Chapter 4

IRDP: An Administrative Portrait

(i) The Procedure

(ii) The Prescribed Administrative Setup

(iii) Situation in Mizoram: Findings from the Field
CHAPTER 4

IRDP: AN ADMINISTRATIVE PORTRAIT

This chapter consists of three parts. Part I deals with the procedural dimensions of Integrated Rural Development Programme. Part II is devoted to a description of the administrative set-up of IRDP as prescribed under the manual. Part III presents the data specific to Mizoram. First, it portrays the administrative machinery for IRDP in the State. The IRDP administrative set-up for IRDP in Mizoram does not necessarily conform to the All India pattern in every detail. This is partly because the Panchayati Raj system does not operate in the State and partly because of the existence of the village councils, which have existed in Mizoram since 1954. These factors lend some uniqueness to the situation in Mizoram, which is discussed in section (A) of Part III. Section (B) analyses the working of the IRDP administrative machinery as it has been evolved in the State. In section (C) of Part III, we have made suggestions to secure improvements in the State's IRDP machinery.

(i) THE PROCEDURE

IRDP is an anti-poverty programme par excellence. It targets the weakest of weak, e.g., small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and other disadvantaged group, like rural women. They are the hard-core of the poverty-stricken populace who possess little or no assets and have to be provided with productive assets and appropriate skills.

The small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers have been defined under the IRDP guidelines as under:¹

(a) Small farmer - A cultivator with a land holding of 2 hectares or below.
Marginal farmer - A person with a land holding of 1 hectare or below.

(c) Agricultural labourer - A person without any land other than a homestead and deriving more than 50% of his income from agricultural wages.

In this programme, the family is the basic unit of development, and the economic programmes are devised for the family as a whole. The basic criterion for selecting families below the poverty-line is the income of family. Poverty-line, as defined by IRDP guidelines is that level of income (expenditure) which is sufficient for keeping a family at the subsistence level of existence, in terms of basic nutritional requirements. Anyone who has an income below this level is said to be poor. During the Sixth Five-Year plan poverty-line was fixed at Rs.3,500/-. The families whose annual income was below Rs.3,500/- were selected for the IRDP assistance. During the Seventh Five-Year Plan, it was revised and fixed at Rs.6,400/-. During the Eighth Five-Year Plan, poverty-line was redefined to mean an annual income, per family, of Rs.11,000/-. The approach under IRDP is to assist the poorest of the poor first. Rural poor have been divided into four groups on the basis of the intensity of poverty: destitutes, very very poor, very poor and poor. Eighth Five-Year Plan has fixed the income of these four groups as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destitute</td>
<td>0 - 4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very very poor</td>
<td>4001 - 6400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>6401 - 8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>8501 - 11000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cut-off line has been fixed at Rs.8500/-. First, the families below Rs.6400/- are assisted. After certification from the block development officer, DRDA notifies to ascertain whether there are any families below income of Rs.6400/-. Thereafter, DRDA approves assistance to families with income between Rs.6401/- to Rs.8500/-. Lastly, assistance is given to families with income between Rs.8500 - 11000/-. 
Identification of Families

The first step in the implementation of IRDP is identification of the beneficiary families. For identification of eligible families, a household survey is conducted by the VLW as per the survey schedule. Survey schedule reflects profile of the beneficiaries, in terms of number of family members, occupation, annual income, and so on.

After the household survey, the succeeding steps are as under:

(a) A priority list of the poorest of poor families, in accordance with the laid down criteria, is prepared by the VLW/Block staff.

(b) The said list is placed for approval in the meeting of the Gram Sabha. This meeting is convened by the BDO.

(c) The gram sabha meetings convened for the purpose are attended, apart from adult population of the village, by non-officials, block bureaucracy and bank officers. Voluntary organisations are also associated with these meetings.

(d) The list of the beneficiaries selected by the gram sabha is displayed on the notice board of the village panchayat and that of the block office. There is provision for filing objections in respect of the list.

(e) In case of a dispute, the decision of the Project Director, DRDA is final. Typically, the Project Director will consult the BDO in arriving at his decision.

(f) The list of the beneficiaries is thereafter printed by DRDA, blockwise and the same is made available to the field staff, block officials, bankers and other concerned agencies.
(ii) **Selection of Schemes for Identified Families**

The schemes chosen for the families must match the need and aptitude of the family and the local resource profile. While selecting schemes, the choice of the selected beneficiaries for particular schemes, their aptitude and technical skills, the nature of infrastructure support, backward and forward linkages available are kept in view. Any economically viable schemes can be taken up under the programme in primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors.

(iii) **Sanction of Schemes and Procurement of Assets**

The next step is to prepare loan application forms of the beneficiaries. These application forms are prepared in a camp attended by the beneficiaries, the block functionaries, the concerned departments, and the bankers. The camp system is advisable to save time and energy of the beneficiaries in having to run from office to office to get the requisite documents completed. Then the applications are sent to the banks. Care is required to be taken to see that the applications do not go to the banks in a bunch. The bank manager processes the loan applications and, while sanctioning projects, he ensures that the schemes and the cost of the units, terms of loan and repayment schedule are in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

(iv) **Financing Pattern**

The selected schemes are financed partly by subsidy and partly by bank loan. Differential rates of subsidy are provided for under the programme, varying from 25 percent to 50 percent of the capital cost of the scheme. For example, subsidy of 25 percent per family is given to
small farmers; 33 percent to marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers and rural artisans. 50 percent subsidy per family is given to scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. The remaining portion of the capital cost is to be provided by the financial institutions, like banks.

(v) **Recovery of Loans**

The State Governments have been advised to render necessary assistance to Bank Officials in recovering the dues from IRDP beneficiaries. The DRDAs organise Credit-cum-Recovery camps periodically, where the beneficiaries are impressed upon to repay their dues promptly. While computing the figures of advances and recoveries, the banks are to exclude the amount of subsidy received so as to reflect the factual position. The recovery performance under IRDP is discussed at block level and in DRDA to finalise the difficult cases.

(vi) **Follow-up**

The follow-up on the projects given to the beneficiaries is done by the DRDA/block officials and bankers to ensure that the beneficiary is properly managing his assets and is able to generate sufficient income. The aim is to remove difficulties that the beneficiary may be facing. Every beneficiary is given a monitoring card, known as Vikas Patrika, to ensure proper utilisation of subsidy, loan and the assets. Two copies of Vikas Partikas are prepared of which one copy is given to the beneficiary family and the other is kept at the block headquarters. Both the copies are kept continuously updated regarding the health of the project.

An annual physical verification of assets may also be undertaken on a campaign basis at the end of every year.
(vii) Monitoring

The performance of the implementation of IRDP is monitored continuously at all levels. At the block and district levels, this is done through reports, field visits and physical verification of the assets by the DRDA/Block level officers. At the Central Government level, the programme is continuously monitored on the basis of reports: monthly key indicator report, annual progress report and annual income generation report. State governments send these reports and other information received from the DRDA to centre.

(viii) Evaluation

The Government of India carries out concurrent evaluation of IRDP on a regular basis. Reputed institutes and organisations in the States are selected to carry out survey of the beneficiaries in different blocks and DRDAs. The institutes and organisations for conducting the survey are selected by Government of India in consultation with the States. The findings are analysed and results shared with the State Governments for suitable follow-up action.5

(II) THE PRESCRIBED ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP

Administrative set-up refers to the structural arrangement by which effective implementation of the programme can be possible. It also clarifies, what functions have to be performed at what level so that, duplication of work, can be eliminated.
Central Level

At the central level, the Department of Rural Development in the Ministry of Agriculture has the overall responsibility for policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the IRDP. A Central Level Coordination Committee (CLCC) on IRDP and allied programmes has been constituted with Secretary, Rural Development as its Chairman, to assist the Department. CLCC is a broad-based body with its membership drawn from a varied range of departments and agencies. Members of CLCC include the following: Secretary, Agriculture and Cooperation; Advisor (Rural Development), Planning Commission; Secretary, Expenditure; Secretary, Deptt. of Women and Child Development; Secretary, Deptt. of Small Scale Industries; Secretary, Ministry of Welfare; Director General, Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART); Additional Secretary, Rural Development; Additional Secretary, Banking Division, Ministry of Finance; Chief Executive Officer, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC); Managing Director, National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD); Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India (RBI); Joint Secretary, Finance, Deptt. of Rural Development; and State Secretaries of Rural Development of selected States.

Functions of the Central Level Coordination Committee (CLCC) are as under:

The CLCC performs a diverse range of functions. These include the following:

(a) Framing and revision of guidelines for the IRDP.
(b) To ensure effective implementation of the IRDP.
(c) To review infrastructure facilities for the IRDP beneficiaries.
(d) To review preparation of block plans, district plans, annual plans and credit plans for the IRDP.
(c) To consider changes in administrative set-up under IRDP.

(f) To review progress of the IRDP in physical, financial and qualitative terms.

(g) To consider concurrent evaluation reports of IRDP.

(h) To provide a forum for a continuous dialogue with the State Governments for better implementation of IRDP.

State Level

At the state level, the Department of Rural Development is responsible for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IRDP. A State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) has been created to assist this department in discharging these responsibilities. The recommended Composition of the SLCC is as under:

(a) Chief Secretary/Agricultural Production Commissioner/Development Commissioner - Chairman

(b) Secretary, Department of Rural Development - Member

(c) Secretary, Department of Finance - Member

(d) Secretary, Department of Planning - Member

(e) Secretary, Incharge of Women's Programme - Member

(f) Head of the Department of Agriculture - Member

(g) Head of the Department of Animal Husbandry - Member

(h) Head of the Department of Irrigation - Member

(i) Head of the Department of Cooperation - Member
(j) Head of the Department of Forest - Member

(k) Head of the Department of Fisheries - Member

(l) Director, Institutional Finance - Member

(m) Representative of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) - Member

(n) A representative of the Government of India, not below the rank of Deputy Secretary - Member

Functions of the State Level Coordination Committee

- SLCC performs wide-ranging functions. These are listed below:

(a) To provide leadership and guidance to the DRDAs in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the IRDP.

(b) To secure departmental coordination between various implementing agencies of programmes like Operation Flood, Operation Blackboard, Applied Nutrition Programmes, etc., and to ensure development of strong backward and forward linkages for the IRDP.

(c) To consider needs of and changes in the administrative set-up for the implementation of IRDP; approve establishment pattern and sanction posts accordingly.

(d) To fix norms for office expenses, equipment, vehicles, hiring of accommodation etc. where necessary and to review expenditure on these items to ensure that it remains within the prescribed limits.

(e) To review the physical targets and achievements of the districts keeping in view the objective conditions affecting the provision and operation of viable schemes and modify the targets accordingly, keeping in view the overall objectives.
To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the IRDP with reference to the objectives of the programme.

To review implementation of IRDP and allied programmes by voluntary agencies and other NGOs.

To serve as a forum for dialogue between the policy makers at the state level and the implementors at field level.

**District Level**

The most important innovation of the Integrated Rural Development Programme is the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), which is a registered society under the Registration of Societies Act. It is an autonomous body, responsible for implementing programmes of rural development in general and the IRDP in particular at the district level. DRDAs are generally headed by District Collector/Deputy Commissioner. The DRDA has a Governing Body whose Chairman is Deputy Commissioner. He is empowered to form Committees to assist the DRDA. There is a full-time project director of the DRDA who is member-secretary of this body. The constitution of Governing Body is as follows:

(a) Collector - Chairman

(b) All MPs and MLAs of the District - Member

(c) Head of the Central Cooperative Bank - Member

(d) Chairman of Regional Rural Bank - Member

(e) Chairman of Zilla Parishad - Member

(f) Lead Bank Officer - Member
(g) NABARD representative at District Level - Member
(h) General Manager, District Industries Centre (DIC) - Member
(i) Representative of Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) - Member
(j) District Officer in charge of Family Welfare Programme - Member
(k) District Employment Officer - Member
(l) Project Officer, Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) - Member
(m) Regional/District Officer, Scheduled Caste Finance Corporation - Member
(n) Assistant Project Officer (Women's Development) - Member
(o) One Woman Worker/Organiser with actual experience of Organising rural poor - Member
(p) Representative of District Milk Union - Member
(q) Two Representatives of the weaker sections - Member
(r) One representative of rural women, preferably a beneficiary - Member
(s) Project Officer/Director, DRDA - Member-Secretary

Functions of the DRDA

The DRDAs are the overall incharge of the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IRDP in the District. The main functions of the DRDAs are as follows:

(a) To keep the District and Block level agencies informed of the basic parameters and requirements of the programme and tasks to be performed by the concerned agencies.
(b) To coordinate and oversee the surveys, preparation of perspective and annual plans of the blocks and finally prepare a District Plan.

(c) To monitor and evaluate the IRDP implementation by government and non-governmental agencies to ensure its effectiveness.

(d) To secure inter-sectoral and inter-departmental coordination and cooperation.

(e) To give publicity to the achievements made under IRDP and disseminate knowledge and build awareness about the programme.

(f) To send periodical returns to the State Government in prescribed formats.

**Block Level**

Under the IRDP, community development block has been accepted as a unit for planning and implementation. It is the basic unit for preparation of perspective and annual plans, identification of beneficiaries and selection of schemes for identified families. Therefore, a responsive block level machinery, adequate in quality and number is an urgent requirement for the programme realisation.

The Block Development Officer (BDO) has a crucial role to play at the block level. He is required to perform the role of the chief coordinator in the block. He has to see that plans are prepared in time and implemented effectively. The BDO is assisted by extension officers, whose number is determined according to the needs of the area. Usually, there is one extension officer for every development department. There is provision for a "Joint BDO" in blocks with population of more than one lakh. The number of VLWs is also determined according to the needs of the area. Ordinarily, there is provision for 10 VLWs per block. In addition, there is provision for two women VLWs to facilitate assistance to women beneficiaries.
Functions of the Block Level Setup

(a) Preparation of perspective plan and annual plan.

(b) Identification of beneficiaries.

(c) Selection and allotment of income generating activities.

(d) Organising infrastructural arrangements.

(e) Maintaining liaison with banks.

(f) To undertake periodic follow-up of the schemes.

(g) Monitoring the implementation of the programme.

(h) Assisting the banks in recovery of loans.

(i) Motivating the beneficiaries and to secure their active participation in programme implementation.

(III) SITUATION IN MIZORAM: FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

(A) Administrative Setup for IRDP in Mizoram

At the State level, a Commissariat of Rural Development has been setup since 1989. Before this, there existed in Mizoram a Directorate of Rural Development which was created in 1972 when it became a union territory. There is additionally, at the state level, a State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC), which is headed by the Chief Secretary to Government of Mizoram. There is a three-tier administrative setup at the district level and below for the administration of IRDP. At the district level, the State Government has created DRDAs in keeping with the pattern elsewhere in the country.
DRDA in Aizawl district has a Governing Body, consists of 27 members which is headed by the Deputy Commissioner. Three executive committees have been formed by DRDA, Aizawl. These are:

(i) District Consultative Committee,
(ii) Bank Loan Recovery Committee, and
(iii) District Vigilance and Monitoring Committee.

All the three committees are headed by the Deputy Commissioner. The District Consultative Committee effects coordination between the banks and the DRDA and seeks to resolve the larger issues of inter-institutional coordination. The Bank Loan Recovery Committee reviews the repayment of loans by the beneficiaries. District Vigilance and Monitoring Committee monitors the programme implementation and works to remove leakages.

At the block level, there are two committees to assist the block administration in the implementation of IRDP. These are:

(i) Block Development Committee
(ii) Block Vigilance and Monitoring Committee

Both the committees are headed by the SDO (Civil), Sadar. Block Development Committee approves the selection of beneficiaries and, generally, reviews the implementation of the programme. The Block Vigilance and Monitoring Committee reviews the monitoring of programme implementation at the block level.

At the village level, there are village councils in the State. Village councils have been functioning in the State since the early 1950s, when the present Mizoram constituted a district
of the Assam state and was administered as an "autonomous district" which was created, in 1952, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.  

Village councils form the bottom rung of the territorial administration in the State of Mizoram. These are, broadly, analogous to the gram panchayats under the three-tier Panchayati Raj system. However, a vital difference between the gram panchayat and the village council is that there is no provision in the latter for a general assembly similar to the gram sabhas under the Panchayati Raj system. Besides, because there is a large nominated element in the membership of the village councils, these -- by the standard of the panchayati raj institutions -- would be considered truncated democracies.

For the above reason, a special mechanism has been evolved in Mizoram for the identification of beneficiaries at the village level. To compensate for the deficiency of a general assembly at the village level, Village Development Committees have been established. Village Development Committees are headed by the Village Council President and these are mainly concerned with the task of identifying the IRDP beneficiaries at the village level. Fuller details of the composition and functions of Village Development Committee have been provided in Chapter 5.

The foregoing sketch of the administrative set-up for IRDP in Mizoram unmistakably reveals that the State Government has made a painstaking effort to create a suitable administrative infrastructure for the administration of this poverty alleviation programme.
(B) Working IRDP Administrative Machinery in Mizoram

How has the administrative machinery for IRDP implementation in practice functioned is the question to which we now turn.

The information gathered by the researcher during her field visits revealed that although the State Government had established a Commissariat of Rural Development, the office of the Development Commissioner was lying vacant for more than one year during the year 1994-95. The Joint Commissioner officiated during this period.

Similarly, one of the important functions of the State Level Coordination Committee is to fix norms for office expenses, equipment, vehicles, hiring of accommodation, and so on. But it was observed the Mizoram SLCC had not been able to keep the expenditure on these items within the prescribed limits. It had also failed to initiate necessary steps for streamlining and strengthening the administrative set-up for the implementation of IRDP at various levels.

The field visits further revealed that, at the district level, the involvement of the committees of the DRDA in the programme implementation was of a routine nature. The Deputy Commissioner, who is chairman of these committees, had nearly never the time to deliberate on issues central to the IRDP. He was too heavily preoccupied with the general law and order problems of the District, to have the time to devote to questions of development.

Besides, the number of trained personnel, available with the DRDA, was inadequate. Very few Project Directors had undergone training in IRDP. The situation in the case of the Accounts Officer was similar; he had not received training in the IRDP work. The Assistant Project Officers were also not trained in their respective disciplines.
In order to elicit involvement of the elected representatives, all MPs and MLAs have been made members of the governing body of DRDA, Aizawl. But, their involvement in the implementation of the programme was of a superficial nature. Their main interest appeared to centre on securing the inclusion of their supporters in the lists of the beneficiaries.

At the block level, the Block Development Committee was mainly active in the selection of beneficiaries. It did not display much interest in the matters of follow-up of its own recommendations. The members of the Block Vigilance and Monitoring Committee were reported to conduct site inspections only occasionally. The number of the village level workers and extension officers was, generally, not adequate in the respective blocks.

At the village level, the Village Councils were ineffective in securing the participation of beneficiaries. IRDP-related matters, anyway, appeared to command a low priority in the profile of the Village Councils activities.

(C) Suggestions for Improving the IRDP Administrative Set-up in Mizoram

(i) There is need to relieve the Deputy Commissioner from rural development functions. Another officer of the IAS rank may be appointed to independently look after these functions.

(ii) There should be two project directors at the DRDA level. One may hold exclusive charge of IRDP while the other may be made responsible for rural development programmes other than IRDP.

(iii) There should be one officer in the DRDA to coordinate with the banks, which is one of the major activities under IRDP.
(iv) The District Monitoring and Vigilance Committee under DRDA needs to be further activated to effectively check leakages in the system.

(v) There should be set up a state-level rural development institute for training of the programme bureaucracy.

(vi) The village council should be strengthened in powers and functions so as to be able to provide a broad-based support to the IRDP-related activities.

(vii) The relationship between the machinery for rural development and the existing institutions of rural local self-government (i.e. the village council) needs to be further strengthened.
REFERENCES


2. ibid, p.1.


5. ibid, p.15.

6. ibid, p.15.

7. ibid, p.18.

8. ibid, p.19.