

Role and Functions of the District Rural Development Agency

1.1 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 DRDAs play a critical role. The DRDAs are not the implementation through overseeing the implementation of different programmes and ensuring that necessary linkages are provided. To this extent the DRDA is a supporting and facilitation organization and needs to play a very effective role as a catalyst in development process.

1.2 The district Rural Development Agency is visualised as specialized 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 DRDA will continue to watch over and ensure effective utilization of the funds intended for anti-poverty 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 DRDA will therefore be distinct from all the other agencies, including the Zilla Parishad.

1.3 DRDAs must themselves be more professional and should be able to interact effectively with various other agencies. They are expected to coordinate with the line department, the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the banks and other financial institutions, resources required for poverty reduction effort in the district. It shall be their endeavour and objective to secure inter-sectoral and inter-departmental coordination 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 and would set them apart.

1.4 The DRDAs are expected to coordinate effectively with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Under no circumstances will they perform functions of PRIs.

1.5 The DRDAs will maintain their separate identity but will function under the chairmanship of the Chairman of Zilla Parishad. They are expected to be a facilitating and supporting organization to 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 DRDAs would function under the Collector/District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be.

1.6 The DRDAs 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 DRDAs 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 overseeing whether the intended beneficiaries are receiving the benefits under the different programmes.

1.7 The DRDAs shall keep the Zilla Parishad, the State and 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.

1.8 It shall be the duty of the DRDAs 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.

1.9 The DRDAs shall take necessary steps 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 sensitizing the different functionaries in the district to the different aspects of poverty and poverty alleviation programmes.

1.10 The DRDAs will strive to promote transparency in the implementation of different anti-poverty programmes. Towards this end, they shall publish periodically, the details of the different programmes and their implementation.

1.11 Keeping in view, the substantial investment that are being made in poverty alleviation programmes, the DRDAs 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.

1.12 Thus the role of the DRDA is in terms of planning for effective implementation of anti-poverty 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.

1.13 In addition the DRDAs shall coordinate and oversee the conduct of the BPL Census and such other surveys that are required from time to time.

1.14 The DRDAs shall also carry out / aid in carrying out action research/ or evaluation studies that are initiated by the Central/State Governments.

1.15 The DRDAs should deal only with the anti-poverty programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development. If DRDAs are to be entrusted with programmes of other ministries or those of the State Governments, it should be ensured that these have a definite antipoverty focus. Entrusting of any programme to the DRDAs, 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.