

SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

M. A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IV SEM

RURAL LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: WITH DUE REFERENCE TO M. P(404)

TOPIC NAME- BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

UNIT-IV

Introduction-

The Block Development Officer is the leader of a team of as a coordinator of all the activities and the staff under his control, his main responsibility is to provide leadership to the block staff in the field of rural development. The role he has to perform is by setting an example of himself through work in the selected areas of the block. However, with the introduction of the Panchayati Raj system, the Block Development Officer has become the secretary or the chief executive officer of the Panchayat Samiti. This necessarily ties him down with the administrative functions concerned with the Panchayat Samiti and the implementation of the programmes decided by the Panchayat Samitis. Never the less, he is to educate the members of the Panchayat Samiti in taking right decisions in respect of the programmes to be undertaken in the block and involve them in the implementation of the programmes. To the extent possible, he is involving the members of the Panchayat Samiti and Panchayats in the operational aspects of the programme. He can devote the rest of his time for providing leadership to the block staff in the field of rural development.

DUTIES OF A BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER:

(a) As a Chief Executive Officer:

(i) Block Development Officer is to see that the plans and programmes approved by the appropriate authorities are executed efficiently.

(ii) He signs contracts and authenticates all letters and documents for and on behalf of the Panchayat Samiti subject to the prior approval of the appropriate authority.

(iii) He draws and disburses money out of the Panchayat Samiti Fund.

(iv) He takes steps to remove any irregularity pointed out by the auditors about Panchayat Samiti accounts.

(v) He inspects on behalf of the Panchayat Samiti, the financial position of the Panchayats with special reference to the levy of taxes, and their recovery of loans and maintenance of regular accounts.

(vi) He helps Panchayats to draw up plans and see that they conform to the plans and priorities of the Panchayat Samiti. He also sees that the construction programmes undertaken by the Panchayat conform to the standards laid down and completed within the scheduled time.

(b) As a Head of the Block Office:

(i) BDO exercises supervision and control over the extension officers and other employees of the Panchayat Samiti and the staff borne on transferred schemes. He can censure a Panchayat Samiti employee under him, subject to the right of appeal of the latter to the standing committee on taxation, finance and administration.

(ii) He formulates annual budget and places it before the Panchayat Samiti, prepares the annual administrative report and quarterly progress reports for the consideration of the Panchayat Samiti and transmits the same to Zila Parishad and the State Government.

He supplies copies of resolutions and proceedings of the Panchayat Samiti and standing committees to the Zila Parishad or the State Government or their duly authorized officers.

(iii) He reports without delay all cases of fraud, embezzlement, theft or loss of money or other property of the Panchayat

(c) As a Secretary:

(i) He issues notices for the meetings of the Panchayat Samiti and standing committees under instructions from the Pradhan and Chairman of the respective committees.

(ii) He attends all such meetings himself or authorizes a senior officer subordinate to him to attend such meetings. However, he does not exercise right to vote while attending such meetings.

(iii) He causes minutes to be recorded and circulated.

(d) Emergency Functions:

In case of fire, floods or epidemics, he directs the execution of any work or act and incurring of expenditure upon it which normally, requires the sanction of Panchayat Samiti or its standing committee. In every such case, the action taken and reaction thereof requires re-orting to the competent authority.

It may not be out of place to point out that the role of B.D.O. in Panchayat Samiti meet-ings is more than secretarial. He can render advice regarding the legality and the various con-sequences of a proposed course of action.

Owing to his long experience, knowledge of prece-dents and insight into legal, financial and administrative matters, his advice is given every consideration. He sometimes acts as a moderator when the Samiti fails to compose the differ-ences. A competent and sympathetic B.D.O. can win the trust and respect of the Panchayat Samiti members.

He is assisted by a team of experts in agriculture, co-operation, animal husbandry, cottage industries, etc. Commenting on the significance of Block organisation, Ramaswamy remarks, "Block organisation is the symbol of cooperation between a democratic government and its free people. It is only now that the block officers, have started going to the farms and homes of the villagers to do what the villagers wanted.

Functions of Block Development Officer:

(a) Agricultural, Education, Store and Distribution of Agricultural Supplies:

It was an important function in the initial stages. However, with the emergence of co-operative stores, the distribution function has been taken away from him. Through camps, individual talks, group meetings and demonstration, he imparts agricultural education which means making the villagers aware of fertilizers, improved seeds and use of insecticides.

(b) Social Education:

Formerly he explained to the people, the philosophy of the community development programme and the opportunities available under it. Now, this responsibility mostly devolves upon Gram Sabha and Samitis. However, he has to do a lot of explaining in Gram Sabhas and Panchayats. In the words of Dr. S. C. Jain, "The V.L.W.'s role has become as one of an enabler rather than that of the initiator.

(c) Production Plan and Allied Services:

Since 1957, the V.L.W. has started helping the Village Panchayats in framing their production programmes and executing and reviewing them. He draws up the plan in accordance with instructions from above, summons Gram Sabha meetings, explains the plan to Gram Sabha and sanctifies it as village plan after the rectification of the plan by the Gram Sabha.

He secures technical and financial assistance through the help of Extension Officer and by expediting applications for loan or subsidy.

(d) Attending Works:

In the initial stages, he persuaded the villagers to make contribution to the work programmes, organised 'Sram dan', secured the assistance of overseer, maintained record of works and secured grants from the government for executing the programme. This function is claiming comparatively less attention now.

(e) Organising Co-operatives and other Auxiliary Agencies:

The village level worker organises co-operatives, youth clubs, Bal Mandirs and Mahila Mandals. He convenes their meet-ings quite frequently.

(f) House Keeping:

He sends reports and returns and maintains records. He attends staff meetings at the Block Headquarters and attends to supervisors and visitors who call upon him when he is on official tour.

(g) Attending Panchayat Samiti and Gram Sabha Meetings:

He is required to attend Panchayat and Gram Sabha Meetings in his circle. These meetings are convened on an average about five per month and take nearly five and a half days.

(h) Miscellaneous Jobs:

Besides the functions already enumerated, he has been entrusted some miscellaneous functions as supplying medical first-aid, taking surveys, participation in small saving campaigns and other functions of emergent nature.

Keeping in view the relative importance of functions performed by him, we can, therefore, sum up that Village Level Worker (V.L.W.) devotes 80 per cent of his time on agriculture. His multipurpose character thus stands eclipsed.