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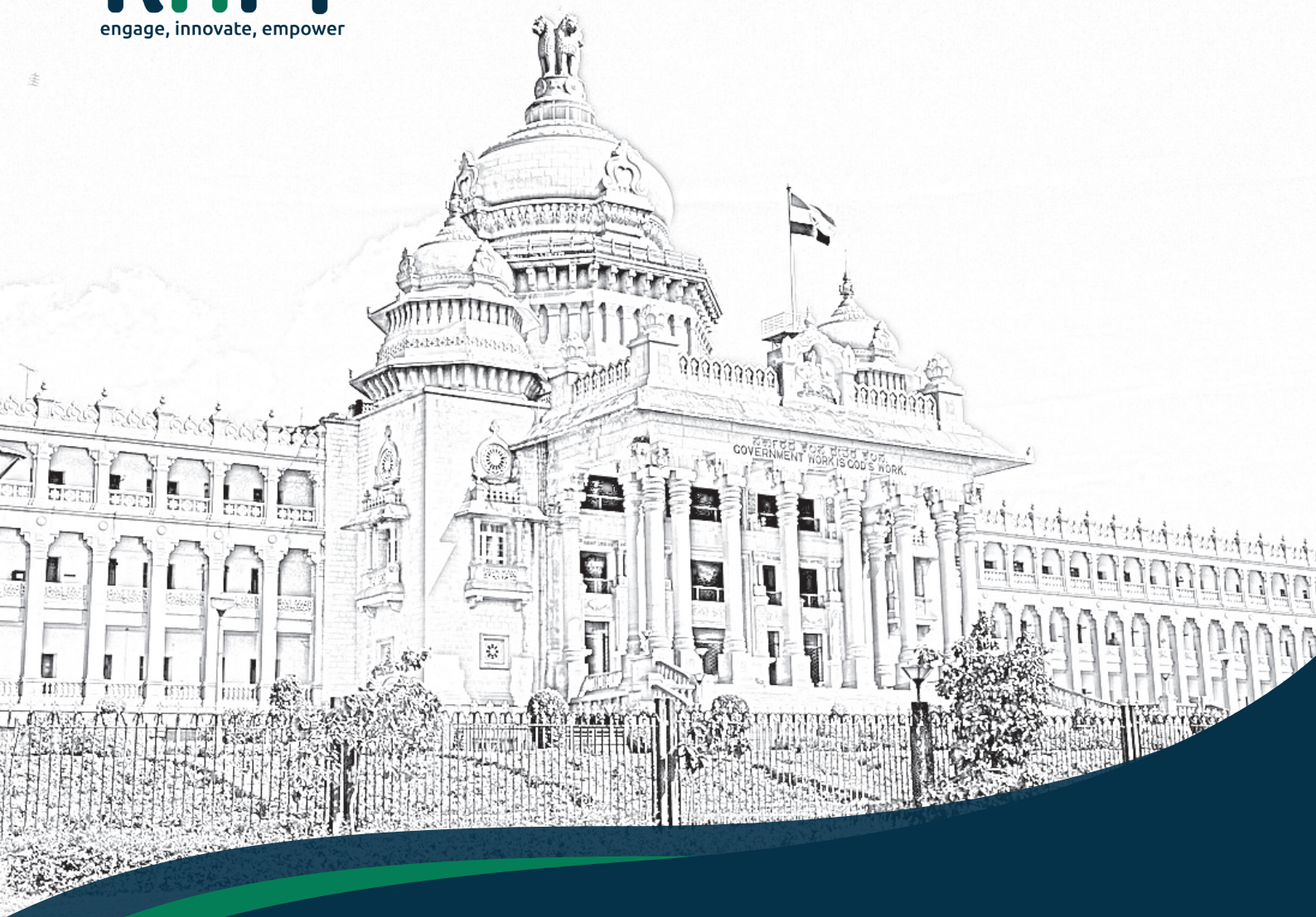
engage, innovate, empower



Government and Civil Societies: A Facilitator's Guide on Government Engagement

LEARNING MODULE

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Learning Module

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We acknowledge **Mohan H L**, CEO, KHPT for his valuable insights and inputs to session 3 - The Government and NGO - Why do we need each other? in the learning workshop which significantly contributed to drafting this learning module.

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CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Session 1: Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes) 6

Session 2: The What and Who of Government: Perceptions about the Government and how it functions. (45 minutes) 7

Session 3: The Government and NGO - Why do we need each other? (1 hour) 8

Session 4: Between a rock and a hard place... Challenges CSOs face while working with the Government (40 minutes) 10

Session 5: There is no magic pill but how to "make it work"? (45 minutes) 12

Session 6: The rare Golden opportunities (20 minutes) 15

Session 7: Mapping Government Engagement (40 Minutes) 16

Session 8: Conclusion and the Way Forward (10 minutes) 17

TRAINING AGENDA	
Session 1 Welcome and Introduction	**Duration:** 10 mins **Materials used:** Not applicable
Session 2 The What and Who of Government: Perceptions about the Government and how it functions.	**Duration:** 45 minutes **Materials used:** Sticky notes, pens, pencils marker and whiteboard
TEA Break (10 mins)	
Session 3 The Government and NGO - Why do we need each other?	**Duration:** 1 hr **Materials used:** PPT slides
Session 4 Between a rock and a hard place... Challenges CSOs face while working with the Government	**Duration:** 40 mins **Materials used:** Chart paper, markers, pens, and whiteboard For demonstration: Ink, Disprin tablet, coin, water and 3 glasses
LUNCH Break (40 mins)	
Session 5 There is no magic pill but how to "make it work"?	**Duration:** 45 mins **Materials used:** PPT slides
Session 6 The rare Golden opportunities	**Duration:** 20 mins **Materials used:** PPT slides
TEA Break (10 mins)	
Session 7 Mapping Government Engagement	**Duration:** 40 mins **Materials used:** Chart paper and pen
Session 8 Conclusion and the Way Forward	**Duration:** 10 minutes **Materials used:** Not Applicable

Introduction

A strong government relationship is one of the three organizational hallmarks of KHPT. Forging a strong partnership with the Government at all levels is the core DNA across all of KHPT's programs. It is of paramount importance for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to have a conducive relationship with the government. Both CSOs and Government share a common cause of development and empowerment of communities at the grassroots in the sphere of health. Therefore, it becomes important to reinforce the need to work with the government across all programs that KHPT has as an organization.

This module is designed for the facilitators to train those in the program or research team who are supposed to work closely with Government stakeholders, or aim to sharpen skills for those who are already engaged as part of their work. The module draws from the proceedings of a learning session on engaging with the government which was conducted at KHPT in February 2024. The module will further provide insights on the ways to navigate the challenges while working with the government encapsulating the experiences and learnings we have at KHPT.

Learning Objectives

The overall objective of the module is to provide a framework for facilitators to train participants on the what, who and how of engaging with the government.
In the module, the participants will learn to conduct a session on:

1. Generalized perceptions and notions about the government.
2. The relationship between CSO and Government and how they supplement each other's work
3. How to smoothly engage with the Government and what are those effective engagement strategies
4. Highlight various challenges commonly encountered while working with the government and solution strategies

Overall Methodology

The training will adopt a mixed training methodology such as conversational talk, group discussion, and experiment-based activities in addition to conventional presentations and discussions. Multiple methods could be used inside a single session as well. This module further includes exercises that the facilitator should use for reflection and discussions around various components of engaging with the government and sharing experiences. The module will also provide a descriptor of the sessions along with the time required and the methodology adopted to facilitate these sessions for the benefit of the facilitator.

SESSION 1: Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)

Learning Objective

To set the context for the need for this training and who it is intended for. To explore the learning expectations of the participants.

Method

Conversational Exploration

Description of the session

1. The facilitator will begin the session by welcoming the participants and exploring the learning expectations from this training.
2. The facilitator then will set the context for the workshop and emphasize why it is important to work with the government. It is of utmost importance to engage with the government as KHPT's cause for the development and empowerment of vulnerable communities complements the work of the government.
3. The facilitator should stress the liaising with government as the latter is instrumental in scaling up our programmes.

SESSION 2: The What and Who of Government: Perceptions about the Government and how it functions. (45 minutes)

Learning Objective

To deliberate upon various notions and perceptions of Government and how it functions

Method

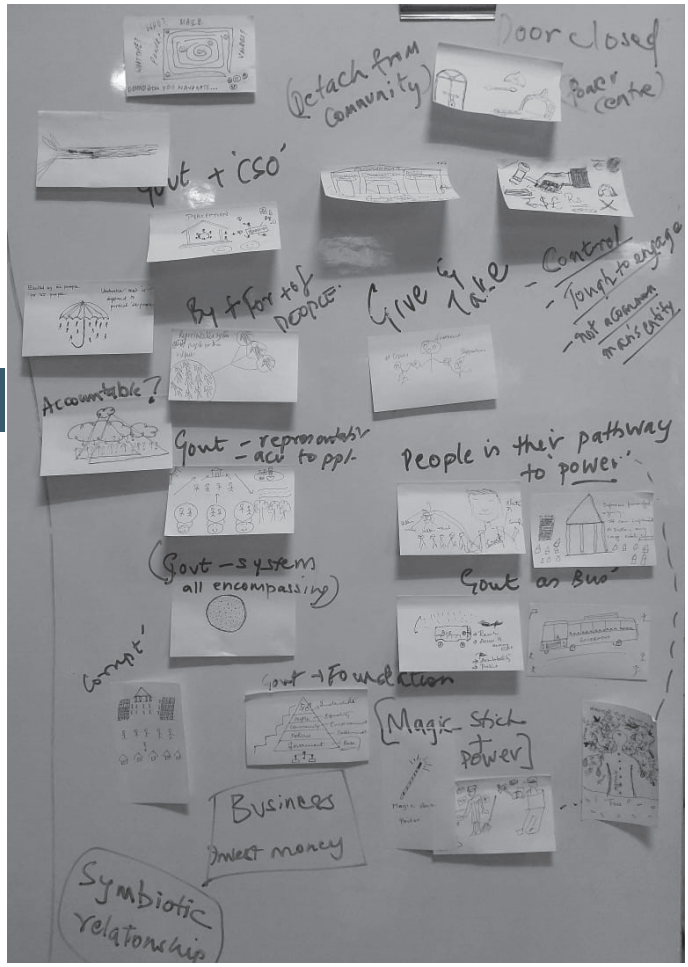
Exercise-based

Material required

Sticky notes, pens, pencils marker and whiteboard.

Description of the session

1. The facilitator will distribute sticky notes to the participants and request the participants to draw an image/ symbol that they think closely depicts the government. Allow 5 minutes for the activity.
2. After 5 minutes, request the participants to show the drawing to the audience and explain the reason for the image drawn.
3. Write down the responses of the participants on a whiteboard.



Points of Discussion

The facilitator must discuss the various perceptions and responses of the participants and end the exercise on the note that each individual has a perception of the government.

This perception could be good or bad, based on trust or distrust; however, all of these perceptions are based on experiences of the past or prior knowledge.

SESSION 3: The Government and NGO - Why do we need each other? (1 hour)

Learning Objective

To understand how civil societies/NGO and Government complement and supplement each other's work

Method

PPT Presentation followed by discussion

Material required

PPT slides

Description of the session

1. The facilitator should use PPT slides for presentation and should initiate a discussion on the role of civil societies in identifying the priority areas of work and accelerating the effort made by the Government.
2. The facilitator should start the discussion by posing a few questions to the participants which include: whether they consider themselves to be a part of the government (or not).
3. Based on the responses (which could be mixed) like "No we are" or "We are not" part of the government, we only elect, and Government rules us, etc. The next probing question could be if there is any difference between KHPT/CSOs as an organisation(s) and the government as we also have layers of approvals, hierarchy and so on.
4. If a majority will respond that they are not part of the Government, the facilitator can further the discussion by mentioning that it is erroneous of them to think that they are not a part of the government as the constitution empowers them to elect their representatives and it is thus incumbent on them to support and guide elected representatives to identify key gaps, devise effective strategies and solutions.

Though the service delivery mechanisms of the government could be glacial, the pace of delivery varies from state to state. For instance, the GPs in Kerala are more efficient when compared to that of UP. Considering the government and the CSOs as two distinct entities is in itself a faulty approach which is detrimental to overall social development. Both the CSOs and the Govt. function within the purview of the constitution and cannot take the extra-constitutional path to achieve quick service delivery.

The government is a large body with complex systems requiring seamless delivery of services. Both the CSOs and the government need each other as we work for a common cause of development mandated by the Constitution. However, these causes are perceived differently by the government and the CSOs. Despite this void in perception, both the CSOs and the government must come to common terms.

Why do CSOs need to work with the government?

1. The CSOs may be structured, while the government have stringent systems in place. The unstructured nature of the government enables it to spring to action during contingencies. For instance, the government has the power to put a stop to all activities and accord attention to pressing issues like COVID-19.
2. The government has its strengths- it has a large scope when compared to CSOs. It can scale up programmes and could dictate terms to the funders based on needs and it makes no distinction between the first and the last person. We have limited resources unlike the government as the resource pool of the government is huge. In the CSOs, there are several levels where we could pull the plug on the use of resources which is not the case with the government.
3. While KHPT may have a strong presence locally (within the communities) the government has a global presence like the UN and the G 20 which are represented by countries. The CSOs may have a connection with like-minded institutions which is not to be construed as presence.

Why should the government work with the CSOs?

1. The CSOs are strong and have a micro lens towards issues. The government does not have the bandwidth to adopt such a lens. For instance, the GFATM and the Sphoorthi model. The government took cognisance of the Sphoorthi model and decided that it should reach 2 lakh girls. What we saw at the micro level, the government scaled up to a macro level.
2. The CSOs have quality and have a set agenda as they can focus on a specific problem of the population based on their needs. While the government considers the criteria of eligibility and not the specifics of the problem.
3. The CSOs have required skill sets as they come with specialisation, unlike the government which takes a generalist approach. Some skills the CSOs possess include programme and data collection.
4. Process vs. Target - The CSOs look at the process to achieve a certain goal, while the government are concerned about the target. For instance, the free bus scheme for women in Karnataka. While the CSOs consider questions around how these busses are useful, are the women efficiently able to utilise these services, the government looks at the number of busses in use.
5. The study approaches of the CSOs are different from that of the government.

The facilitator should take questions after the presentation.

SESSION 4: Between a rock and a hard place... Challenges CSOs face while working with the Government (40 minutes)

Learning Objective

To evaluate the challenges while working with the government realistically.

Method

Group Work

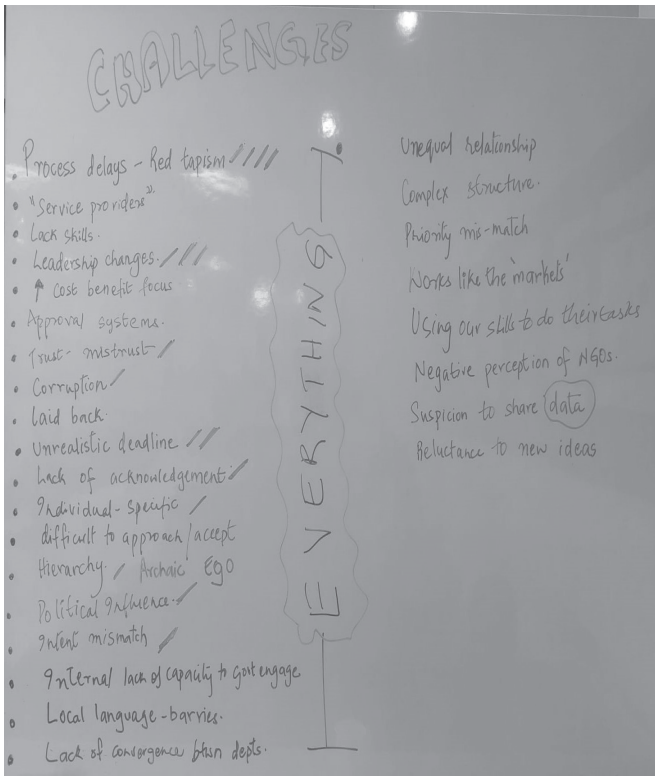
Material required

Chart paper, markers, pens, and whiteboard.

Description of the session

1. The facilitator should divide participants into groups of 3 or 4, depending on the number of participants
2. Distribute chart papers among the groups. Request the groups to discuss and list out a few challenges they think they face while working with the government. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.
3. After discussion time, request each group to present their challenges.

Expected responses



Process delays and Red tapism: The government is viewed as a service provider, lack of skill set, changes in leadership and people, over-emphasis on the cost-benefit aspect rather than services, corrupt officers, lack of access to officials, hierarchy, distrust in the NGOs and reluctance to share data and so on.

After the presentation, initiate a discussion, and start with a few probing questions for the participants to reflect on.

Some of the questions could be:

If we were in the government would we have shared data?

What would we have done if we were overburdened with work?

Then convey to the participants that we must try to win the heart of that one champion.

Activity: (15 minutes)

Material required

Ink, Disprin tablet, coin, water and 3 glasses

Description

Pick 3 volunteers. Ask them to fill the glasses with 3/4th or half of the water. Ask the participants to drop a Disprin pill, drops of ink gradually, and a coin in each of the glasses filled with water respectively. Then ask the participants to describe their observations they can see in each glass.

Expected responses

- The coin is as it is and it makes a sound while settling down keeping intact its nature.
- The ink is dissolving slowly but surely changing the color of the water.
- The pill is taking no time to dissolve at all!

Discussion

Ask the participants questions so they can reflect if they want to be the coin, the pill, or the ink? Another question the facilitator should ask is, has the water allowed the ink to dissolve instantly? Has the coin embedded itself into the system? The facilitator should further add that - there are times, we are the coin, there are times we are the ink or we are the pill. The pill was attracted to the water and dissolved instantly.

Further probing questions could be, is it good to be like the pill and get into the system as instantly losing your identity and behaving like the system? The pill created only a little agitation, whereas, the ink and the water worked together unlike the pill. There are times when we have to revisit the original intent to achieve the broader goal. We may interact with pressure groups and political issues. It is not just us struggling but also the government that is grappling with various issues. We must be flexible to be a part of the system; The systems of penalty against government officials are strict through various mechanisms like show cause notice.

SESSION 5: There is no magic pill but how to "make it work"? (45 minutes)

Learning Objective

To understand the various strategies to work with the government

Method

PPT presentation

Material required

PPT slides

Description of the session

The facilitator could use slides or initiate a discussion on some essential tips to work effectively with the government.

There is no magic pill to work with the government but there could be magic moments. Following are a few things to remember while working with the government:

1. There is a need to be flexible - For instance, the ink gets dissolved slowly when added to water changing the colour of the water gradually. Each system has its process therefore there is a need to align with the system.
2. Choose what battles you want to win - The decision of one person in the government is not the last word, as each level of the government may have a vested interest and agenda of their own. Therefore, we must choose what specifics we need to be engaged with, and what are those expected outcomes.
3. Identify the officer who thinks your perspective matters and is important. However, it is a rare situation.
4. Turn the negatives of government into opportunities - As there may be a sudden drop in efficiency and ability of persons within the government. Tap this opportunity, try and be a resource to the government when the need arises.
5. Reflect on the urgencies of the government - The government works under tied grants by the central government leading to a resource crunch resulting in a change in priority at the blink of an eye.
6. Hierarchy is key - As accountability lies at the top, there is instant check and the public has a constant eye on the system. For instance, if an officer supports one NGO, several other organisations would question the decisions of the officer.

7. Make sure that the written documentation is strong of every Govt. engagement meeting
8. Have reality checks - There is no specialisation and no support for each other within the system itself.
9. Channel your frustration in the right way - For instance, instead of mere conversation, get to the ground, come out with studies on the issues that require attention, and make small changes. This helps us in coming out of the state of exasperation in turn giving us satisfaction.
10. Do not fear probing questions from the officers as they are only to test us if our work is genuine.
11. At a professional level, there is a need to have a clear understanding of the administrative systems and structure. For instance, we may think the systems are rigid but if the officer wills, he could accommodate the change.
12. Develop effective communication in writing and follow it up with necessary supporting documents. The documents must be clear in the first stage itself.
13. Try to build connections with the officers by reading their profiles about their work.
14. Stay humble and be empathetic - This could be done by following the Twitter handles of the officers, keeping track of their travel plans and planning your work accordingly. This you could do by keeping in touch with his office and supporting the officer within your capabilities. Be sensitive to the other groups in the Government office.
15. Share evidence generated by us with the government - Try to integrate the thematic programme with the current programmes of the government by taking an interest and being mindful of the latest developments at the state and the national level. For instance, read the NITI Ayog consultations and the government report.

Session 5.1. Some scenarios to substantiate the points of how to work with the government

The scenarios below are based on real experiences and stories of interactions while working with the government. The facilitators should use these scenarios or any other scenario to discuss and substantiate the tips mentioned above.

Scenario 1: Lack of support and unity within the government itself

In Coorg, a company forged a land document by adding a few digits to the lease agreement. After 30 years, when an IFS officer figured this out and wanted to battle the case, his colleagues refused to support him and the officer even after retirement, had to use the retirement benefit money to fight the case and pay the court fee.

The scenario conveys the message that there could be situations where even persons working within the government lack the required support against corruption. And the facilitator could allow time for participants to reflect on this further.

Scenario 2: Channeling frustration

While most of us in the public health and development space talk about floods and natural disasters, very few come up with solutions. There are examples in the past when professionals conducted studies to assess and explore the root cause and progress of floods and gave recommendations to the Government. This often helps in channeling frustration and gives a sense of satisfaction. Hence, channeling frustration could be best achieved by coming up with a solution for each problem/issue encountered.

Scenario 3: Be the change you wish to see

The Under Graduate (UG) Environment College of Engineering by BBMP initially had only three levels of funding for building research centres. The funding was only given to premium universities. Due to several letters and student campaigning - a Level 0 was introduced and the funding layers were modified. Multiple attempts were made by one professional who led this campaign to achieve the change. This somewhat resonates with scenario 2 where one need not only cite issues or challenges, but should work towards identifying and implementing solutions.

After the participants have gone through all the scenarios, ask them how the government relationship is a hallmark for KHPT-

- Does it resonate with them in particular and KHPT in general?
- Is engaging with the government the role of only the thematic leads or for all of them engaged with the Government in some other capacities and for various requirements?
- Have we explored the right opportunity to engage with the government?

SESSION 6: The rare Golden opportunities (20 minutes)

Learning Objective

To understand what are the organizational and program level opportunities to engage with Government

Method

PPT presentation

Material required

PPT slides

Description of the session

The facilitator could talk about the various opportunities and chances that KHPT encountered in the past while working with the government. Some key opportunities are mentioned below.

1. KHPT came up with the idea of the Innovation Cell (IC) to provide technical support to the government with support from the academia making the cell an innovation hub, where KHPT would share its novel ideas, models and developments with the government.
2. KHPT should look at new ideas, pilot new innovative programs, and pilot innovative approaches/tools helping the government to take these to scale.
3. One should try to be a part of initiatives of the government from the design to the implementation and evaluation stage. KHPT has done this earlier by codesigning programs along with the Government.
4. Develop and make the innovation by KHPT available digitally as this could increase visibility.
5. District administration can be involved integrally in project implementation through joint planning, joint review and continuous sharing of program experiences

SESSION 7: Mapping Government Engagement (40 Minutes)

Learning Objective

To map out government engagement opportunities/ tasks across projects

Method

Group work - mapping exercise

Material required

Chart Paper and pen

Description of the session

1. The teams will brainstorm the opportunities they see for government engagement in their respective projects and list the activities they can undertake as part of the govt engagement at district, state and national levels.
2. Further, the facilitator should guide the participants in classifying these opportunities under three broad buckets such as approvals, follow-ups, and dissemination.
3. They can discuss in groups and fill in the following matrix:

Sl. No	Opportunities in the project for engaging with the government	Type of meeting [approval, follow-up, dissemination)	Policies that we can influence (optional)	District level Govt. engagement activities	State-level Govt. engagement activities	National level Govt. engagement activities
1						
2						
3						
4						

SESSION 8: Conclusion and the Way Forward (10 minutes)

The facilitator should conclude the session by summing up the entire day and emphasizing the key takeaways of each session. Convey messages that emphasize KHPT's commitment towards government engagement -

- KHPT believes in working in consonance with the government and working to scale up programmes aiming towards the empowerment of the community.
- KHPT believes in constant interaction with the government through various platforms like the Innovation Cell, interactions with government officials and so on.
- The onus of government engagement rests with all the colleagues of KHPT and not just the thematic leads. KHPT hopes to work in mutual consultation with the Government.

Annexures

Annexure-1: Hierarchy of the Secretariat- Karnataka's Administrative Service Overview

HIERARCHY OF THE SECRETARIAT

- Chief Secretary
- Addl. Chief Secretary Cum Development Commissioner
- Addl. Chief Secretary
- Principal Secretary
- Secretary
- Addl. Secretary
- Joint Secretary
- Deputy Secretary
- Under Secretary
- Section Secretary
- Case Workers

KARNATAKA'S ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE OVERVIEW

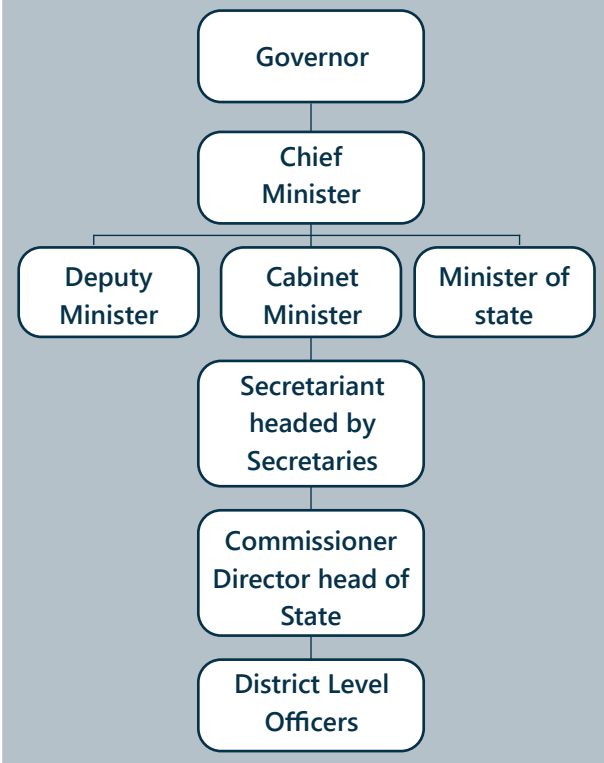
ROLE OF SECRETARIAT

- Assisting ministers in day to day activity
- Assisting in policy formulation
- Helping ministers during assembly sessions

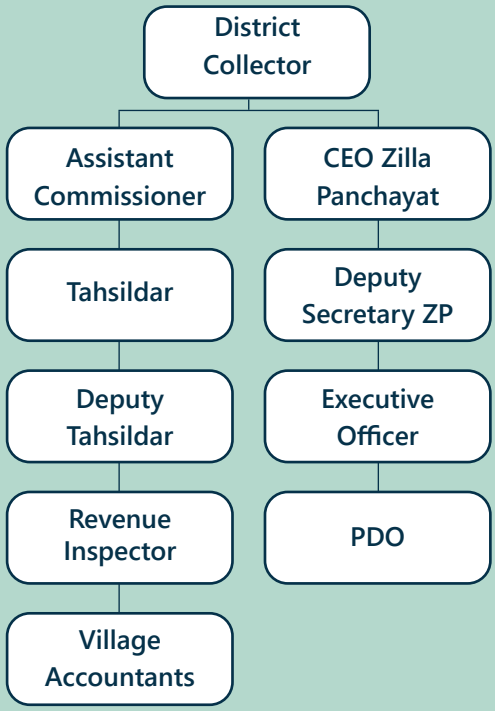
DEPARTMENTAL HIERARCHY

- Director/Head of Department
- Additional Director
- Joint Director
- Deputy Director
- Assistant Director

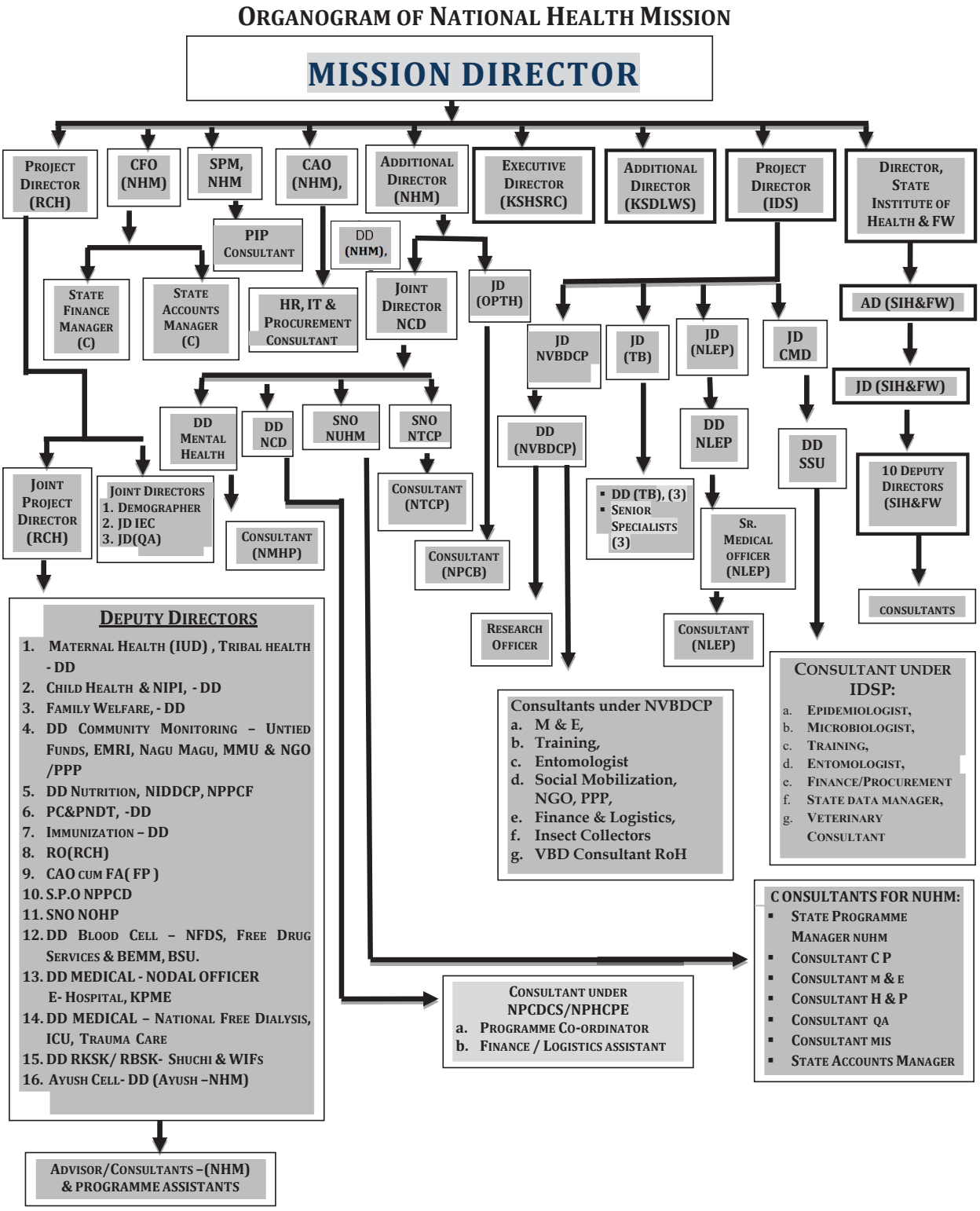
State Administration



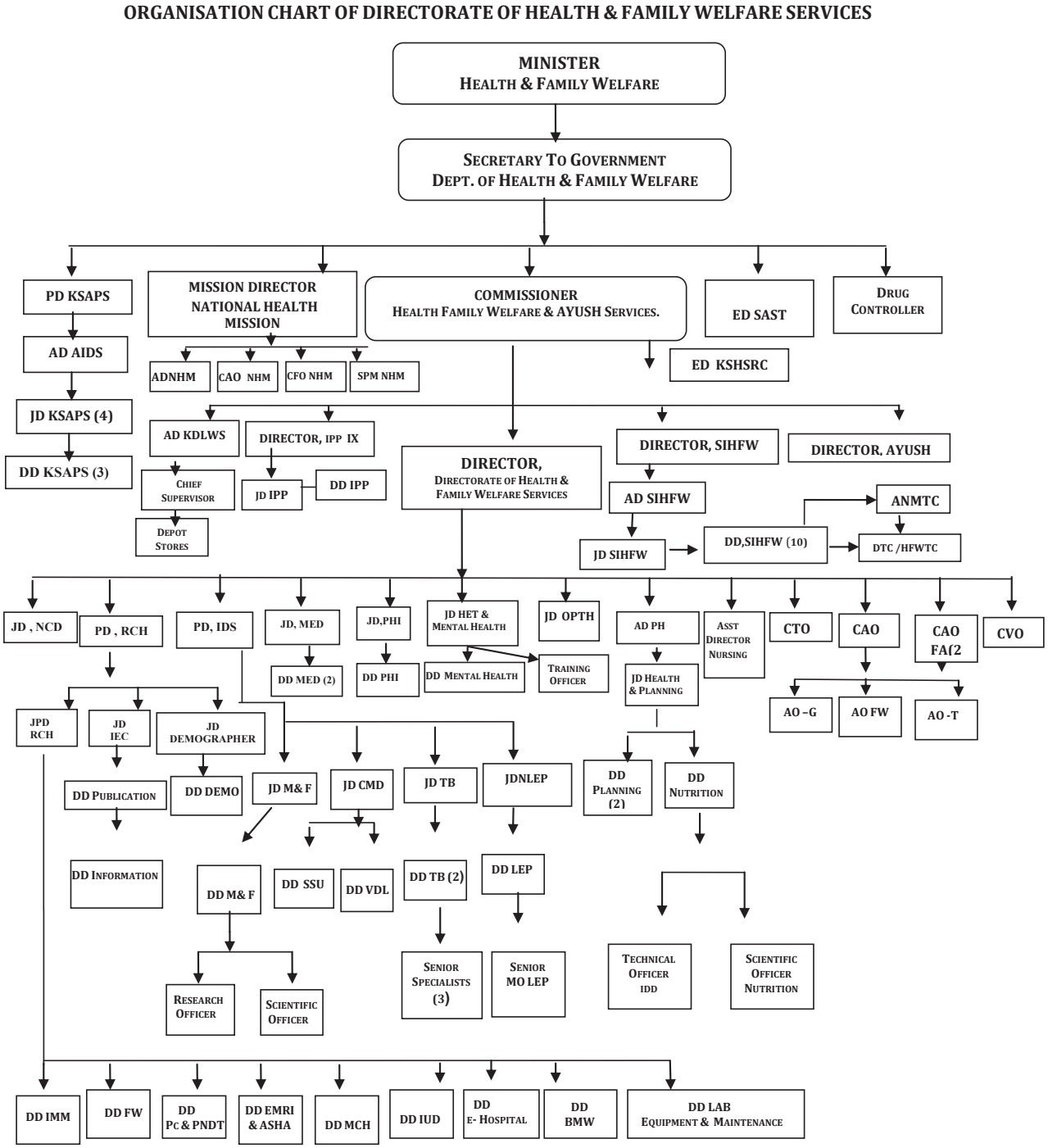
District Administration



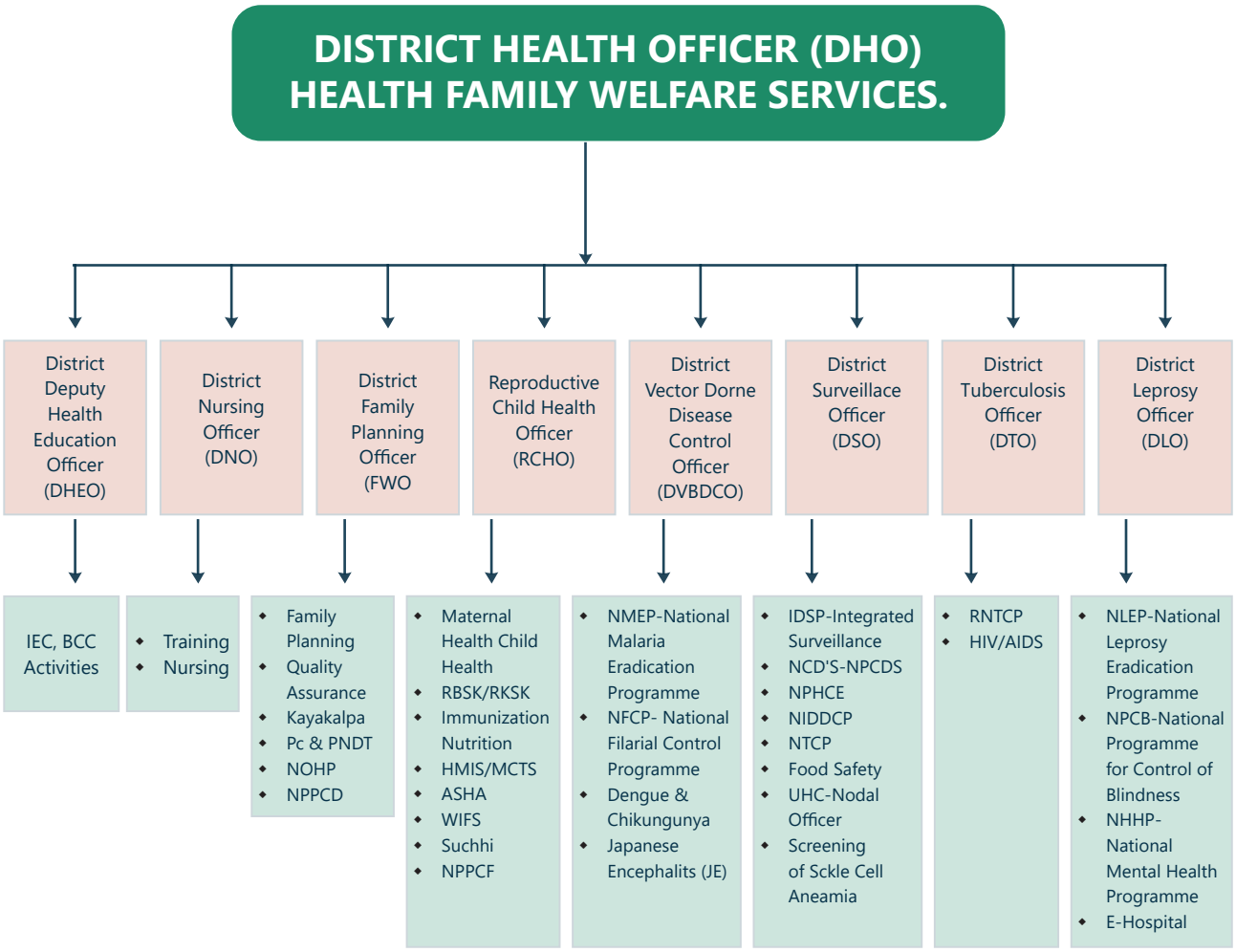
Annexure-2: Organisation Chart of National Health Mission, Government of Karnataka



Annexure-3: Organisation Chart of Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka



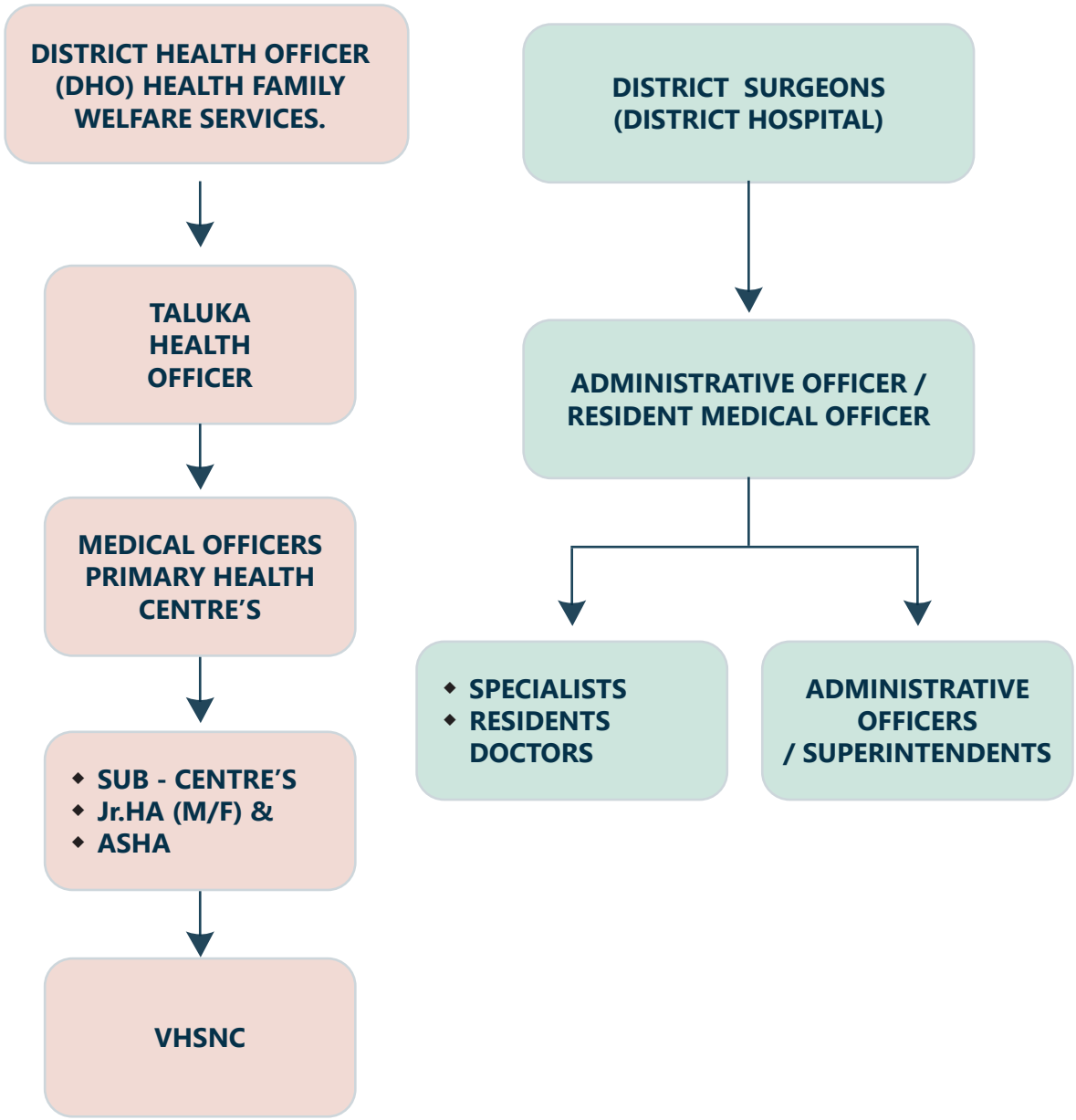
ORGANOGRAM CHART AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE SERVICES

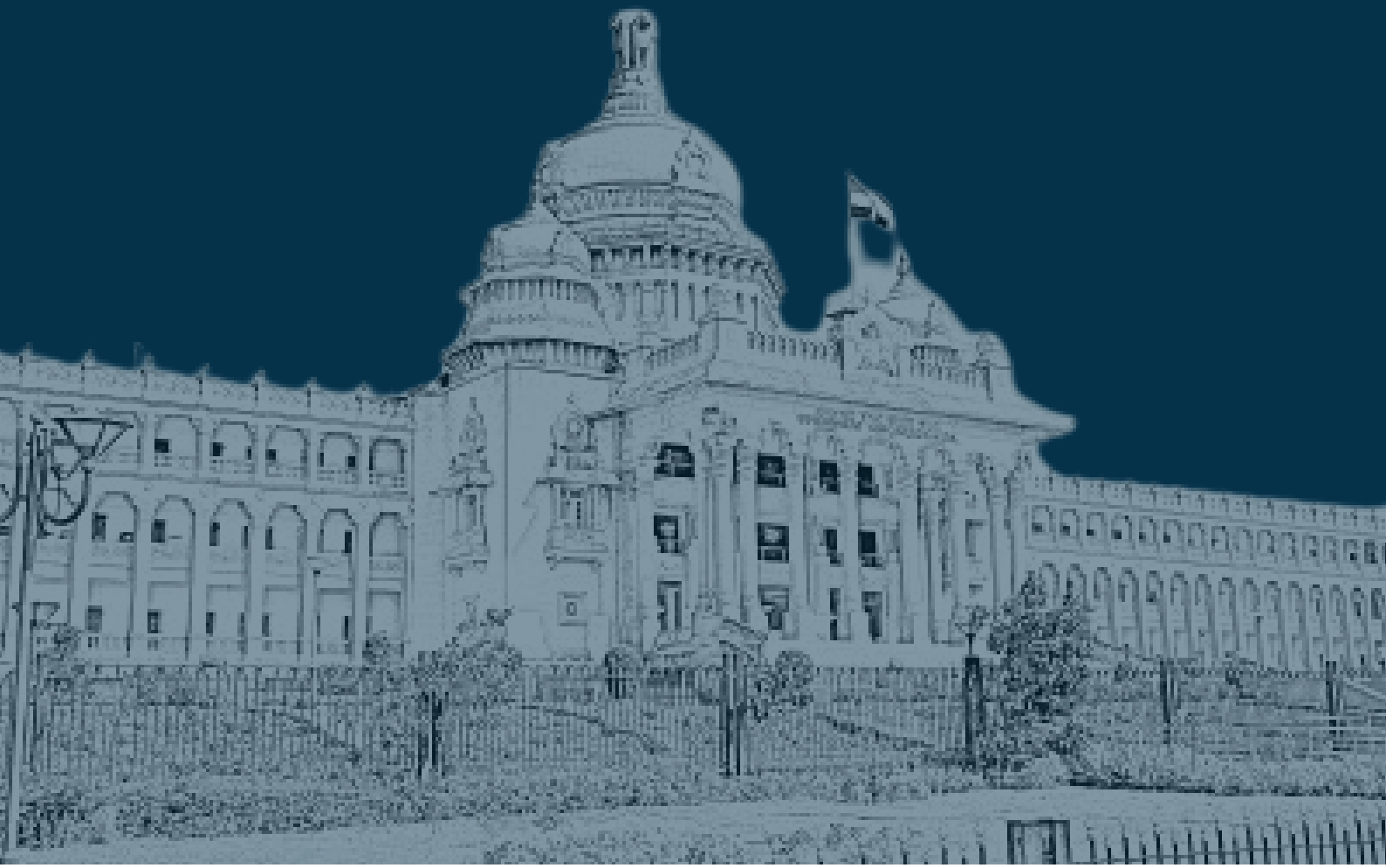


NOTE:

- In addition to the above, the District Programme Officers are nominated as Nodal Officers for each Taluka's for effective and Periodic Monitoring and Review.
- As per the GOI guidelines, the Organogram envisages to create Programme Officer post which is uniform across the Nation and is similar to the current wings present in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI. Government of India recommends in addition to the existing posts the creation of 15 posts for the effective monitoring vide circular Of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi No. Z.14012/1 2013 Dated: 2nd June, 2014 .

ORGANOGRAM CHART AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL/TALUKA AND PHC LEVELS





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