CHAPTER II

BLOCK ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA
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BLOCK LEVEL ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

When India achieved her independence, its rural life exhibited a spectacle of acute misery, social disintegration, cultural backwardness, economic poverty and low political awareness, which had created a measure crisis for development, modernisation and nation building in India.\(^1\)

Independent India's tryst with its villages began in 1952 when the first ever-nationwide rural reconstruction scheme namely Community Development Programme was launched to bring about all-round improvement in the rural society. The basic aims of the Community Development Programme were as follows:

(a) Creation of a progressive outlook among the rural population,
(b) Inculcating habits of co-operative action,
(c) Securing increased production,
(d) Promoting increased employment.\(^2\)

The Community Development Programme was started as a movement in India. The programme followed the basic

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principles as laid down by the United Nations in early fifties that "the process by which the effort of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities" for the progress of the nation. The main ideas behind the Community Development Programme in India were also similar as those understood in the U.S.A. at that time. It meant a process of social action in which the people of a community "organise themselves for planning and action; define their common and individual needs and problems; make group and individual plans to meet their needs and solve their problems; execute those plans with the maximum reliance upon community resources; and supplement them when necessary, with services and materials from governmental and non-governmental agencies outside the community."³

Community Development Programme was based on a scheme formulated by the Government of India in cooperation with the Ford Foundation as per Indo-U.S. "Operational agreement No.8" and it was started in 1952 with 55 projects, comprising 27,388 villages having a population of 16.7 million.

Each Community Development Project area was divided into 3 development blocks each consisting of about 100 villagers, and a population of about 60,000 to 70,000 spread over an area of 150 to 170 square miles. The criteria

for selection of the project area has been the existence of irrigation facilities or assured rainfall line of activity.

The Grow More Food Enquiry Committee suggested that the 'Project area' was apparently unwidely. So it was to continue till the end of the American aid. After the American aid was ceased, these Community Projects became Development Blocks under the suggested plan. The development block became the lowest administrative unit above a village. Below the block, there were a group of villages. As B. Mukherji has pointed out: "The blocks have been created entirely by administrative action. They have no roots in the history nor in social or economic growth".  

During the First Five Year Plan, along with the Community Development Blocks, certain National Extension Service blocks were created. Community Development is the method and rural extension is the agency through which the plan sought to initiate the programme of socio-economic transformation. Extension work and community programme ran concurrently, the only difference being that the former which was restricted in scope, covered a wider region while the later, aiming at alround development concentrated on


5. B. Mukherjee, Community Development in India, Calcutta, Orient Longmans, 1961, P.216.
particular areas. Barring the original community development blocks, forming part of the 55 community projects, and 53 Community Development Blocks added to the series next year, the career of new blocks were marked by four stages; namely pre-extension, extension, community development or intensive and post-intensive. However, the Government of India accepted the recommendations of Balwantray Mehta Committee and accordingly divided the blocks into two stages. Stage I was the Intensive Development phase wherein people's participation would be promoted and the panchayats would be intimately associated with the formulation of plans for the respective areas. The growth and functioning of self-reliant rural communities would depend upon the degree of success attained in the first stage. In the second stage, which is the post-intensive phase, the operation of the method of Community Development would be intensified in its fuller amplitude; the emphasis is more on Community Development than a Developmental Programme. But each stage would be of 5 years duration in order to maintain the urgency and dynamism of the programme. The period of operation of Stage I would, however, be extended by one year in specific cases in case of necessity. The assumption was that by the time the Community Development phase was completed, the block would reach a take-off stage, because of a viable developmental base both in terms of material assets and attitudinal change.

Right from the time Panchayati Raj was first introduced in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh in the year 1957
the district tier (Zilla Parishad) instead of being a purely advisory body, was vested with some executive functions. Then Gujarat and Maharashtra dealt almost a decisive blow to the block as the basic unit of devolution. In these two states the district tier became the primary unit and the block tier was reduced to the position of an executive committee of the district tier. Thus the Mehta Committee's emphasis on block as the basic unit had lost its original simplicity.

However, in the 1960s, with the criticism of people and area getting poorer, special programmes strengthened the block administration in the relevant areas in terms of personnel, finance, and a package of inputs. But in the late sixties with the designing and working of special programmes like DPAP, SFDA and MFAL Programmes, the block level administration had been utilised in several ways, but it has had no direct responsibility. Thus, block level administration had suffered in prestige to some extent, on the assumption that such programmes were entrusted to the regular machinery of development administration and Panchayati Raj. This reduced position of the block was accelerated with the "growth-centre approach" incorporated in the Fourth Plan. The Fourth Plan pointed out that the Panchayati Raj institutions were agencies of government and administration at the local level. In developmental planning the emphasis was shifted from the Block to the local level planning of Panchayati Raj institutions and district level planning.
However Dantwala Working Group Report 1978\(^6\) recommended for the choice of Block as a unit of planning. The Working Group suggested to introduce block-level planning in 3500 blocks in the next five years. But the Group recommended that the responsibility for the selection of blocks from among the priority districts should be left to the State Governments. Hence, there was a tilting of the balance in favour of the block, vis-a-vis the district, and growth centres below the block level. To be sure, in 1978, the blocks had struck deeper roots. The Sixth Plan put the focus all the time on blocks. But again the importance of block was reduced in the Report of the Ashok Mehta Committee\(^7\). The report recommended that the block level body should act as the executive committee of the Zilla Parishad. So the Committee did not recommend for the abolition of blocks as such but the continuance of the block as a matter of transitional phase\(^8\). Even if the block has to pass a long and zigzag way, it is still important as the unit of planning and administration as the Integrated Rural Development Programme is being implemented since 1978.

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8. Ibid., P.38.
The Community Development Programme had provided an elaborate delivery mechanism in the form of development blocks and the village level extension agency. However, over the years, this mechanism had suffered considerable erosion and gradual disintegration. With the launching of Integrated Rural Development Programme in the Sixth Plan, efforts were made to restore to a substantial extent the mechanisms provided under the Community Development Programme. As a result the position improved but the total delivery system has still not been able to attain its effectiveness as originally envisaged. Simultaneously, a multiplicity of functionaries has emerged at this level for implementation of a large number of programmes aimed at the same people for raising their standard of living.

**BLOCK LEVEL ORGANISATION**

During the First Plan, in implementing the Community Development and National Extension Service Programme, a major task was to provide for an adequate administrative structure to establish appropriate practices to train personnel and to evolve methods of achieving day-to-day collaboration between official and non-official agencies.

When the blocks were created, separate administrative structure for the administration at the block level was also provided. Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommended, "The block should, as far as possible, be treated as the administrative unit of all development departments so that there is one unified set up without
duplication in overlapping of jurisdiction or blurring of responsibilities."

Though the "Operational Agreement" provided a brief description of the organisational framework at the Central, State, district and project levels organisational details relating to the block were not spelt out, presumably because the project area was the key unit and the project executive officer was the key functionary. The Grow More Food Enquiry Committee also suggested that the block-level administration would be headed by "the head of the block development administration and he would be called "Development Officer" or "Extension Officer". He would be assisted by four technical officers - for agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, and engineering. The same Committee also suggested that a group of villages below the Block would be the area of operation of the "village worker" whose role would be vital in rural development. Accordingly, the block administration at present is vested upon an officer appropriately known as Block Development Officer. He has to keep linkages with the Subdivisional Officer at the sub-division level, district officer at the district level and also Chief Secretary or the Development Commissioner at the State level. Under him, a number of officers are involved in various developmental works of the block like agriculture.

education, health, animal husbandry, industry etc. Village Level Workers are directly responsible to the B.D.O. for their work. The rural India finds a new sense of partnership with higher level of government which mainly through their bureaucratic apparatus seek to help it till it can stand on its own feet. The organisational structure of block level administration is hierarchical in nature. This can be shown in a chart given below.

CHART NO. 3

State Government Ministers

Secretaries and Commissioners to Government

R.D.C.

Collectors

S.D.O.

B.D.O.

V.L.W.  Extension Officers
The block organisation, known as the National Extension Service Agency, started with creating enthusiasm among the people to take active part in the process of formulation and implementation of development programmes and coordinating the developmental activities spread over different departments. A group of technical services was placed at the block level and provision was made for the constitution of Block Advisory Committees to enlist popular support for the programme. However, it was realised that the Block Advisory Committees were not functioning properly because they were merely advisory and did not have any direct responsibility in this regard.

The next step was that of attempting to weld together Panchayati Raj and Community Development. This objective followed from the acceptance of the recommendations of the Study Team of the Committee on Plan Projects. (Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, 1957). The three-tier Panchayati Raj system, together with its modifications in different states, thus set the pattern of local development administration. At each level village or group of villages, block or group of blocks
and district - there was to be a link between the administrative apparatus and elected representatives.

With the introduction of Panchayati Raj system as per the recommendation of the Mehta Committee\(^\text{10}\), the association of the elected representatives in block-level administration became important and with the creation of the Gram Panchayats in the villages, Block Advisory Committees were established. By introducing a democratic component, a new dimension was added to the organisational dynamics of the block level administration. Thus throughout the block pattern of working, there is a bifocal link. The multi-purpose village-Level Workers take guidance from a number of subject matter specialists and have to pay proper attention to the

\(^{10}\) Balwantray G. Mehta (Chairman) Report of the Study Team for the study of Community Projects & National Extension Service, New Delhi, Government of India, with a view to examining critically the working of the programme and its relationship with wider aspects of development and administration. The above study team was appointed by the Committee on Plan Projects in 1957. The Committee pointed out that development at community level can be possible only through democratic institutions and people's participation at the grass root level.
programmes of each of these in accordance with the priority fixed by the B.D.O. The B.D.O. in his turn, is responsible to the district level departmental officers for the working of these programmes within the block, but at the same time, in his role as administrator and coordinator, he is primarily responsible through the district planning officer to the district magistrate.

Thus the present structural matrix of the Block Organisation consists of two wings namely, the administrative wing and the representative wing. The matrix can be stated in the following chart.

CHART NO.4

The Matrix of Block Organisation

Administrative Wing

Representative Wing

Generalists Specialists Multipurpose

Panchayat Samiti

B.D.O. E.O. VLW

Gram Panchayats
The administrative wing of the block organisation consists of three types of functionaries; they are the generalists, the specialists and the multipurpose (or an amalgam of the two). For the purpose of coordination, general administrative officer (generalists) designated as the B.D.O. continues to perform this function. The Specialists, called in a majority of the states as Extension Officers are deputed from different technical departments of the state to work at the block level. The multipurpose functionary called the village Level Worker (VLW) was posted at the village level.

To coordinate the technical services and to rationalise the work load of the VLW who is the common agent for the extension of technical services at the village level, the S.D.O. acts as the captain of the team posted at the block. By virtue of this responsibility, the B.D.O. exercises powers of supervision and general control over technical and ministerial staff. However, as headquarters of technical departments are equally concerned with the implementation of their development programmes, the Extension Officers (EOs) at the block level are also amenable to their control.
Thus, though at the block level, the block functionaries are supposed to function as a team, their departmental affiliations and allegiances differ. The B.D.O. and the VLWs are under the direct administrative control of the District Collector or the District Development Officer, the extension officers are under the technical control of their district officers and under the immediate administrative control of the B.D.O.

The block set-up has been confronted with a few organisational issues. The most important issue is the issue of coordination - coordination between the B.D.O. and the field agency (the B.Os and V.L.Ws) on the one hand, and between the field agency and the district officers on the other. The former has raised the issue of horizontal coordination and the latter vertical coordination. Another issue regarding coordination also has been raised with regard to the coordination between the bureaucratic officials and elected representatives.

The block organisation is expected to function as a team, both for purposeful coordination of developmental programmes and for the promotion of an integrated approach to the effective implementation of
rural development programmes. But the problem of coordination also arises due to the existence of dual control at the block. There are 'technical control' as the one hand and "administrative" or "operational control" on the other. A district technical officer extends control on the block technical officers and at the same time the D.O. has his control over the technical officers and thereby there is always a situation of divided control and responsibility. As it has been pointed out in a study conducted in the states of Orissa, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, "dual control breeds dissatisfaction not only among the functionaries concerned but also permeates into their job functions and contributes to inefficiency". 11

Coming to vertical coordination dual control and supervision in administration negate the principle of unity of command and this negation in the block organisation,

as has been found, sometimes leads to conflicting instructions to the extension officers by their district-level officers and the B.D.O. The problem of vertical coordination is more a psychological than administrative one. To overcome these problems, the Vyas Committee recommended a single line of control for the services to reduce these tensions.

Coming to horizontal coordination, it is found that officers deputed from various departments have been organised into one development team. But it has been difficult to sustain the team spirit among the block officials, as the B.D.O. has no adequate delegation of authority over the extension officers which create the problem of horizontal coordination. He does not possess any disciplinary power over them.


Personnel constitutes one of the crucial problems in the block level organisation. With the launching of the Community Development, the Central Government had provided broad guidelines on personnel matters and left the states to evolve their own policies. Despite the minor variations in the policies followed by each state, this continued to operate without any major change till the advent of Panchayati Raj. The staffing pattern of the block level during this period (1952-57) is given in the following chart.

**CHART NO.5**

Organisational Set up of the Community Development Projects on October 1952

- Development Commissioner
- Project Officer (B.D.O.)
- Assistant Project Officer

- Senior Chief Extension Officer
- Extension Social Officer
- Education Officer
- Three Deputy

- Two Junior Organisational
- Extension Officers

- Midwives Assistant
- Sanitary Inspectors
- Rural Engineering

**Multipurpose VLWs (30)**

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The administrative pattern was thus developed on the basis of a single line Organisation consisting of the Development Commissioner at the State level, Collector at the district level, Block Development Officer at the Block level and Village Level worker at the village level. It was only slowly realised that if the technical departments were not brought into the programme and the Block would not develop as their common agency, the objectives of the programme could not be realised. This brought to the forefront the problem of coordination at the level of policy making and at the level of execution in the field.

The manner in which the block extension team comprising the Block Development Officer and Extension Officers in different fields of development functions is of the highest importance for the success of Panchayati Raj. To assist the Panchayat Samiti effectively, these officials must continue to function as a team, the B.D.O. providing the necessary coordination and leadership, and Extension Officers in
different fields participating actively in formulating programmes and schemes for the consideration of the Panchayat Samiti and its standing Committees executing them impartially in accordance with the rules and ensuring that the supplies and services needed are organised efficiently. Adequate supervision over the work of the VIMs is essential. Care should be taken to see that the B.D.O. and the Extension Officers undertake extensive touring within the block.

After the introduction of the Panchayati Raj, the Community Development Personnel at the block level including the VIMs came under the control of the Panchayat Samiti. In some states like Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, the staff working at the block level is borne on the state cadres and placed at the disposal of Panchayati Raj institutions, which have only day to day administrative control, recruitment, promotion, transfer etc. being vested in the State Government or its Officers. In other states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra,
and Rajasthan, a separate Panchayati Raj service has been created for the VLWs, primary school teachers, ministerial establishments etc. The B.D.O. and other Extension Officers are encadred in the state services and are treated as on deputation to the Panchayat Samiti on such terms and conditions as prescribed by the concerned state government. These officers remain free to some extent from the pressure of Panchayati Raj politics and thereby they can implement the programmes without fear or favour.

The B.D.O. is recruited through deputation from the State Revenue Cadre or try promotion from among the Extension Officers meeting relevant stipulations. Many states have been appointing revenue officers usually of the rank of Tahasildar as B.D.Os.

The VLWs, Gram Sevikas, School teachers, Veterinary Live Stock Inspectors and functionaries of equivalent cadre, coming under Class III services are constituted into a district cadre under the Panchayati Raj service. However, the Administrative Reforms Commission suggested classification of class III (services) into Class III (Extension) and Class III (Ministerial). They preferred to keep the Extension Wing as a state-wide cadre while recommending the formation of a
district cadre for ministerial services\textsuperscript{15}.

However, when the Integrated Rural Development Programme was implemented the aim of Block Level Administration was to formulate area specific plans at the block level, and identify programmes for development of the area, making full use of the local resources. The block organisation has been indirectly associated with the implementation of the centrally sponsored programmes viz. the Command Area Development (CAD), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP). The implementation of these special programmes was therefore entrusted to a special agency with decentralised powers in the decision-making process and with funds coming directly from the centre and the state governments to enable them to act quickly without serious loss of time and opportunity.

The block organisation with the B.D.O., Extension Officers and VLWs is considered quite inadequate for taking of these new tasks under block level planning. So the Ashoka Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj recommended transfer of the State Government staff to the Panchayati Raj institutions along with the developmental functions. Thus the need to strengthen the personnel at the block level is emphasised.

\textsuperscript{15} India, Administrative Reforms Commission, Report of the Study Team on District Administration (Chairman, Takhatwal Jain), (New Delhi, 1967) Paras 227 and 228.
in view of the new responsibility of planning entrusted to them.

The B.D.O. is the highest officer at the block level to work as team leader, supervisor, guide, motivator and coordinator of all the personnel involved in rural developmental work. He is a class-II gazetted officer but acts as the Chief Executive Officer at the block level. In some states, revenue and magisterial functions also have been entrusted to the B.D.O. He performs some regulatory functions such as collection of taxes for Panchayat Samiti. In such cases he combines both revenue and developmental functions. The most important fact to be pointed out is that the job performance of B.D.O. depends upon the cooperation he gets from his elected head i.e. the Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti, and its members. The Extension Officers are recruited by their respective parent departments of the state government and are on deputation to the block.

The role of the Gram Sevak (VLW) has attracted considerable attention as he is the key functionary in the implementation of development programmes at the village level. Sometimes he is over burdened with too many responsibilities. On an average each VLW's circle covers 6 to 10 villages and a population of 500 to 6000. The most important fact to be pointed out is that the job performance of B.D.O. depends upon the cooperation he gets from his elected head i.e. the Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti, and its members. The Extension Officers are recruited by their respective parent departments of the state government and are on deputation to the block.

the job areas of the VLWs. The VLWs "endeavour to match the resources and expectations of the villagers."\textsuperscript{17} VLWs generally with a rural background show better performance than others. Like VLWs (Male), Gram Sevikas are expected to help in "making women of the village good housekeepers, good mothers and good citizen, imbued with the desire for improvement in their living condition and for the community's welfare."\textsuperscript{18}

While the responsibility of the official agency is defined and enforced, the functions of non-official leaders are categorised as follows:

a. to mobilise public participation and promote the acceptance of the programmes by the people.

b. to assist village panchayats and co-operatives in their work.

c. to assist in training programmes for village leaders and others.

d. to organise programmes for the benefit of the community, using local man-power resources, and

e. to promote the welfare of the weaker sections.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} S.C. Dubey et. al. Village Level Workers, Their Work and Result Demonstration, Mussuri, NICD, 1962, PP.118-119.

\textsuperscript{18} India, Ministry of Community Development, Report of the Expert Committee on the Training of Project Personnel, New Delhi, 1957, P.29.

The scheme for strengthening of block machinery and monitoring cells at State Headquarters was continued in the Seventh Plan. The Government of India provided 50% assistance to states for this. In the case of Union Territories, the entire expenditure was borne by the Government of India. Under this, proposals for additional staff had been for all the States and Union Territories.

A decision was also taken to provide a joint B.D.O. to all these blocks which had a minimum of 10 VLWs and 5 Extension Officers and which cover 1 lakh population. The tribal areas would also be provided additional staff to the extent of 5 Gram Sevaks at 50% of the existing strength of Gram Sevaks/Sevikas, which is less.

PROGRAMMES

The Block agency, designed for the socio-economic change of the rural areas undertook eight categories of functions under Community Development Programme which was inaugurated on 2nd October, 1952.

They are (1) Agriculture and related matters (2) Communication (3) Education (4) Health (5) Training (6) Social Welfare (7) Supplementary employment (8) Housing

The Fourth Evaluation Report of 1957 adopted activities for Community Development Blocks which were classified as

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(a) Constructional Programmes (b) Irrigational Programmes 
(c) Agricultural Programmes (d) institutional and other programmes.

Since these activities did not contain any concern for people's participation, extension activities known as National Extension Service Programmes were undertaken in order to lift people out of themselves. Under the new set up of Community Development and National Extension Service, the activities undertaken during the first Five Year Plan were (a) (i) agricultural Extension (ii) Green Manure Seeds Multiplication Scheme (iii) Distribution of fertilisers (iv) Production of bone-meal; (b) Animal husbandry, (c) Cooperation, (d) Irrigation, (e) Reclamation (f) Soil Conservation (g) Health and Sanitation (h) Education (i) Social Education.

During Second Five Year Plan as per the recommendations of the Fifth Development Commissioners Conference, emphasis was shifted to industrialisation. So from 1956 to 1958, much emphasis was given to agriculture and animal husbandry. The Community Development Programme could not yield any result due to lack of consciousness of the people and uncontrolled population explosion along with inadequate natural resources. So in the early part of 1960s, the government initiated the programmes, targetting the special sectors known as target sector approach. Bureaucrats and policy makers argued that "equipping the section of higher development potential will be equally beneficial to help the poorer sections because the facilities and potential of development will percolate to the bottom in due
course.\textsuperscript{21} Besides a team of agricultural experts sponsored by the Ford Foundation in its report entitled "India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet it" 1959, suggested to undertake intensive effort for production with the help of technology in selected areas\textsuperscript{22}. So Intensive Agriculture District Programme (IADP), known as the 'Package Programme' was launched in 1960-61.

During the Third Five Year Plan, on the consent of the Agriculture Production Board, Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) was implemented in 1964 to increase the production of main crops in selected areas. Another step taken by the government to meet the food crisis was the implementation of High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP) in 1966. It aimed at producing more and more of food grains with a short span. In order to supplement the HYVP, Multiple Cropping Programme was implemented in 1967-68 to produce other types of crops in a short time.

Introduction of modern scientific instruments and advanced technology in agriculture as well as proper training and education became indispensable for the success of these programmes. So the Farmer's Training and Education Programme was launched by the Central Government in 1966-67.


The programmes, implemented from 1960 to 1965-66, during the period of Green Revolution, though met the challenges of food crisis but failed to elevate the economic status of the people. So the Central Government started some programmes to produce more and more commercial crops like Jute, Coffee, Sugarcane, Cotton, Oil Seeds etc.

During the Fourth Plan period, the introduction of Regional Planning encouraged the Central Government to implement some area specific programmes.

They are IDAD (Integrated Dryland Agricultural Development) Programme in 1970-71 for dryland areas, DFAP (Drought Prone Area Programme) in 1970 for areas of scanty rain fall. Under these programmes a horizontal attack to the poverty in the rural areas was made. Small Farmer’s Development Agency (SFDA) as well as Marginal Farmer’s and Agricultural Labourers Programme were introduced in 1969. During the Fifth Plan, these two programmes merged into a composite programme catering both to small farmers and agricultural labourers. The National Commission on Agriculture implemented the Command Area Development (CAD) Programme in 1974 to optimise agricultural production.

23. A farmer having 5 acres of irrigated land is known as a Small Farmer.

24. A farmer having 2.5 acres of irrigated land or 5 acres of non-irrigated land is a marginal farmer.

25. One who does not possess any land but works in the agricultural field throughout the year is known as an agricultural labourer.
Since the middle part of Southern India is hilly and could not cope with the general flow of development due to some ecological factors, so as a special step Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) was implemented in 1975.

During the Fifth Five Year Plan, for the first time an integrated sub-plan approach for tribal development was adopted. For operational purposes, the tribal sub-plan areas were organised into Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) in order to increase the levels of development of tribal areas and other areas. During this period, the concept of basic minimum needs was a matter of great concern for guaranteeing social justice. During Sixth Five Year Plan, some other objectives were set which were relevant to the concept of basic minimum needs. They were (a) the progressive reduction in the incidence of poverty (b) strengthening the redistributive bias of public policy (c) a programme reduction in regional inequalities, (d) promoting policies for controlling the growth of population and (e) increase the involvement of the people through education, communication and institutional strategy.

26. The scope of Minimum Needs Programme during Fifth Five Year Plan comprised drinking water supply, rural roads, provision of house sites for the homeless, village access roads, elementary education for the rural poor, provision of rural health services, extension of rural electrification, environmental improvement of slums and nutrition for the under-nourished. But during Sixth Plan the scope of basic minimum needs was enlarged & included adult education. See Kurukshetra, Conference Number, Aug.1964, P.17.

At the advent of the Sixth Five Year Plan, it was seen that though such a trial and error expedition of the government in the field of Community Development could solve some of the general problems of the people but could not contribute anything in eradicating poverty, in particular, from the rural mass. In order to have a direct attack on poverty from economic angle and to bridge all the possible channels through an all round attack integrated in a single programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme was implemented in 1978. In order to fill the different gaps left by IRDP some supplementary programmes known as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) in 1980, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGDP), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) in 1983, Training for Rural Youth Self Employment Programme (TRYSEM) were implemented. During Seventh Five Year Plan, the emphasis on IRDP was shifted from number to quality for permanent eradication of poverty.

FINANCE

Successful implementation of these programmes requires huge investments. In order to inaugurate the Community Development Programme on 2nd October, 1952, in January 1952, a Technical Cooperation Programme Agreement was signed between India and America, where the later agreed to contribute 50 million dollars by 30th June, 1952. India was also to contribute equal amount. In December, 1952, a supplementary agreement to the first was signed where America made a contribution of 1,925,000 dollars and the Government of India contributed Rs. 73,300,000.
The Community Development Programme imposed financial obligation on both centre and the States with the proportion of 75% for the centre and 25% for the States in case of non-recurring expenditure and 50% each for the centre and the States in respect of recurring expenditure. This applies to "grant-in-aid".

In 1953, some National Extension Service Blocks were opened with a budget provision of Rs. 4.5 lakhs from the Government and Rs. 3.00 lakhs from Reserve Bank of India.

During the Second Five Year Plan, the expenditure on a Community Development Block and National Extension Service block for three years was reduced to Rs. 12 lakhs and Rs. 4 lakhs respectively as per the recommendations of the Mehta Committee. During Third Five Year Plan, the blocks had to walk through two stages known as stage I and Stage II, each for a period of five years. During this period, the stage I block got an assistance of Rs. 2.4 lakhs and the Stage II block got Rs. 1 lakh per each year.

After the introduction of Panchayat Raj, the blocks, completing Stage II period, received funds under three plan schemes known as Community Development Programme which included central as well as state share; Panchayat

28. The non-recurring expenditure includes the cost of Special Staff on the Projects as well as at the headquarters of the State Governments.
Scheme which were wholly in the State's Sector and the Central Schemes provided in the Central Sector.

Till 1969, since the expenditure was short, the bulk of the available resources went towards staff maintenance leaving little for programme activity. Besides, since diversion of resources from one head of development to the other head was not practically possible and comparatively more advanced states obtained a large portion of central assistance, the schematic budget proved to be conducive to balance development. So the National Development Council in the year 1968 decided to abolish this schematic budget pattern of assistance. The central assistance was made available to the States through the block grants and block loans in the proportion of 30% and 70% respectively.

TRAINING:

In an organisational set up, the importance of personnel lies with the training of the skill they possess. When the Community Development Programme was inaugurated in 1952, due emphasis was also attached to the training of the personnel involved in the programme. The then Prime Minister Mr. Nehru in his letter to the Chief Ministers of the states pointed out, "The whole success of this programme depends upon the training of various categories of personnel."

personnel". In the Chief Ministers Conference, he also opined, "Training takes some time and some type of training takes considerable time. Therefore, unless we set about this matter quickly and in a planned way, we shall be held up even though we might have adequate funds." The organisation of training facilities on the scale required for the national extension and Community Development Programme was a task of considerable magnitude. On its successful execution, depended the success of the programme as a whole.

In the early stage, since activities under the programme was comparatively less technical due to the generalised nature of the problem, so the training system was also not so complicated. The training pattern envisaged during this period may be projected in the following chart.

CHART NO. 6

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<th>Training of Extension Personnel</th>
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<td>Pre-job</td>
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During the inauguration of the Community Development Projects, 25 extension training centres were opened with the funds supplied by the Ford Foundation. Training courses of short duration were conducted only for project personnel due to shortage of time to plan regular training programmes. Then a few training centres for each category of personnel such as VLWs, SSOs, BDOs and others were established on the lines suggested by the Development Commissioner's Conference. The training programmes for the extension officers or the block level subject matter specialists were organised by the respective Ministries of the Central Government. The Community Project Administration (CPA) had organised training courses for B.D.O's and S.E.O's. In July 1964, the Conference of the State CD Ministers was held and the Conference emphasised that "training of extension personnel was of basic importance in increasing their general and professional competence."\(^{32}\)

With the changing strategy of rural development, the content and method of training for personnel also have been revised from time to time. A number of Committees like Balwantrai Mehta Study Team 1957, Administrative Reforms Commission, 1957, and Ashok Mehta Committee 1973, recommended for the reorientation and training of personnel at block level in the light of new strategy and approach for rural

development. Accordingly the duration of training of Gram B Sevaks was extended to two years. The selected VLWs were encouraged to take training in agricultural colleges and rural institutions. The B.D.Os had to undergo a combined orientation-cum-job course. The training course for other personnel such as SEOs, EOs, etc. have been suitably revised. The revised programme of training provides for refresher course for all the functionaries. But as yet the follow-up of the training programme was not adequately assessed.

The Training and Visit System was started during 1974 with full involvement of the State Government who control the agricultural research development programmes and institutions concerned with agricultural research, education and training. Then the Government of India also approved a centrally sponsored scheme to assist the state governments in building a professionally competent agricultural extension service. In this connection Sri G.V.K. Rao, Secretary Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of India said, "Transfer of know-how from the research scientists to the farmers fields under the methodology is sought to be achieved in two broad stages, Stage I, Training provides for transfer of know-how from the research scientists/subject matter specialists to the extension workers, and Stage II, 'Visits' provides for transfer of know-how from the extension workers to the
By the time of the Fifth Five Year Plan, a number of training institutes including the National Institute of Rural Development were established to impart training in technical and general matters to the people involved in the rural development activities and block administration.

During this period the nature of training insisted upon the conceptual understanding of the concept of Integrated Rural Development and its multi-disciplinary approach. The persons were also trained to recognise problems and to provide feedback to administration and development. They were also given training upon leadership quality as well as ability to communicate to the rural people. Keeping in view these objectives the Government of India, Ministry of Rural Reconstruction vide his letter No. S.11011/15/80, IRCD III dated 23.9.80 instructed the states to impart a 3 days training to the BDOs and Assistant Project Officers as far as possible in the extension training centres/Agricultural Colleges/Agricultural Universities/Veterinary Colleges etc., so that the expertise knowledge can be utilised.

Planning:

Planning is associated with all the developing states because it ensures accompanying changes in depth and

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scope. But in the early 1950s, control over developmental activities in most Third World Countries has been centralised in national government ministries and agencies. Central Planning was prescribed by international assistance agencies, such as the world Bank, as a way of promoting "modernisation", accelerating social-political changes gathering employment, and mobilising capital for further investment\(^ {34} \). However, by the end of the 1960s, it was widely recognised that central planning had not achieved these goals as economic growth remained sluggish in most developing countries during the 1950s and 1960s. Further, it was realised that central planning was not only complex and difficult to implement, but might also have been inappropriate for promoting equitable growth and self sufficiency among low income groups and communities within developing societies.

Thus with the shift of emphasis to growth-with-equity policies and the realisation that development is a complex and uncertain process that can be easily planned and controlled from the centre, there arose an interest in decentralised planning and administration.

Coming to India, during the inauguration of Community Development Programme, planning was completely centralised from top to bottom. The formulation of the First Plan did not afford sufficient time for consulting districts

\(^{34}\) See Shahbir Cheema and Dennis A. Rondinelli, *Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*, Beverly Hills; Sage Publications, 1983.
and local organisations and it was a hastily drawn patch work of the departmental and State Plans.\textsuperscript{35}

During Second Plan, adequate lee-way was given for the formulation of the plan proposal at different levels. During Third Plan period, since priority was given to agriculture, a number of special programmes like Intensive Agricultural District Programme, Intensive Agriculture Area Programme etc. were introduced which involved district level planning with certain limited objectives. Apart from the district, it was also suggested that the block should serve as a unit of planning and development.

Within the general framework of the district plan, the block plan was intended to include all social and economic activities within the block which called for:

(a) Planning initiated locally at the block and village levels; and
(b) Coordination with the plans of various departments which were implemented within the block.

The following were the principal activities which fell within the block plan:

(i) Items in the schematic budget of the Community Development block according to the stage reached.

\textsuperscript{35} N.R. Inamdar, "District Planning in Maharashtra" The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Special Number Vol. XIX No.3 July-Sept. 1973, P.323.
(ii) Items included in the budgets of different departments which might be executed by or under the block organisation;

(iii) Works undertaken by the local community or beneficiaries in accordance with the obligations laid down by law;

(iv) Works involving unskilled and semi-skilled labour undertaken in the blocks.

(v) Other activities undertaken in the block or by the block organisation with a view to securing greater contribution from local communities to development schemes in different field.

However, the district with a population of 1.2 to 1.5 million and covering an area of 3000 to 4000 square miles could not prove to be very effective as an unit of planning. The failure of district plans was pointed out by the Committee on Plan Projects of Planning Commission in 1966. In 1971, the Bongirwar Committee Report also pointed out, "much of the present defective, distorted planning in the local sector arises from the fact that at present, there is no clear demarcation of the activities to be taken up in the State Sector on the one hand and the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Sectors on the other. In fact there is considerable amount of overlapping in this report."


37. See Bangirwar Committee Report 1971, Maharashtra.
So it was decided that the planning process should be more and more decentralised in order to reach the poor people of the rural areas. Hence, during the Fourth Five Year Plan, due to the "Green Revolution" regional planning in India was advocated in identifying or locating growth centres and related foci of growth and in suggesting measures for integrated development, needless to say in optimum balance was to be sought between 'multiplier' effects of growth foci and the requirement of equity and welfare. However, the Fourth Plan on the whole does not appear to have taken the block very seriously. In terms of instruments of planning, Community Development and Panchayati Raj institutions have been reduced to an extremely peripheral status with the budget provision in many cases being limited to the maintenance of staff while in

38. At the close of the Sixties, a new challenge came to the concept of the block as an areal unit of development planning and administration from the growth centre approach. As a part of studies on area planning, a centrally sponsored scheme of Pilot Research Project in Growth Centres was being launched. The aim of the pilot project would be to evolve a broad research methodology and pattern for identifying emerging growth centres and to indicate how the growth potential of these centres could be promoted through comprehensive and scientific study of the overall development needs and, how these centres could be meaningfully woven into the frame of the district plan and thus help in the process of planning from below. The scheme would thus bring wider close study action strategies relevant to the acceleration of integrated area development around potential growth centres. A number of projects would be set up in different areas in the states and Union Territories. A few projects would be located in the institutions working on Planning Methodology to facilitate integration with district planning, the growth centres would to the extent possible, be located in districts for which detailed plans in terms of guidelines and norms provided by the Planning Commission were already being drawn up. See, Report, Fourth Five Year Plan, P.44.
other cases there is duplication of a large number of small schemes.

The conference of the State CD Ministers held in 1964 discussed how best the block could be made the unit of planning and development. The need was felt to have at the state level a consolidated picture of the development programmes taken up at the local levels and the total investments on them. The Conference, therefore, decided that the state governments should give timely indications of the financial inputs that would be made available to the Panchayati Raj bodies. For this purpose, the state governments should prepare within the framework of the Five Year Plan a 'Sub-Plan' for Panchayati Raj bodies as a whole. On the basis of this framework, each Zilla Parishad or Panchayat Samiti should be given an indication of the principles on which allocations should be made to them. The additional resources which the Panchayati Raj bodies are expected to raise themselves should also be taken into account. The Five Year Sub-Plan might be broken up while advance indications about the funds likely to be made available to the local area, were to be given to the Panchayati Raj bodies to facilitate realistic local plans before the end of February every year. As soon as the State budgets were finalised, the exact order of funds might be firmly indicated to the Panchayati Raj bodies. The Development Commissioner might prepare a
comprehensive model plan and circulate it to all blocks. Thus the concept of the block as a unit of Planning and Development envisaged the pooling of all development funds at that level, including not only the schematic budget but departmental funds and local community effort. The block was to act as the common agent for all departments in the field of development both for planning and implementation of programmes evolving technically sound block and village plan and executing them efficiently.

The process of block level planning would generate the interest of the local people in production-cum-employment programmes of the block plan. Motive forces of the block plan spring from the felt-needs of the masses and are based on locally available resources. So block plan is to be supplemented by an intensive and extensive survey of resources and needs of the area as well as, with the identification of appropriate projects.

There are thus two basic requirements for block level planning. First is closely related to the relevant knowledge of local conditions. The second requirement is the association of local people in making and implementing the plans. Formulation of the plan may be related to technical know-how but its implementation would not be

39. State Community Development Ministers' Conference held from 24th and 25th April 1964, See Kurukshetra, Conference Number August 1964, p.15.
possible without local understanding and cooperation. Thus block level planning would have to take the note of the local resources, man power, institutional strength and people's participation to ensure the goal of growth for social justice. A base-level economic survey, scientific resource inventories and man power estimation would form the basis of planning at the block level.

Thus, in the Sixth Five Year Plan, local level planning was considered as a principal method for Rural development and blocks were intended to be the primary area for local planning. During the plan, the development programmes were made area specific based on local endowments with an intension to formulate block level plans and identify programmes for development of the area.

Decentralised planning has also assumed special significance in view of the fact that the Approach to the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) document assigns to "decentralisation of planning and full public participation in development", the first place among the twelve-point 'important feature' of the Seventh Plan. When the Integrated Rural Development Programme was implemented it called for detailed micro-level planning. The main purpose of block-level planning was to accelerate the process of decentralisation with the hope that a more systematic planning effort

with a smaller coverage would not only help to speed up the development process but would also improve it qualitatively in the sense of making it more responsive to the needs of the weaker sections of the community. Major objectives of block-level planning was thus classified into four heads, (a) Higher Agricultural production (b) Maximum employment (c) Equitable distribution (d) Prevention of exploitation of labour and rural poor.

However, there is not yet an independent planning machinery consisting of block planning officer and other professionally qualified persons at the block level. In the present set up of development process, development blocks are considered as a body to implement the development projects. The present staffing pattern in the blocks is mainly turned to the implementation tasks and not so much towards planning functions.