

PART III

**RATIONALISATION
OF THE
FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND
STRUCTURE OF THE
MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

Rationalisation of the functions, activities and structure of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Ministry of Tribal Affairs

1. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry for planning, promotion, coordination and overseeing implementation of programmes for the development of Scheduled Tribes (ST). Compared to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, from which it branched off in October 99, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has a single objective i.e, promotion of welfare of Tribals. According to 1991 census there were 67.76 million tribals, comprising 8.08 per cent of India's population. Unlike Scheduled Castes, they are concentrated in certain parts of the country, mostly in remote afforested hilly regions. They have a certain cultural identity distinct from the general population. They are also economically much weaker than others. The Planning Commission estimated in 1993-'94 that of the ST population, 51.92% in rural areas and 41.14% in urban areas were below the poverty line. Against the national average of 52%, the literacy rate amongst tribals is around 29.60%. More than three quarters of ST women are illiterate. Even among the tribals there are certain groups which need extra help to overcome their drawbacks. According to the Ministry's annual report, 1999-2000, 'Based on pre-agricultural level of technology, low level of literacy and stagnant population' 75 Primitive Tribal Groups have been identified in 15 States and Union Territories.
2. A special ministry to safeguard the interests of tribals is definitely justified. Various Constitutional provisions emphasize the need for a strong watchdog and

protector of tribal identity, their habitat, and natural wealth. This is also necessary to prevent their exploitation by many unscrupulous, vested interest groups.

3. Concentration of STs in certain areas facilitates dissemination of benefits of area specific general schemes to ST population of the area too. There are 194 Integrated tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), set up in Blocks/group of Blocks where ST population is more than 50% of the total population. Villages with a population of 10,000 or more and having 50% or more tribal population form pockets under Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) and 259 such MADA pockets have been created. In addition, 82 clusters have also been formed for groups of villages having population of 5,000 or more but where STs constitute more than 50% of the population. In other words, in these areas of ST concentration, it becomes feasible to reach the benefits of the welfare programmes of other agencies in the field of education, health etc. to the ST population.

4. The thrust areas identified by the Ministry include development of Primitive Tribal Groups; setting up of 100 model residential schools; development of infra-structural facilities in tribal areas; encouraging research in tribal affairs; and monitoring utilization of funds released to States/Uts and NGOs under various Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The Ministry gives Special Central Assistance (SCA) to 20 Tribal Sub-Plan States/ Uts as an additive to their own outlays. These grants are meant basically for family oriented income generating schemes.

5. The Ministry supports 14 Tribal Research Institutes located in different States. A National Institute for Research & Training in Tribal Affairs is also being set up. The Ministry also has under it Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited

(TRIFED) – an apex body for ensuring remunerative prices for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) of the tribals and to protect them from exploitation. Apart from making equity contribution, the Ministry also provides price support to TRIFED. In addition, in April, 2001, National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) was bifurcated to form a separate National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC). It is a fully owned Government of India Undertaking and is managed by a board of directors with representation from Central Government, state level channelising agency, financial institutions and persons representing scheduled tribes etc.

6. The Ministry has a total provision of Rs.1045 crore in the budget for the current year. Of this, the Plan provision is as much as Rs.1040 crore spread over 26 schemes. A list of these schemes is given at Annex I. It can be argued that in areas like this the ideal course would be to transfer the funds to the states, leaving it to them to formulate and implement such schemes as they deem fit. But then two points militate against such an approach. First, given the fiscal constraints faced by most states, it cannot be said with certainty that the funds released for the benefit of the ST population would actually reach them section and not get directed for other purposes. Second, numerous audit reports and even findings of Parliamentary Committees point to large scale under utilisation of funds, implementation of programmes in a routine manner and so on. Thus, while the states should have a greater role in the finalisation and implementation of such programmes, Central role in the form of earmarking of funds, overall supervision etc. would still be necessary.

In the circumstances, the Ministry could explore the feasibility of following the macro-management approach recently adopted by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation. Under this approach, while the Centre prepares a large basket of schemes, the States are allowed the freedom and flexibility to choose for implementation those schemes which in their judgement are more suited to their requirements. The States also advise on the changes necessary in the selected schemes. The proposals of the states are then discussed and finalised. Thereafter the release of funds and monitoring is done with reference to the schemes as approved for each state individually. The larger role assigned to the States secures their interest in the implementation of the scheme. In turn, by reducing the load of supervision it also enables the central ministry to devote more attention to policy making, laying broad guidelines for the various programmes and interaction with the other concerned Central ministries.

7. In respect of the corporations, there is a need to have their capability and effectiveness evaluated by an expert body. Two aspects of corporations' working need to be addressed in particular. Firstly, whether in the light of available experience corporate structure is the best possible way of promoting self-employment amongst the tribals? Secondly, if indeed it is the best option then, how should it be organized and manned so that it is able to effectively guide and support its beneficiaries? For instance, a marketing agency like TRIFED may be needed to prevent exploitation of tribals when it comes to selling their produce, but should it be a government corporation? TRIFED's record has been dismal. On the other hand, a professionally run co-operative like NDDB might hold out promise of a much better

deal for all concerned. Hence, the need for an expert assessment and review of the corporate structure adopted so far.

8. The organizational chart of the Ministry is at Annex II. At the secretariat level, the Ministry is headed by a Secretary assisted by a Joint Secretary and 5 sanctioned posts of Directors/Dy. Secretaries and other staff. Against a total of 96 sanctioned posts, 69 were filled up till the beginning of August, 2001. Of the vacant posts, 3 belong to Gr.A, 10 to Gr. B, 13 to Gr. C, and 1 to Gr, D category. Considering that this is a small compact ministry, no changes are suggested either in the structure or in the staff strength. However, if the macro management approach is adopted, the requirement of staff strength will go down. It is therefore, recommended that the filling up of the vacant posts should be done after careful deliberations and in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.

Statement showing the B.E. 2001-02 in respect of Plan Schemes

(Rs. In crore)

S.No.	Name of the scheme/item	B.E. 2001-02
1.	Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan	500
2.	Article 275(1)	300
3.	Post Matric Scholarship	63
4.	Girls Hostel for STs	10.5
5.	Boys Hostel for STs	10
6.	Supporting project of All-India for Inter-State nature	0.5
7.	Price Support to TRIFED	4
8.	Research & Training	3.5
9.	Educational Complex	7
10.	Vocational Training in Tribal Areas	11
11.	Grant-in-Aid to State Tribal Development Coopt. Corps	12
12.	Assistance to Vol. Orgns.	27
13.	Grain Banks scheme	2
14.	Dev. Of Primitive Tribal Group	14.5
15.	Coaching and Allied	1.2
16.	Book Bank	0.8
17.	Upgradation of Merit	0.3
18.	National Institute of Tribal Affairs	3.5
19.	Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas	12.5
20.	Lumpsum provision for North East	24
21.	Information & Mass Media	1.5
22.	Special Incentive to NGOs	0.4
23.	Exchange of visits by Tribal Communities/delegates	0.2
24.	State Tribal Dev. Fin. Corporation	2
25.	Investment in TRIFED	1
26.	National ST Finance and Development Corporation	25
	TOTAL	1040

**ORGANISATION CHART
MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

