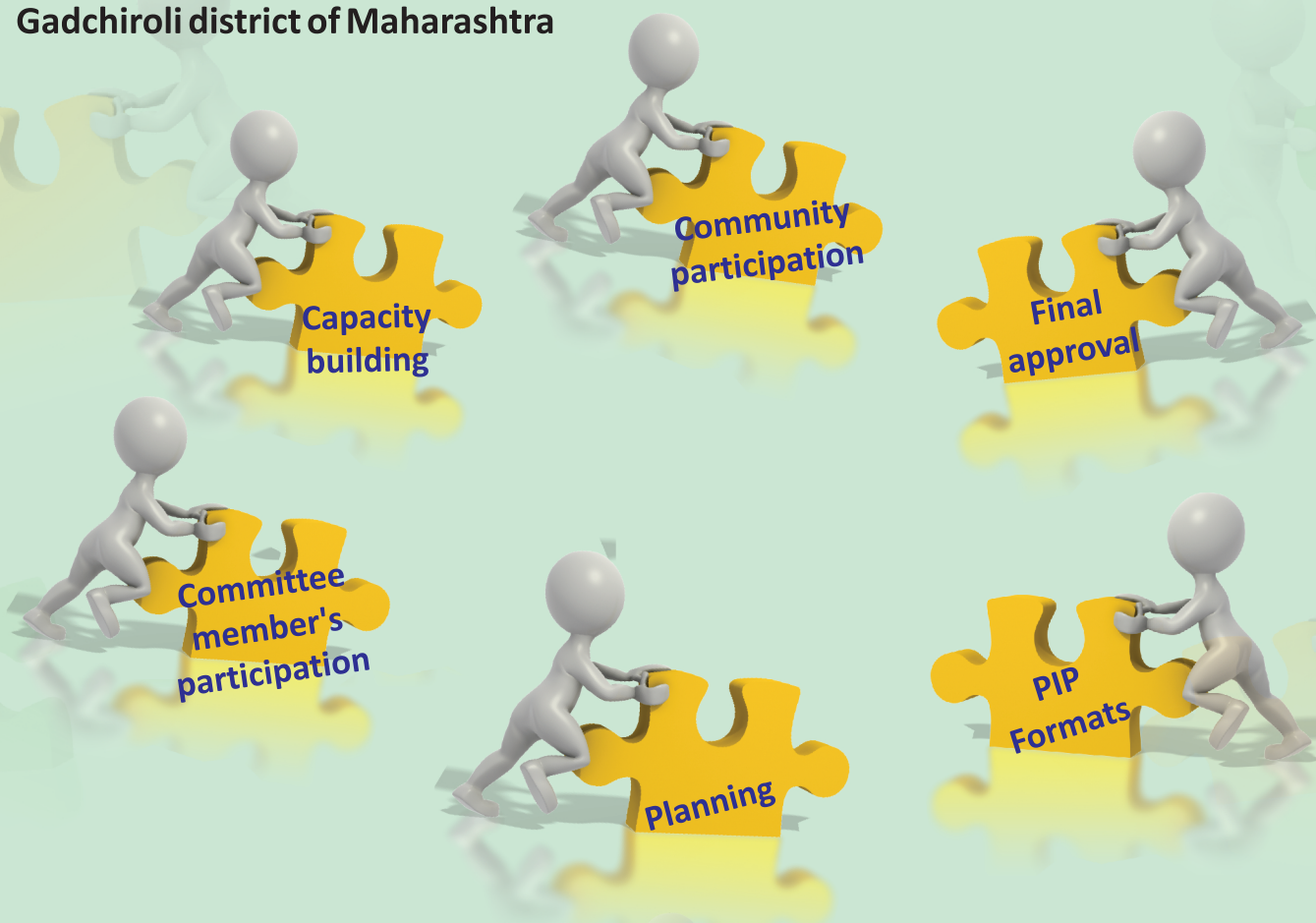


The process for preparing health sector PIPs in Maharashtra : How is it being done?

Is it genuinely participatory?

A study of the PIP preparation process under the National Health Mission in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra



One of the important initiatives of the National Health Mission (NHM) is to support decentralized health planning for improving community participation in the implementation of health services in the State. The strategy that NHM adopts to operationalize decentralized health planning is to generate a health plan i.e. Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) at different levels. Every year, the process of preparing PIP takes place from the National to the village level and then back from the village to the National level. The main intention of this process is to ensure that instead of health budgets being prepared by experts sitting in Delhi and Mumbai, they should be prepared in a participatory manner, taking people's local needs into account. It is expected that actual village level meetings are held with villagers through the forums like Gramsabha. Every year, the central Government sends out the PIP formats to each state Government, using which an annual PIP is expected to be prepared from the village to the district level. However, as noted by the process of Community Based Monitoring and Planning (CBMP) in Maharashtra, this is not being done in reality. On this background, an in-depth study was conducted to understand how the process of preparing PIP from the village to the district level is actually being undertaken.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the understanding of various stakeholders involved in the PIP preparation process, about the PIP.
2. To understand how the process of preparing PIP is actually being undertaken in terms of capacity building, community participation and its approval.
3. To document the experiences of various stakeholders involved in the PIP preparation process in the view of understanding key gaps or challenges faced and suggestions for improving the same.

Scope, time frame and methodology of the study

This study was conducted from July 2015 to August 2015, in two blocks of Gadchiroli district, namely Armori and Kurkheda, where the CBMP process is being implemented. In this study, 33 key stakeholders, involved in various capacities at various levels, in the process of preparation of PIP for the financial year 2013-14, were included. Selection of participants was done using purpose sampling while in-depth interview was used as the method of data collection. Based on the posts of these respondents and their role in the preparation of the PIP, they were divided into three categories, and were interviewed accordingly, using a structured questionnaire.

Table No.1		
Category	People involved in preparing the PIP in 2013-14	No of respondents
Category I - Non-official members of various committees from village to district level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative of district nodal organisation (1) Monitoring and planning committee / Rugna Kalyan Samiti members (5) Village Health Sanitation, Water Supply and Nutrition Committee members (4) 	10
Category II - Committee chairperson / PRI member at various levels- village to district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarpanch (2) Chairperson, Monitoring and Planning Committee, Rugna Kalyan Samiti * (5) Health <i>Sabhapati</i> (Chairperson), Z.P. to district (1) 	8
Category III - Staff and officials from sub-centre to district level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) (3) MO (Medical Officer) (4) Block/district level officials (6) Administrative members (2) 	15
	Total respondents	33

**Out of the eight persons from group of PRI members, one person is actually the BDO and not a PRI, but he is the Chairperson of the Rugna Kalyan Samiti in the RH and has the powers to give final approval in the PIP process, just like PRI members, hence he has been included here.*

Key findings...



Limited understanding among key stakeholders about PIP preparation process

■ 28/33 respondents have heard about the PIP..

Out of the 33 respondents, 28 respondents had heard about the PIP preparation process at some point of time. Within this, the proportion of those who knew about the PIP preparation process was more among the officials and staff category.

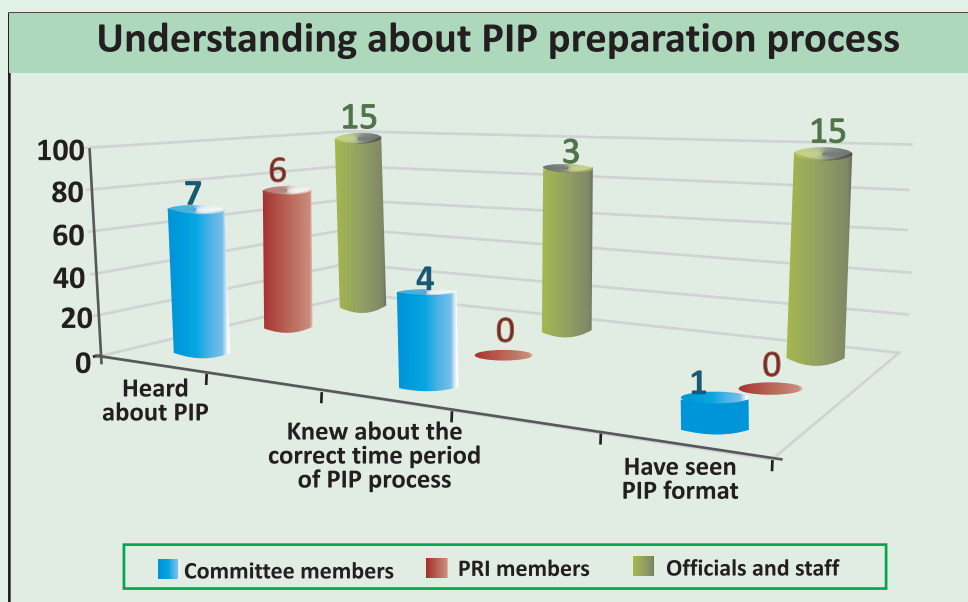
■ 22/33 respondents have knowledge about PIP..

Out of 33 respondents, only 22 respondents seemed to have knowledge about the PIP preparation process. 15 out of 22 were officials and staff, who had received information about the PIP process from their senior authorities. The

remaining seven were non-official members of the committee, who had received information about the PIP preparation process, from local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). **It emerged that not even a single Panchayat Raj Institution member (PRI member) had knowledge about the PIP process.**

■ Only half of them have knowledge about the time period of the PIP..

Of the 33 respondents, half (17) were able to tell the correct time period for preparing the PIP. Of these, 13 were officials and staff and four were committee members. Among the PRI members, not a single respondent could tell the correct time period of preparing the PIP.



■ What does PIP mean?

When asked this question, most of the respondents mentioned that during this process, formats are filled and are combined together at various levels from the village to the district level. **Almost half of the respondents (16) mentioned that the PIP preparation process is intended to strengthen health services through planning.** Two officials mentioned that good records are created while seven committee members expressed the view that people's needs can be appropriately addressed by undertaking participatory planning process. **Almost half of the group of officials and staff responded that PIP preparation process involved filling of formats.** One official mentioned that the PIP process is to fulfil the objectives of the NHM. Out of the total

33 respondents only one from the group of officials and staff gave the response that PIP means annual planning, based on people's need through community participatory process.

Overall, understanding regarding PIP preparation process among all three groups does not seem to be satisfactory. Actually if one looks at posts of the respondents and their role in the process of preparing the PIP, then they should have considerable knowledge about the PIP preparation process, but out of 33 respondents, five were not even aware about the PIP. Among those who have some knowledge about the PIP process, most are actually officials and staff however even in this group, understanding about PIP is restricted to filling of PIP formats.

Key Findings

- Out of 33 respondents, only 22 respondents seemed to have knowledge about the PIP. It emerged that not even a single PRI member had knowledge about the PIP preparation process.
- Also it was found that five out of 33 respondents had not even heard about PIP preparation process.
- Of the 33 respondents, half (17) were able to tell the correct time period for preparing the PIP. Among the PRI members, not a single respondent could tell the correct time period of preparing the PIP.
- When asked what does PIP mean, most of the respondents (21) mentioned that during this process, formats are filled and are combined together at various levels from the village to the district level.
- In the studied blocks, non-official members and PRI members both had not received any such training from the Government. Further they did not get any such opportunity to actually participate in the current PIP process hence trainings they received remained for their capacity building only.
- Not a single MO participated in the study, had undertaken the process of seeking approval as per guidelines. Seeing limited involvement of non government committee members and PRI members in the PIP process for 2013-14, this 'approval' seems to be only on paper.



Capacity building – for participatory planning or for filling up formats?

No training from government system to PRI members and non-official members of committees.

- Out of the 15 respondents in the category of officials and staff, only half (9) could tell when they had received the training. Local officials and staff reported that they had received information from higher level authorities about how to fill the formats for PIP. Further, they shared that every year before the actual process of preparing the PIP, in the monthly meetings held at the district and other levels PIP formats are explained to them and these meetings are termed as training. While, district level officials informed that three day training sessions are conducted for them at the state level.
- Among the PRI members, however, not a single PRI member has received any training till date. Out of the 10 non-official members, seven have received training about the PIP

process from CSOs. It was noted that non-official members and PRI members, both had not received any such training from the Government.

- Non-official members informed that the emphasis of the training which they received from CSOs was on participatory planning in the PIP process, and to incorporate people's needs in the PIP. However, they stated that they did not get any such opportunity to actually participate in the PIP process hence trainings they received remained for their capacity building only.

In short, during the year 2013-14 officials and staff have received some form of training through the Government, but the non-official members and PRI members have not received any training from the Government. Also the training is limited only to filling of formats, without relevant emphasis on community participation in the planning process.



The current PIP preparation process indicates less participation

PRI members and non-official members of the Committee do not have active participation in the process

- It was found that during the preparation of PIP in year 2013-14, only 19 of the 33 respondents actually participated in the process, of these most were officials and staff.

- All officials and staff reported having received the formats and the instructions for filling the same. However, only five of the non-government committee members have seen the PIP till date. As far as the PRI members are concerned, actually seeing the formats is far-fetched, interviews revealed that they were not even aware about what is planning and how people's needs are incorporated in this process.

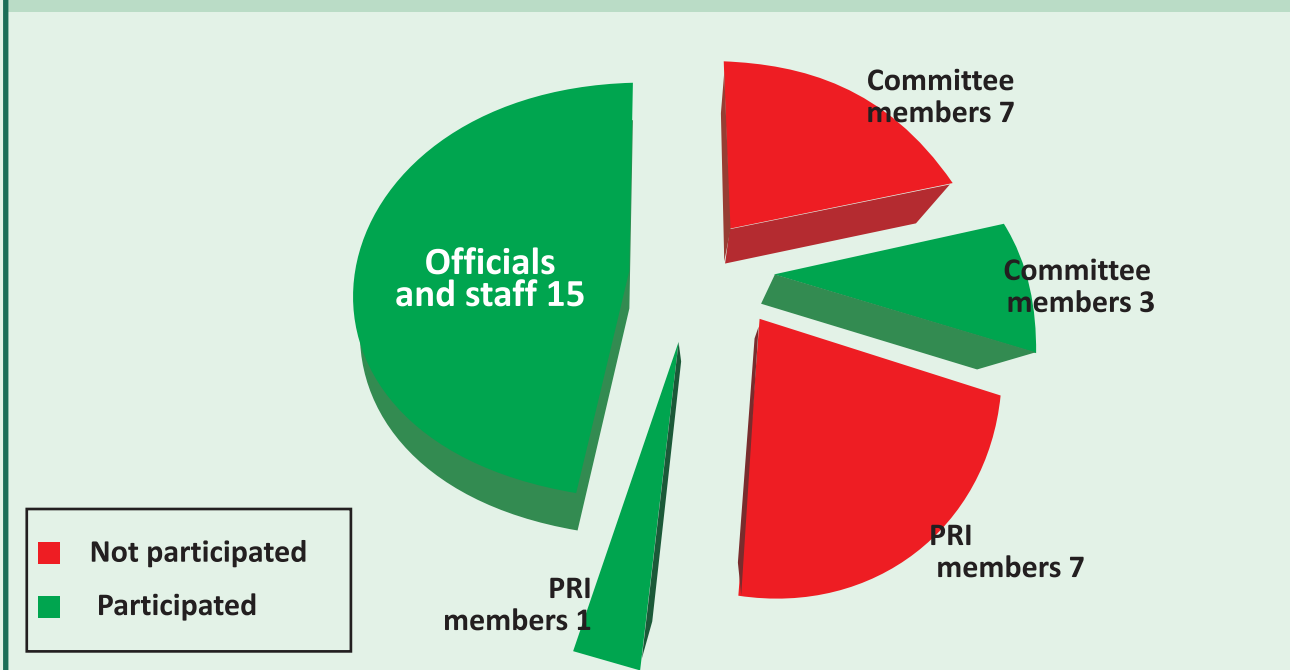
- It was noted that PRI members and non-official members are not included in trainings; neither any efforts are made to involve them in the process at any level.
- Most importantly, **not a single ANM had conducted a village meeting for filling the annual PIP formats.** One ANM responded, 'The records which we already have are sufficient to fill up the formats. There is not enough time to organise village meetings.'
- One more ANM responded, '**We are given the formats and given a time frame of only two-three days to fill them, then day and night we strive to complete the task of filling the formats, and sending them to the PHC.**' One ANM said, 'All information in the formats has to be filled in pencil, if the records which we already have, are not filled up properly, **only then we need to actually visit the villages and fill the pending information in the formats.** But

there is no need to conduct village meetings for this purpose.'

- We are required to fill in several formats during the year, this PIP is one more such format! So we don't give it any special importance', shared one ANM. Even the information regarding the PIP format is given to them in the monthly meeting, just like the other formats.

Actually, a special arogya gram sabha should be conducted, or at least a village meeting should be conducted, for discussion, during which the PIP should be filled. But without undertaking any of these processes, the figures from the registers are filled in the formats and these formats are then sent. As a result it has emerged that at the village level there is almost no participation of the VHSNC and PRI members in the current process of preparing PIP proposal.

Participation in PIP process of 2013-14





By passing participatory bodies while approving PIP proposals?

MOs have the crucial role of compiling the formats at their level and sending it to the block level. The guidelines state that before this, the filled formats should be presented before the Rugna Kalyan Samiti (RKS) of the PHC and their approval should be taken. But from the interviews **it emerged that not a single MO participated in the study had undertaken this process of seeking the approval in this manner. According to them no approval is required before sending the formats at the block level.**

One MO shared his experience, 'Often it is difficult to fill the budget related items in the format, it has to be done based on some speculation. This is the most time-consuming part of filling the formats.' The scope of compiling the formats at the block level and higher levels is very huge.

The format for each PHC in the block is completed in the block level workshop. In the same workshop, the formats for Rural Hospital and Sub-District Hospital are also filled. Also, any new schemes are also incorporated. Further at the district level, the PIP related information which has been collected at each block level is compiled at the district workshop, under the monitoring of the district health officials. This is the overall process as described by the officials.

For the PIP proposal to be passed at the block and the district level final approval of PIP proposals from the various committees at different levels is required. At the block level, approval of the three committees - Block level Rugna Kalyan Samiti, executive Committee and block Monitoring and Planning committee- is required. At the district level, approval of all 3 committees - District governing body, Executive body and District Monitoring and planning committee - is required. **However, taking a look at the role of these committees, and the PRI members in the process of preparing the PIP for 2013-14, this 'approval' seems to be mostly on paper in the studied blocks.**

One official shared, **"Before the block level PIP is submitted to the higher level, it has to be presented for approval in a meeting of the Block Development Officer (BDO) and the Panchayat Samiti Sabhapati (Chairperson)."** However, on verifying the same, it emerged that the approval was taken in a meeting conducted after the submission of PIP to the higher level. One official shared that PRI members can be involved in the process of preparing the PIP by merely asking for their suggestions, there is no need to take their approval.



Some experiences shared by the respondents about the PIP process..

“ Providing guidance, giving oral instructions to spread information about the new formats upto the sub-centre level, balancing the budget with requirements while compiling the formats at the block level etc. are very challenging while filling the PIP formats. ”

- An experience shared by an official

“ At the block level, there is a lot of work of compiling several formats from different levels. However, the time allotted is very limited. This time is insufficient, and if the formats have not been filled properly at the lower levels, then the process becomes much more time-consuming. ”

– Another experience shared by an official

“ Another official shared the following experience,
“Due to time constraints, gram sabha is not conducted and people's participation is not taken. Even if we do so and incorporate demands emerging from people and send them up, at the higher level these are removed and not included in the PIP.” ”

“ One more official shared, “ No matter how meticulously we prepare the formats for the coming year, the actual inflow of money for the current financial year gets delayed. If there is insufficient information on a certain budget head, then 10% increase is calculated over last year's allocation and the format is completed.” ”

In this entire process, the Government employees perform the task of following orders received from the higher level. Following the timelines, filling the formats once the orders come, if there is shortage of time, then they complete the task of filling forms by putting aside all other work.



Difficulties regarding the PIP preparation process shared by respondents

About the formats

- Presently given PIP formats are in English, which seem to be difficult to understand.
- If training have not been conducted prior to the process of filling the formats, then gaps remain in filling of the formats.
- There is no mechanism for cross-checking the information being sent from the village level to the higher levels.
- There is lack of co-ordination among government officials - staff and committee members while filling the PIP formats at various levels.
- The health needs of remote areas are not incorporated in the PIP proposal.
- Those health needs which do not fit into the budget heads given in the PIP format, have

to be included in the 'remarks' section, there is no separate provision for this in the format.

About the capacity building

- Local health officials and staff are not given a separate training for compiling the formats.
- The quality of the PIP proposals depends upon the quality of training and co-operation which authorities are able to extend to the level below.
- As there is no combined training, the PIP preparation process is not undertaken through a co-ordination of officials and staff, non-official members and PRI members.
- In the training, emphasis is not given on community participation and incorporating people's needs in the PIP proposals.



Suggestions from respondents about the PIP process

About the formats

- The time available for filling the PIP budget formats should be sufficient.
- Gramsabha should be conducted and demands emerging from the same must be incorporated in the formats.

- Various Government Resolutions (GRs) in context of health must reach the PRI members.

About capacity building

- The Government must arrange for training or orientation at each level, prior to the PIP preparation process.

- At each level, training must be arranged from the Government, for at least chairperson of the committees and for the interested committee members.

■ About the approval of PIP

- Before the PIP proposals are sent to the higher level, an approval must be taken from the committee members and PRI members.

■ About follow up of the planning

- The funds which have been approved through the planning must be available for use, from the beginning of the financial year.
- The progress report about the implementation of annual PIP preparation process, should reach all levels.
- Committee members and PRI members should monitor whether the implementation of programs in the financial year is taking place as per the approved PIP.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to gauge the understanding and experiences of various stakeholders involved at different levels in the PIP preparation process in Gadchiroli district for the period 2013-14. In terms of overall understanding, information regarding PIP as well as training, the officials and staff turned out to be better placed than the non-official members of the committees and PRI members. It can be seen that the role of the non-official members and committee chairpersons at various levels in the preparation of the PIP, has been side-lined. There seems to be very weak co-ordination between the government officials and committees, at various levels, ranging from training to actual preparation of the PIP. The training process also seems to be limited to only explaining formats. However, it emerges that in the training which is provided by the NGOs, there is an emphasis on community participation in the planning, PIP process. Even when taking final approval for the PIP proposals, the guidelines are being bypassed. Overall, it emerged that there is a lack of people's participation in the actual process of preparing the PIP. The understanding of most of the respondents in the study seemed to be that PIP is just another format, like all the other formats which are required to be filled during the entire year. On the whole, currently decentralised planning exists mostly on paper, to bring it into reality through community participation for addressing health needs, certain policy level changes are essential in the current process to attain the main objective of decentralised health planning.



Recommendations for improving the PIP preparation process

Based on the issues which have come up in the study and the suggestions given by the respondents, we are suggesting the following modifications in the PIP preparation process

Need to carry out decentralised planning in a people-centred and participatory manner

- To make the PIP preparation process people-centred and to ensure their participation, mass awareness is required. For this, the Government should initiate mass awareness campaign on Decentralised health planning in the villages. This could be done by displaying posters in the villages, informative advertisements on TV/Radio, organizing 'kala-jathas' etc., which include awareness about what is meant by decentralised planning? What is PIP? What is the importance of people's participation in preparing the PIP?; what is the role and responsibility of community in planning process?, etc.
- Existing constitutional, democratic and participatory spaces such as four regular Gramsabhas which are conducted annually, Mahila Gramsabha, Arogya Gramsabha, block and district level Aamsabha etc. should be utilised to understand and identify people's health needs, which would provide significant inputs to PIP preparation process.

Need to conduct regular, systematic and periodic workshops on capacity building of various stakeholders who are involved in the PIP preparation process-

- The government should plan regular and systematic training programs for the various stakeholders of the PIP process, such as local officials and staff, PRI members, members of various committees who are responsible for the final approval of the PIP process. The main emphasis of these trainings should be on how to ensure community participation in the planning process. At the same time, good quality, simple and effective awareness material such as informative booklets about concept and operational framework of PIP preparation process, pamphlets, posters etc should be prepared and disseminated.

Need to make certain modifications in the current PIP preparation process-

- There is need to modify the time period of existing PIP preparation process for which, 'Annual Calendar for PIP preparation' should be developed and implemented for preparing PIP proposals. In proposed annual calendar, the PIP preparation process should be initiated at the beginning or in the middle of the financial year.
- The PIP preparation guidelines and formats which are issued from the national level should be translated in local language in simplified form.
- In the existing PIP budget formats there is very limited space for inclusion of people's demands/ needs which are not directly linked with budget but have importance in the context of decentralized planning. Hence some such space should be allocated in the existing budget formats. At the same time, there should be a feedback mechanism towards accountability, where people can be informed about the progress on the demands which they had raised for incorporation into the PIP. If the people see that their demands are taken seriously by the Government then this would encourage them to actively participate in this process, and also where the demands have actually been sanctioned, the people can help monitor the implementation of these demands.
- The coordination between various stakeholders such as government officials and staff, PRI members and the committee members should be improved at each level.

Need to consider block as a unit and to define block budget envelope-

- Currently in the process of PIP preparation, district is considered as a unit for preparation of budget as well as for disbursement. However, in the present form, it is observed that most of the village level health needs are not being addressed in accordance with the geographical, socio-economic factors specific to the particular block. Hence there should be a process of preparing plans first at the block level, with genuine scope for flexibility and innovation within the defined financial envelope.
- Similarly once the block level budget is prepared, instead of disbursing the funds at the district level, the block level budget allocation should be done.

***CBMP district nodal organisation which actively participated in this study-
Amhi Amchya Arogyasathi, Kurkheda, Dist.- Gadchiroli***

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