

## **Chapter XVII**

### **Functional Review of 5 Key Departments of Government of Assam**

#### **Departments :**

- Education,
- Health & Family Welfare,
- Irrigation,
- Public Works, and
- Personnel

Problems sorted out with the help of Public Sector Reform Group of Asian Development Bank .

## **Functional Review of 5 Key Departments of Government of Assam**

### **Common Problems**

There are important inter-sector links in each department such as water supply, sanitation and nutrition in health, health status of school children, ICDS centers and pre-primary education, PMGSY funds for infrastructure and road links for schools and health centers, PWD's capacity to maintain and upgrade buildings, agricultural operations, parallel responsibility for minor irrigation and community mobilization in agriculture, irrigation and Panchayat departments, command area development, ongoing World Bank assisted project for agricultural competitiveness project and hydel power.

Certain common issues (related mainly to functional reviews and not technical aspects) affect the four departments in the current context of fiscal crisis and manpower containment on the one hand and the persisting issues of public administration and personnel management in the state.

These include:

- Implications of delay in financial and personnel matters in secretariat
- Shortage of non-Plan funds for completing existing works and essential operation and maintenance;
- Levy of user charges in higher and technical education, irrigation and toll roads and implications for user involvement and improvement in quality;
- Lack of priority to establishment control function and manpower planning
- Lack of rational staff norms or failure to update old norms;
- Lack of accurate and regularly updated employee data in computerized form which can be linked to treasury payroll and pension;
- Critical vacancies of frontline positions and difficulties in filling vacant positions;
- Need to normalize Plan post as to generate additional funds for Operation and Maintenance and creation of assets
- Multiplicity of cadres, long hierarchies and insufficient attention to cadre management;
- Preponderance of grade III and IV posts in non-technical and office positions and scope for contracting services in line with general policy;
- Lack of service rules for several posts and old rules in need of revision;

- Implementation of the transfer policy circulated by the Personnel department and ensuring transparent and objective guidelines for minimum tenure and posting;
- Flexibility in redeployment of posts and employees through administrative changes or amendments to rules;
- Delays in administrative approvals from finance department (after consultation where necessary with Planning and WPTBC) for filling posts, salaries for retained posts, new or continuing schemes, budget ceiling, release of counterpart and non-Plan funds and contingent expenditure;
- Litigation, High Court judgments and contempt orders in service matters, especially regularization of contract or irregularly appointed workers, salary arrears, punishments, transfer and ad hoc promotions;
- Problems of disparities in remuneration and stagnation and delay in payment of salaries and award of pension to regular employees;
- Inadequate skill development and opportunities for training;
- Lack of computerization in many aspects of functioning and most territorial units;
- Factors affecting motivation and performance such as pay scales, traveling allowance, delayed payment of salaries, work environment, lack of equipment and facilities, poor condition of accommodation and insufficient or no promotion prospects; and
- Inadequate mechanisms for client oversight and external accountability partly due to limited progress in devolution of functions to panchayati raj and urban local bodies.

The exercise will lead to common strategies for redeployment and offer of voluntary retirement accompanied by social safety network. The elaboration of the strategy will call for collection of data on different elements of establishment control, staff size, category, Plan and Non Plan breakup and approach to filling vacancies. Building capacity for personnel management and organizational reform is a major challenge confronting all departments which will be addressed under the guidance of AARC and the public administration reform committee. ASC can assist in this task as it has already started doing.

### **Education (As on 1-1-2005)**

Education department accounts for the largest share of government employment including provincialized teachers besides salary expenditure for aided colleges and institutions. The management of education sector is characterized by multiple directorates and agencies and by different streams of activities. At the secretariat, while there is a single Minister, there are two

departments under the Commissioner with each department being headed by a Secretary: one for elementary and secondary education and one for higher and technical education. The department of elementary and secondary education controls the directorates in charge of elementary education, secondary education, the project directorate of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), SCERT and Textbook Bureau. The other department controls the directorates in charge of higher education and technical education. Elementary education depends substantially on funds provided under centrally sponsored schemes including SSA. A number of departments like Social Welfare and WPTBC provide educational services.

There is substantial scope for restructuring the Directorate to address the issues of accountability, transparency, expenditure compression through staff reduction, and fiscal consolidation. Bulk of the Plan and non-Plan provision is consumed by salaries. Besides the common problems noted earlier and the specific issues in the health and education sector, the aspects deserving study for the review include:

- Problem of shortage of funds even in areas of assured central funding (as in SSA) due to difficulties of counterpart funding and timely release of funds;
- Shortage of non-Plan funds for salary provision in higher and technical education and lack of funds for normal and maintenance and upgrading in these institutions; implications for levy of user charges;
- Problems of continued funding of salaries and pensions in grant-in-aid institutions, question of imposing budget ceiling as in other states and ensuring quality and performance of these institutions;
- Redundancy of the directorate of adult and non-formal education and scope for reorganizing directorates for elementary and secondary education along with the scope for franchising textbook production;
- Ensuring integrated working of all directorates and reporting to the Secretariat through a Director General of Public Instruction;
- Lack of mechanism for coordinating the activities of the Directorate with other GoA Departments, and institutions engaged in delivering elementary education services, resulting in large scale duplication of activities, tasks, and functions, and unnecessary burden on the state's finances;
- Rationalizing the administrative structure at the district and block level, given the difficulty in flexible deployment of elementary and secondary education officials, the scope for appointing SSA project coordinators on contract basis, the resource centers devised under

SSA and the opportunity for involving the anchal and gaon panchayats and school management committees as in other states;

- Inadequacies of the structure in not providing means of assigning accountability with respect to assigned responsibilities; instances of duplication of tasks with similar task being performed by more than one branch/cell, or duplication of function vis-à-vis posts with similar functions/tasks assigned to different posts, all these being largely the result of absence of detailed job descriptions for posts;
- Problems of physical infrastructure in terms of construction and renovation of school buildings, basic facilities and all weather access of pupils to schools;
- Faulty location of schools and polytechnics, uneven dispersal of schools across districts and co-location of middle and elementary schools and need for rationalization;
- The huge size of teachers, numbering 131544 and dispersed over 23 districts (now 26) including the autonomous councils and BTC under Sixth schedule);
- Problems related to recruitment and appointment of primary teachers at the constituency level, which are aggravated by the provincialization of teachers, service rules and irregular/illegal appointment of teachers in the past;
- Large numbers of single teacher schools and difficulties in their upgrading;
- Tremendous variation in pupil-teacher ratio and obvious numbers of surplus and deficit teachers in schools and blocks, which cannot be easily resolved by rationalization committees or transfer due to local opposition;
- Large number of untrained upper and lower primary teachers and constraints faced by training institutions in districts in training;
- Problems in contract appointment of teachers in Education Guarantee Scheme and SSA and the risk of demands for regularization;
- Difficulties in identifying and filling vacancies of primary teachers in the absence of scientific studies and credible field data
- Vacancies of subject matter teachers in secondary and higher secondary schools;
- Scope for assessing requirement of ministerial staff at different levels and outsourcing services performed by grade IV;

- Problems created by the award of UGC scales to university teachers and technical institutions governed by AICTE and ensuring the performance of teachers in conformity with UGC norms;
- Recovery of user charges in higher and technical education;
- Slow progress in evolving reward and incentive mechanism and local oversight for ensuring teacher presence and education outcomes through departmental supervision, parental involvement;
- Problems of motivation, employee grievance and responsiveness of district and state education administration;
- Reducing the influence of extraneous factors in the appointment and transfer of teachers and location of teaching institutions; and
- Building capacity of cadre controlling authority

### **Health and Family Welfare (As on 1-1-2005)**

Assam's health infrastructure includes 610 Primary Health Centres, 99 sub-division health centers, 5109 Sub-centres, 100 Community health centres, 146 rural FW centers, 41 post-partum centers, 21 sub-division hospitals, 23 district hospitals, 8 specialized colleges, 3 medical colleges and 14 state hospitals. The department of Health and Family Welfare is divided into two branches: one for dealing with public health, family welfare, transport organization, food and drug control and the other branch for medical education. The programs are implemented through the Director of Health Services (for public health and disease control, food and drug adulteration and clinical infrastructure), the Director of Family Welfare and the Director of Medical Education (through the medical colleges and attached hospitals).

Government activities in health depend significantly on funds provided under different central schemes with state Plan being insufficient for maintenance and improvement of facilities. Health expenditure is low by national standards with critical shortage of funds for medicines, equipment, renovation and expansion of buildings for primary health care and hospitals and to enhance specialist care. A high proportion of expenditure is incurred on salaries in both branches of the hospital leaving little provision for health-related items.

The department has undertaken a number of innovative steps in recent months such as the phased conversion of CHCs into First Referral Units, enactment of law to create a cadre of rural medical practitioners and use of PMGY funds for upgrading health buildings. The formation of local management societies at the district and hospital level and their empowerment to levy and retain user charges has eased the situation on maintenance. Shortage of doctors, specialists and nurses, which is more

pronounced in remote and rural areas, affects the access to health care, institutionalized delivery, health education and prompt referral for emergency care.

The issues related to functional review in the health sector include:

- Picture of wide disparities in access of people (especially poor and marginal groups) to primary and hospital care;
- Poor physical infrastructure in general and worse picture in peripheral and remote areas for buildings, equipment, drug availability and availability of health staff;
- Issues of organizational structure for health delivery at directorate, district and PHC level, job descriptions, overlapping and duplication for similar functions, disparities in emoluments and career prospects and integrated working;
- Issues of adequate regulation of, and partnership with, private providers of health care;
- Inadequate attention to issues of human resource management, performance assessment, reward, recognition and sanction for performance and incentives for ensuring availability of health staff in areas with less access to health facilities;
- Varying nature of problems in filling vacant posts;
- Reform of recruitment policy and service rules to assure required complement of medical and paramedical staff, educators and health administrators, while rightsizing the component of non-technical staff and outsourcing non-clinical services;
- Distinct problems of medical education and public health/family welfare;
- Critical shortage of doctors in primary health centers and hospitals and non-availability of medical officers in health centers, especially in remote and rural areas due to a variety of factors including low remuneration, disinclination of medical graduates to enter public health service and gravitate to private sector or other states and lack of incentives and sanctions to ensure the presence of medical officers in the assigned place of work and assure 24 hours service;
- Inadequacy of specialists for first referral units and for weekly visits in remote centers and over 20% PHCs without access to specialist care;
- Shortage of nursing staff and other paramedics in hospitals and sub-centres due to court cases and over 20% of sub centers without access to institutionalized delivery;

- Problems affecting efficiency and morale of health staff such as inadequate emoluments, traveling allowance and transport facility, livable accommodation, supply of frequently required medicines, equipment, physical infrastructure for outpatients and operation, power, water supply and sanitation facilities in health centers and sub centers;
- Opportunity for training and upgrading knowledge and skills at all levels, starting from post-graduate qualification for doctors to basic skills for nurses;
- Significance of links to anganwadis, potable water and sanitation;
- Levy of user charges and the evaluation of health management societies;
- Community outreach and participation including the involvement of elected local bodies in health care services; and
- Building capacity of cadre controlling authority

### **Public Works (Roads) as on 1-1-2005**

Public Works Department (PWD) is an old institution, which originally included the present irrigation and flood control departments. The engineering service was later split into separate services for three departments, The Public Works Department (Roads Wing) is responsible for implementing various schemes of the Government relating to construction and maintenance of roads, State Highways, National Highways, North Eastern Council Works, rural roads and bridges under the World bank assisted project and Indo- Bangladesh Border Roads. The Chief Engineer (Roads) is in charge of a major portion of the work and the entire establishment. The department has recently set up a Roads Board for more flexible channeling of the funds for Prime Minister's Rural Road Scheme and maintenance. It hopes to follow the work under the earlier World Bank Project called ARIASP with the work on roads and markets under the Agricultural Competitiveness Project.

As in the case of all infrastructure departments, PWD faces critical constraints of funds and problems in filling vacancies. This has affected the maintenance of roads, bridges and buildings but less seriously than irrigation. The department depends mainly on funds released under central schemes, Northeast development and World Bank project. The uncertain flow of funds affects construction schedules. However, the department is making innovative efforts such as electronic tendering, quality assurance in roads, standard bid documents, merit-based performance assessment and computerized review of progress of works.

The issues affecting functional review in PWD include:



- Elaborating the consequences for manpower planning and utilization of transfer of border roads to a national organization, termination of works under the first World Bank project and low workload in maintenance;
- Adverse effect of consistent low allocation of funds for operation and maintenance on road quality and the utilization of engineering divisions;
- Lack of service rules for diploma holders, architecture wing and subordinate engineers;
- Isolated cadres of mechanical and electrical wings;
- Devising rational staff norms and working out required staff of different categories for projected workload and normalization of Plan posts;
- Optimizing the utilization of available technical manpower and divisions in relation to estimated quantum of work and working out the scope for redeployment across districts;
- Devising rational staff norms and estimating surplus manpower and deficient skills;
- Improving establishment control at departmental and different engineering levels through reforms in recruitment and service rules, computerized database and MIS;
- Estimating and dealing with the problem of regularization of work-charged and muster roll workers in the overall context of idle divisions;
- Career development, stagnation and effective use of available staff
- Evaluating the performance assessment procedures and merit-based promotion guidelines to ensure their transparent operation;
- Dealing with issues of transfer and employee morale and issues relating to districts in 6<sup>th</sup> schedule;
- Establishing computerized database of employees for effective personnel management and staff deployment; and
- Building capacity of PWD in the context of institutional development under the Agricultural Competitiveness Project and capacity building in planning, surveys, design, project preparation, quality assurance, material evaluation, maintenance management, financial management, contract administration, social and environmental education and human resource management.

## **Irrigation (as on 1-1-2005)**

In specific terms, the Irrigation Department has the responsibility to provide four key services:

1. Developing plans for realization of irrigation potential i.e. Annual Irrigable Area (AIA)
2. Undertaking Major/Medium, and Minor schemes for harnessing irrigation potential
3. Ensuring full utilization of the realized irrigation potential through providing facilitating services such as development of field channels, energizing electricity operated pumps, repair and maintenance, and
4. Improvement of water use efficiency of created potential through planning and implementing Command Area Development programmes

The relevant issues for functional review include:

- The rationale for a separate department for water resources and the need for comprehensive approach to water resources and river basin management based on experience of other states;
- Budget crunch and fund shortage for completion of major irrigation projects and problem of full utilization of central grants due to insufficient counterpart funds;
- Inability of government to allot sufficient O&M funds with consequences for deterioration of major and minor irrigation works, release of water for agriculture and hydel systems;
- Lack of service rules for section assistants and subordinate engineer and pending amendment to other rules;
- Isolated cadres for mechanical and electrical cadres;
- Problem of winding up the Minor Irrigation Corporation and absorbing the staff or offering voluntary retirement;
- Continuance of idle divisions and regular staff because of inadequate budget provision under Plan and non Plan;
- Problem of regularization of work charged muster workers and implications for extra salary and pension expenditure and additions to idle staff;
- Lack of accurate database on regular and work-charged/muster roll staff;
- Old staff norms and need to project required staff requirements according to projected workload and fund availability in consultation with finance department;
- Opportunity for assessing surplus staff in grades III and IV;

- Identifying savings in staff and budget due to transfer of responsibility to water user association and local bodies;
- Unfilled vacancies of AEs and JEs;
- Lack of computerization for technical and non-technical operations;
- Performance assessment and merit-based promotions;
- Lack of facilities for entry and in-service training of technical staff;
- Transfer policy, tenure and issues of staff working in districts under 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule;
- Departmental inquiries and service litigation;
- Stagnation at different levels and addressing motivation and productivity of staff; and
- Building capacity of cadre controlling authority

## **Synopsis of Recommendations**

- Education,
- Health & Family Welfare,
- Public Works
- Irrigation, and
- Personnel

### **Education Department:**

1. The two departments of education and the directorates under them should undertake the following tasks for completion by end-April 2005:
  - a. Draw up their respective Mission statements
  - b. Prepare organizational charts
  - c. Prepare job charts
  - d. Enforce citizens' charters
  - e. Ensure adequate delegation and decentralization
  - f. Develop mechanisms for swift grievance redress of employees and the public.
  - g. Develop proposals for computerization that should be sent to the E-governance Mission.
  - h. Develop proposals for training for submission to the Finance department for consideration under the ADB training budget.
  - i. Prepare a manpower plan based on assessment of optimal staff levels and equalised deployment of teachers in elementary and secondary education subject to guidelines to be issued by Finance Department.
  - j. Assess requirement of grades III and IV staff
  - k. Develop proposals for redeployment of surplus staff
2. The government should provide the required counterpart funds to achieve the national goals in programmes like SSA and mid-day meals.
3. The issue of fragmentation of primary students and teachers among elementary and secondary education should be addressed through integrated legislation, structure and training.
4. The Department should determine if training should be insisted as a condition for recruitment or if training should be provided after appointment. In the latter case, the Department should develop a plan for augmenting training infrastructure.
5. The Department should ensure that no teacher is appointed without proper sanction.
6. Once government laid down the parameters for transfers, the officers should be allowed to deploy teachers according to requirement and equalize the PTR.

7. The Government should decentralize the management of elementary and secondary education and give greater control to user committees at the local level.
8. The Department should ensure that teachers get their salaries only if their presence and performance is certified by the School Management Committee or Gaon Panchayat.
9. The Department should check absenteeism by ensuring greater accountability of teachers to local committees and by sanctions for poor performance.
10. The curriculum of training should be revised on demand-driven basis.
11. The Department should examine the causes for inadequate supervision of schools and their low accountability.
12. The Department should examine the suggestion for the integration of educational administration at the district and block level and the abolition of the tier of deputy inspector of schools and also entrust greater responsibility for primary education to the Gaon Panchayats.
13. AARC should consider the proposal for merger of the Directorate of Adult Education with the Directorate of Elementary Education, and consider the absorption of the surplus staff arising from the proposed scheme for Open University.
14. The Department should examine the feasibility of utilizing the existing staff of the Directorate of Adult and Non-Formal Education in the continuing education programme, which is funded by the central government and implemented by a state level agency.
15. The empowered committee constituted by the government on de-linking colleges from higher secondary courses and integrated approach to college education should also address the issue of difficulties in filling 400 vacant posts in colleges because of UGC guidelines, and lack of incentives to teachers for upgrading their skills as they tended to focus on higher secondary courses which were supervised by the Council for Secondary Education apart from.
16. The Department should conduct a market study to determine the composition of disciplines in engineering colleges while increasing the intake.

17. The Department should examine the scope for private investment in technical education, while being conscious of regulation of quality and cost, and the socio-economic climate in Assam to ensure the ownership of industry, trade and other stakeholders.
  
18. The Department should examine the scope and justification for (i) enhancing cost recovery to improve infrastructure and facilities in colleges, which had deteriorated for want of budget provision, and (ii) meeting the needs of poor students by scholarship.

### **Health and Family Welfare Department:**

1. The Department should take immediate action on the following areas and forward the plan to finance department and AR&T by April 2005:
  - a. Develop a Mission statement and post it on the web site (after developing the site)
  - b. Develop job chart for all categories of staff and officials and give wide publicity to the charts;
  - c. Delineate and then publicise the organization chart;
  - d. Frame and enforce the Citizens' charter and for each of its sub-units;
  - e. Develop the plan for e-governance and computerization and forward it to the e-governance Mission;
  - f. Forward proposals for training and capacity building to the Finance and AR&T departments;
  - g. The Minister's approval may be quickly obtained for the action plan on improved service delivery, manpower plan and training.
2. The Department should set up an expert committee to devise the staffing pattern and manpower plan for the health department.
3. The finance department should replace the present system of bi-yearly release of funds with monthly release of funds to ensure uninterrupted fund flow for disease control and other programmes.
4. The Department should take quick to implement the decision to encourage private participation in medical colleges and nursing colleges to address the problem of shortage of medical graduates that is expected to continue.
5. The recruitment freeze order of finance department should be relaxed for critical vacancies of health staff, and specialist positions should be approved in FRUs and hospitals to keep pace with demands of health care.
6. The Department should develop a plan, including a financial plan, for repair and renovation of PHCs, sub-centres, hospitals and other buildings as lack of investment in maintenance of infrastructure and equipment affected services to patients and the quality of medical education.
7. The Department should take steps to strengthen the district and hospital level management societies and utilize the user charges for essential maintenance.



8. The Department should ensure that the proceeds of user charges were used for non-salary items and led to efficient management instead of being diverted to salaries.
9. The Department should explore all options for outsourcing cleaning and other housekeeping jobs, pathological tests and maintenance of equipment on the model of West Bengal and other states.
10. The Department should ascertain reasons for lack of response from the private sector and NGOs for running PHCs and hospitals on contract basis.
11. The Department should urgently review the grade IV and III staff presently being utilized for cleaning and other housekeeping jobs, pathological tests and maintenance of equipment
12. The Finance Department should consider a scheme of providing matching funds against collection of user charges to enable outsourcing and use of proceeds for improved services and essential maintenance.
13. The Department should examine the scope for drawing on MLA and MP Development programme for health infrastructure in districts.
14. The Department should prepare a comprehensive assessment of training needs for all categories of staff with the help of Administrative Staff College and experts. The training plan should be forwarded within a month to the finance department for inclusion in the ADB training budget.
15. The proposals for training should be supplemented by proposals for study tours to other states for exposure to good practices, preparation of training manuals and documentation of good practices in the state.
16. The Government should be requested to approve the staffing pattern for the State Health and Family Welfare Institute, especially full time Director and faculty.
17. The Department should prioritise health expenditure. For this, the Department should:
  - a. Devise a manpower plan
  - b. Assess redundant non-technical aspects and
  - c. Ensure optimum deployment of staff across districts and blocks.

- d. Make efforts to staff the FRUs and PHCs with required competent staff
- e. Make the available physical infrastructure and equipment functional to provide desired services to public.

### **Public Works Department:**

1. The Department should undertake the following tasks for completion by end-April 2005:
  - a. Draw up a Mission statement
  - b. Prepare organizational chart
  - c. Prepare job charts
  - d. Enforce citizens' charters
  - e. Ensure adequate delegation and decentralization
  - f. Develop mechanisms for swift grievance redress of employees and the public
  - g. Develop proposals for training for submission to the Finance department for consideration under the ADB training budget
  - h. Prepare a manpower plan based on assessment of optimal staff levels and equalised deployment of teachers in elementary and secondary education subject to guidelines to be issued by Finance Department
  - i. Assess requirement of grades III and IV staff
  - j. Develop proposals for redeployment of surplus staff
2. The finance department should approach the World Bank to consider integrating the assistance available under its project and ADB in the larger interest of statewide compatibility for financial management and human resource management.
3. The Department should transfer salary expenditure under Plan to non-Plan to increase plan expenditure for development.
4. The Department should enforce the Planning Department's recommendation of only taking up works that can be completed in three years.
5. The Department should rationalize the functioning of the Assam Roads Board with transparent guidelines.
6. The Department should clarify the implications of parallel reporting of technical officers to the Department and the Assam Roads Board and the replacement of present arrangements for executing works.
7. The Assam Roads Board should have its own and dedicated fund subject to proper oversight of utilisation.

8. The Department should appreciate the implications of adding to salary burden by regularization of work charge and muster roll workers whose current strength is around 8,000. The department should consider pursuing the scheme of performance-based contract and road management for maintenance of roads instead of relying on unskilled workers.
9. The department should, by end-April 2005, complete the assessment of manpower and divisions in relation to projected capital and revenue expenditure during the Tenth Plan period and identify redundant posts for further necessary action in line with policy guidelines to be issued by finance department.
10. The department should conduct a TNA with the help of AASC and address training needs at all levels, while drawing on the available funds in the World Bank project for rural roads. Entry-level training should be ensured even though the new entrants had better qualifications.
11. The Department should document the various initiatives taken by it in technical and personnel management areas so that the good practices can be extended to other areas through the efforts of AR&T, finance department and AASC.
12. The department should make efforts to deal with the public impression of quality and functioning of PWD. For this, the department should consider the adoption of practices like quality audit, three tier quality assurance practice (as under PMGSY), third party inspection and principles of national quality monitoring.

### **Irrigation Department:**

1. The Irrigation Department should undertake the following tasks on a priority basis to be completed by end-April 2005:
  - a. Prepare Mission Statement
  - b. Prepare Job Chart, which should be a public document especially as it is required under the Right to Information Act
  - c. Prepare Organization Chart indicating delegation of powers
  - d. Develop Citizens. Charter and Quick Grievance Redressal Mechanisms
  - e. Develop E-governance Plan for submission to the E-governance Mission
  - f. Develop proposal for training and capacity building related to the state training policy and Training budget under the ADB Project
2. The department should priorities expenditure for optimum utilization of available funds.
3. In order to initiate action for zero-based functional audit and staff assessment, the Department should draw up an action plan by April 2005 to address the common and department-specific issues and obtain the approval of the Minister and the competent authorities for the plan.
4. All unfinished projects should be prioritized in keeping with the guidelines and criteria issued by the Planning Commission and the feasibility of early completion determined. Finance and Planning Departments should consider funding them to the extent possible. Planning Commission supports the completion of projects in order to minimize the waste of funds locked up in these projects.
5. Asset Protection and Management are critical issues that must be addressed by the Department on a priority basis while addressing incomplete projects and the provision of adequate resources for maintenance of completed projects. Finance department may consider the sanction of a professional study of operation and maintenance of irrigation projects as advised by central government.
6. The Department should examine the feasibility of handing over maintenance of canals and tube wells to User Groups to reduce staff requirements and increase user involvement.
7. The department should formulate guidelines for Water User Associations in preparation for the passage and notification of the

legislation. The department may study the progressive examples of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

8. The Department should abolish the vacant posts and deal with the surplus staff according to the norms followed for other PSUs.
9. The Department should review the rationale for different posts in grades III and IV with similar functions but multiple designations and propose abolition of redundant cadres.
10. The Department should establish revised staffing norms after studying examples of other states. For this, the department should conduct a study by end April 2005 on staff requirements and the workload of divisions in keeping with the budget availability and staffing norms, and then inform finance department about the surplus staff.
11. The Department should consider the option of abolishing the redundant positions and either continue the incumbents till retirement or to transfer them to the surplus staff cell and then offer them attractive VRS as envisaged in states like Karnataka.
12. Personnel department should formulate rules to elaborate the provision in the FR for flexible deployment and posting of employees across departments and levels of administration in the course of staff rationalization, while finance department should review the rationale for multiple scales for posts with similar tasks to facilitate flexible deployment.
13. The Finance department should issue comprehensive guidelines for all departments regarding the identification, constitution of the surplus staff cell in the finance department and the redeployment of surplus staff. The department could study the suggestions and draft circulars contained in the consultant reports.
14. The Department should reconsider the rationale for regularisation of work-charged and muster roll workers, given the low workload and additional liability of salaries and pensions.
15. Finance department should review the current orders for regularization of work-charged workers appointed before and after April 1993 after studying the recent Supreme Court orders. The Finance Department should develop a verified inventory of work-charged workers.
16. The Government should consider the option of paying statutory compensation to the workers appointed after April 1993 in conformity with law rather than consider their absorption into permanent cadres.

17. Service rules for subordinate staff should be formulated early by the Department.
18. The Department should request the Personnel department for early decision on amending service rules for JEs.
19. The performance assessment system and procedures for merit-based promotion should be revised in line with PWD experience.
20. AR&T should take early action to revise the ACR format and introduce technical supplements for individual departments to reflect specific requirements.
21. The Department should ensure prompt and credible writing of ACRs and make the process transparent and participatory.
22. Tendering procedures and systems should be reviewed and e-tendering introduced on the model of PWD.
23. The finance department should consider the upward revision of ceiling on financial powers with chief engineers and lower officers for approval of tenders and purchases related to works.
24. Training plan for technical staff based on training needs assessment should be prepared. The proposal for training and study tours should be sent early to finance department and AR&T for incorporation in the training budget.

## **Departments of Personnel and A. R. & Training**

1. The existing Department of Personnel should function as Department of Human Resource Management by consolidating the existing departments of Personnel, AR&T and Secretariat Administration as well as the responsibility of General Administration department for district establishment. This would restore the original scheme of the department till the 1970s and provide an integrated focus for human resource management.
2. The existing establishment and capacities of the departments of Personnel and AR&T, including the capacity of senior officers, to implement the series of critical actions recommended in the functional review, should be strengthened.
3. AR&T should devise an optimal establishment schedule of each department on the basis of objective norms like receipts, number and nature of schemes, expenditure, agencies supervised etc., and then get the schedules approved by respective ministers and the Cabinet following consultations with finance, personnel and concerned departments. These schedules should form the basis for departmental budgets, assignment of staff and the assignment of staff for the revised set of departments following restructuring.
4. In line with existing policies for staff containment, AR&T should review and assess fresh proposals for creation of new departments with reference to the impact on duplication, functional overlap, fragmentation of cadres and parallel delivery mechanisms.
5. The capability of the Secretariat Training /school should be improved with the help of AASC. SAD should prepare a TNA for the secretariat staff, revise the curriculum and arrange for systematic training of all functionaries.
6. The existing transfer policy that recognized the institution of civil service board, the principles of minimum tenures and objective principles for transfer of officials, and the requirement of submission to chief minister for premature transfers, should be enforced, and Rule 4 of the PSC regulations which permitted ad hoc appointment and promotion should not be misused.
7. The representative of Personnel department should be trained in the promotion rules and procedures of all departments to ensure conformity of the DPC recommendation with prescribed rules and guidelines.



8. The Government should evolve objective parameters for recruitment, transfer and promotion based on best practices and audit the compliance by personnel audit similar to financial audit, submit the findings to the Chief Minister and give wide publicity to the report. This will ensure accountability of officers for performance and compliance with objective norms.
9. The Personnel Department should ensure time-bound submission of all employee database forms (A, B, and C) by denying the payment of salaries if forms are not submitted by respective DDOs before the end of March 2005.
10. The department of AR&T should be strengthened and necessary staff appointed for implementing various elements of civil service reform and amendments to secretariat manual.
11. The Departments of Personnel and AR&T should formulate proposals for engaging consultants and utilizing professional institutions for implementing a work plan relating to regulatory changes, revision of manuals and fixation of staff norms. This plan could form a part of the ADB budget for capacity building.
12. AR&T should formulate a training plan for all categories of staff with the help of AARC and then monitor the impact of training on the basis of the employee database. The details of the plan could be incorporated in the proposals for utilization of ADB training budget.
13. The departments should forward the proposals for training budget to the Finance Department for consideration under the ADB training budget.
14. Functioning of the Staff College should be more autonomous.
15. Five percent of total establishment budget should be earmarked by finance department for training as envisaged in the national training policy.
16. The faculty composition of the staff college should be revised to include senior staff with technical competence to train technical cadres.
17. IT infrastructure should be improved for MIS and employee database.

18. Mission statements for the departments (Personnel, SAD, and AR&T) and the agencies under them such as PSC and AASC should be developed.
19. Organizational charts and job charts should be developed by the departments (Personnel, SAD, and AR&T) and the agencies under them such as PSC and AASC.
20. The departments should enforce citizens' charters.
21. There should be adequate delegation of powers and mechanisms for swift grievance redress of employees and the public.
22. The departments should develop proposals for computerization that should be sent to the E-governance Mission.
23. The departments should draw up a manpower plan for their establishment as well as for the secretariat based on assessment of optimal staff levels.
24. The department of Personnel and AR&T, should develop by March 2005 an implementation plan and timeline of actions with details of agency roles, agreed responsibilities, milestones and requirement of resources. Consistent with present capacities and staff, the two departments should formulate a set of immediate doable actions such as database, establishment schedules of departments, revision of manuals and rules and the training plan, and then identify the professional help and budget required to implement some of these actions. Similar action should be undertaken by the other four departments.

**Next Steps  
in  
Administrative Reforms**

## **Next Steps in Administrative Reforms**

Chairman AARC convened a series of meetings from January 27 to February 2, 2005, to discuss the recommendations contained in the reports of the ADB consultants on functional reviews, civil service reform and organizational restructuring. The recommendations arising from the meetings with departments of Education, Irrigation, Public Works, Public Works, Personnel and AR&T are contained in the Annex.

The context for implementation of the recommendations is found in the fiscal and governance goals of Government of Assam, the guidelines of central Ministries and the policy matrix of the ADB loan for Governance and Public Resource Management. The policy and programme areas arising for collective consideration of government in the light of the department-level meetings and the proposed agenda for change are as follows.

### **Action Plan for Reform**

All the departments and the agencies under them should undertake the following tasks for completion by end-April 2005:

- a. Draw up their respective Mission statements;
- b. Prepare organizational and job charts and give them wide publicity through web sites and media;
- c. Initiate action for zero-based functional audit and manpower assessment to address the common and department-specific issues and obtain the approval of the Minister and the competent authorities on agreed areas of action;
- d. Ensure adequate delegation and decentralization with due regard to 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments;
- e. Formulate and enforce citizens' charters, along with mechanisms for swift grievance redress of employees and the public and better internal communication and information access to public;
- f. Develop plans for computerization and send them to the E-governance Mission.
- g. Develop proposals for training for submission to the Finance department for consideration under the ADB training budget.

### **Staff Rationalisation**

Consistent with the agreed replacement ratio and the decisions of SLEC, all key departments should:

- Finalise action for winding redundant agencies and corporations and the redeployment of staff, such as MI Corporation;

- Work out optimum number and deployment of staff in line with available funds, staff norms, and equitable distribution of staff across districts and blocks and set up, if necessary, an expert committee for this purpose;
- Review the rationale for different posts in grades III and IV and the posts sanctioned against Plan schemes in the past;
- Abolish the redundant positions and, in case of serving staff, either continue the incumbents till retirement or to transfer them to the surplus staff cell and then offer them attractive VRS;
- Formulate rules for flexible deployment and posting of employees across departments and levels of administration;
- Consider issue of comprehensive guidelines regarding filling critical vacancies, redeployment of surplus staff and review rationale for regularization of work-charged and muster roll staff.

## **Fund Flow**

Finance and Planning departments should ensure

- Provision of counterpart funds in time and timely release of central and state shares to departments for various schemes;
- Allotment of adequate funds for maintenance of roads, buildings, irrigation sources and other facilities to ensure asset protection and service quality;
- Timely approval of schemes and expenditure proposals;
- Levy of user charges and their utilization for essential maintenance and improved services;
- Wider avenues for public-private partnership, decentralized management and outsourcing subject to protection of public interest and service quality;

## **Personnel Management and Civil Service Reform**

Government may consider the following:

- The Department of Personnel should function as the Department of Human Resource Management by consolidating the existing departments of Personnel, AR&T and Secretariat Administration;
- Approve an optimal establishment schedule of each department on the basis of objective norms and utilize it as the basis for departmental budgets and the assignment of staff with guidelines for annual updating;
- Extend to each department the transfer policy contained in the 2002 circular of Personnel department and ensure the effective operation of civil service board;

- Evolve objective parameters for recruitment, transfer and promotion based on best practices and ensure accountability of officers for performance;
- Implement objective and transparent system of performance assessment along with a credible regime of rewards and sanctions;
- Formulate time-bound plan for the simplification and streamlining of rules, manuals and procedures relating to personnel management;
- Strengthen AARC for implementing exercises for functional reviews and the AR&T for administrative reform and training;

### **Employee Database**

- Ensure the early piloting of the digitised database for ACS/IAS and finance staff;
- Implement the exercise for installing digitized database for all employees within a year with penalties for non-compliance;

### **Training and Capacity Building**

- Development of plans and submission by all key departments, including finance, personnel and AR&T, for TNA-based training and capacity building besides necessary analytic studies for effective implementation and improved service delivery;
- Quick finalization by FMU of the proposals for utilization of the ADB training budget with due regard to proposals from AARC, AR&T and departments;

### **Way Forward**

Under the guidance of AARC, all departments should develop by March 2005 an implementation plan and timeline of actions with details of agency roles, agreed responsibilities, milestones and requirement of resources. Under guidance of AR&T, they should identify the professional help and budget required to revise manuals and rules, prepare manpower plans, devise staff norms and undertake training.