

CONSULTANCY AND MONITORING: A necessity for policy reforms in India

Since its inception in 1998, Infrastructure Professional Enterprise (P) Ltd (IPE Global) of India has emerged as a successful venture, facilitating many development projects by governments and international agencies through end-to-end consultancy and implementation services. In a conversation with *Bureaucracy Today*, Ashwajit Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of IPE Global, emphasizes the need of consultancy and evidence-based monitoring for strengthening policy formulation and implementation in India.

By Salma Rehman

A number of times Government policy reforms in India have been under the scanner and criticized for lackadaisical approach either in their formulation or in implementation. There are lapses reported in the allocation of funds, policy framework or delivery mechanisms. But, according to IPE Global CMD Ashwajit Singh, such loopholes could be avoided through profound research, planning and monitoring.

As a development management consultancy firm the IPE Global has been supporting policy reforms through providing designing and technical assistance in flagship social programmes by the Government. "I feel that many a time there is a great disconnect between the formulation of policies and what actually is put into action at the ground level. The idea behind the establishment of the IPE was to bridge this gap thus ascertaining successful implementation of policy reforms and contributing to national economic growth in the long run," says Singh, who is also an alumnus of the London School of Economics.

He says that new schemes have also been devised under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minis-

ter Narendra Modi like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the Smart City plan and the Affordable Housing scheme which will have a positive impact on social indicators.

Singh further tells *Bureaucracy Today* that India has a great scope in the development sector for providing technical assistance both to large-scale government flagship programmes and donor-funded programmes. "Internationally, to meet the Millennium Development Goals, estimated assistance stands at US\$ 150bn per year approximately. Development Consultancy services typically account for 5-10% of the total budgetary allocation for a single project," says Singh.

IPE Global also provides services to prominent international agencies, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and has closely worked in cooperation with the governments of several developing countries.

In July 2014, the IPE Global became the first development consultancy firm to acquire a company overseas. The IPE Global has ac-

| IPE GLOBAL'S CLIENTS |
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| The World Bank |
| Asian Development Bank |
| United Nations International Children's Education Fund |
| United Nations Development Programme |
| Department for International Development |
| United States Agency for International Development |
| Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation |
| Japan International Cooperation Agency EURASIA Foundation |
| Voluntary Service Overseas |
| Forests and the European Union Resource Network |
| The Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Maldives, Montserrat and Sri Lanka and the Scottish Government. |

quired Triple Line Consulting Limited, a UK-based international development consulting firm which has expanded the group's footprints over 100 countries with special focus on operations in developing and underdeveloped countries. "The company will be further planning such acquisitions but most probably in developing nations like Africa and countries of South Asia," informs the IPE Global CMD.

CORE SECTORS AND SERVICES

The IPE Global deals with development projects in the areas of health, nutrition and water and sanitation, education and skill development, infrastructure development, tourism, heritage and conservation, environment and climate change, private sector development, forest governance and agricultural development. According to Singh, while addressing these sectors his company is assisting in an all-round approach of socio-economic upliftment that furthers the growth of the nation.

“We work on the principles of programme management where we facilitate the policy process through technical assistance and expertise,” he says. The IPE Global also implies evidence-based monitoring through tools of qualitative and quantitative analysis which help to study the impact of programmes after their commencement. The practice areas of the company include- public financial management, monitoring, evaluation and learning, governance and capacity building, social and economic empowerment, grant and fund management and IT and e-governance.



ASHWAJIT SINGH, CMD, IPE Global

IMPORTANT PROJECTS

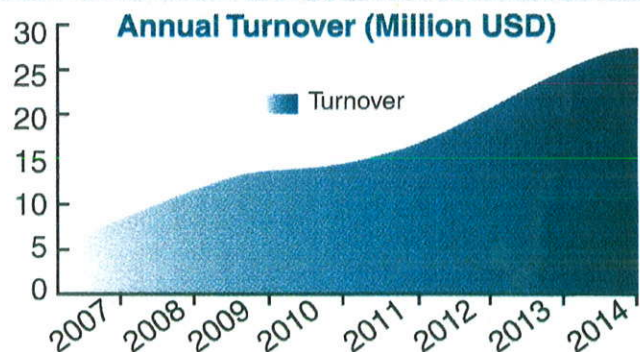
The IPE Global is assisting in looking after a number of development projects in Odisha, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh

and Uttarakhand. Mentioning a significant project in Odisha, Singh says, “We have been assisting the Government of Odisha and the Department for International Development with the Odisha Girls Incen-

tive Programme since 2012 after focusing on improving secondary school enrolment, attendance, and completion rates by transferring scholarships in the bank accounts of girl students after Standard VIII

FINANCIAL TURNOVER

The IPE Global started with a turnover of Rs 20 lakhs when it was established in the year 1998. The company has significantly grown with sustained fiscal growth. It has an order book of nearly Rs 400 crore and a year-on-year growth rate of over 35% in the last five years. In the fiscal year 2013-2014, the company had a turnover of Rs 200 crore. It expects an average growth of about 25%-30% in the next five years.



which is when the dropout rate is considered to be maximum.” The project which also focused on establishing learning hubs and providing safe transport for girls has yielded noteworthy results.

“We have seen that the girls’ enrolment and attendance rates have risen significantly and the dropout rate has receded,” says Singh. He proudly shares that after the resounding success the project has now been extended to provide such facilities for school boys as well while empowering the lives of 650,000 SC/ST students.

The CMD says, “The company also played a significant role in aiding the pulse polio campaign run by UNICEF in Uttar Pradesh.

Some of its interesting international projects include the supervision of road construction in some areas of Congo and assisting the Kabul Municipality to strengthen IT and financial systems. Presently the company is working on a poverty eradication project in Ethiopia and facilitating a Knowledge Partnership Programme which aims at producing and disseminating high quality research based on Indian and global evidence on policies that impact development outcomes and supporting advocacy towards strengthening policy and programmes in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Ghana.” This, according to Singh, is a significant initiative

as he believes that policies and programmes which have been implemented in India could be a great source for learning and replication for the developing nations.

CHALLENGES

Talking of the challenges faced by the IPE Global while working in close association with the Centre and State Governments, Singh says, “The frequent changes in the bureaucracy result in changing priorities of the officials as far as projects are concerned. Adding to the challenges is the lack of political will which hampers the implementation and timely completion of programmes.”

Singh further says, “Though the Government-sponsored programmes are well thought of and well structured, most States lack the capacity of proper planning and implementation because of the shortage of skilled manpower.”

Citing the examples of the National Rural Health Mission and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, the IPE Global CMD says that even these large-scale programmes face challenges due to low absorption of funds. He thus believes that there is certainly a need to bridge the lacuna against the demand for planning, designing and execution of welfare schemes and quality technical assistance essential for its successful implementation.

However, Singh sounds optimistic when he says, “Over the years we have realized that all social schemes can be successfully implemented, if there is a champion within the system to take them forward and ensure that they are realized at the ground level.” ■

send your feedback to:

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MAJOR PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN

The Odisha Girls Incentive Programme (OGIP) being funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) (2012-2016).

Health System Strengthening, Quality Improvement and RMNCH+ Scale-Up; Programme Area 5: Scaling Up Interventions in Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health being funded by the United States Agency for International Development (2014-2018).

Design and Implementation of Sector Wide Approach to Strengthen Health (SWASTH) in Bihar, India, being funded by the DFID (2009-2014).

Technical and Management Support Team for Design and Implementation of Odisha Health Sector Reform Plan, India, being funded by the DFID (Phase II: 2012-2015).

Design and Supervision Consulting Services for upgradation of Urban Infrastructure in Jammu under J&K Urban Sector Development Investment Programme being funded by the Asian Development Bank (2014-2017).

The preparation of a tourism master plan for the Chilika Lake and its catchment area in Odisha under the ICZMP-ODISH being funded by the World Bank (2014-2015)

Project Management Consultant for infrastructure development investment programme for tourism, Himachal Pradesh, being funded by the Asian Development Bank (2012-2014).

Project Management Unit, JNNURM, under the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India (2014-2016).

Project Management Unit Services for Capacity Building for Urban Development being funded by the World Bank (2011-2016).

Support Programme for Urban Reforms being funded by the DFID (2008-2016)

Odisha Modernising Economy Governance Administration Programme being funded by the DFID (2010-2018).

12) The Knowledge Partnership Programme being funded by the DFID (2012-2016)