

Chapter 7

Human resource management

7.1 *Vacancies in post of field functionaries*

To bridge the knowledge deficit of farmers in the areas of modern technology and improved package of practices, the Department emphasized on strengthening the extension machinery through re-training and re-tooling of existing extension personnel. Assistant Agriculture Officers (AAOs) at block level and Village Agriculture Workers (VAWs) at GP level are the officers providing agricultural extension services at the cutting-edge level. The Department was also equipped with an engineering wing for providing technical support to farmers at the field level as well as for development of agricultural infrastructure.

We noticed that 412 (46 *per cent*) out of 902 posts of AAOs, 1413 (44 *per cent*) out of 3218 posts of VAWs and 68 posts of Subject Matter Specialists (25 *per cent*) in the State remained vacant as of March 2011 which *inter-alia* gravely affected extension programme. Such large-scale vacancies affected agricultural extension activities in the test-checked agriculture districts as ₹ 58.86 crore under various schemes like NFSM, RKVY, Extension Reforms etc. remained unspent.

Similarly, we noticed that under the Engineering wing, three posts of Executive Engineer (15 *per cent*), 111 posts of Assistant Agriculture Engineer (33 *per cent*) were lying vacant. Besides, in the eighth State Level Sanctioning Committee (RKVY) meeting (23 May 2011), Director indicated that ₹ 28.15 crore relating mostly to infrastructure development remained unspent due to shortage of Assistant Engineers.

In reply, the Director admitted (November 2011) that agricultural extension work had been affected due to such vacancies. He added that Government had permitted (January 2011) to fill up 1413 posts of VAWs on contractual basis and action had been initiated for filling up 117 posts of AAOs and that 1100 posts of VAWs had already been filled up; the remaining posts could not be filled up as the matter was sub-judice.

Though acute shortage of staff was prevailing prior to SAP 2008, yet the same was not considered while framing the SAP 2008 and most of the strategies set out therein were oblivious of this field reality especially while framing strategies on farmers' training, demonstration, knowledge dissemination etc. In the exit conference (November 2011), we pointed out that the issue of staff shortage prevailing for over two decades was not considered in the SAP 2008 and no strategy was proposed to meet this challenge. The CCO-cum-Principal Secretary agreed that a separate strategy to meet this challenge needed to have been framed.