

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1491

ANSWERED ON:01.08.2000

ASSISTANCE TO DROUGHT PRONE AREAS

DINESH CHANDRA YADAV;NARESH KUMAR PUGLIA;RAM JEEVAN SINGH;RAM SAGAR

**Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the drought prone area is increasing in the country even after being provided the Central assistance in this regard;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the manner in which the Central assistance is used by the State Governments;
- (d) whether cases of irregularities in the utilisation of drought relief, misappropriation, misuse and diversion of funds for other purposes have come to the notice of the Union Government;
- (e) if so, the details thereof, State-wise particularly for Maharashtra; and
- (f) the action taken by the Government to ensure that the District Rural Development Agencies utilise the funds meant for drought areas as per the guidelines to this effect?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (A. RAJA)

(a) & (b) The Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) is in operation since 1973-74 in areas specifically identified for the purpose. The coverage of the Programme changed in 1995-96 due to changes in criteria adopted to identify drought prone areas. The criteria under the old DPAP guidelines identified only 55.3 m. ha for coverage under the programme. Subsequently, a High-level Technical Committee (Hanumantha Rao committee, 1994), identified some new areas for inclusion under the Programme at the same time identifying some existing Programme areas for exclusion from its coverage. However, a policy decision was taken by the Government to add the newly identified areas for coverage under the Programme as also not to delete any of the already covered areas under the Programme as these areas had not been completely treated for drought proofing. Consequently, the total Programme coverage increased to 74.6 m. ha with the adoption of the new Guidelines for Watershed development with effect from 1.4.1995.

(c) In accordance with the new watershed guidelines, the Central assistance is being utilised exclusively in the execution of watershed development projects in the programme States through people's own organisations specifically set up for the purpose at the village level.

(d) & (e) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, in their Report for the year ending March 1998 have made the following major observations :

(i) Though the programme is under implementation for almost two decades, the drought and ecological conditions had shown no perceptible improvements.

(ii) Overlapping objectives of a multiplicity of rural development programmes had resulted in blurring of focus.

(iii) Complete development of the area and saturation of watershed were not achieved in any of the States.

(iv) Eight State Governments did not use scientific techniques like aerial photography and remote sensing for identification of watersheds and works in the watershed projects were taken up without conducting detailed surveys.

(v) Four State Governments did not undertake demonstration of crops.

(vi) Funds were diverted for activities/schemes beyond the scope of the programme.

(vii) The State Governments and implementing agencies did not maintain the inventory of assets created under the programme nor were the assets handed over to line departments in eleven States.

(viii) The average unit cost of land development works varied widely from State to State.

As far as Maharashtra State was concerned, the observations related to unutilised/unadjusted advances lying with the DRDAs, diversion of funds to other schemes/activities not connected with the programme, funds parked in Revenue/Personal Ledger Account/Personal Deposit/bank account by DRDAs and inoperative and abandoned schemes.

(f) The observations contained in the CAG Report mainly relate to the implementation of the Programme under the old guidelines before 1.4.1995. The Hanumantha Rao Committee (1994) which reviewed the implementation of the Programme also highlighted the infirmities that resulted in the lack of perceptible impact. As a remedial measure, the Committee recommended implementation of the Programme exclusively on watershed basis and through active involvement of local people in planning, implementation and post-project management of the watershed projects. New Guidelines to this effect are in operation since 1.4.1995. In order to ensure that funds meant for drought areas are utilized as per the prescribed guidelines, a Watershed development Advisory Committee at the district level and a Watershed Programme Implementation and Review Committee at the State level are constituted. At the Central level, Programme implementation is monitored through periodical reviews by the Secretary (RD) with the concerned State Secretaries, similar reviews by the Joint Secretary in-charge of the Programme, visits to the project areas by Central Officers handling the Programme as well as Area Officers specifically assigned the task of overseeing programme implementation in the State(s) assigned to them.