Chapter 4

Stakeholders Meeting

- Summary and Minutes

Update from the Stakeholders Working Group

Ward Representatives and Panchayat Members who attended the workshop met to explore ways to make the planning process in Agonda participatory and inclusive. The meeting was chaired by the Hon. Sarpanch Jovi Fernandez. The group proposed to expand the existing Core Planning Committee which worked on the Plan for Agonda by formally involving other stakeholders. They listed all the businesses and interest groups present in Agonda, and discussed formation of a representative Core Planning Committee which would be the working group going forward. The list included:

Fisherman, Farmers, Dairy Co-operative Society, Toddy Tapers, General Store Merchants and Retailers, Permanent Bar and Restaurant Owner Operators, Transportation Operators, Beach front Land Owners, Sports and Cultural Club Members, and Members of the Managing Committee of the Communidad for Agonda.
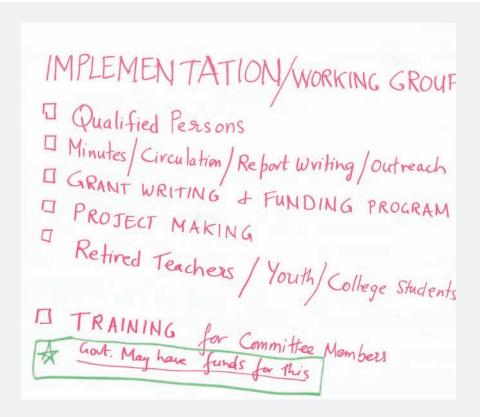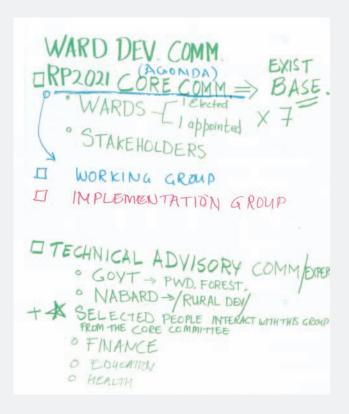
Forming a Core Planning Committee

It was felt that such a Committee would need periodic training as well as input from qualified professionals which would include Government Program Representatives, environmental engineers, planners, architects, lawyers, sociologists, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Goa Institute of Rural Development and Administration (GIRDA), and other innovative finance experts. The Core Planning Committee would identify a group of Professionals in the form of a Technical Advisory Committee, and follow up on periodic coordination on selected matters. They would provide regular updates to the Panchayat, and formulate proposals for the Gram Sabha's considerations.

Panels from the Stakeholders Meeting

It was noted that the Panchayat has responsibilities and role to play to ensure public health and safety. Beach Protection was also listed as a Panchayat responsibility. The group suggested some ways for the Panchayat to control rampant development and environmental degradation may be through means of:

1. Proper authority and regulation of licenses. This would involve ensuring that the Department of Tourism does not issue any No Objection Certificate (NOC) without verification and clearance from the Panchayat.

2. Assessment of existing conditions and infrastructure and system capacity to handle planned growth. Identifying indicatos and where applicable setting thresholds and applicable limits and compliance standards. It was noted putting existing regulations into effect may be a good place to start. And,

3. Establishing tourism policies to ensure environmental protection, planned local community development, and sustainable growth

Finally, keeping it realistic, it was recognized that implementation of ideas would require a qualified and dedicated staff person whose responsibilities may include: Outreach, Coordinating and setting up Monthly Meetings, Circulating Meeting Agendas, Maintaining Maps and Records, Writing Project Proposals, Exploring Funding Options for Proposed Programs, Liaisoning with Organizations and Partners for Agonda. The staff person could also coordinate setting up Training Programs for Committee Members and Community for which there may be Government funding available.