INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Our country is an agricultural country. She develops her 5,70,000 villages where 78 per cent of her population lives. As Mahatma Gandhi said, India lives in villages. The development of villages is a pre-condition for balanced economic development, accelerated economic growth and industrial advancement. The basic requirements for economic growth, viz. saving and investment and expanding market for industrial products ultimately depend upon the rural development. The problem of rural development in India is multidimensional and complex and its prime object is poverty and ignorance.

75 per cent of our population lives in absolute poverty. Poverty narrows the horizons of possibility. It saps energy, not only for physical work, but also for the opening of the mind to opportunities. The main causes of poverty are unemployment, under employment and low resource - base of the majority of the producers in agriculture and allied sectors. Our experience in planned economic development during the last three decades has shown that these causes cannot be automatically eliminated through "top-down" planning of the general economic growth. Special and deliberate programmes are needed for abolishing object poverty in rural areas. Various measures had been taken up in the past to improve the living conditions of rural people of India.

The first step in this direction was the launching of community development programme in 1952. This programme, however, could not bring about the desirable results in increasing the agricultural production, removing illiteracy and improving the health and hygiene. To boost up food grains production, intensive agricultural district programme was later organised in selected districts of the country in 1961 and high yielding varieties programme
in 1965-66. As a result of these measures, the country could become self-sufficient in food grains during the late 1960's.

This period saw the beginning of what is termed ‘Green Revolution’. The rapid growth in agricultural production not only fulfilled the food requirements of the country but it also brought a high growth rate in the rural economy. It was, however, noticed that although food problem was eased, the economic status of a large segment of the rural population witnessed little improvement. To provide special assistance to the underdeveloped section of the rural population, small farmers development agency and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers agency were organised in 1971.

Several studies during 1971-75 indicated that the benefits of the rapid growth in agriculture in socio-economic terms, did not equally flow to all sections of the population such a situation gave strong support to the idea of integrating all development activities under one umbrella. And in the Indian science congress session of 1975, the concept of the I.R.D. Programme received wide support from the scientists of the country.

The programme of integrated rural development may be defined as a series of mutually supporting agricultural and non-agricultural activities oriented towards a stated objective which involves improvements in the rural system as a whole. The uniqueness of I.R.D.P. as compared to the earlier programmes lies in the fact that it was all embracing, employment and income oriented and involved a package treatment of the visible and invisible constraints to achieve quick results. In short, the objective was three-fold: increased production, better distribution and fuller employment.

Actually the Integrated Rural Development programme was launched
by the Government of India in 1978-79 in 200 blocks in the country. Subsequently from 2nd October, 1980, the scope of the programme was widened to cover all the 5,011 community development blocks in the country to uplift 15 million families above the poverty line whose family's annual income from the sources was below Rs. 3500. It aims at uplifting families of weaker sections, small marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, rural artisans, schedule castes and schedule tribes, etc. above the poverty line, by providing them with productive assets and employment. The SFDA/MFALA agencies were renamed on 2nd October, 1980 as District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA). The responsibility of implementation of this programme has been entrusted to the department of Rural Development, at the state level and to the rural development agencies at the district level in co-ordination with other development departments and financial institutions functioning in their respective areas.

The people identified for the benefits of I.R.D.P. are known as beneficiaries and treated as that their annual income fell down below the poverty line. Beneficiaries are identified on the basis of socio-economic survey or household survey conducted in the blocks. The families whose annual income was below Rs. 3500/- per annum were treated as target group under I.R.D.P. Now this level has been raised to Rs. 6,400/- per family per annum for the identification of target groups. The "cut-off" line for identification of the families for assistance would be Rs. 4800/- annual income per family. However, in order to ensure that the poorest of the poor got the assistance first, it would be ensured that families with an annual income level upto Rs. 3500/- are assisted first.
The I.R.D.P. beneficiaries are assisted through viable bankable projects which are financed partly by subsidies and partly by bank loans. The present guidelines stipulate subsidies at differential rates ranging from 25 to 50 per cent of the capital cost of the scheme subject to a maximum of Rs. 3000/- in non DPAP and Rs. 4000/- in DPAP areas. For the tribal beneficiary, the limit is Rs. 5000/-. During the sixth plan, the average subsidy provided to a typical beneficiary has been around Rs. 900/- and the average investment (subsidy + loan) about Rs. 2700/-. 

While talking to the newsmen on the salient features of the seventh plan, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Dy. Chairman, Planning Commission, expressed the hope that those below the poverty line would come down from the present 37 per cent of the population to 26 per cent in 1989-90 in terms of revised poverty line of Rs. 6,400/- per year for a family of five members. It is proposed to bring it down to less than 10 per cent by 1995. The concern of the Government for the speedy rural upliftment is evident from the fact that as against the sixth plan allocation of Rs. 4500/- crores, the I.R.D.P. allocated in the seventh plan has been raised to Rs. 16000/- crores.

Till Nov. 1992, 9.26 lac families have been benefitted against the target of 18.75 lac families. The allocation of budget for the year 1992-93 was Rs. 662.22 crores while Rs. 328.97 have been utilized till the end of Nov. 92.

The Government of India has increased the level of annual income of the beneficiaries from Rs. 4800.00 to Rs. 8500.00 for the eight plan period.


Thus, it is high time to make micro-level studies at the block
instance, a person may have everything that a normal human being requires but he may have an uncomfortable feeling that he is poor because he can not keep up with those living next door.

In our country from the very beginning of the planning system, rural development has heavily relied on the effectiveness of the administrative system for the success. So the major concern of the academicians and the research institutions has been to study the organizational and administrative issues in the implementation of the rural development programmes and the government has structured and restructured the existing administrative system to fulfill the necessary demands of the programmes.

The economic situation has been characterised by a low growth rate, growing unemployment and under employment, a large number of people living below the poverty line and glaring inequality in distribution of income and capital assets. The average growth rate realised during the last 20 years is woefully inadequate to meet the growing needs of the people. At the beginning of the seventh plan, there were still 37 per cent of the people who were yet to be uplifted above the poverty line. The present study was conducted over a sample of 300 beneficiaries and a group of 50 officials from four blocks of districts Aligarh and Bulandshahr.

As it is well known, there are hardly few studies available over the working of Integrated Rural Development Programme and more so in districts Aligarh and Bulandshahr, this study will be an important addition in this direction. Because this scheme has been specifically meant for improving the lot of weaker sections of the rural community, it would be of interest to know as to how far it is adequate enough in its aim and procedures. The
findings of this study will be useful in understanding the necessity of the programme and its approaches along with its ramifications. To the researchers it would be of immense interest to find the information of the operation of the IRDP schemes; and also as a base for making such other studies.

Limitations of Study:
1. The study mainly depends on the primary data collected from the beneficiaries who were mostly illiterate and did not keep any records. Despite sufficient care taken by way of incorporating adequate cross-checks in the interview schedules, it cannot be ruled out that their reporting was based on memory, to great extent. Since the unit is the family, any change in the size of the family during the life of the investment would naturally have affected the size of the unit as well as income.
2. Due to shortage of time, it was not possible to conduct a deep study of all the beneficiaries and hence only 300 beneficiaries were selected. Fifty official respondents were also selected for the study.
3. Some of the respondents were unwilling to pay attention and disclose the information regarding their socio-economic status for fear of insult or unfavourable actions by the Government. Therefore, a lot of tact and persuasion had to be used to convince them about the usefulness of the programme and made them willing to give the information. The beneficiaries' forgetfulness about some of the facts was also one of the obstacles.