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Local Area Planning: Objectives, Concept of Local Area and Planning, Levels of Planning, Challenges to Planning

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- Local area planning is a process of planning that is concerned with resolving local level problems and issues. Its priorities include overall welfare of the people and development of the local area. Maintenance of social services and amenities, promotion in the quality and quantity of local products and services and keeping surroundings and local environment clean and green are some of its continuous concerns.
- In terms of size, it is the smallest planning unit with reference to people and places. A planning which is carried out through people's participation turns out to be a dream of real situation reflecting continuous growth and development in the local area.

Objectives

The major objectives of this chapter are:

- To recall the terms like local area planning, ecological, and socio-economic basis of development
- To explain how planning helps in using resources to meet the local needs
- To compare different approaches and their objectives which have evolved to undertake local area development over the different Five-Year Plans
- To identify different planning areas in India and their unique needs
- To explain how ecology, environment, and resource utilisation are related to each other and managed for local area planning

Concept of Local Area and Planning

- The term local area is used variously in ecology, economy, and society. It is a site-specific issue, commodity, or community. In terms of attributes, local area is both a physical as well as cultural attribute like landscape of an area, surroundings of a locality, local products, folk dances, handicrafts etc.
- The attributes of a local area reflect strong bonds of association with the location and people. With regard to non-local area and people it reflects weakening bonds of association and growing variations. For example, sea breeze, a local wind, exercises considerable effect along seashore and it gets weakened away from the sea. Sometimes local area product or identity becomes so popular and specialized that it becomes demanding across places and regions. Sandals of Kolhapur, sandal sticks of Mysore, fireworks of Shivakashi, Naga Shawls, Kashmiri Pashmina, Varanasi silk sarees, Madhubani art, Kuchipuri dance etc. are some of the local area products or specialities that are in great demand both from national as well as international markets.

- A well-maintained locality with its clean and green environments acts as a source of attraction to the non-local people and acts as an ideal for other places to follow. For example, Shalimar Bagh in Srinagar, Mughal Garden in Delhi, Valley of Flowers in Uttarakhand, Rock Garden in Chandigarh, Nagarjuna Konda in Andhra Pradesh, Rajgir in Bihar, Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu etc. are the local area sites that present a sound balance of ecological and aesthetic significance. A sense of pride and attachment to the local product, area and people is a source of unity and activity. It also leads to common understanding and identity. Ecologically, local areas may be mountainous, plateaus, plains, coastal, desert, or wetlands. Functionally local areas may be pastoral agricultural, industrial, institutional, or service areas. In terms of habitations, local areas may be rural, urban, nomadic, or tribal. Local areas could be modern or traditional with regard to their social setup. Similarly, in terms of economic development local areas could be developed or less developed. An effort to devise ways and means to solve the problems of places and people is termed as planning. Maintenance of amenities and public utility services, sanitation, general health, and education are some of the most common problems faced by the local people. Since local areas are the smallest units of planning, it is rather easier to find solutions to their problems which are also smaller and manageable in dimension. Most of the problems that seek planning and solutions are related to the ecological imbalances, economic depressions, and social tensions.
- To improve the general conditions of the people in a local area, provisions for basic social amenities and facilities need to be planned. The participation of local people helps in utilizing local materials, indigenous knowledge, and maintaining infrastructure that are planned. Planning also aims at improving the quality of local environment through tree plantation, maintaining the local water pools like rivers, tanks, lakes etc. , and managing the depletion of rocks and soils. People's participations in the local area planning and continued cooperation in their maintenance results in developing healthy local environment. Thus, planning is defined as conceiving, initiating, regulating, and controlling environment as well as socio-economic activities by the local people and authority according to set priorities with a view to achieving objectives within a given time frame.

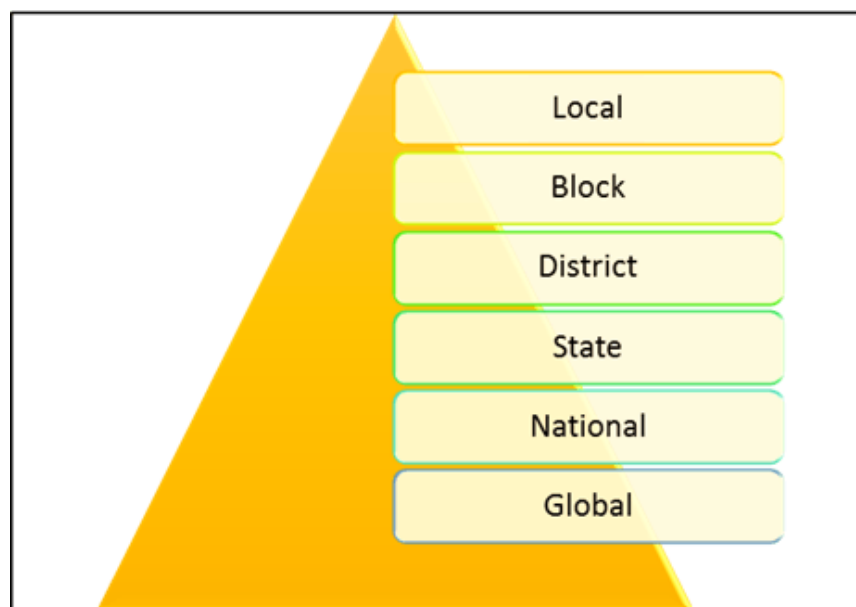
Levels of Planning

- Planning is carried out at various levels. Beginning from a small local area to as large area as the world, planning is an integral part of human progress and area development. People have been planning their affairs, activities, habitats, etc. from early times. It is, thus a continuous process across time and areas and is aimed at the welfare of people and the environment. At the global level, planning for the whole world is taken up by the United Nations and countries provide cooperation in the implementation of the planning schemes.
- Various programmes such as UNEP, UNDP, etc. are initiated to deal with the global issues of environment, poverty, development, and so on. At the country level, national plans are formulated for the welfare and development of the nation. In our country, the Planning Commission is the central agency to design plans for various sectors of economy such as agriculture, industry, etc; different ecological zones like mountains, deserts, coastal areas etc. ; and different segments of society such as women, children, tribal groups, youths, aged persons etc. Prime Minister is the Chairman of the Planning Commission. Nation is further subdivided into several sub-units for administrative and planning purposes.

Planning Levels

Type of Planning	Level
Global Planning	I
National Planning	II
State Planning	III
District Planning	IV
Block or Micro Level Planning	V
Local Area Planning	VI
<i>Planning Levels</i>	

- It varies from country to country with different nomenclature. In our country, the nation is sub divided into states, districts, and blocks. At the state level there is a State Planning Board that develops plan for the entire state. This is also known as a regional plan. Chief Minister of the state is the Chairman of the State Planning Board. Districts are the third order planning units after nation and the states. At the district level, planning and development agencies work together and the District Magistrate coordinate the plan implementation. Community Development Blocks are the fourth (micro) level planning units. Each C. D. Block consists of about 50 villages. These blocks are responsible for plan implementation down to the village and household levels. Block Development Officer (B. D. O.) is the coordinator of the plan at this level of planning. Local area planning is meant for small localities like a village, a Basti or Mohalla. The entire community, living and working at the place, is responsible for developing plans and seeking assistance and cooperation from the Governmental Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, and others. It is not the endeavour of a few people but hard work of many that makes the local area clean, green, and prosperous. A diagrammatic presentation of various planning levels is given below:



Planning Levels

Challenges to Planning

There are serious challenges to the success of a planning scheme. More often planning is initiated without giving adequate thought to its effect on the area and people for whom it is meant. Since a planning scheme moves from top to bottom, it gets obstructed at various levels before it reaches to the target area and people. Inspire of relatively higher economic development, India continues to run behind in terms of social advancement. Our country has the largest concentration of poor, malnutrition, and illiterate persons. These serious challenges cannot be managed through governmental or some non-governmental agency level, but one requires effective participation and co-operation of the local people. People wish and plan that roads reach to their doorsteps, every child study in a school, they have power and potable water, they have water to irrigate their fields, and markets to sell their local products. Thus, infrastructure related to health and education can ensure people's awareness, effective participation, and mobilization for the success of planning scheme. Ecological and economic considerations must be in perfect balance if planning has to succeed and remain sustainable. The following are the basic requirements of local area planning:

- Formulation of objectives or goals.

- Fixing targets of planning and its priorities to be achieved.
- Mobilisation of resources for the execution of plan.
- Creating necessary social group or organization for the implementation of the plan.
- Regular evaluation and monitoring of the progress made.