

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee constituted to suggest measures for review and revamp of NIRD, SIRDs and ETCs held on 17.12.2010 at New Delhi.

A meeting of the Committee constituted to suggest measures for review and revamp of NIRD, SIRDs and ETCs was held on 17.12.2010 in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Dr. Y.K. Alagh, Chairman, IRMA. The list of participants of the meeting is enclosed at Annexure.

2. At the outset, Chairman welcomed the members of the committee, who introduced themselves. Shri Niten Chandra, Joint Secretary (Trg.), Ministry of Rural Development made a short presentation regarding the proposed NIRD Centre at Jaipur. The Centre would be a knowledge and training hub for the rural development sector in the country with its vision to become a global centre of excellence in the field of rural development. Referring to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for management of the Centre, he indicated that the Centre is proposed to be established in partnership with a reputed and well established applied research, academic and training institution with experience in the field of development studies. The role and responsibilities of the institutions to be contracted, the contracting process and the criteria for evaluation were also highlighted.

3. Initiating the discussion, Dr. Arvind Mayaram, Addl. Secretary and Financial Adviser, Ministry of Rural Development observed that the focus of the institute needs to be narrowed down to Livelihood Studies. It may include livelihood issues, skill building, development of rural economy through emphasis on skills and livelihoods, etc. Smt. Nandita Chatterjee, DDG, CAPART suggested inclusion of training of NGOs as part of the activities of the Centre.

4. In his initial comments, the Chairman welcomed the establishment of a high level institute with focus on training and research. The nomenclature of the Centre for Rural Development is wider in scope and permits consideration of livelihood. The justification for a Centre of Rural Development in Rajasthan will arise from the fact that it will enable research on activities relating to arid climatic zone whose results will not only be relevant to India but also to arid countries in Asia and Pacific. It can cover the regional agro-climatic areas like Rajasthan, Gujarat and M.P and also have a regional focus.

5. Referring to the list of institutions added as part of the TOR, AS&FA clarified that they are listed not as networking institutions but as institutions which could be invited to bid for operationalisation and management of the NIRD Centre at Jaipur. The number of Schools/Centres to be opened should be left to the organisation finally selected. In this context, Chairman observed that the selected organization should suggest a governance structure not stifled by administrative fiats. It should have a management structure which demands performance and can propose rewards and disincentives. The proposed institute should be autonomous and needs to be given a corpus. It was further indicated by AS & FA that the funds required for running the Centre would be provided by the Ministry after an MOU is executed

between the Ministry and the Institution chosen. He observed that while there was a possibility of funding the Centre with Livelihood focus, it would be difficult to obtain funds if its scope is widened to include agriculture as well. Interest has been shown by International organizations like ILO, UNDP and bilateral agencies like GTZ, etc. in livelihood issues.

6. Shri Pramthesh Ambasta proposed that the term livelihood should not be viewed in the narrow sense of skill development and the proposed centre should not only be an institute of academic research and training but should also have links with grass roots. Civil societies should be involved and the list of all institutions proposed should be more broadbased. The Chairman mentioned that the added values by training institutes are experience, knowledge and skills. The focus on rural development would need grounding in sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry artisan activities and value added processes, and livelihoods would get emphasis. Accountability issues are also very important.

7. Calling it a critical initiative, Shri Ashwini Kumar from Tata Institute of Social Sciences welcomed the setting up of the Centre and in general agreed with the Terms of Reference proposed. Referring to his report on capacity building in the context of MGNREGA, he highlighted the need for symbiosis between MGNREGA and NRLM. The Institute should have administrative support and academic staff.

8. Shri M.V. Rao, DDG, NIRD referred to the meeting of one of the sub-Groups of the Committee held in NIRD under the chairmanship of Dr. Samar Dutta of IIM. Recalling the discussions of the sub-Group, he stressed the need for reflecting the work of NIRD so far. He also mentioned the shortage of faculty in the institute due to which functioning of the NIRD is handicapped, leaving scope for autonomy in its functioning. In this context, Chairman observed that the replacement capital of NIRD would be currently over Rs.1000 crores and there is need for unlocking the capital invested in the institute. It was also clarified that funding requirement if any of the revamp programme would get full consideration.

9. Secretary (RD) recalled the direction of Planning Commission during the Mid term appraisal of the Plan schemes to set up the Committee observing that the NIRD is not producing the intended results, though lot of capital is locked. He added that initially the institute functions with lot of enthusiasm, though subsequently the process of capture takes place and the proposed intentions are defeated. Independent and rigid performance evaluation is needed and the staff should be willing beyond 5' o'clock. Functioning with the annual grant will also not lead to the improvement in the system. Not much action seems to have been taken after a presentation was made by Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad on evaluation of NIRD done by the institute. Since an announcement was made by the Ministry of Rural Development for the national level institute at Jaipur, the proposed Centre cannot have only local focus. Even if it is located in Jaipur, people from other regions can be benefited. Networking and technology should be drivers for such an institute of excellence. The Chairman endorsed the argument of Secretary(RD) that small farmer

agriculture and the special needs of landless labourers would need detailed attention in next phase of the policy implementation. Also that Indian rural development policy would need to work in a regional focus. He clarified that in the paper he had circulated these ideas were there and additional material of a background nature was there in an earlier draft which he edited in the interest of brevity but would if needed be very happy to circulate it again.

10. Clarifying further on the Terms of Reference, AS&FA proposed that the Expression of Interest with the Terms of Reference proposed, may be issued inviting the reputed institutions to express interest. The Committee could invite the organizations and discuss programmes, management structures, etc. for the proposed Centre.

11. The members looked at the details of criteria for evaluating the Expressions of Interest of the Institutions. It was agreed that the third criterion relating to publications would be modified as under:

“At least 500 publications in either journals or reports for different organizations at the national and international level / Ministries of the GOI in the last 10 years. For institutions working at the field level, at least 100 publications during last 10 years should have been done. ”

12. Subject to the modifications being suitably incorporated, the Committee agreed to the Terms of Reference for the proposed NIRD centre at Jaipur. The EOI would be invited based on the Terms of Reference from reputed institutions which may include the list of institutions already circulated.

13. The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 10th or 11th January, 2011. The venue would be finalized later in consultation with the Ministry.