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The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development
Department of Rural Development

Guidelines on
Village Development Planning Process, Myanmar

Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

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Content

| | |
|--|----|
| Table of content | |
| Abbreviations and acronyms | |
| Words | |
| Map of Village | |
| 1. Introduction | |
| (a) Purpose of the guidelines | 2 |
| (b) Objective of village development planning | 3 |
| (c) Benefits and utility of village development planning | 3 |
| (d) Scope of a village development plan | 6 |
| (e) Limits of impact of village development planning | 6 |
| 2. Guiding principles for village development | 7 |
| 3. Methodology and approach | 10 |
| 4. Manual for formulation of a village development plan | 13 |

1. Introduction

(a) Purpose of the guidelines

The Guidelines on the national village development planning are set out to:

- Clearly elaborate the underlying principles, approaches, processes, tools and instruments, arrangements and schedules for conducting village development planning in rural Myanmar.
- Serve as a reference tool for union and region/state government agencies and township departments and authorities engaged in performing their mandated task of assisting village communities in developing their capacity to formulate village development plan.
- Provide guidance to the government's implementing partners (national and international organisations) for the assistance they need to provide to township planning teams in augmenting their capacity for village development planning.

The national approach or model for village development planning explicated in the Guidelines is based on the approach and in-country experience of government agencies and national and international organisations which, through their humanitarian and development programme activities in rural Myanmar, have accumulated a wealth of village planning experience since 1994 and on a larger scale since the aftermath of cyclone Nargis in May 2008. In developing the national approach/model, care has been taken to ensure that the methodology and tools of participatory planning as well as the data and information coverage, collection and processing methods are not too complex and demanding rendering impracticability given the existing capacity at union, state/region and township levels. In particular, care has been taken to use the minimal set of participatory planning tools and nationally instituted planning processes at the local level while ensuring that the resulting village development plan is still credible and meets the requirements outlined in the section II: Objective and Purpose of Village Development Planning. With experience and increased capacity at the township and community level, it should be feasible to expand the technical, statistical and analytical capacity of the village development planning in an orderly manner over time.

(b) Objective of village development planning

Planning for village development is an exercise conducted by the village communities to articulate their vision and goals for the development of their villages and for greater wellbeing of the village population with a focus on expanding their human capabilities, elimination of poverty and vulnerability, and improvement of their social and economic wellbeing.

Government has the responsibility to respond to the needs of the village communities for technical and financial cooperation in developing the capacity of the village communities for planning and organizing implementation of village development and household livelihood activities.

Other national institutions including non-government organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector are also stakeholders in the village development process.

From the perspective of the stakeholders, the village development planning process is an opportunity to empower the village communities to augment their capacity for planning, strengthening village organisations and governance mechanisms, mobilising resources, and organising implementation development activities.

The village development process provides for the explication of a coherent document – a village development plan - that spells out clearly the development vision and aspirations of the village population, current socio-economic and human development situation, development potential, barriers and challenges, development strategy, strategy implementation through programme activities and projects, budget and financing strategy.

(c) Benefits and utility of village development planning

- Village development planning process strengthens participation, promotes community and social capital, and facilitates development priorities and orderly implementation of intervention activities.
- It brings residents, business communities, and civil society organizations together to share ideas and work together on issues that are important to everyone.
- It increases the level of concern in the community about the problems that affect them.
- It improves information collection, objective assessment village situation and wellbeing of villagers; it facilitates communication, sharing of ideas and building consensus.

- It helps a village identify its strengths and potentials; assess the barriers and challenges to development; formulate strategy to overcome the barriers; identify community concerns into action and prioritise development intervention activities and the arrangements for their implementation; evaluate its resources and explore options for resource mobilisation.
- It encourages creativity and builds partnerships both within and outside the village.
- It helps the communities to build their capacities in implementation, monitoring of their activities in a sustainable manner together with a sense of commitment.
- It enables others to become more informed and responsive about what needs to be accomplished.
- It can influence the policy and financial decisions of central, local government, development partners and business community.

The utility and relevance of village planning is outlined below:

| Utility | Stakeholder, user |
|---|--|
| <p>Village population will have a comprehensive development framework of their village, which they can use for adopting strategies and implementing activities for improving their social, economic and human development situation.</p> <p>Township level administration authority and line ministries and departments will have a coherent reference framework for prioritizing and allocating their technical, administrative, financial and project services to the village population.</p> | <p>Village population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village households and families • Village groups and communities <p>Government organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village tract administrators and village tract development support committee (VTDC) • Township authorities and departments • District offices • Region and state governments • Union level government |

| Utility | Stakeholder, user |
|--|--|
| <p>Village planning can offer a significant potential for a micro foundation of macro policies because the planning process at the grassroots, village level will bring out issues that affect livelihoods of the village population and their insights an suggestions for macro level government support interventions through policies and programmes.</p> | |
| <p>Private sector will be able to strategically develop their business services to meet demand of the village population.</p> <p>NGOs, CSOs, philanthropic organisations will be better informed on development needs and priorities of the village population.</p> <p>Banking institutions and microfinance finance institutions will have better information on the needs for financial services in the rural area.</p> <p>Technical research institutions and centres of excellence will be better informed on precise needs of the village population so that they can organize their research, technical innovation and related research and skills development programmes.</p> <p>The media and other communication and advocacy organisations will have a reliable information base for communicating and advocating progress and challenges of village development.</p> <p>Better coordination among external development organisations at the township level for village development.</p> | <p>National organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector • NGOs, CSO, philanthropic organisations • Banking and financial institutions • Academia and centres of excellence • The media and other communication agencies <p>International organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN organisations • International financial Institutions (World Bank, Asian Development Bank) • Bilateral Donors • International NGOs • International philanthropic organisations (e.g. Soros Foundation, Gates Foundation) |

(d) Scope of a village development plan

Village planning is not project planning. Project planning is planning for specific interventions such as installation of water pipe, construction of bridge, construction of village footpath, school sanitation, and other similar schemes that contribute to improvement of livelihoods of rural families and village level development.

Aggregation of projects at a village level or their consolidation at village tract and township levels is also not village planning. It is merely a summation or aggregation of project intervention activities. Further, if they are not assessed in the context of overall development possibilities and constraints they tend to become consolidation of “shopping list” of needs and wants.

Village planning has the underlying scope of accomplishing households and village communities' aspirations and desires for improvement of their socio-economic and human development situation or condition. Planning is thereby necessarily people-centred, with a focus on developing and improving human capabilities of the population. Sectoral interventions are organised and prioritised to precisely facilitate human development of the village population.

Planning entails “optimisation”; in that policies, strategies and projects are organised to maximise meeting of human development needs subject to (or given) limited resource availability and resource mobilisation possibility and institutional and implementation capacity. Thus limitation of resource availability and implementation capacity will necessarily require phasing out over a period of time the attainment of development needs and wants.

(e) Limits of impact of village development planning

Village planning provides for grassroots participation of the village population in articulating their development aspirations and programme priorities. The process, if instituted through proper configuration of institutional mechanisms and application of participatory instruments and tools, has the potential of effectively communicating “voices” of the village population for defining and prioritising programme interventions at the subnational and national level. The bottom up planning process can thus influence the subnational and national process to respond to the issues and intervention support and strategy identified and proposed at the local level.

However, village planning and development action at the local level must be reinforced by macro level policy and programme measures. Sustainable livelihoods outcome and welfare of the village population and the poor in particular attempted through grassroots, village level interventions must be reinforced by supportive macroeconomic conditions and

related government policies. Villagers' efforts to improve and sustain their livelihood conditions also depend on their access to local level institutions that must also be adequate.

2. Guiding Principles

Village planning process and intervention activities (projects and schemes) shall adhere to the following guiding principles:

(a) Ownership (of village development plan and project intervention activities and schemes)

- Village communities are owner of their village development plan; henceforth any form of capacity development support must centre on empowerment of village community.
- Similarly, project intervention schemes and activities are to be organised, led and implemented by village communities; henceforth all forms of external support – technical, financial and material assistance – must be channelled through village communities and groups.
- Commitment of villagers for village development activities is to be secured through their leadership, active participation and community “equity” contribution in the form of finance, labour and materials.

(b) Inclusive planning and development

- Village planning process must invoke (or set up) appropriate mechanisms and tools for effective participation of all social groups and income classes.
- Equity considerations must be adequately incorporated in project planning, prioritisation, implementation and outcome of development progress. Equity considerations will entail:
 - ❖ Equal access to opportunity for social, economic and governance processes and measures;
 - ❖ All Myanmar people regardless of their race, religion and sex have equal access to development opportunities and to the benefits of development schemes and support;
 - ❖ Gender issues must be integrated in all aspects of social, economic and governance systems and activities;
 - ❖ Special considerations are to be given for those who are physically and mentally challenged.

- Equality of opportunity may not still allow some groups and people with special disadvantages to participate fully in the socio-economic development processes and their outcomes; in such situation policies and programmatic support measures will be set up (or made available) for increased equity and equality of opportunity.
- Village planning and development interventions shall promote reinforcement of social cohesion and harmony.

(c) Economic principles

- Consistent with national development and macroeconomic policy, village planning and development interventions shall invoke as well as promote market economy with opportunity for inclusive participation for all social, ethnic and economic groups.
- Where there are market failures, the village planning and associated monitoring and evaluation processes shall be leveraged to identify causes of the market failure. Subsequently, inform and propose Government of policy and legal support measures for improved functioning of the markets at the local level (including goods and services market, labour market and financial market).
- Rural household economy shall be the focus of sustainable livelihoods and welfare improvement of the rural population.
- Development interventions shall encourage mutual relationship between poor and non-poor and strengthening of social capital of the village population. Special economic and livelihood support needs of the poor households shall be incorporated in development support measures but such support shall not undermine the interdependency between income and social groups in a village and between villages.
- Private sector participation shall be encouraged in the provision of agricultural (crop, livestock and fishery) inputs and marketing of agricultural products.
- Development assistance at the local level shall utilise and promote capacity of the private sector. In particular,
 - ❖ utilise competitive capacity of the private sector for provision or supply of goods and services including training;
 - ❖ innovate and utilise tested “business models” that encourages local private entrepreneurs to produce goods and services including technologies for the rural economy;
 - ❖ extend development assistance to local private sector for improvement of their enterprise and business management capacity as well as production and technology capacity; and

- ❖ promote public-private partnership in agriculture.

(d) Sustainability

- Village planning and implementation of development activities shall have clear strategy for sustainability of the processes and resultant output and outcome, and continuity of interventions until their full completion.
- Continuity of intervention support including external aid must consider:
 - ❖ Adequate provision of financial and material input for full completion of a project or scheme;
 - ❖ Effective exist strategy that may include, for instance, developing community capacity and organisational arrangements for incremental responsibility by community for sustaining project implementation;
- Continuity of processes include, for instance:
 - ❖ Policy support measures and arrangements for continuing access for the poor to livelihood capital assets and services such as those provided by township departments and authorities.
 - ❖ Development of village community capacity so the villagers could have lasting access to support services and facilities from institutions at the local and sub-national level.
- Sustainability of resulting output and outcome of development interventions include, for instance:
 - ❖ Organisational, management and local “fiscal” measures for operation and repair and maintenance of village small infrastructure schemes such as village footpath, jetty, pond, community building, etc.
 - ❖ Organisational and management arrangements for sustainable and effective operation and maintenance of community paddy bank, group savings and loan operation, village market, community-managed pharmacy, and other similar economic and social facilities.
- Judicious use and management of natural resources and environmental asset.

3. Methodology and approach

3.1 Participatory process

The planning process must be participatory, in that people and households from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds must be encouraged and given equal opportunity to participate in reflecting on their human development situation and conditions, constraints and issues, feasible strategies for attaining their human potential and their village development potential, and intervention programmes and projects, budget and financing strategies. The detailed processes and procedures are elaborated in chapter IV of the Guidelines.

A key objective of village development planning is to eliminate poverty and a strategy to attack poverty may require targeting for extreme poverty and elimination of vulnerability. There are different income groups and wealth classes within a village and it is necessary to identify them by the villagers themselves so that plans can be made with regard to intervention measures and development assistance. To assess and capture their specific needs, focus group discussion sessions have to be held with various social and livelihoods groups. Participation of different social groups such as boys, girls, men, women, elders ensure that interests and needs of the priority groups is incorporated in a village development plan. All social and income groups' representatives will also participate in village governance process such as village development committee.

Active participation of the government and non-governmental functionaries along with the communities in these participatory planning exercises forges a strong partnership between communities and the service providers thereby ensuring effective use of various services and resources. Active involvement of existing structure of the government and existing task forces in the project implementation and management will create a space for the project in government policies, structure and systems.

3.2 Process tools

At the village level, participatory village planning tools and processes will be used. Village mass meeting will provide information regarding the objective, basic principles and processes of village develop plan to the villagers. Then participatory assessment follows using PRA tools. The findings will be consolidated and agreed at the village mass meeting. Village development committee (VDC) will be formed with the consensus of the majority. Proper and thorough mobilisation is essential for having committed representatives. Potential persons or representatives from various groups such as women, elders, youth, livelihoods or occupational and social groups should be included in the VDC.

Selected representatives from the VDC of each village will be included in the village tract development committee (VTDC). Essentially, there are two tiers in the process viz. village level and township level. At the village level, village plan originated from the village vision and refined and agreed by the villagers will be the final output.

At the township level, consolidation and integration of projects from villages into Township Development Plan will have to be done based on the relevant information and with the technical support from concerned departments. At township level, Multi-sectoral Planning Team comprising relevant departments headed by General Administrative Department (GAD) will lead the allocation of resources with the facilitation of the Department of Rural Development. While so doing, there will be some adjustments and amendments to the village development plans. These will be communicated to the concerned villages with reasons and suggestions for alternative projects; subsequently agreement will be received from the villages.

3.3 Approach

Government has the responsibility to respond to the needs of all 63,899 villages across the country's 305 rural townships. This is a big challenge; hence the village planning process must be cost effective and efficient in terms of time, with a strategy to build capacity incrementally over time. Comprehensive information on the process of implementation is mentioned in chapter VI, section 12 of the Guidelines, namely "Implementation Modalities and Arrangements".

Government has adopted a two-phased approach for development of the national approach and initiative for village planning:

- **Phase 1** is a preparatory phase where the focus will be on developing a national approach for participatory village planning, testing and firmly establishing a national model. Two sample villages near Nay Pyi Taw will be fielded for preliminary testing. Then consultation meeting with stakeholders will follow for improvement and adjustment. Field-testing will be conducted in 34 townships covering 170 villages followed by a second stakeholder consultative meeting. Then, government will endorse the national approach and methodology for village development planning. After that a detailed work plan together with timeline and budget for rolling out the village planning to cover all 63,899 villages in phase 2 will also be clearly defined in the preparatory phase. Priority villages will include those that have not yet undertaken any substantive village development planning.

In the preparatory phase, a strategy including methodology, approach, instruments and tools for township planning process will also be developed. Precise implementation plan together with budget and work plan for carrying out the township planning exercise initially in seven selected townships will be defined (for Phase 2 of the village planning work).

Efforts will be made to accomplish tasks for the preparatory phase in six months, January to June 2015 including one month of resource mobilisation that will be needed to carry out the substantive tasks.

- In **Phase 2** the village planning exercise will be scaled up to cover all villages in rural Myanmar between July 2015 and December 2017. In the event all priority villages are not covered in the 30-month period, July 2015 – December 2017, because of financial and capacity constraint, the work will continue through 2018 with additional budget and technical resources, if needed.
- At the very initial stage, July – December 2015, seven sample township development plans will also be developed alongside the village planning exercise that will cover all villages in the seven townships.

To operationalize the village development planning exercise, DRD union has constituted core expertise in development planning comprising DRD staff and experienced consultants with development planning expertise. This team will provide technical support to the township multi-sectoral planning team (TPT) comprising representatives from various departments concerned at the township level. While General Administrative Department will take the coordination responsibility among government departments, Department of Rural Development provide technical support including building competency of TPT to conduct village and township development planning.

The success of village development planning will critically depend on the capacity of the township planning teams (TPTs), which must have the technical expertise to reach out effectively to the village communities to conduct their village development planning. Two to five TPTs will be set up in each township depending on the village coverage of a township. Each TPT will have three to five members appointed by the township line departments. Each TPT will have at least person functioning as “development planner” and two persons working as “PRA facilitator”. GAD In cooperation with DRD will develop technical capacity of the TPTs using the “Guidelines for national Village Development Planning Process - Myanmar” and field (village) level practical training in conducting PRA exercise, data collection, data tabulation, structured organisation of data and information, and development analysis of the planning data and information.

4. Manual for Formulation of a Village Development Plan

Details of the processes, instruments and tools for formulating a village development plan are set out in the Guidelines' accompanying document "The Manual for Formulation of a Village Development Plan, Myanmar". The Manual covers the following topics:

1. Introduction
2. Data and information for village profiling and planning
3. Participatory planning process: PRA tools and process
4. Content of a village development plan
 - (a) Introduction: objective and scope
 - (b) Village socio-economic profile
 - (c) Current development situation
 - (d) Development potential, barrier and challenge
 - (e) Development goal and strategy
 - (f) Macro policy and programmatic implications of village development issues
 - (g) Programmes and projects, and implementation timeline
 - (h) Budget and financing option
 - (i) Plan monitoring and assessment
 - (j) Implementation modality and arrangements
 - (k) Organisational arrangements and financing mechanisms for operation and maintenance of development schemes

Annexes

List of tables and charts

References

