

Role, Functions and Organizational Structure of the District Rural Development Agency

Rohit Narwal

Research Scholar

Deptt. of Public Adm.

M.D.U. Rohtak (Haryana)

Vikas Narwal

Lect. in Pol. Science

Govt. Sr. Sec. School

Pakasma, Distt. Rohtak(HR)

Abstract: Rural Development is one of the priorities of our development policy. For developing the rural areas, well-planned efforts are going on appropriate administrative arrangements have been made from time to time to achieve the goals and objective of rural development. The then existing agencies popularly known as Skills For Development (S.F.D.) as were renamed as District Rural Development Agencies District Rural Development Agency with effect from 2nd October, 1980 to implement. The District Rural Development Agency as are expected to coordinate effectively with the live departments, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), banks, other financial institutions, Non Governmental Organization as well as technical institutions in order to garner support and resources required for the poverty reduction effort in the district. The Present

research paper highlights the role, function and organizational structure of DRDA.

Keywords:- Rural Development, Panchyati Raj, DRDA, Anti Poverty Program

Introduction: The District Rural Development Agency is playing a excellent facilitating role for the ministry at the district level all across the country. This role could be further to enable them to play a pro-active role in the development of the country. The District Rural Development Agency has traditionally been the principal organ at the District level to oversee the implementation of different anti-poverty programmes. Since its inception, the administrative costs of the District Rural Development Agency were met by way of setting apart a share of the allocations for each programme. However, of late, the number of the programmes had increased and while some of the programmes provided for administrative costs of the

District Rural Development Agency others did not. There was no uniformity among the different programmes with reference to administrative costs. Keeping in view the need for an effective agency at the district level to coordinate the antipoverty effort, a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme for strengthening the District Rural Development Agency has been introduced with effect from 1st April 1999. Accordingly, the administrative costs are met by providing separate budget provisions. This scheme which is funded on a 75:25 basis between Centre and States, aims at strengthening and professionalising the District Rural Development Agency. The funding ratio in respect of North East States has been revised to 90:10 with effect from the financial year 2008-2009.

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:

□ The District Rural Development Agency is visualised as a specialised and a professional agency capable of managing the anti-poverty programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development on the one hand and to effectively relate these to the overall effort of

poverty eradication in the District. In other words, while the District Rural Development Agency will continue to watch over the implementation of Programme to ensure effective utilisation of the funds intended for antipoverty programmes, it will need to develop a far greater understanding of the processes necessary for poverty alleviation/eradication. It will also need to develop the capacity to build synergies among different agencies involved for the most effective results. It will therefore need to develop distinctive capabilities rather than perform tasks that are legitimately in the domain of the PRIs or the line departments. The role of the District Rural Development Agency will therefore be distinct from all the other agencies, including the Zilla Parishad.

□ District Rural Development Agency must themselves be more professional and should be able to interact effectively with various other agencies. They are expected to coordinate with the line departments, the Panchayati Raj Institutions the banks and other

financial institutions, the Non Government Organization as well as the technical institutions, with a view to gathering the support and resources required for poverty reduction effort in the district. It shall be their endeavour and cooperation for reducing poverty in the district. It is their ability to coordinate and bring about a convergence of approach among different agencies for poverty alleviation that would set them apart.

- The District Rural Development Agency is expected to coordinate effectively with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Under no circumstances will they perform the functions of PRIs.
- The District Rural Development Agency will maintain their separate identity but will function under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad. They are expected to be a facilitating and supporting organisation to the Zilla Parishad, providing necessary executive and technical support in respect of poverty reduction efforts. Wherever the Zilla

Parishads are not in existence or are not functional, the District Rural Development Agency would function under the Collector/District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be.

- The District Rural Development Agency are expected to oversee the implementation of different anti-poverty programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development in the district. This is not to be confused with actual implementation, which will be by the Panchayati Raj and other Institutions. The District Rural Development Agency will monitor closely the implementation through obtaining of periodic reports as well as frequent field visits. The purpose of the visit should be to facilitate the implementing agencies in improving implementation process, besides ensuring that the quality of implementation of programmes is high. This would include over-seeing whether the intended beneficiaries are receiving the benefits under the different programmes.

- The District Rural Development Agency shall keep the Zilla Parishad, the State and the Central Government duly informed of the progress of the implementation of the programmes through periodic reports in the prescribed formats. Special report, as and when called for, shall be provided.
- It shall be the duty of the District Rural Development Agency to oversee and ensure that the benefits specifically earmarked for certain target groups (SC/ST, women and disabled) reach them. They shall take all necessary steps to achieve the prescribed norms.
- The District Rural Development Agency shall necessary step to improve the awareness regarding rural development and poverty alleviation particularly among the rural poor. This would involve issues of poverty, the opportunities available to the rural poor and generally infusing a sense of confidence in their ability to overcome poverty. It would also involve sensitising the different functionaries in the district to the different aspects of poverty and poverty alleviation programmes.
- The District Rural Development Agency will strive to promote transparency in the implementation of different antipoverty programmes. Towards this end, they shall publish periodically, the details of the different programmes and their implementation.
- Keeping in view, the substantial investment that are being made in poverty alleviation programmes, the District Rural Development Agency shall ensure financial discipline in respect of the funds received by them, whether from Central or State Governments. They shall also ensure that the accounts are properly maintained including in respect of the funds allocated to banks or implementing agencies in accordance with the guidelines of different programmes.
- Thus the role of the District Rural Development Agency is in terms of planning for effective implementation of antipoverty programmes; coordinating with other agencies-Governmental, non-

Governmental, technical and financial for successful programme implementation; enabling the community and the rural poor to participate in the decision making process, overseeing the implementation to ensure adherence to guidelines, quality, equity and efficiency; reporting to the prescribed authorities on the implementation; and promoting transparency in decision making and implementation.

- Entrusting of any programme to the District Rural Development Agency, other than anti-poverty programmes of the Ministry, be it of any other Ministry of Government of India or the respective State Government will have to be done with the approval of the Secretary, Rural Development of the respective State(s), who should examine such request in consultation with the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. In such cases, it must be ensured that adequate provision is made for requisite staffing needed for proper implementation of the programme.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:

- Each district will have its own District Rural Development Agency. Ordinarily it would be a society registered under a Societies Registration Act. In respect of such states where District Rural Development Agency does not have a separate identity a separate cell should be created in Zilla Parishad which maintains a separate identity and separate accounts, so that the accounts are capable of being audited separately. This Cell should be directly under the charge of Chief Executive Officer or alternatively an officer who has the qualifications to be a Project Director. The accounts of District Rural Development Agency should under no circumstances be merged or amalgamated with those of the Zilla Parishads.
- In order to be effective, the District Rural Development Agency must have an appropriate staffing structure as well as suitable personnel policy. Keeping in view

the role and functions of the District Rural Development Agency listed in the previous chapter, the staffing structure of District Rural Development Agency must include positions for planning for poverty alleviation, Project formulation, social organisation and capacity building, gender concerns, Engineering supervision and Quality control, Project monitoring, Accountancy and Audit functions as well as Evaluation and Impact studies. An indicative staffing structure is given in Annexure and is also detailed below. The State Government may modify the structure suitably, but without altering the basic design, to take care of the needs of individual districts keeping in view their size as well as specificity. However, this will also be subject to the overall ceiling of administrative costs admissible to the District Rural Development Agency in the State. By and large the staff appointed should be dedicated to District Rural Development Agency -related works and should not be frequently transferred.

A) PROJECT DIRECTOR:

- i) Each District Rural Development Agency should be headed by a Project Director, who should be of the rank of an Additional District Magistrate. The Project Director should preferably be a senior scale officer of the All India Services or a senior officer of the State Service, eligible for appointment to the All India Services. He would be in overall charge of the activities of the District Rural Development Agency and responsible for interaction with the District/State administration as well as with the Government of India. The PD should be exclusively for the District Rural Development Agency work.
- ii) In some States, such as Maharashtra, the Chief Executive Organization of the Zilla Parishad is the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad. Government of India have suggested to all the State government that the chairman, Zilla Parishad should be the chairman of the governing body of the District Rural Development Agency. In the light of this, in such

states, the C EO of the Zilla Parishad could also be designated as the Project Director of the District Rural Development Agency.

- iii) Each District Rural Development Agency should have the following wings:
- Self-employment Wing;
 - Women's Wing;
 - Wage employment Wing;
 - Engineering Wing;
 - Accounts Wing;
 - Monitoring and Evaluation Wing;
 - and
 - General Administration Wing

B) SELF-EMPLOYMENT WING:

- i) The self-employment wing, shall be headed by a Project Officer and should have APOs in the field of planning, social mobilisation, credit and Technology. The Project officer may be specifically responsible for any of these four functions. The APO (Planning) would look after the activity clusters, district/block/village group plans, guiding the Block Development and Planning Officer and others in plan preparation, planning for infrastructure including marketing infrastructure. He

would coordinate with the district officers, the banks as well as other institutions in the district.

The APO (Social Mobilisation) would look after group formation, capacity building, monitoring of groups, choice of activities for groups, release of revolving funds and coordination. The APO (Credit), who should be from the commercial banking sector, would coordinate with the banks in all matters relating to credit, including the interface between the bankers and the beneficiaries/beneficiary groups, loan disbursements as well as loan recovery. The APO (Technology) would look after issues concerning Technology up gradation as well as transfer of technology.

- ii) The District Rural Development Agency would be drawing up projects for specific activities under the Self-employment programmes. It would be necessary to have suitable experts to oversee the successful implementation of such projects. As part of the overall programme management, the District Rural Development Agency may take outside experts on a consultancy basis. Secretary, Rural Development of each state should develop guidelines for selection of consultants so as to avoid

any wrong use of such provisions and to see that only those who have a proven practical expertise are engaged. Such experts to be engaged on project specific basis will function under the overall control and supervision of the Project Officer, self-employment programmes.

C) WOMEN'S WING:

In order to ensure that women receive adequate attention in all the anti-poverty programmes, a Women's Cell should be set up in each District Rural Development Agency. This Cell would establish necessary synergy with Departments such as Women & Child Development, Education and Health Departments to ensure that women not only receive their due share in the antipoverty programmes but are also able to receive benefits of other programmes. The Women's wing will be headed by an Asst. Project officer, who will function under the overall co-ordination of the Project officer of the self employment wing.

D) WAGE EMPLOYMENT WING:

The Central concern of the District Rural Development Agency in the wage-employment programmes should relate to planning, monitoring and vigilance by a

technical wing. The District Rural Development Agency should not concern itself with the actual implementation and execution of works which can be done by the line department/engineers or the Panchayati Raj Institutions. At the same time, the magnitude of the wage employment wing, with a Project officer assisted by a small complement of staff.

E) WATERSHED WING:

A Watershed Wing will be set up in the District Rural Development Agency in all such districts where IWDP/DPAP/DDP is in operation. This wing should consist of a Project Officer, assisted by a small complement of staff. This staff would be independent of the programme support in the form of PIAs or Watershed committees.

F) ENGINEERING WING:

Each District Rural Development Agency should have a technical wing, which should also be responsible for innovations in design or use of materials, as well as training of the engineering personnel of the line departments or the PRIs. This wing should be manned by an Executive Engineer assisted by one or two Assistant/Junior Engineers.

G) ACCOUNT WING:

- i) Wherever it has not been done, the District Rural Development Agency should shift over to commercial accounting systems from the existing government account system. They should publish an annual report along with the balance sheet. The accounts wing of the District Rural Development Agency should be headed by a Sr. Accounts Officer, either on deputation or by engaging the services of a chartered accountant. He should be supported by an Accounts Officer each for self-employment programmes and wage employment programmes duly assisted by accountants. Wherever the Watershed programmes (IWDP/DPAP/DDP) are under implementation, an additional post of Accounts Officer may be sanctioned. For Indira Awaas Yojana, one Accountant at the district level should be available to monitor the progress of the programme and the accounts.
- ii) One of the Accounts Officers should perform the role of internal audit.

H) MONITORING WING:

There should be a separate Monitoring and Evaluation wing headed

by a Project Economist and functioning directly under the supervision of the Project Director. Apart from monitoring the progress of all the programmes, this wing should also carry out evaluation/impact studies regularly by independent institutions/experts including NGOs. The cost of such studies will be met from the respective programme funds. This wing should also monitor issues relevant to poverty in the district.

Conclusion: TO conclude we can say that if effective programme design is critical to successful implementation of rural development programmes. So is an effective delivery agency. None of the anti-poverty programmes can have impact unless they are implemented with clarity of purpose and a commitment to the task. It is here that the District Rural Development Agency plays a critical role. The District Rural Development Agency are not the implementing agencies, but can be very effective in enhancing the quality of implementation through overseeing the implementing agencies, but can be very effective in enhancing the quality of implementation through overseeing the implementation of different programmes and ensuring that necessary linkages are provided. To this extent the District Rural Development Agency is a supporting and a

facilitating organisation and needs to play an effective role as a catalyst in development process.

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