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Administrative structure and functioning of IRDP in Himachal Pradesh: A case study of Solan district

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Abstract

The poverty alleviation programs in India can be categorized based on whether it is targeted either for rural areas or for urban areas in the country. The target group under IRDP consists of small and marginal farmers, agricultural laborers and rural artisans having annual income Rs 11,000 defined as poverty line in the Eighth plan. In order to ensure that benefits under the program reach the more vulnerable sectors of the society, It is stipulated that at least 50% of assisted families should be from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with corresponding flow of resources to them, Furthermore, 40% of the coverage should be of women beneficiaries and 3% of handicapped persons.

In the initial stages of planned development, particularly during the 1950-60, it was thought that with accelerated economic growth both in the agricultural and the industrial sectors, the benefits of the growth will reach to all the sections and all the religions of the country through the spread or trickledown effect.

Keywords: Farmers, structure, development, governing, economic, objective

Introduction

The post-independence period in India is characterized by a concern expressed by the political leadership about the serious problem of poverty, unemployment and economic inequalities. Efforts continue to be made to overcome these problems. In the beginning of the 1980's, the government had realized that the poverty-ridden rural people deserved greater attention than been paid to them. It was with this view that the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was conceived as a strategy to improve the economic and social life of the poorest of the poor living in rural areas. Now that this programme has been in operation for about a decade, it is desirable to examine the efficacy of its administrative framework. IRDP introduced in 1979 for rural poor and weaker section of society. Earlier programs relied on delivery systems which suppressed self-reliance. The apparent failure of the CDP was the main reason for the evaluation of the IRDP. For managing the program, a corporate governmental agency name as District Rural Development (DRDA) was set up at district level. The DRDA is guided and directed and supported by a governing council headed by the Project Officer of DRDA. The District Collector, Heads of District Officers, legislators, Panchayat Union Chairmen and some other non-officials from the member.

Objectives and Methods

The present paper examines the administration of IRDP in the context of districts Solan of Himachal Pradesh. More precisely it seeks to analyze:

1. The role and composition of programme implementing agencies at different levels of administration and to find out the gaps, if any, and reason thereof;
2. The involvement of district/block level as reflected by their role perceptions; and
3. The performance of district/block level official in implementing the programme.

With view to studying the administration of IRDP, the necessary primary information was obtained through a questionnaire administered to 40 development administrators/officials in all the 5 blocks of Solan district. In addition, secondary data relating to administrative organization of IRDP was obtained from various levels of government agencies. The term "development administrator" is used here to include the official at the district, block and village levels who were entrusted with the task of implementing IRD Programme.

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IRDP was introduced in Himachal Pradesh in 1978-79. Initially it covered 29 blocks. On 2 October, 1980, it was extended to all the 69 developmental blocks. Solan district came into existence at the time of re-organization of the district of the state on 1 November, 1972. From the administrative point of view the district is divided into four sub-divisions, the total geographical area of the district is 1,936 sq.kms and its total population according to 1981 census was 3,03,280. In solan district, IRD programme was initially started in 1978-79 in the three development blocks, viz., solan, Kandaghat and Dharampur. In the remaining two blocks namely, Nalagarh and Kunihar, the programme was started from 2 October, 1980. The total number of families below poverty line was 15,259 in the entire district.

Organizational Structure

The existence of efficient administrative set-up with commitment to programme objectives at various levels is essential for implementation of any programme for the rural poor. In a programme like IRDP in which delivery system

comprises various departments and institutions, their co-ordination is equally important. No doubt in all this, the center and the states play their roles in the formulation of policies, their monitoring and evaluation at a macro level but the real responsibility lies with the district and block administrative set-up. As such any attempt to examine the efficacy of administrative framework entails analyzing the functioning of district and bloc level agencies. For this it is necessary to have an overview of the structure proposed by the centre and the state and actually provided for in the district.

Whereas at the district level, a district administrative agency, namely District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has evolved, at the block level, however, the implementation of IRDP has done primarily through the pre-existing network. Therefore, let us first examine the DRDA set-up and the composition of the bodies associated with it. The central government had proposed the following organizational pattern of DRDA:

Administrative Structure and Functional of IRDP

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF DRDA

PROJECT OFFICER

Subject Matter Specialists (A.P.S.S.) Ators (2) Investigator (1)	Planning Team (one each for credit, rural industries, economics, statistics).	Asstt. project officer monitoring- (1) Investing- Drivers (1-2) Chowkidar (1)	Accounts Officer, Accountants.	Office Manager/Supdt./ Head Clerk (1) LDCs (4) Statistical Class IV (4) LDC (1)
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The Government of Himachal Pradesh has however made significant deviations from the central model perhaps due to financial and other constraints peculiar to the state. These deviations have reduced the infrastructure considerably which in turn seemed to have impinged on the efficient implementation of programme. There is an acute shortage of staff at DRDA. For instance, there is no assistant project officer for animal husbandry and monitoring.

Only a statistician looks after the work of the assistant project officer (monitoring). Besides, an accountant maintain accounts pertaining to the various programmers run by the DRDA. Two clerks assist the statistician and the accountant in their work. The agency functions under the control of a governing body of which the Deputy Commissioner is the chairman, the Additional Deputy Magistrate is the vice-chairman, and the project officer is the secretary.

The governing Body

The governing body of DRDA consist of representatives of weaker sections, MPs, MLAs, officials from the co-operative Land Development Bank and the lead bank and district level officer of the department of agriculture, horticulture, industries, animal husbandly. The Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Magistrate and project officer are its ex-officio chairman, vice-chairman and secretary respectively. It is the controlling and co-ordinating Body which not only provides leadership and guidance

DRDA in planning implementing and monitoring of the programme at the district level but also evaluated its overall performance. It enjoys vast administrative and financial powers.

Action Committee

The governing body being a bigger organization cannot meet frequently. Hence, DRDA has its own Action Committee which is the real executive at the district level. It comprise Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Magistrate, Project Officer, etc. who function on behalf of the governing body. Usually, the Action Committee meets once every month.

Block Level

It is the operation level through which the programme is implemented. Perspective and annual action plans are prepared at the block level. The Block Development Officer (BDO) ensures that the programme is implemented according to the approved scheme and provides feedback on the impact of the programme. Therefore, the BDO is required to perform the role of chief co-ordinator in the block. He also ensures that plans are prepared in time and are implemented effectively. Each block is headed by a BDO who is assisted by extension officers. Usually, there is an extension officer each for every core discipline. Other members of staff are junior engineer, gram ewika etc. the key role played by the village level worker (V.L.W.). He

functions as a link between the block administration and the legible families. In short, block level is the most crucial level in the administrative network of IRDP.

Role Perception of Development Administrators

Having examined the organizational structure of IRDP in Solan district, the present seeks to analyse its inner function dynamics vis-a-vis the role-perception of the development administrators/officer involved in the programme. An analysis of the role-perception with regard to the extent of involvement of the respondents in policy-making at the district and block levels revealed that 60 per cent of them felt that their involvement was considerably high, whereas 20 per cent felt dissatisfied with the extent of their involvement. The remaining 20 percent maintained that their involvement was negligible.

However, when the same respondents were asked they would like to involve themselves in policy-making to a greater extent, nearly 70 percent of them answered positively. The remaining felt that their participation in policy-making should be increased so as to make the administration of the programme more effective.

Administrative Structure and Functioning of IRDP

For an effective implementation of any programme it is necessary to evolve a two-way communication process, i.e. from the higher administrative level to the lower levels of administration and vice versa. When respondents were asked whether day to day experiences, problems and perceptions should be communicated to the higher authorities, the overwhelming majority -88.57 percent- were of the view that such a communication system was urgently needed. The remaining 11.43 percent were indecisive on this point yet they did not favor a complete blocking of communication with the higher authorities. As regards the mode of communication, 71.43 percent respondent wanted it to be through proper channel while the remaining desired that there should be direct contact with the state headquarter.

How far the lower rung officers should consult their seniors in day-to-day functioning and decision-making was another aspect probed. Thirty percent respondents believed that such a consultation was always necessary; majority of respondents constituting 55 percent of the total felt that such consultation was often needed. However the remaining 15 percent wanted to take decisions independent of their superiors.

Findings and Role Performance of Development Administrators

As regard administrator's opinion with regard to initiative and discretion in the programme implementation, 7.5 percent of the respondents stated that they enjoyed a higher degree of discretion. Another 7.5 percent opined that they did not enjoy any discretion. The opinion of these two groups which represent diametrically opposite views do not seem to be well placed. What appears to be logical as well authenticated by the opinion of the overwhelming majority, i.e. 85 percent respondents is that the officials at the district, block and village levels enjoyed only limited and descending discretion and initiative. This becomes further evident from the fact that the senior administrators continued providing guidance to their subordinates in 78 percent cases quite frequently. This implied little room for

discretion as most often they were guided by senior officials. It is only occasionally that the administrators had to take decisions at their own level. Although the seniors provided substantial guidance in more than 75 percent cases, yet they owned substantial responsibility comparably to than a very limited extent i.e. 8.7 percent only the majority the respondents (71 percent) were of the view that either the seniors owned responsibility or no responsibility.

As such an overwhelming majority, i.e. 90 percent development administrators were satisfied with their role performance to a limited extent. Only 10 percent reported that they were highly satisfied.

Conclusion

The existing administrative structure of IRDP implementing agencies at the state, district and block level is far too inadequate keeping in view the responsibilities expected to be discharged by them. This particularly true in respect of block level administration. There is an urgent need to implement the staffing pattern approved by the union government. Since there exists concentration of powers at the state level, the decentralization of powers to the district and block levels may ensure a more effective implementation of the programme. There exists a lack of accountability and co-ordination at the block level as some of the functionaries are not under the control of BDO, instead they deal directly with their respective line departments, the solution to these problems lies either in creating an organizational set-up exclusively meant to implement IRDP or in making the existing staff accountable to the Block Development Officer.

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