

MDGs Localization through Participatory District Development Planning (P-DDP) Pilot Project

**Process, Achievements, Lessons Learned,
Challenges and Ways Forward**

(Synthesis Report)



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1. Introduction

The Government of Ethiopia put in place a comprehensive MDGized five-year (2005/06-2009/10) national development plan referred to as 'Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty' - (PASDEP) in order to accelerate economic development in the country. The plan aims to exert massive-scaling up efforts to meet the MDGs. Furthermore, the Government also reiterated its commitment to deepen and strengthen the ongoing decentralization process by shifting decision-making closer to the grassroots, particularly districts or *woredas*¹ level. However, the limited capacity at *woredas* has slowed down and often impeded efforts to decentralize planning activities. Moreover, the existing local planning exercise lacks comprehensiveness and is highly sector-oriented.

The MDGs need assessment study jointly conducted by Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) and UNDP revealed that adopting MDGs in the local context is central to the achievement of the same. The need to integrate MDGs with local development planning and make the process broad-based is also part of the recommendations of the assessment.

Based on global agreement reached between UNDP and SNV to localize MDGs and informed by national and regional development frameworks, this particular initiative (Localizing the MDGs through Participatory District Development Plan - P-DDP) aimed at designing comprehensive and integrated development plan for the selected three Woredas. Poverty Action Network of civil society organizations in Ethiopia (PANE) was chosen as a local partner to implement the activities of the project. PANE's efforts were geared, first of all, towards building the capacity of local development actors to plan jointly and set up institutional structures that facilitate such kind of planning exercises.

To this effect implementation of the pilot project called *localizing the MDGS through participatory district development planning* commenced in 2006 with PANE playing the leading role on behalf of the Ethiopian CSOs. This report briefly summarizes the process, achievements and lessons learned in the course of implementation and also points out the ways forward for the project to bear fruit with regard to its envisaged impact linked with achieving the MDGs in 2015 in this country.

2. Background and Initiation of the Pilot Project in Ethiopia

2.1 Inception of P-DDP

The P-DDP initiative is born out of the global agreement reached between United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Netherlands Development Agency (SNV) to localize MDGs in selected developing countries. Poverty Action Network of civil society organizations in Ethiopia (PANE) became a local partner in Ethiopia to coordinate activities surrounding PDDP. After reaching consensus both with UNDP and SNV on the overall course of the 'MDGs localization project', a memorandum of

¹ Woreda refers to an administration unit that can be equated to districts in other countries. It comprises several Kebeles, the lowest administrative units in the country.

understanding was signed. The overall objective of the project revolved around creating awareness regarding MDGs and PASDEP at local level and ensuring local development planning processes are MDGs-focused.

After setting criteria, through wide consultative process, for selecting pilot *Woreda* (districts) and undertaking a meticulous process of selection, the project was launched in three *Woredas* namely **Mille Woreda** (Afar region), **Tehuledere Woreda** (Amhara region) and **Yem Special Woreda** (Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region). These pilot *Woredas* are thought to represent quite significant features of social, economic, cultural and geographic diversities existing in the country. Before commencing the project in these *Woredas*, the first task was to set up institutional structures at national and *Woreda* level in order to ensure meaningful participation of different stakeholders and consolidate the legitimacy of the exercise. Accordingly, institutional arrangements that believed to suit the special features of the project were put in place both at national and *Woreda* levels.

2.2 Rationale and Justification for the P-DDP Initiative in Ethiopia

Based on the commitments made at the United Nations Millennium Summit, Ethiopia started the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process in 2002 attempting to address to a common set of principles and targets that would bring all its peoples' to a minimum acceptable standard of development. Ethiopia, however, already subsumed the MDGs in its poverty reduction strategies ahead.

National poverty strategies need to be translated into sub-national or local levels since it is at the local level that policies get translated into implementation, which enhances the ability to involve and reach more effectively the poorest of the poor.

In light of the initiative of Poverty Action Network of Civil Society in Ethiopia (PANE) towards the achievements and localization of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at lower structures especially *woreda* level, three pilot *Woredas* (**Mille from Afar Region; Tehuledere from Amhara Region and Yem from Southern Nation, Nationalities and People's Region**) have been selected. The MDGs localization process would inevitably be successful when the *gaps of Woredas'* in relation to participatory and integrated development planning are identified and kept filled. For this reason, PANE together with other development partners tried to build and empower a decentralized planning capacity that addresses participatory and comprehensive local development planning approaches. Based on these approaches, socio-economic and other data were collected, organized, analyzed and interpreted to discover the development needs of the society in line with the national and regional strategies as well as MDGs. The study findings, together with secondary data, also helped the *woreda* administration to gauge MDGs status of the *Woreda* and prepare participatory district development plan (P-DDP).

The local government was involved in the planning process through the overall organization, management and coordination of the process. For this purpose a

Steering committee (SC) and plan facilitation team (PFT) were independently delegated.

Millennium development goal needs assessment study in Ethiopia (MoFED and UNDP, 2005) revealed that adopting the MDGs to the local context is critical to foster the development process in the country. Thus, there is also a need to localize the MDGs to the local context through the preparation of the comprehensive & integrated district development plan.

It is in this context that PANE & its member organizations envisaged facilitating the preparation of participatory district development plan [P-DDP]. A planning framework was developed in which planning methodologies and experiences of both state and non-state actors have been widely assessed. The framework took into account the overarching development planning frameworks of the country like PASDEP and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and embodied possible strategies of operationalizing them within existing realities of woredas.

The justification for P-DDP heavily lies in the comparative advantages it provides relative to other forms of planning. The benefits can be summarized as follows:

- i. It lays the foundation for meaningful stakeholders' participation. It creates the platform for building a sense of ownership for stakeholders like local community members, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector and develops a shared vision to meet the development needs of the woreda.
- ii. It provides the framework to align and coordinate development programs. Besides facilitating the streamlining of local development planning with development plans at regional and national level, it creates the opportunity for other actors to align their interventions with the overall development priorities of the woreda.
- iii. It also ensures the effective and efficient allocation and utilization of development programs. Planning, as a decision making exercise, involves allocating limited resources to identified problems of the woreda. This process can be efficient and effective when the district is able to set clear and measurable objectives.
- iv. By defining development priorities and resource requirements to meet development targets, PDDP provides a mid-term financial and capital investment plans. This could form the basis for attracting international and local funding agencies that are keen to be approached with feasible development programs/projects.

In attempting to ensure that this comprehensive plan meets the aforementioned basic features of the P-DDP, all possible effort were exerted to make the process participatory, integrated, poverty responsive and implementation-oriented.

3. Objectives of the Pilot Project

The overall objective of the project was to build the capacity of local government and CSOs in the area of program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programs at grass root level. It is also meant to integrate MDGs into the local planning process and build on the ongoing process, particularly PANE, to facilitate broad based ownership and participation in the implementation and monitoring of PASDEP and MDGs through greater involvement of sub-national governments, private sector, CSOs and the community at large.

Immediate objectives

The pilot project has the following immediate objectives:

- Creating awareness on MDGs and PASDEP & integrate them with local development priorities
- To strengthen the understanding and applied skills of CSOs and local government in participatory data collection and analysis, quantitative research methods, macro-economic planning frameworks, and monitoring & evaluation
- To facilitate joint government-CSOs dialogue and partnership building in support of the MDGs and PASDEP at lower levels.

4. Components of the Pilot Project

The following were the major components of the pilot project.

- Awareness creation on MDGs, PASDEP and other relevant policy frameworks
- Capacity building training on data collection and analysis methods, program planning, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, etc., to woreda experts
- Producing MDGs status report of pilot woredas,
- Producing comprehensive development plan of pilot woredas
- Organize series of stakeholders forum in each pilot woreda to augment partnership and participation
- Conduct revenue base assessment and develop strategies of enhancing local revenue collection and management
- Build lasting institutional planning capacities in pilot woredas by providing technical and material assistance

5. The Process

After a thorough consultative process, three Woredas (districts) were selected for the project. In selecting these *woredas*, the attempt was to capture the social, economic,

spatial and cultural diversities existing in the regions & woredas. PANE signed project agreement with UNDP and SNV that clearly outlined the responsibilities of stakeholders and intervention areas. Furthermore, PANE signed another agreement with each woreda administration clearly mapping out the different aspects of cooperation at the local level and facilitates implementation of the project. The project was officially launched in all *woredas* in mid 2006 and has been going on till end of September 2008.

5.1 Institutional arrangements

A two-tier institutional arrangement was put in place to make sure that the plan preparation process encompasses the interests of various stakeholders and ultimately enjoys their full support. The national level structure includes the steering committee for the project and national plan advisory team (NPAT). At Woreda level, the structure involved Stakeholders' forum, Woreda plan steering committee (WPSC) and Woreda plan facilitation team (WPFT).

The *steering committee* at the national level (National Plan Steering Committee - NPSC) is comprised of heads of the three partnering organizations namely UNDP-Ethiopia office, SNV and PANE. NPSC is responsible for making policy-level decisions and overseeing the overall activities of the project. The *NPAT* included program-level experts from the three partnering organizations, representatives of NGOs working in the three pilot Woredas and other interested PANE member organizations. It is mainly responsible for technically assisting Woreda-level experts in the course of the planning process and participates in the capacity building activities of the project which mainly occur in the form of training.

The *stakeholders' forum* at the *Woreda* level included representatives from Woreda cabinet, CSOs, women and youth groups, community-based institutions (CBOs), private sector, prominent personalities, elders/tribe chiefs and other resource persons. It is a focal consultation platform for consulting on the deliverables of the project at all levels of the planning process.

The *Woreda-level steering committee* constitutes the Woreda administrator, heads of Woreda sector offices and head of one CSO operating in the Woreda chaired by the Administrator with head of the Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office acting as secretary of the committee in each woreda. The primary role of the woreda steering committee was to support the Woreda Plan Facilitation Team members in their day to day project related activities and also oversee the performance of the project through a regular meeting of once in a month. As the senior governing body of the *Woreda*, the members of the committee were responsible for the overall management, coordination and monitoring of the process at woreda level.

Woreda Plan Facilitation Team (WPFT) members are experts drawn from pertinent woreda level sector offices namely woreda administration, woreda offices of finance, education, health, agriculture and rural development, water and an expert from focal civil society organization working in the woreda. The day to day activities of the project is mainly left to the WPFT members and the team was responsible for undertaking the

survey, data collection, organization, analysis, interpretation of data and write-up of the reports.

The *Woreda office of finance and economic development (WoFED)* has been responsible for the overall management and coordination of the planning process. The WoFED hosted the P-DDP facilitation team and took responsibility for the day-to-day management of the planning process.

Woreda sector offices: since sector offices will be in charge of implementing the P-DDP, concerned officials from each of the sectors were fully involved in the planning process.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs operating in the woreda were represented in the *Woreda* Planning Steering Committee and Plan Facilitation Team. NGOs' strategies and project activities were also reflected in the P-DDP. NGOs were particularly engaged for:

- Providing methodological or technical guidance to the P-DDP process;
- Documentation of outcomes of planning activities;
- Special studies, best practice and other product related contributions;
- Support to organized and unorganized groups and communities to more effectively engage in and contribute to the planning process.

NGOs that took part in the project at woreda level were Action Aid Ethiopia which was focal NGO at Yem special *woreda*, Agri-service Ethiopia in Tehuldere woreda and Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA) in Mille woreda.

5.2 Methodology

In the P-DDP, the planning methodology deals with the selection and application of different methods and tools that were used in data collection, analysis, planning, exchange of experiences and also methods that ease decision-making in the planning process.

a) Data Collection Methods

Information for the P-DDP was collected at different levels of the district structure. Since collecting data from each Kebele Administrations (KAs) and households in the district is not easy and economical. Thus, the planning team decided on the representative sample of the KAs and households for the data collection.

The households for socio-economic survey were using a stratified sampling technique so as to achieve desired representation of the various social groups in the population. The P-DDP process utilizes the best of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods where their relative advantages in soliciting relevant information can be maximized. As the District Development Plan is a principal strategic document for the

district, care had been taken to participate all stakeholders at the design stage. As one of the basic principles in the P-DDP process, participatory data collection methods were given due attention in all stages of the planning process.

Review of existing secondary information was involved systematic identification and analysis of documents, which have relevance to planning and decision-making. In addition to the primary data collection, secondary data sources were consulted in order to review relevant information available from both published and unpublished sources. Official reports and records in the district were reviewed at the district council administration, sector offices and departments, private organizations, NGOs, Kebele Administration and sector office at community level.

- **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)**

In the process of P-DDP preparation, the PRA methods were applied in data collection and analysis through focus group discussions. The composition of the PRA team greatly influenced the quality of information, analysis and the subsequent formulation of the plan. The PRA team members were trained in which they were facilitated to be familiar with the different PRA tools and techniques.

- **Socio-economic Survey**

The main purpose of the survey was to collect data in a structured way focusing on the information gap of specific areas that could be covered by review of existing information and the PRA methods. The planning team prepared questionnaire to solicit information on the issues to be collected at household level.

b) Application of data analysis tools/software

Information/data were analyzed qualitatively or quantitatively depending on the nature of the information and methods applied to collect. The quantitative data collected through socio-economic survey were analyzed using computer software such as *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)*. The household income and expenditure analysis enabled the plan facilitation team to determine the income poverty level of the district.

c) Experience sharing visit to Uganda

Uganda, which has a rich experience in decentralized planning, was visited by a team comprising members from WPFT and NPAT. The purpose of the visit was to get exposed to current practices of decentralized planning in Uganda and how it is fostering the realization of the MDGs. SNV Uganda was the host organization and two districts with relevant experience were visited. The team was able to obtain first-hand information from local planners regarding the level and mode of participation of stakeholders, the way fiscal decentralization has been operationalized and the overall local planning procedures.

Furthermore, the team paid a visit to two MDGs localization projects which aim at creating awareness on global, national and local policy frameworks at the local level. Team members also learned how UNDP-SNV partnership with diverse civil society actors is enhancing local participation in the planning process.

6 Major Achievements and Results

6.1 Achievements

The overall objective of the project was to build the capacities of CSOs and local government bodies in the area of program design, implementation & monitoring and evaluation. Activities to realize this objective were organized around two broad engagement areas. The first relates to capacity building of *woreda* experts and CSOs and the relevant sector offices while the second is around producing documents that show the existing realities of the *woreda* and the future desired state. The performance of planned activities together with the results achieved is discussed below..

- Production of Local Development Planning framework
- Capacity building
- Enhancing knowledge on global, national and regional policies
- Collection and analysis of *woreda* and community levels socio-economic data
- Production of the MDGs-status report and District Development Plan for all pilot *woredas*
- Revenue Base Assessment Study of pilot districts

6.1.1 Developing planning framework for PDDP

A planning framework was developed to guide the planning process at all stages. The framework preparation process was informed by planning practices of different NGOs, local government in Ethiopia and Uganda which has rich and long-experience in decentralized planning. The Pilot –District Development Plan (P-DDP) preparation framework has been prepared by reviewing existing planning exercise and the decentralization policy that empowered the *woreda* with designated planning functions. Attempts were also made to exploit best practices and planning approaches of different NGOs so as to have a comprehensive planning framework that would enable both government and CSOs share experiences and plan together for a common goal.

The framework guided capacity building activities, identified contents of the plan and set how each planning stage would be managed to eventually develop a full-fledged district development plan. In the course of the preparation, various stakeholders namely partnering organizations and experts were involved.

6.1.2 Capacity building

The project incorporated a capacity building component through which the necessary trainings to the WPFT members are delivered and the institutional capacity of the focal

government body at local level would be strengthened. The following activities were performed in that respect.

6.1.2.1 Organizational capacity building

Woreda Finance and Economic Development (WoFED) offices in all pilot woredas are responsible for the coordination of local development planning activities. Hence, they have been PANE's counterparts at the Woreda level. Besides the human power capacity building activities, organizational capacity building efforts have been directed to WoFED offices.

All WoFED offices in pilot *woredas* were supplied with equipment and furniture that would be put into use for the planning process. Computers, printers, photocopy machines, GPS receivers, Arc-GIS and SPSS software were handed over to WoFED offices after reaching an agreement that it will principally be used for planning purposes at *woredas*. All the planning process to date has been conducted using equipments supplied to WoFED.

6.1.2.2 Human resource capacity building

The project initially set out a plan that targets building planning capacities of local government experts. The technical aspects of the planning process have entirely been mandated to WPFT members. The idea was to upgrade planning capacity of local experts thereby enabling woredas to adopt a new approach of planning. To this end, series of training packages were organized for WPFT members which principally concentrated on socio-economic and spatial data gathering, analyzing and planning methodologies.

- **Data gathering methodologies**

Training topics given on data gathering methodologies included participatory rural appraisal (PRA), Socio-economic survey methods and market survey and synthesizing secondary data. In order to give a broad picture of the overall setting within which the planning is envisioned to take place, trainees (WPFT members) were familiarized with MDGS, PASDEP and other important wider policy issues. To complement practical skills that they require when collecting data from field, they were exposed to the basic skills of communication and facilitation.

- **Data analysis methodologies**

The second phase of training was organized after team members conducted socio-economic survey, PRA, market survey and collected secondary data from sector offices and relevant documents. Having received the report on the data collection process, the analysis training focused, among others; on the way various data types can be analyzed to be inputs for the planning process.

Hence, training topics included socio-economic data analysis using statistical methods (SPSS), analysis of PRA data, stakeholders' interest analysis, Potential, Opportunity, Challenge and Constraint (POCC) analysis, spatial data analysis using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) application software and market data analysis. A separate two-week special training session was organized to train selected team members in Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and Arc-GIS application software with practical exercises.

- **Planning methodologies**

Following the two successive phases, the final round of training exclusively focused on planning methodologies. Once analysis was completed, trainees were exposed to the different types and levels of planning and on the details of District Development Planning. They were familiarized with commonly used planning techniques like Logical Framework Analysis (LFA). Other training topics under this package included programming, designing implementation strategy and monitoring and evaluation schemes and aligning the district development plan with regional and national plans.

6.1.3 Raised awareness on global and national policy frameworks

a) Awareness raising forums

There were a series of forums organized at local levels to all government executing and implementing bodies & also to the CSOs in those woredas to enhance their knowledge and understanding on the MDGs and PRSP/PASDEP. The awareness raising forums were organized with the aim to capacitate local level development actors on policies pertaining to poverty reduction and sustainable development so that they will be in a better position to integrate them with their development planning processes.

b) Woreda Level Stakeholders' forums

Following the finalization of the socio-economic analysis and production of MDGs status reports, each woreda conducted stakeholders' forum to discuss on the preliminary findings of the MDGs-status report. The forums were also used to gather additional inputs in the form of prioritizing the development needs/problems of pilot woredas to be used for the DDP formulation.

6.1.4 Collection and analysis of woreda and community levels socio-economic data

The major hindrance to planning activities at local levels has been unavailability of disaggregated socio-economic data. This is why usually development plans formulated at woreda levels hardly capture and reflect the real pictures of socio-economic situations of local communities. In such situations not only monitoring and evaluation of progresses will be difficult but also measurement of achievements against plans could remain obscure.

The pilot woredas, in this project, were able to conduct socio-economic surveys which helped them to collect every data necessary to determine the status of local communities in terms of food security and poverty, education, health, water, etc. The data/information were also organized, analyzed and interpreted using scientific tools which afterwards were compiled into the *woreda MDGs Status Report and Woreda PDDP*. Data from secondary sources were also collected and made to be part of the documents. These documents could serve as reference materials for the preparation of any development program and project at woreda level.

6.1.5 MDGs status reports and the P-DDPs of pilot Woredas

One of the major objectives of the project is to make any progress towards the millennium development goals and targets at local levels through P-DDP.

Both the MDGs-status report of pilot *woredas* and the District Development Plan were planned to be produced as consecutive parts towards the final stage of the project. It was envisioned, right from the start, to prepare MDGs-based district development plan after knowing the status of *woredas* in terms of achieving the MDGs.

In order to assist plan facilitation team members in using the SPSS application software to finalize the MDGs status report, concerned officers of PANE paid visit to all pilot woredas to assist the WPFT members on the organization and analysis of socio-economic data for the production of the two reports. Afterwards, a one-week planning workshop was organized for the WPFT members with a view to provide close technical support in the finalization of both the MDGs status report and the PDDP for the 3 pilot woredas.

Both of the reports were completed by the WPFT members in the fourth quarter of 2008 and PANE distributed printed copies from each report to pertinent stakeholders found at National, Regional and Woreda levels including key partners of the project namely, the respective Woreda Administrations, MoFED, Regional BoFEDs, MoCB (Ministry of Capacity Building), SNV-Ethiopia and UNDP-Ethiopia.

6.1.6 Revenue base assessment study

The main objectives of the study were:

- a. to assess policy environment and legal provisions regarding fiscal decentralization in Ethiopia and how they foster/limit local development planning and ultimately localization of MDGs
- b. to investigate existing practices of local revenue collection and management at pilot *woredas* and identify problems, bottlenecks and challenges
- c. to identify potential revenue sources in pilot *woredas* and recommend specific strategies of enhancing revenue collection and management.

The study was designed to be part of the overall district development plan that would indicate ways in which the development plan can be financed from local resources. It, therefore, intended to direct the focus of stakeholders to the efficient mobilization and use of local resources. Furthermore, the findings of the study inform and advise local

decision-makers on the existing alternatives of generating more local revenue in the future. After gathering information on the status of current revenue management practices vis-à-vis existing regulations that govern them, the study assessed how each *woreda* performed and the associated bottlenecks.

The assessment was largely based on the views and opinions of stakeholders and pointed to the need to initiate an all-rounded capacity building program in the pilot *woredas*. Based on the findings of the study, PANE organized a stakeholders' workshop with the aim to consulting with appropriate government units at regional and national level in order to consider how revenue bases of local governments can be enhanced.

Accordingly, the draft was presented by at a stakeholders' consultation workshop and the findings of the assessment were critically discussed by the participants in the workshop. The final version of the report is submitted after the necessary amendments are made on the draft and the final copies are distributed to pertinent stakeholders including the *woreda* administrations in the three pilot *woredas*.

Pilot *woredas* were provided with the draft *woreda* revenue assessment report and made use of the findings to frame their financial plan as part of the PDDP based on objective ground.

6.2 Results and added values of the pilot project

The following are the major results obtained at *woreda* level as a result of the pilot project.

- There is now an institutionalized capacity in all pilot *woredas* to undertake comprehensive participatory planning
- Pilot *woredas* have come to understand the steps and modalities required to develop MDGs-based local development plan, the strategies to finance it & monitor and evaluate outcomes and impacts periodically
- There is now a general appreciation from all sides regarding the need to work in partnership with non-state actors at all levels
- Various stakeholders mainly comprising government officials at *woreda* level, NGOs working in the districts and the main project partners began to work together and initiated a new planning approach at the districts
- The planning framework structured components that make up the DDP. As a result, it assisted efforts at various levels to introduce this new approach of local planning. It is still instrumental in popularizing the initiative particularly at local level
- Plan facilitation team members have immensely built their planning capacities. As a result, there is a strong drive to plan based on facts and evidences in all pilot *woredas*
- Local government officials have come to appreciate the role of civil society and how they can be useful in filling capacity gaps

- Local government experts and civil society members have come to understand the usefulness of integrated planning approach more concretely thereby ensuring the efficient use of limited resources
- The pilot woredas are in a better position to clearly map out development needs and build consensus on the alternative ways to deal with them
- There is now better capacity at pilot *woredas* in terms of using IT equipments in the planning process. For instance, the plan facilitation team members have come to grasp knowledge on how to use SPSS, GPS receivers and Arc-GIS software to gather and analyze spatial data
- WoFED offices are using the equipments to gather and organize relevant information and data which was one of the lacking elements in the planning exercises in all pilot woredas
- The findings of the assessment highlighted the differences between theory and practice. Local government officials were largely unaware of the scope of their responsibilities in generating and managing local revenue as defined by laws and regulations governing it
- The revenue base assessment/study identified problematic areas where future efforts to improve revenue management should focus and forwarded strategies that can enhance it
- The woreda MDGs-status report is one of its kind in the country and sets a model for similar woredas to follow in order to come up with feasible development plan that would guide efforts towards the achievement of MDGs
- The report also generated vital facts that woreda administrations can use for various purposes. Very fragmented and apparently low-valued data have been well organized to depict realities that otherwise would have remained illusive had it not been for this initiative
- Woreda administrations have gradually come to understand the added values in following such techniques of planning. Furthermore, it was possible to clearly depict the types of interventions and resource requirements to address them. The plan further provided the basis for understanding the role of different stakeholders and how they can cooperate to avoid duplications as well as learn from their experiences
- The process also helped to popularize PASDEP and MDGs at district level by deepening local knowledge, commitment and ambitions to attain MDGs
- The experience is considered to instigate the need for developing a planning methodology that could be adopted at local level in all Regions of the country with the PASDEP & MDGs at the center
- It was also possible to expose WPFT members to the experience of similar initiatives in Uganda and facilitate the integration of same into this initiative

7. The project review process

The review process of the MDGs pilot project focuses on having a field level review by key stakeholders and organizing a stakeholders' consultation workshop together with a review of the process by the NPSC members. It was expected that the outcomes of the

forums will enable PANE to prepare a synthesis report regarding the process, its outcomes and the way forward for further consultation with key partners of the project.

Before commencing the review process, a TOR was prepared by PANE for the review which was sent to concerned national Government bodies and has got full acceptance to be utilized to dictate and guide the review process. The project review mechanisms included national consultation by the NPSC members, field level review by major stakeholders and final stakeholders' consultation workshop that involved all stakeholders from all levels.

7.1 Tripartite consultation on the process and outputs of the pilot project

The three partnering organizations namely PANE, UNDP and SNV were expected to finalize the pilot phase of this initiative with identification of lessons learned and clear conclusions regarding the ways forward. To facilitate this, PANE planned to organize the consultations in the third and fourth quarters of 2008. Accordingly, preliminary and final discussions on the 2 draft reports of the three woredas and future directions of the pilot project took place between the three parties. The steering committee members appreciated the performance and achievements of the project reflecting their intentions to support the project so as to scale it up to other regions of the country for replication of the lessons in those areas. Further discussions on the future of the project continued where all NPAC members showed their interest to work not only on scaling up the initiative but also to do their utmost efforts possible in order to assist the pilot woredas start implementing their PDDPs.

7.2 Joint visits of the NPSC and other key Government stakeholders

Towards the final stage of the MDGS localization project, joint field level review of the project was organized at one of the pilot Woredas involving all stakeholders from National, Regional and woreda levels. The field review took place in Nov. 27-29, 2008 at Yem Special woreda of the SNNP Region which is one of the three pilot woredas of the project. Key stakeholders of the pilot project which took part in the field review were heads and representatives from SNV-Ethiopia, UNDP-Ethiopia, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Capacity Building, Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of the SNNP Region, Executive Director of PANE & concerned Officers from PANE.

The purpose of the visit was to have first hand input to the review process on the achievements, lessons learned and challenges encountered in the project implementation process at the ground level. Accordingly, the woreda Administration hosted the guests successfully and the review was started with a meeting where the woreda Plan Facilitation Team members made presentation on the process, achievements and challenges of the project from the woreda's perspectives. After the presentation, there was discussion and reflections involving all the participants. The trip also was accompanied by visits of some of the development potentials & historical sites of the woreda. The field trip was concluded with final discussion with the UNDP, SNV, PANE and the woreda Administrator on future roles of stakeholders and the ways

forward. All the parties involved in the field review were impressed with the achievements they were able to witness and agreed to work in partnership to further strengthen the outcomes and achievements of the pilot project in the future.

7.3 Stakeholders' consultation on the local development planning process

The stakeholders' forum was organized in December in Adama town. This consultation workshop was attended by participants representing national, regional and woreda level key stakeholders of the pilot project. The objective of the consultation was to discuss on the achievements, lessons learned and challenges encountered in the process of implementation of the Project. UNDP, SNV, PANE, Christian aid, representative of Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), MOFED, representatives of Bureaus of Finance and Economic Development of Amhara and SNNP Regions, Woreda Administrators or their representatives, 4 WPFT members from each pilot woreda and Woreda Finance and Economic Development heads of the three woredas and other concerned/invited experts attended the consultation workshop.

The participants discussed pertinent issues after listening to presentations on the implementation of the pilot projects by WPFT members of all woredas and also presentations on the initiation and background of the project by PANE as well as presentation on the findings of the RBA report by the consultants. The plenary discussions were accompanied by group discussions and presentations on selected issues of mechanisms and roles of various stakeholders to scale up the initiative to other regions and woredas of the country. It was also emphasized during the consultation that focus should be given not only on the issues of scaling up but also on strengthening the existing pilot woredas so as to execute their comprehensive plans. The participants/stakeholders also showed their commitment to play their share to make the initiative bear fruit.

At the conclusion of the 2-days consultation on the project, it is agreed on the need to setting up a national taskforce involving key stakeholders that will meet regularly and work on issues of integrating the lessons gained into the national/regional planning exercise and look into ways of scaling up the initiative to other regions and woredas of the country. Accordingly, a national taskforce is formed comprising all key stakeholders at the national level.

8. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

8.1 Best Practices

The entire initiative is one of its kind in the country and outputs and outcomes of the project in the process can be regarded as new opportunities. There is an immense need to scale up the initiative and reach out to as many *woredas* as possible in collaboration with both the present partners and others who showed interest. What can principally be regarded as best practice from this project is the aspect of introducing MDGs/based planning process in the local planning set-up.

In a country where the decentralization process is at a nascent stage and the infrastructure to institutionalize it is far from being properly laid, such ventures have a great role to play. PANE is interested to continue with the consultation process now, even after the project period has ended, to bring on board decision makers at regional and national level so that the vital aspect of the project can be mainstreamed in the existing planning process of the Government particularly at the local level. *Woreda* experts who have participated in this project and whose capacities has immensely been upgraded will be used during further consultation processes to explain both to Government and civil society members how the project has made a difference and the added values that have emerged as a result.

8.2 Lessons Learned

The following points summarize the lessons learned both at the project level and SNV-UNDP partnership level.

- i. At the project level, the lessons learned have to do with the local dynamics at woreda administrations.
 - a. Lack of awareness regarding the national policy frameworks and the modality to implement them at local level has made this project look like an isolated effort. While the entire approach is in line with the government's policy directions, it took a lot of time and effort to convince local government authorities about the added benefits of the project. The lesson here is that for more and speedy acceptance at the local level, a lot of work should be done at Federal and regional levels with government counterparts so that legitimacy questions are sufficiently answered.
 - b. It took a lot of consultative process to get the local administrative machinery working for a common goal. The sector-oriented approach of planning at local level has brought about unintended fragmentation in the allocation and utilization of resources. The project was going well when local authorities came to understand the usefulness of integrated planning as an efficient means of allocating limited resources and use them.
 - c. The time taken to familiarize local stakeholders on national policies and also on the envisaged outcome of the project to persuade immediate action or response by the same accompanied by slow rate of integration among stakeholders led to extended time required to finalize the project which again made the project seem a little expensive imitative. The lesson that can be drawn here is to assign binding roles and obligations to stakeholders from the outset and allow focused but little time to the awareness raising activities at local level.
- ii. At UNDP-SNV partnership level, the lessons relate largely to delimiting the role of both in realizing the objectives of the project. The absence of a tripartite agreement could be one reason for not clearly stipulating what the role of each individual organization could be and how they can be engaged individually and collectively in the activities of the project.

9. Challenges

As a pilot initiative, the project encountered challenges that have had effects on the implementation of the project. The major challenges are mentioned as follows.

- High turnover of *woreda* officials meant that PANE had to orient assigned officials repeatedly to familiarize them with the objectives & all about of the project.
- Plan facilitation team members were carrying out responsibilities assigned to them by the project in addition to their regular duties. It was, at times, difficult to implement plans in time because of team members' regular engagements.
- Institutionalizing this planning approach in mainstreaming with local development planning mechanism required a lot of effort and close collaboration with government body responsible for coordinating planning activity in the country. Nevertheless, this has been an absolute necessity in furthering the benefits of this project.

10. Ways Forward

The initiative in general is considered to be a success in view of the achievements gained out of the whole process. This has been witnessed by all national, regional and local level stakeholders both during the field level review and stakeholders' consultation processes. PANE, based on the outcomes of the review process and insistence by local level stakeholders, intends to forward formal appeal to concerned parties to scale-up the initiatives to have more geographic coverage across the country considering the achievements, results and lessons that are drawn from the process. PANE also will consider all options possible to persuade other partners who would like to work on strengthening the pilot woredas' capacities in implementing activities/projects identified and incorporated in the DDPs. To this effect, PANE seeks continued support of major partners of this project particularly SNV and UNDP.

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