

Approach Paper for Lab-to-Land Initiative

**Department of Rural Development
Government of India**

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1 Background

Department of Rural Development, Government of India is implementing a wide range of programmes for the welfare and development of rural population. The investment under these programmes has grown at a compounded annual rate of growth of 26.8% from Rs. 7169 crores in 2001-02 to Rs. 76,800 crores in 2011-12. These programmes aim to improve the quality of life of rural households by providing them infrastructure for roads, housing, drinking water and sanitation, opportunities for income, employment, skill development, social security and support for proper management of natural resources. People's institutions like Gram Sabhas/Ward Sabhas are assigned a pivotal role in planning and implementation of these programmes along with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, various evaluation studies have shown myriad shortcomings in the implementation of programmes and have highlighted the need to improve the quality by enhancing people's participation and improving mechanisms for vigilance and redressal of public grievances. It has been found that the awareness of people about the programmes and their entitlements is low and participation of people in planning, implementation and social audit of programmes is limited. People have large number of complaints and grievances and the implementing agencies are unable to respond to them satisfactorily. Many of the provisions of the programmes remain unimplemented or are wrongly implemented due to various constraints facing the implementing agencies such as shortage of staff, frequent transfers of key functionaries, lack of training and exposure to best practices, ineffective quality control systems, weak monitoring and vigilance, and fragile mechanisms of social audit. These problems give rise to serious friction within the delivery system and loss of focus from the goals underlying the programmes. Despite huge investment in development and welfare programmes, the relationship between the people and government institutions is perceived to be marred by a deficit of trust. Communication between people and government institutions is thwarted by illiteracy, remoteness of habitations, poor rural infrastructure, local factionalism, uneven distribution of power, social inequality, prejudices and discrimination. As a result, the objectives of the programmes are not achieved fully. A wide chasm is observed between the provisions of the programmes and the state of actual delivery system.

A barrage of measures is required to educate the people about their rights, entitlements and procedures to avail them under various programmes, forge partnerships between the people and government institutions, strengthen inter-departmental coordination, prepare village development plans, monitor and audit their implementation in accordance with the provisions of the programmes, and reinforce village unity and harmony by eliminating barriers of caste and class. It is also imperative to build the capacity of the implementing agencies to expand their outreach and become more responsive to the needs of the people in order to make the utilization of programme resources more efficient and meaningful.

Department of Rural Development, Government of India provides financial assistance to

