess the functioning of the prevailing schemes like Indira Awas Yojana.

Discussions on Specific Action Areas of the Policy

Participants were divided into small working groups which critically examined the clauses proposed in the

working draft. The discussions and recommendations by the smaller groups were shared in the plenary session that followed. However, the general view was that the needs and conditions of the people of the islands are different from that of the mainland. The policy should cater to the needs of all people living in different cultural, socio-economic and environmental conditions in the islands.

Key points of discussion:

- People are unaware of the design of the scheme
- People's choice not paid heed to
- People are provided with building materials and not cash for construction of houses

1. Land – Access and Management

- Clauses laid by the Coastal Regulation Zone(C.R.Z) should be flexible
- Lands lying unproductive should be put to use for distribution to the landless. It could be also used for other development purposes.
- The forest lands already occupied by some communities should be regularized. However to restrict further encroachment, policy should restrict future possibilities of the same.
- Excess land gained through encroachment should be ceased from people and put for developmental use.
- Due to increasing in -migration, there have been problems related to excessive stress on the land, civic infrastructure & ecosystem. A master plan should be developed to check the problem of in-migration.
- People who have lost land due to Tsunami should be provided with land.

- Land records should be developed for the Islands. Where land record already exists, they should be updated and digitized.

2. Access to Finance

- BPL families, the poor and the marginalized must have continued access to the Government Housing Schemes
- Government funds should be earmarked to provide support to PRIs through mechanisms like grants etc.
- Funds should be made available to the people for availing basic amenities also.
- Fiscal incentives need to be provided to the local producers of cost effective and environment friendly materials.

3. Legal and Regulatory Reforms

The clauses under this could be broadly divided under 3 broad heads.

I. Devolution of Powers

- There is a need for administrative mechanisms, more manpower and resources for proper implementation of rural habitat plans at the level of PRIs.
- There should be a land use policy at the district level
- The preparation of the District Housing Action Plan should be made time bound and put in place before the expiry of current Five Year Plan.
- NGOs working in the villages must be made accountable to the Gram Sabhas

II Legislative Reforms

- While NGOs and CBOs are promoted as part of P-P-P housing scheme, care should be taken to ensure that such steps do not add to the vulnerability of the poor.
- Stamp duty would be waived for the rural poor
- Allotment of land should be in the name of both, husband and wife. Where there is absence of proper land record, it should be created and updated.
- Livelihood opportunities should be equal and no discrimination should be made on the basis of cast, creed etc.

III. Sustainability Concerns or Norms

- Guidelines and regulations would need to be developed by the State governments to facilitate adoption of sustainable building practices.
- There is a need for proper coordination and integration of policies regarding natural resource management, solid waste disposal etc.
- There should be specified norms to check the consumption of natural resources. Guidelines should be drawn for the use of renewable energy source.
- The Government would take an active lead in promoting and using building materials and components based on agriculture and hazardous industrial wastes.

4. Infrastructure: Reinforcing the 'Habitat' Paradigm over a Focus on 'Housing'

- There is a need to find ways to achieve the required upgradation and installation of infrastructure in a manner that would cater to the needs of women, men, children, differently abled, tribals and other vulnerable groups.

- The areas that fall within the ambit of infrastructure should encompass provision of adequate water, power supply, energy etc but it is also important that recycling of water is promoted.
- PRIS should be responsible not only for infrastructure planning and management but also for its implementation and regulation.
- If rural people are subjected to displacement they should be compensated by equal amount of land and equal size of houses in a better habitat which would provide them with basic amenities. If disaster rehabilitation packages are provided, it should be done in consultation with the needs of the people.

5. Reorganizing Delivery Mechanisms

- The housing programs need not necessarily be based on the SHGs as it might lead to the monopoly of the SHGs, further marginalizing the poorest.
- There should not only be transfer of cost effective building materials from “lab to land” but also from “land to land.”
- Owner driven construction processes need to be followed and livelihood generation programmes should be integrated with construction activities.

6. Capacity Development

- In Andaman and Nicobar, as the NREGA is not available, other opportunities for on-the-job training must be explored and tapped.
- Training cess should be levied by the Panchayats for houses with plinth area of 50sqm.or more
- Keeping in view the fact that the islands lie in a disaster prone area, local carpenters, masons, plumbers who are engaged in construction activities must be properly trained and certified to ensure that they have the right building skills.
- Concerned states would be advised to provide decentralized training through building resource centers for both men and women.

7. Employment issues in the Housing Sector

- Though the issue of poverty is not critical in the island, there is need for improving and upgrading standards of living in terms of development of agricultural sector, industrial sector as this would open up livelihood opportunities for the unemployed.
- Unemployment of educated youth is critically to the union territory. The policy should target to do away with it. In the process it needs to look at the issue of in-migration that leads to the unemployment of local people.
- Tourism could be made to emerge as a flourishing business and it must absorb the local people who do not have prospective livelihood opportunities

8. Effective Monitoring and Access to Information

- Clear strategy needs to be established for beneficiary selection.
- A common platform or physical space needs to be identified where people would share their grievance with one another and voice their thoughts and needs.