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## UNIT 1 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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### Structure

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit you should be able to:

- describe the existing organizational structure for rural development programmes;
- identify the changes brought about and sought to be brought about in the structure since the inception of the Community Development Programme;
- list the problems encountered by the different functionaries;
- assess the strengths and weaknesses of the administrative structure; and
- outline the future prospects.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the earlier blocks you have read about the rural socio-economic structure and the various rural development approaches and strategies. It is evident that rural development in our country has to be oriented necessarily towards the integrated development of rural areas, the transformation and modernization of rural economy and society, and the alleviation of poverty. For this purpose, you would agree, we need mobilization of resources and their allocation specifically to implement programmes for the benefit of the rural population, particularly the rural poor. The *administrative structure* for the implementation of rural development programmes therefore assumes special significance. In India, today, a major agency for development is the administrative

machinery itself. A pertinent question is whether the present administrative structure is capable of playing its role as an agent of change. In order to accomplish this task, i.e. bring about changes in a country like India, three conditions are essential. First, the ideas, attitudes, values, orientations and predispositions of the bureaucracy should change if it is to succeed as a major instrument of social transformation. Functionaries in the development administration are not expected to rule or function as masters of the people, instead they are required to facilitate, stimulate and promote change and development. They have to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. Secondly, the bureaucratic organization and structure should be reasonably decentralized, rendered free from procedural rigidities and should involve the people in the process of decision-making. Thirdly, since political leadership lays down policy and gives direction to development, administrative performance is to a large extent influenced by the support and cooperation of political leaders. It is therefore essential that bureaucrats and political leaders develop a new understanding of their complementary roles and forge functional relationships accordingly.

This unit aims at familiarizing you with the existing organizational and administrative structure of the rural development programmes, and the features that characterize the system.

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## 1.2 ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

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To understand the present administrative setup of the rural development bureaucracy better, it is essential to find out its roots right from the Planning Era. We should know, how we reached the present day scenario and how the development approach of the policy planners influenced the administrative infrastructure at various stages?

**Historical Overview:** The present administrative system of India was inherited from the colonial rulers, and it is this structure, which has primarily been entrusted with the functions and responsibilities of rural development. Some modifications, however, have been grafted onto it from time to time. The revenue and general administrative organization and structure have been mobilized for rural development functions. Changes have been made since the inception of the Community Development Programme in 1952, which for the first time attempted in a big way to set up development administration right at the field level, and it included induction of technical expertise and training of manpower to undertake various schemes under its purview.

It was the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee, which in its report submitted in 1952 stressed, for the first time, the need for an integrated organizational structure for rural development. It also laid down the blueprint for the setup at various levels—the National, the State, the District, the Block and the Village. It recommended the establishment of *the taluq* as a development block covering 100-120 villages under the charge of a Development Officer for the Block who would be the Revenue Divisional Officer assisted by four Technical Officers (one each for agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation and engineering) and Village Level Workers, one each for 5 to 10 villages. The report also recommended that development activities at the district should be unified under the Collector assisted by specialist officers and at the state level there should be a Cabinet Committee presided over by the Chief Minister and a non-official Board for coordinating policies and facilitating joint action.

This blueprint was given shape with the launching of the Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1952 followed by the National Extension Services (1953) which covered the whole country. Under the CDP programme, *the development block* was created as the basic unit of planning and integrated rural development comprising agriculture, animal husbandry, village industry, education, health, social welfare, etc., with special emphasis on self-help and public participation. The most

striking administrative innovations made by the Community Development Programme were identification of blocks as the units of administration, appointment of extension officers who were subject specialists, appointment of the Village Level Worker (VLW) for a group of villages as a multi-purpose development functionary through whom programmes of different departments were administered, role of the Development Commissioner as the coordinating functionary at the state level, coordination and integration of development programmes of different departments at the block level and the mobilization of people's participation in development.

The administrative setup conceived at the time of the implementation of the Community Development Programme has broadly continued with some changes introduced at the district level during the fourth and the fifth plan periods in the wake of the shift in the strategy of the rural development programmes and the launching of special programmes. The strategy for rural development has gradually begun focusing on area based and clientele specific development.

### **1.2.1 Administrative Setup at the National Level**

The Ministry of Rural Reconstruction was constituted in 1979 and continued as such till 1982, when it was renamed the Ministry of Rural Development. In January 1985, it became the Department of Rural Development under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In September 1985, the Ministry was renamed the Ministry of Agriculture with a separate Department of Rural Development as one of its constituents. Then, it was renamed the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment in March 1995. Since April 1999, however, it is being called the Ministry of Rural Development.

In what follows, we describe the organizational structure as it operated in 2002-03. The Ministry of Rural Development is a separate Ministry and has two departments viz. Department of Rural Development and the Department of Drinking Water Supply. Both the departments are headed by a Secretary to the Government of India assisted by a hierarchy of officers. The Ministry is divided into Divisions on functional basis as follows:

- a) ***Department of Rural Development***
  - i) Administrative and Panchayati Raj Division
  - ii) Poverty Alleviation Division
  - iii) Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana Division
  - iv) Rural Connectivity Division
  - v) Land Resources Division
  - vi) Monitoring Division
  - vii) Finance Division
- b) ***Department of Drinking Water Supply***
  - i) Drinking Water Supply Division
  - ii) Rural Sanitation Division

Each of the above Divisions is headed by a Joint Secretary level officer assisted by other supporting staff, administrative as well as technical.

The Ministry of Rural Development is responsible for policy, planning, direction, coordination, release of central share of funds and monitoring of the programmes. The programmes of the Ministry may be divided into four broad categories viz. a)

Self-Employment Programmes, b) Wage Employment Programmes, c) Area Development Programmes, and d) Basic Needs Programmes.

The Ministry of Rural Development has the following institutions under its administrative control:

The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) which is an autonomous body and the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) which is a registered society.

A National Fund for Rural Development (NFRD) was set up in 1984 for the purpose of attracting donations for rural development projects. It provides incentives to the donors by offering them a tax concession. As far as possible, the receipts into NFRD are channelled for projects identified by the donor in accordance with the guidelines of the Ministry.

It is important for you to remember that the Ministry of Rural Development is not the only agency to implement programmes in rural areas. Rural Development is as much a concern of several other Ministries/Departments that have programmes in rural areas. To mention some, the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has a large number of programmes and also the Ministry of Environment and Forests; the Department of Women and Child Development has programmes for welfare of children and women; the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the physically and socially handicapped in rural areas; the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for health and family planning programmes; the Ministry of Industry for village industry and employment of the youth; the Department of Education for educational development and the Ministry of Water Resources for the development of water resources.

### **1.2.2 Administrative Setup at the State Level**

The State Government has direct responsibility for the administration of rural development programmes. Almost all the states have now a separate Department of Rural Development headed by a Secretary. Above him is the Development Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. In several states the Chief Secretary himself/herself is the Development Commissioner-cum-Secretary. During the late 1960s, State Level Coordination and Review Committees were set up in all the states to bring about coordination among different departments. These Committees consisted of the Secretaries of all the departments concerned and a representative each from the Central Government. A study conducted during 1979- 1981 by the Programme Evaluation Organization (PEO) of the Planning Commission in connection with the *Antodaya Programme* for Small Farmers, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers (1983), pointed out that the Coordination and Review Committees at the state level were not active in most of the states and that they had failed to provide guidance or support to the agencies. The state level cells, which were expected to exercise general supervision and ensure coordination of the activities of various departments, had generally not been able to achieve their objectives either.

The erstwhile Union Ministry of Rural Development had prescribed that programmes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), the Desert Development Programme (DDP), etc. should be looked after by a single department having an overall control over the development administration right up to the block and the field levels so that inter-sectoral coordination with other departments were adequately taken care of at the state level. The Ministry had further recommended the creation of a separate post (to deal with all the special programmes) at the level of a Commissioner to be assisted by middle level officers of the rank of Joint/Deputy

Secretary for monitoring, formulation and implementation of these programmes in the districts.

Consequently, at the state level, initially there was the office of the Development Commissioner who was in charge of all the development work under the supervision of the Development Committee usually chaired by the Chief Minister. Now, in most of the cases, either the Department of Planning or the Department of Rural Development is responsible for policy, planning and implementation. The Coordination Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary/Agricultural Production Commissioner/Principal Secretary reviews, sanctions, coordinates, monitors and evaluates the schemes.

### 1.2.3 Administrative Setup at the District Level

The district in India has been the basic unit of administration and the head of the district administration is the District Collector. At the district level, the revenue and development functions have been combined in one office. When the CDP was launched, the District Collector was made the head of the community development administration in the district. The Collector coordinated district plans and presided over the District Planning Committee. This committee consisted of official and non-official members assisted by a District Planning Officer.

Significant changes were introduced at the district level during the fourth five-year plan (1969-74), when the Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDAs) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agencies (MFALs) were set up on the recommendation of the All India Rural Credit Review Committee appointed by the Reserve Bank of India in 1969 to provide credit support and technical guidance to the small farmers. To coordinate the activities of all departments, a coordination committee was created in each district under the chairmanship of the District Collector.

An autonomous agency registered under the Registration of Societies Act 1860 was established at the district level to implement the SFDA/MFAL programmes. Each agency consisted of a Governing Body with a small executive staff and was to receive support from a State Level Coordination and Review Committee. The governing body consisted of a Chairman who was normally the Collector of the district, representatives of the State Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Cooperation or any other department intimately concerned with the programme, a representative of the Lead Bank, Chairman of the Central Cooperative Bank concerned, a representative of the Zilla Parishad concerned and a few non-officials. Each agency was allowed only a nucleus staff comprising a Project Officer and three Assistant Project Officers drawn from the Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperation. The SFDA had no field staff of its own and the agency was supposed to work using the services of the staff of other development departments concerned and financial institutions such as cooperatives and commercial banks.

Besides SFDA, other special programmes were also introduced in the country during the fourth and the fifth five-year plans. Among these, the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP) were taken up in the 1970s. Also special project agencies have been set up by the State and/or the Central Government at the district level. Collectors are normally associated with them.

### 1.2.4 Administrative Setup at the Block and the Village Levels

Under CDP, the Development Block was created as the basic unit of planning and integrated rural development comprising agriculture and allied activities, such as education, health, social welfare, etc. with special emphasis on self-help and public participation. The *block administration* consisted of a block level officer, namely Block Development Officer (BDO) who was assisted by about eight extension personnel representing agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, social welfare,

irrigation, etc., Village Level Workers (VLWs) also called Gram Sevaks/Sevikas and some auxiliary staff. Provision was made for the constitution of block advisory committees to enlist popular support for the programme. After sometime, however, it was realized that the block advisory committees were not functioning properly because they were mere advisory bodies without any direct responsibility in the development work.

The Balvantrai Mehta Study Team appointed by the Government of India to review Community Development Projects and the National Extension Services in 1957 suggested decentralization of power to the basic unit viz. block, in a three-tier organically linked structure including the district level above and the village level below.

Even with the introduction of new programmes in the mid-sixties, like SFDA and MFAL, the structural mechanisms at the block level have not altered much. All the programmes and schemes of the DRDA are being implemented through the Development Blocks headed by the Block Development Officers (BDOs). Besides the BDO, the other block staff involved directly in the implementation of the IRDP are the Extension Officers for Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Social Welfare, Irrigation, and Industries and the Khadi Supervisor from Khadi and Village Industries Corporation (KVIC). In the states, which have adopted the Training and Visit (T & V) system of agricultural extension, agricultural extension is being directly handled by the staff of the Department of Agriculture. As a result, the Agriculture Extension Officer and 70 to 80 per cent of the VLWs have been taken away from the Block Establishment, which has now only a small nuclear staff. Consequently, the Block Administration got considerably weakened.

The review of development programmes is conducted at the block level on a fortnightly basis in a meeting of VLWs and other block staff under the chairmanship of the BDO. The review of all the activities of a block is also made in the quarterly general body meeting of Panchayat Samiti under the chairmanship of its Pradhan with the BDO as the member-secretary. This meeting is attended by all the members of the Panchayat Samiti, Sub-divisional Magistrate of the area, district level officers of the development departments concerned, representatives of DRDA, Sub-divisional Agricultural Officer, Tehsildar of the area, block level officers of other development departments and the block staff. For the review of credit supply and coordination there is a Block Level Coordination Committee (BLCC), which meets once a month on a fixed date. The Pradhan of the Panchayat Samiti is its chairperson. All the branch managers of banks in the block and the Tehsildar of the area also attend the meetings of this committee. With the devolution of power and all the development activities with their administration gradually coming to their fold, the Panchayat Samitis have gained considerable significance in the development process. But, for them to work efficiently, concrete steps need to be taken to improve the managerial competence of the elected members in relation to administrative and financial matters.

### **1.2.5 Creation of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)**

The erstwhile Ministry of Rural Development had recommended that at the district level, the planning and implementation agency should be the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) headed by a chairperson, who could be the Collector, the Deputy Commissioner or the District Magistrate, and run by a functional executive as the Project Director/Project Officer. Accordingly, DRDAs were set up as autonomous agencies at the beginning of the sixth plan when the IRDP and NREP were launched in all the blocks in the country.

The DRDA is the overall in-charge of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes in a district. The functions of DRDAs are:

- To provide information regarding the parameters, dimensions and requirements of the programmes to the district and the block level agencies and to apprise them of their tasks in this regard;
- To coordinate and oversee the survey and preparation of the perspective plan and annual plans of the block and finally prepare a District Plan;
- To ensure the effectiveness of the programme by regular evaluation and monitoring;
- To secure inter-sectoral and inter-departmental coordination and cooperation;
- To publicize the achievements made under the programmes, disseminate knowledge and build up awareness about the programmes; and
- To send periodic returns to the State Governments in prescribed formats.

The Governing Body of the DRDA includes, apart from the Chairperson (usually the District Collector), the following:

- i) All MPs and MLAs of the District,
- ii) Head of the Central Cooperative Bank,
- iii) Chairman of the Regional Rural Bank,
- iv) Chairman of the Zilla Parishad or his/her representative,
- v) An officer of the Lead Bank,
- vi) District Employment Officer, and
- vii) One representative of rural women, preferably a beneficiary.

The President of the DRDA is empowered to form an Executive Committee to assist the DRDA. The Committee has district level officers as its members. The Governing Body of the DRDA is required to meet every quarter and the Executive Committee every month.

The Project Officer of the DRDA is assisted by 2 to 3 Assistant Project Officers (APOs) who are subject specialists. An APO for women looks after the women's component of IRDP and the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas Programme (DWCRA). There is also an APO (Monitoring).

The erstwhile Ministry of Rural Development had also suggested the setting up of a District Development Committee under the chairmanship of the District Collector. The district level heads of the development departments, BDOs, representatives of the banks and non-officials' bodies, attends its meetings. Its main function is to coordinate the work of all the district level departments and other agencies like Khadi and Village Industries Board, District Industries Centre, banks, etc. It also reviews the working of various programmes in operation in the district and attends to the day-to-day problems of implementation and administration of the programme.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space provided.

ii) Check your answer with the possible answer provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the mandate of the Ministry of Rural Development and what are the kinds of programme it deals with?

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## **1.3 CHANGE IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE SETUP AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL AFTER THE CONSTITUTION (73<sup>RD</sup> AMENDMENT) ACT, 1992**

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If a critical analysis of the present administrative setup and the delivery mechanisms at the district, the block and the village levels is carried out, we will find that the core idea of the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act, 1992 is slowly but steadily taking a concrete shape through transferring powers and resources to all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and assigning them with the responsibility of planning and implementation of the poverty alleviation programmes. A number of steps have been taken by the Ministry of Rural Development to devolve administrative and financial powers to the PRIs. An officer equivalent to the District Collector in seniority and status may have to be posted as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Zilla Parishad for horizontal coordination. In order to accelerate the pace of devolution of powers to the PRIs, a Task Force was set up (at the behest of the Conference of the Ministers of the Panchayati Raj in July 2001) to analyse all the 29 subjects mentioned in the XI Schedule of the Constitution, identify specific activities under these subjects and suggest inter-se-division of these activities among the three tiers of Panchayats, suggest measures to make administrative decentralization operational and to rationalize delivery mechanisms and propose how the three ingredients of devolution viz. a) Funds, b) Functions, and c) Functionaries related to all the 29 subjects may be transferred to the PRIs. Now, to ensure harmonious integration of the different agencies with common objectives of rural development, the DRDAs have been integrated with the Zilla Parishad. And the DRDA is to act as a Unit/Cell of the Zilla Parishad Administration under the overall supervision of the Zilla Parishad. Though, the process of devolution has improved in the recent past, it continues to suffer from bureaucratic resistance and lack of political will at the state level. The role of the district administration, however, is gradually changing into that of facilitation, quite different from the earlier roles of administration and implementation. But there is still a long way to go. In the next unit we will look at the special features of the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act, 1992.

### **1.3.1 District Planning Committee (DPC)**

The states are required to constitute District Planning Committees (DPCs) as envisaged under Article 243 (ZD) of the Constitution (74<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Act to facilitate the process of decentralized planning. The DPCs are to be set up in each district to prepare Composite Plans covering both urban and rural areas through effective coordination between the urban civic and development bodies for the urban segment and the PRIs for rural areas. The DPCs have lately been constituted in most of the states. The Chairperson of the DPC is the Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad. In many states, however, Ministers or Officers of the State Government are chairing DPCs, which is against the constitutional provision. To facilitate the preparation of plans at the district level, a core planning team comprising experts from various disciplines must be formed. Such a team could help in the preparation of plans after thorough mapping of the physical and natural resources, endowments, existing and missing infrastructure in relation to the felt needs, convergence potential of the ongoing schemes and the available and additional resources required. In addition, when needed, experts could be hired on consultancy bases.

### **1.3.2 Gram Panchayats**

The third tier of the PRIs, the Gram Panchayat, has been charged with the responsibility to identify and prioritize development schemes and prepare its Action Plans accordingly with the approval of the Gram Sabha. The roles of the Gram Panchayats have



increased many fold vis-à-vis the quantum of resources meant for the developmental activities being handled by them. Though the Gram Panchayats have come into existence and are also implementing developmental schemes, yet the participation of the people and the timely conduct of the Gram Sabha meetings are activities not up to the mark in actual practice. The problem can be controlled to a great extent by promoting *awareness* among the rural masses, thereby preventing social elite from stealing the show. It will help the Gram Panchayat to act in the true spirit of the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act, 1992.

**Check Your Progress II**

- Note:** i) Write your answer in the space provided.  
 ii) Check your answer with the possible answer provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the DPC and what are its functions?

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**1.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL FUNCTIONARIES AND THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE**

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The relationship between the official functionaries and the elected representatives assumes a special significance in the context of developing countries as both sets of individuals are expected to work towards the same goal. Moreover, as the agents of social change, the bureaucracy and the elected representatives have complementary roles to play. Hence, it is imperative for successful policy implementation that both work in close cooperation with one another. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), bureaucrats and the local level politicians have an opportunity to work in close cooperation with each other for the realization of development goals. It has become evident, however, that this relationship is not entirely cordial or mutually supportive. The relationship has been affected by a conflict of interests, lack of trust and issues arising from relative status and exercise of powers. Absences of any conventions and the large undefined grey areas regarding the exercise of powers have added to the problems. Let us discuss some of the factors giving rise to this situation.

Often the political leaders are a part of the social elite, that is, they belong to higher castes and higher income groups and the caste/class bias is reflected in the pattern of selection (or non-selection) of beneficiaries for development programmes or the seriousness with which different programmes are implemented. Another feature is the conflicting perception of, and understanding regarding the respective roles of the official functionaries and the elected representatives. This sometimes leads to misunderstandings and a system of functioning that is not quite harmonious. There is

a perception among the official functionaries that since the elected representatives lack a reasonable level of education and administrative experience, they are ill-equipped to participate in developmental planning or in policy formulation. They feel uncomfortable taking orders from the elected representatives. Officials also feel that they are often pressurized into taking decisions for which they become accountable even though these are not in conformity with rules. On the other hand, political functionaries feel that they are closer to the people and hence are in a better position to reflect their interest and aspirations. They often view the bureaucracy as ‘impersonal’, insensitive, rigid, authoritarian and obstructive.

The Ashoka Mehta Committee Report on Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) (1978) observed on this relationship: *“Bureaucracy had probably its own role in dissociating the PRIs from the development process. Several factors seem to have conditioned their perception. The system of line-hierarchy would find favour with them as an organizational principle. The officers would feel that they are primarily accountable for results and financial improprieties to the State Government. The officials knew no better than to trust their own fraternity. They would, on the one hand, therefore, be averse to PRIs being entrusted with additional functions and on the other would not easily get adjusted to working under the supervision of elected representatives.”*

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## **1.5 COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PEOPLE’S ACTION AND RURAL TECHNOLOGY (CAPART)**

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In recent years, non-governmental organizations have also initiated implementation of development programmes in rural areas, in many cases with grant-in-aid from the government. During the seventh plan period there has been a positive move towards involving voluntary agencies in the planning and implementation of rural development programmes. The approach paper to the seventh five-year plan clearly mentioned that (i) there is a need to organize the beneficiaries (the rural poor) to ensure that schemes, benefits and subsidies reach them through the delivery system, and (ii) voluntary organizations should be involved to serve as “the eyes and ears of the people.”

To promote voluntary action in rural development, a nodal agency viz. CAPART was formed in 1986 by amalgamating the erstwhile People’s Action for Development India (PADI) and the Council for Advancement of Rural Technology (CART). While PADI had been set up to provide assistance to voluntary agencies in rural development, CART was set up in 1982 to help in the speedy dissemination of technologies developed in the laboratory to rural areas through their actual application by voluntary agencies. It used Regional Centres in major states to facilitate accessibility and monitoring.

CAPART is mainly entrusted with the task of devolution of funds from the programme budgets to voluntary organizations implementing programmes under SGSY, SGRY, Rural Housing and Drinking Water and Sanitation schemes. It also acts at the national level as the nodal coordinating agency for speedier dissemination of technologies developed in the laboratory to their actual sites of application. CAPART thus acts as the central agency for promoting voluntary action in rural areas.

CAPART is presided over by the Union Minister of Rural Development. It is under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Rural Development. The General Body of CAPART has a maximum strength of 100 members and its Executive Committee has 25 members. Most of the members represent the voluntary sector. The Minister of State for Rural Development is the Chairman of the Executive Committee.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** i) Write your answer in the space provided.

ii) Check your answer with the possible answer provided at the end of the unit.

1) What are the functions of CAPART and what kinds of programme does it deal with?

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## **1.6 STRENGTHENING THE MAINTENANCE OF ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT AT THE PRI LEVEL**

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The Eleventh Finance Commission, in order to strengthen the system for maintaining accounts and audit at the Gram Panchayat level, had recommended that the Gram Panchayats, which do not have exclusive staff for maintaining accounts, may get the work done on contract basis for which each Gram Panchayat can spend an amount of Rs. 4000 per annum. This recommendation has now come into force.

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## **1.7 SOCIAL AUDIT BY THE GRAM SABHA**

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One of the major recommendations of the Task Force (on devolution of powers to PRIs) was to advise states to legally empower the Gram Sabha and issue necessary guidelines for them to conduct social audit satisfactorily. Social audit should have binding legal outcomes so as to curb corruption and misappropriation of funds at the Gram Panchayat level.

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## **1.8 ASSESSMENT**

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The foregoing details clearly suggest that while there have been attempts to bring in innovations for improving the administrative structures, there has been no radical departure from the past. The Community Development Block Administration was essentially built within the framework of the traditional district administration, though the tasks assigned were very different and functionaries like BDOs, Extension Officers and VLWs were new creations. Also, it continued to be based on directions from the top with a hierarchical structure and line of command from the Centre through the State, the District, the Block to the Village Level Worker. It is true, however, that for specialized programmes new structures have been created. For example, the Command Area Development Programme used to be implemented through the Command Area Development Authority and the Small Farmers' and the Marginal Farmers' Development Programmes are implemented through registered agencies viz. Small Farmers' Development Agencies and Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers' Development Agencies set up to implement the programmes. However, the human resources for these new organizations, whether administrative agencies or registered societies, are drawn from the various existing departments. Thus, they do not constitute new establishments, nor altogether new administrative structures or styles of functioning.

They are rather in the nature of adaptations of the existing administrative structures to new tasks and programmes.

There are several questions that arise while considering whether the existing administrative system is appropriate and capable of realizing the goals of rural development. Does the system provide for effective coordination between macro- and micro-level planning, i.e. vertical integration of planning? Does it provide for formulation of inter-sectoral plans, programmes and projects and their horizontal integration? Is the delivery system capable of channeling the benefits of development programmes to the target groups? Does it provide for the maintenance of direct and continuing relationship between the planners and the people and for meaningful participation of the people in the process of development planning and implementation? Does it facilitate cooperation between generalists and specialists? Do the specialists get adequate space/role in the process of decision-making? Does it promote harmonious functional relations between the bureaucracy and the elected representatives of the people? These are some of the questions we have to grapple with in the context of the Panchayati Raj system.

Participation was actually sought to be brought about through the Panchayati Raj Institutions, but the Panchayati Raj has not fulfilled these expectations. A large number of programmes launched in recent years are being directly administered by the Central or State Governments and have no links with the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These programmes have not only expanded the base of the bureaucracy in rural areas but also undermined the role of the elected representatives of the people. Instead of promoting popular participation in rural development efforts, they have contributed not only to its discouragement, but also to its failure in some respects.

The DRDAs are expected to bring about coordination of planning and implementation among the various departments at the district level, but this has not been an easy task. They have not succeeded in invoking popular participation at the local level.

Under the Community Development Programme, the BDO was to be the main plank of the administrative setup at the block level, but with the constitution of DRDAs in 1980, the powers of the BDO have been considerably eroded. For instance, in the states that have adopted *training and visit system* for extension work, the Village Level Workers have been withdrawn from the control of the BDO and are working under the control of the Department of Agriculture. As a result the BDO, who is supposed to coordinate work at the village level, is unable to carry out his functions fully and satisfactorily.

The Evaluation Report (1985) of the study on IRDP undertaken by the Programme Evaluation Organization (PEO) observed that the state level organizations lacked the required degree of support from the sectoral and the subject matter specialists. The study also found that Project Officers of the DRDAs could not exercise proper administrative control over the BDOs and that there was lack of inter-sectoral linkages at the block level.

As is the case in many other developing countries, the core issue is that the planning and implementation of development programmes is controlled by the target-oriented mindset of the bureaucracy on the one hand, and handicapped by a top-down approach on the other. Until and unless this mindset is changed, the scenario more or less will remain the same. Nirmal Mukarji rightly elaborates on the constitutional status and the predominant role of bureaucracy in India:

*“India is the only major federal democracy in the world that gives constitutional recognition to its bureaucracy. That classic instance of federalism, the United States of America, does not. Nor do Canada and Australia. Nor does the Federal Republic of Germany. The Indian exception is clearly a legacy of colonial rule. Sooner or later, serious thought will have to be given to deleting all references to public services in the Constitution. So long as these continue, bureaucratic*

*structures will remain rigid, defying reform. And public servants, noble exceptions apart, will continue to take advantage of their security to become more inefficient, corrupt and uncaring for the public they are supposed to serve.”*

While the above observations made about the administrative structures are undoubtedly enlightening and instructive, it would be necessary to stress that equally important for consideration is the *administrative culture and the style of bureaucratic functioning*. To turn our bureaucracy into a truly responsive administration, overcoming its deficiencies that have been listed, extensively documented and well known, its work culture needs to be overhauled. As we see, though the problem has been identified, by and large the solution – training and orientation of the functionaries – has not been sound enough to bring about the necessary changes wherever needed. Being the main thrust area of the development planning, rural development administration is amidst a transitional phase rising from being an institution of concentration of power to functioning as a facilitator or enabler. It still has a long way to go!

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## 1.9 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have tried to analyse the development approaches adopted since the planning era, structure of the bureaucracy and the role it has played in bringing about economic and social transformation of the rural society, the advent of PRIs as a fallout of the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act and the bottlenecks inhibiting devolution of powers and functions to these people’s institutions.

The bureaucracy in India got involved in rural development administration in a big way with the launching of the Community Development Programme in 1952. Looking at the bureaucracy at various levels – national, state, district and block – we saw how the administrative structure has evolved over time and how some changes were made as different strategies for agricultural and rural development were mooted.

Analyzing the relationship between the officials and the elected representatives of the people in rural areas, we observed that in many situations the two have not been able to team up well. Common areas of work relationship have not been clearly identified and, worse than that, some tensions have also become evident.

We studied the functions and working of CAPART, which is the nodal agency for providing assistance to voluntary agencies engaged in rural development and for facilitating speedier dissemination of technologies in the field. We also noted the allocations made for different programmes in the last few years.

In addition, we pointed out the limitations of the rural administrative system and made some suggestions for their removal. In this connection, we considered the observations and recommendations of some of the important committees and tried to go into the possible remedial measures to overcome the existing inhibiting bottlenecks.

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## 1.10 KEY WORDS

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- Horizontal Integration** : Integration of functionaries at the same level, within say, the block or at the grass roots level.
- Management Information System (MIS)** : A system whereby data processing equipment, procedures, software and people are integrated into the organization, as one of its sub-systems, to provide information of various types to all the concerned including that for decision-making at various levels of the organization.

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## 1.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress I

- 1) The **Ministry of Rural Development** has been assigned the responsibility of poverty eradication in the rural areas of the country and is responsible for policy, planning, direction, coordination, release of central share of funds and monitoring of the programmes. The programmes of the Ministry can be divided into four broad categories viz. a) Self-Employment Programmes, b) Wage Employment Programmes, c) Area Development Programmes, and d) Basic Needs Programmes.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) **District Planning Committees** (DPCs) as envisaged under Article 243(ZD) of the Constitution (74<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Act are to facilitate the process of decentralized planning in the country. These Committees are to be set up in each district to prepare Composite Plans covering both urban and rural areas through effective coordination between the urban civic and development bodies for the urban segment and the PRIs for rural areas.

- 1) Under the Ministry of Rural Development, **CAPART** is an autonomous body mainly entrusted with the task of devolution of funds from the programme budgets to voluntary organizations implementing programmes under SGSY, SGRY, Rural Housing and Drinking Water and Sanitation schemes. It also acts at the national level as the nodal coordinating agency for speedier dissemination of technologies developed in the laboratory leading to their actual application. CAPART thus acts as the Central Agency for promoting voluntary action in rural areas.