

Chapter 3: Planning

District Planning Committee (DPC)

Government of India (GOI) envisages an inclusive and participative planning process for the development of districts. The 74th Amendment Act, 1992 to the Constitution mandated the establishment of a District Planning Committee (DPC) for consolidating the plans prepared by the Panchayats and Municipalities and also for the areas covered by the Autonomous District Councils etc in the district into an integrated District Plan. All the three tiers of local administration *viz* DRDA, Blocks and GPs were to prepare an Annual Action Plan (AAP) at the beginning of each financial year equivalent in value to about 125 *per cent* of their share of funds allocated in the preceding year and no work was to be taken up unless it formed a part of the AAP.

The District Planning Committee for West Tripura District was constituted in September 2008 with the Minister, Panchayat and Urban Development etc. as the chairman, the DM & C, West Tripura District as the member secretary and 27 other members including 21 chairpersons of different local bodies. The District Panchayat Officer, the Project Director, DRDA, the Zonal Officer, Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) were co-nominated members, and 3 more members were to be nominated later from Agartala Municipal Council and one from TTAADC. There were 2 Vice-Chairmen *viz* i) Sabhadhipati, West Tripura Zilla Parishad and ii) one elected member of the TTAADC, from West District to be nominated later. Reasons for the delay in constituting the DPC though asked for, was not made available to audit by the DM&C, West Tripura.

Policy and Planning

The powers and functions prescribed for the DPC require the Chairperson to forward the development plan as recommended by the DPC, to the State Government who in turn shall consult with TTAADC over implementation of such Plan as implementation of programmes/ schemes within TTAADC's jurisdiction are required to be implemented by TTAADC. The members of the DPC were to meet at least twice a year to review the developmental activities in the district. The DPC however, was yet to hold any meeting i.e. even after more than one and half years of its constitution (May 2010).

In the absence of any meeting, the DPC failed to discharge the aforesaid duties.

Perspective and Annual Plans

Scrutiny of the records of the State Planning and Coordination Department, revealed that neither the Perspective Plan nor the Consolidated Annual Plan was formulated for the district for the period 2004-09, except preparing a statement of targeted number of works and outlay at the level of the Gram Panchayats/villages, the Blocks and the district for the year 2007-08, and the next four years' period of 2008-12. No shelf of projects was also prepared by the DM&C on annual basis.

The planning process was thus inadequate and ill equipped to cope with the challenges to provide basic amenities. It lacked the most important characteristics viz. Community participation for want of effective decentralization of the process. In the absence of any District Plan during 2004-09, the planning process became the responsibility of the Implementing Departments/Agencies. Plans were formulated by them in an isolated manner i.e. not being correlated with other developmental schemes taken up in the district. Besides, no measurable goals were set to improve the living standards of the people of the district.

District Rural Development Agency

For rural developmental schemes, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), is to coordinate with the line departments, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), banks and other financial institutions, NGOs as well as the technical institutions, with a view to garner support and resources required for poverty alleviation efforts in the district and contributing to sound planning towards effective implementation of the programmes. The DRDA should closely monitor the implementation through obtaining periodic reports as well as frequent field visits for aiding both the pace and quality of implementation. Besides, the DRDA is to coordinate and oversee the conduct of the BPL⁶ census and other essential surveys, carry out and/or aid in carrying out research or evaluation studies. The DRDA functions through a Governing Body (GB) chaired by the Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad.

As against the total sanctioned strength of 75 for 15 categories of posts, only 53⁷ posts were filled. Properly trained personnel/experts matching the needs of its various wings were in deficit as vacancies included 11 RD Organisers, 3 RD Officers, one Office Superintendent and one Accountant. Besides, the incumbency of the Project Director changed 8 times during 2004-09, despite specific instructions in the DRDA guidelines that the DRDA staff appointed should not be transferred frequently.

DRDA (W) could not publish final list of BPL families for the district as yet despite being entrusted the work in April 2003, reportedly due to non-receipt of duly scrutinized draft list from the Blocks.

The fact therefore, remains that neither a Perspective Plan nor a Consolidated Annual Plan was formulated for the district for the period 2004-09. In the absence of any District Plan, the planning process became the responsibility of the Implementing Departments/Agencies and were formulated in an isolated manner. The District Planning Committee constituted only in September 2008 was yet to hold any meeting and therefore failed to discharge its duties.

⁶ Below Poverty Line

⁷ 51 plus 2 Asstt. Project Directors engaged on Contract Service

In substance, the planning process was inadequate and ill equipped to cope with the challenges to provide basic amenities. It lacked the most important characteristics viz. Community participation for want of effective decentralization of the process. Besides, no measurable goals were set to improve the living standards of the people of the district.

Recommendation

District Planning Committee should forthwith commence preparation of holistic perspective and annual plans for the district, based on inputs from Blocks and GPs as well as other stakeholders. Further, periodical monitoring and review of the actual implementation vis-à-vis plans, needs to be carried out. DRDA Administration should be strengthened adequately so as to enable it to contribute, inter alia, to sound planning and implementation of rural development programmes/schemes in the district. List of BPL families should be finalized and published on priority basis; so that the benefits could reach the identified target people.