



**NIRUPAM SEN**

***Minister-in-Charge***

Department of Commerce & Industries, Industrial Reconstruction,  
Public Enterprises, Development & Planning &  
Power Non-conventional Energy Sources  
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL  
E-mail : [sen.nirupam@gmail.com](mailto:sen.nirupam@gmail.com)

**Foreword**

For over three Decades, planning efforts in West Bengal have focused around an alternative model that seeks to bring about development equity through the reduction of disparities between the State's rural and urban areas. The primary instruments for this have been the principles of development, *decentralisation, devolution, and participatory inclusion*, which have fostered the partnership between planning institutions and the people, reflected in the Panchayat experience in West Bengal. As many independent studies have shown, the success of West Bengal in securing livelihood stability, in uplifting rural literacy standards and in improving agricultural productivity is associated closely with the strength of this progressive partnership.

However, planners in the State have been aware that although these achievements appear impressive in aggregate terms, they have sometimes been uneven at regional level, and that not all parts of the State have been able to share in equal measure in the fruits of success. Since the early 1990s, the State Government has had to function within a changing national policy framework where public investment support for rural development planning has declined considerably. While the advanced regions of West Bengal responded quickly to the early successes, the development needs of regions that lagged behind have been inadequately met from within the limited means available to the State Government. With clearer understanding of regional dimensions in West Bengal being generated by subsequent development studies, it has become increasingly evident that the development strategies being applied to the State need to be differentiated regionally, with full recognition of local factors such as climate, environment and infrastructural conditions. This approach has been inducted into the development policies of the State Government through the formation of regional boards to look into the specialised needs of the Sundarbans, the Paschimanchal and Uttarbanga regions and the Darjeeling hill areas.

Integration of human development concepts into development planning in West Bengal commenced with the preparation of the first West Bengal Human Development Report (WBHDR) which was published in 2004 by the Development & Planning Department, Government of West Bengal. The District Human Development Reports (DHDRs) now being prepared in West Bengal had their genesis in the tripartite agreement between the Planning Commission, the Government of West Bengal and the UNDP for strengthening human development planning





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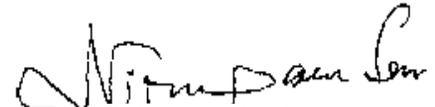
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capabilities in the State Plan. For the State Government, this collaboration held the potential of carrying forward its programme for decentralisation and devolution of development decision-making to local governance institutions, to ensure fuller and more meaningful participation of the people in the planning process. The selection of the backward districts of Malda and Bankura for the initial DHDR exercises marks the resolve of the State Government to address local factors that cause disparity and inhibit development, in regions where their impact has been most severe, also vindicating the ability of the Human Development approach to redirect policy attention to areas where it is most needed. The DHDRs already published for three districts in West Bengal have been widely studied in other States, generating considerable interest in the unfinished task of district level planning.

Some of the critical problems that West Bengal has had to face since 1947 arise from its border location, which affects development patterns in ten West Bengal districts located along the 2217 km Indo-Bangladesh border. Uttar Dinajpur is one among these, and its backwardness is directly related to its geographical situation. The Uttar Dinajpur District Human Development Report 2010 has been prepared by an interdisciplinary team of administrators, academicians and people's representative, through a consultative process led by Professor Jeta Sankritayana, Member, West Bengal State Planning Board. The Uttar Dinajpur DHDR presents a vivid picture of the State of human development in the district, identifying the complexities of its regional and administrative history, its cultural and linguistic diversity, and their combined impact on its attainments in the sphere of livelihood, education and health. I record my deep appreciation of the painstaking effort put in by the team.

It is hoped that the DHDR will serve as a primary document for building a district vision and for assessing and redressing disparities within the district, and shall strengthen the capabilities of the District planning system in meeting people's aspirations and needs.

Kolkata,  
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(Nirupam Sen)