

Desert Development Programme

Owing to the ever-burgeoning human and livestock population, the fragile natural resource base of the drought prone and desert ecosystem has been persistently subjected to excessive exploitation. The depletion in natural resources on account of sizeable loss of vegetative cover, increase in soil erosion and fall in ground water levels has not only contributed to diminishing biomass productivity of the land but also adversely affected the livelihood resource structure of the local inhabitants in the region.

The Desert Development Programme (DDP) was started both in hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana and the cold deserts of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh in 1977-78. From 1995-96, the coverage has been extended to a few more districts in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In hot sandy desert areas, sand dune stabilization and shelterbelt plantations were given greater weightage. On the other hand, in cold desert areas,

since rainfall is negligible, crop cultivation and afforestation could be taken up only through assured irrigation. In these areas, the main activity was water resources development by construction of channels for diversion of water flow from the glaciers and springs to the fields and lift irrigation works in the valleys.

The programme was reviewed in 1994-95 by a Technical Committee headed by Prof. C.H. Hanumantha Rao. The main reason identified by the Committee for below satisfactory results under the programme was that area development was not taken up on watershed basis and the involvement of the local people was virtually non-existent, both in planning and execution of the programme. Besides inadequacy of funds, non-availability of trained personnel and taking up of too many activities, which were neither properly integrated nor necessarily related to the objectives of the programme, were also identified as contributory factors towards reducing the impact of the programme.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee, new Blocks/Districts were included under the programme. Comprehensive Guidelines for Watershed Development were issued in October 1994 and made applicable to the area development programme with effect from 1.4.1995. Subsequently,



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based upon the feed back received from the various stakeholders, revised Guidelines were circulated in September, 2001. These Guidelines are applicable for projects sanctioned during 2000-2001 and thereafter.

Rajasthan has distinct problems because of large tracts of Hot Arid (Sandy) areas. In view of the problem of sand dune stabilization in ten districts of this State, special projects are under implementation under DDP since 1999-2000 for combating desertification by way of shelterbelt plantation, sand dune fixation and afforestation. These ten districts are Barmer, Bikaner, Churu, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Jhunjhunu, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Pali and Sikar.

Objectives

The programme has been conceived as a long term measure for restoration of ecological balance by conserving, developing and harnessing land, water, livestock and human resources. It seeks to promote the economic development of the village community and improve the economic conditions of the resource poor and disadvantaged sections of society in the rural areas. The major objectives of the programme are as under:-

- * To mitigate the adverse effects of desertification and adverse climatic conditions on crops, human and livestock population and combating desertification.
- * To restore ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing natural resources i.e. land, water, vegetative cover and raising land productivity.
- * To implement developmental works through the watershed approach, for land development, water resources development and afforestation/pasture development.

Strategy

Prior to 31-3-95, the impact of the programme was felt only in the areas actually treated by core activities. Growing population and poverty compounded the problem by increasing pressure on fragile ecosystems. Based on the recommendations of the Hanumantha Rao Committee, the major elements of the new strategy w.e.f. 1-4-95 are:

- * Area development under the programme to be taken up on watershed basis only and a

watershed development project of about 500 hectares would be the field unit for implementation over a period of four to five years. A watershed development project to cover a village, as far as possible.

- * However, in some sandy areas where it is not physically feasible to demarcate a watershed, the programme is to be implemented by adopting either a cluster of villages or an Index Catchment as the unit of planning.
- * Direct participation of the local people in planning and development of watershed project areas as well as in the maintenance of assets after the project is completed.
- * The Panchayati Raj Institutions were responsible for monitoring and reviewing the programme at district, block and village levels upto 2002-03. Under new HARYALI Guidelines applicable w.e.f. 1.4.2003, the Panchayati Raj Institutions would function as Project Implementation Agencies(PIA) for the Watershed Development Projects sanctioned during 2003-04 and thereafter.
- * Keeping in view the problem of sand dune stabilization in 10 districts of Rajasthan, special projects would be taken up for three activities namely sand dune stabilization, shelter belt plantation and afforestation.

Coverage

The Desert Development Programme was in operation in 131 blocks of 21 districts in 5 States upto 1994-95. On the recommendations of the Hanumantha Rao Committee, 32 new blocks were brought within the purview of the programme and 64 blocks were transferred from DPAP. Consequently, coverage of the programme was extended to 227 blocks of the country w.e.f. 1.4.1995. With the reorganization of districts and blocks, the programme is under implementation in 235 blocks of 40 districts in 7 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The States where DDP is under implementation along

with the number of blocks and area are indicated in the table below:

Sl. No.	State	Number of Districts	Number of Blocks	Area in Sq. Kms.
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1	16	19136
2.	Gujarat	6	52	55424
3.	Haryana	7	45	20542
4.	Himachal Pradesh	2	3	35107
5.	Jammu & Kashmir	2	12	96701
6.	Karnataka	6	22	32295
7.	Rajasthan	16	85	198744
Total		40	235	457949

Funding Pattern

The DDP is a Centrally Sponsored Programme and funds are directly released to DRDAs/ZPs for implementation of the programme. Upto 31.03.99, Central share for different types of project area based on the nature of the ecosystem was as under:-

S.No.	Type of Ecosystem	Central share
1.	Hot Arid (Non-Sandy) Areas	75%
2.	Hot Arid (Sandy) Areas	100%
3.	Cold Arid Areas	100%

With effect from 1.4.1999, the programme is being funded on the basis of 75:25 for the watershed projects sanctioned on or after 1.4.1999. However, projects sanctioned prior to 31.3.99 would continue to be funded on old pattern. Further, upto 1999-2000, the project cost was Rs.22.5 lakh per project in respect of Hot Arid (non-sandy) areas and Rs.25 lakh in other areas. However, this has been enhanced to a uniform rate of Rs.30 lakh per project and this revised rate is applicable for the projects sanctioned on or after 1.4.2000. The projects sanctioned before 31.3.2000 would continue to be implemented on old cost norms.

Physical and Financial Performance

From 1995-96 till 2002-03, the year-wise detail

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of sanction of projects is as under:-

Year	No. of Projects	Area (in lakh hectares)	Total cost (Rs. in crore)
1995-96 to 1998-99	2194	10.98	Rs. 438.80
1999-2000	1500	7.50	Rs. 325.00
2000-01	1659	8.295	Rs. 497.70
2001-02	1359	6.795	Rs. 407.70
2002-03	1602	8.010	Rs. 480.60

Thus, as on 31.3.2003, 8314 projects were under implementation in the programme States.

During the financial year 2003-04, 1562 new projects covering approximately 7.81 lakh ha for treatment and costing about Rs.468.60 crores have been sanctioned. The table in *Annexure-XXXV* indicates the number of watershed projects taken up in various programme States since the introduction of Guidelines for Watershed Development.

Out of total 9876 projects sanctioned so far, 1861 projects have been completed with an approximate DDP area of 9.305 lakh hectares brought under treatment. The release of funds to programme states during the period from 1.1.2003 to 31.3.2003 is given in *Annexure-XXXVI*. The

table at *Annexure-XXXVII* indicates the year-wise release of funds upto 2003-2004 for implementing Desert Development Programme.

Impact Assessment of DDP

In respect of projects sanctioned during 1995-96 to 1997-98, which have either been completed or are nearing completion, the Ministry had commissioned impact evaluation studies through independent organizations. Some of these studies have since been completed and the results indicate that with the implementation of watershed projects under Desert Development Programme, the overall productivity of land and water table have increased and there has been a positive and significant impact on overall economic development in the project areas. The studies also revealed that green vegetative cover has also improved in desert areas that would have a positive impact in checking soil erosion by water and wind.

Outlay and Expenditure for 2003-04

As against the plan allocation of Rs.185 crore for DDP in 2002-03, an increased provision of Rs.215 crore has been made for the year 2003-04. Out of this allocation, an amount of Rs.214.80 crore has been released upto 31.3.2004.