

SEVENTH REPORT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (1994-95)

(TENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL WASTELANDS DEVELOPMENT



*Presented to Lok Sabha on
Laid in Rajya Sabha on*

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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* Minutes of the sittings of the Committee on Urban and Rural Development held on 9 July, 1993, 27 January and 7 March, 1994.	

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Urban and Rural Development (1994-95) having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Report on 'National Wastelands Development'.

2. The Committee took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Rural Development on 9th July, 1993 and 27th January, 1994. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministry of Rural Development who appeared and placed their considered views before the Committee on the subject.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 7th April, 1994.

NEW DELHI;
4 May, 1994

14 Vaisakha, 1916 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO B. BHOSALE,
Chairman,
Committee on Urban &
Rural Development (1994-95).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

1.1 It has now been widely accepted that with continuously rising population and diminishing resources mankind on the earth cannot survive long if concerted efforts are not attempted to utilise properly the existing resources. One of the major source of livelihood for mankind is land and a large portion of it is 'wastelands'. We cannot afford to create any more wastelands, through unscientific exploitation of natural resources and therefore, need appropriate measures for the reclamation development of the existing wastelands. Our approach should be to turn today's wastelands into tomorrow's granaries or foraging meadows and to check further degradation of the good land.

1.2 All that land which is not being used at present should not be termed as 'waste'. Every bit of land that has been created by mother nature has its own importance and utility. If mankind fails to identify and develop land for its optimal utilization, nature can hardly be blamed for it.

1.3 India, which is predominantly a land of agriculture, has a large part of its total land-mass as wastelands. It is assessed to be around 1,295 lakh hectares in the country, out of which 936.90 lakh hectares is non-forest wastelands.

1.4 The rapid expansion of wastelands gradually weakens the productive resource base and endangers the vital life support system. A vast area of Wastelands continues to remain fallow even as lakhs of agricultural labourers languish for want of employment in a country which is striving hard to increase agricultural production and food for all.

1.5 If the survival of millions of people is to be ensured we must realise that the wasteland Development is an urgent task and the bulk of country's land should be made fertile and productive. As a matter of fact, we cannot afford to allow our valuable land to remain wasteland, so we must protect our precious land from being wasted. Hence, the dire need is to zealously guard it against depletion and degradation to meet the growing demands of our increasing population because once the good land is depleted or degraded, even after spending lakhs and crores of rupees, it cannot be revived. Precisely, the development of Wasteland would not only generate fertility of soil but also food and gainful employment for the rural poor.

1.6 'Wastelands Development' is a vast subject and of a varied nature. The Committee have undertaken a selective analysis and have taken few aspects for consideration.

Organisational Set-up

1.7 To provide much needed thrust to the pressing problem of non-forest wastelands a new Department was created in July, 1992 delinking this function from the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Department of Wastelands Development has been made a part of the Ministry of Rural Development and has been assigned the following subjects:

- (i) National Wastelands Development Board;
- (ii) National Land Use and Wasteland Development Council;
- (iii) Promotion of Rural Employment through Wastelands Development;
- (iv) Promotion of production of fuelwood, fodder and timber on non-forest lands, including private wastelands;
- (v) Research and development of appropriate low cost technologies for increasing productivity of wastelands in sustainable ways;
- (vi) Inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary coordination in programme planning and implementation of the Wastelands Development Programme, including training;
- (vii) Promotion of people's participation and public co-operation, and coordination of efforts of Panchayat and other voluntary and non-Government agencies for Wastelands Development.

1.8 Earlier, the National Wastelands Development Board which was set up in 1985 under the Ministry of Environment and Forests was responsible for wastelands in forests as well as non-forest areas but consequent upon the setting up of Department of Wastelands Development and creation of the National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Board was reconstituted with the mandate for Development of Wastelands in non-forest areas aimed at checking land degradation, putting such wastelands to sustainable use and increasing biomass availability, specially fuelwood and fodder.

1.9 The Department of Wastelands Development (DWD) has the responsibility of reclamation and development of non-forest wastelands and co-ordination with other related agencies working in this field.

1.10 The aim of the Ministry of Rural Development under whose charge the Department of Wastelands Development has been placed is to achieve better co-ordination as the nodal agency for the implementation of the most of the schemes of the DWD and the District Rural Development Agencies. Moreover, the reclamation and development of wastelands is intimately linked with the poverty alleviation programmes run by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Plan Allocation

1.11 The Department of Wastelands was given a budget of Rs. 26.41 crores for 1992-93 of which Rs. 24.10 crores was spent. The DWD requested the Planning Commission to make provision of Rs. 1165.00 crores for various schemes/projects to be taken up during the Eighth Five Year Plan. According to the Department, the Planning Commission has not yet indicated the funds available to the Department for the Eighth Five Year Plan. However, Committee have been informed that the Planning Commission allocated only Rs. 50 crores for the year 1993-94.

1.12 Wastelands Development is being looked after by two Departments, one is for degraded forest lands under the Ministry of Environment and Forests and other is for non-forest wastelands which is a part of Ministry of Rural Development. When asked whether the distribution of wastelands as forest and non-forest wastelands and the budget allocation for it is proportionate, the representative of the Ministry of Rural Development replied that out of the total estimated wastelands of 129.58 million hec., the DWD would be responsible for the sustainable development of 93.69 million hec. which is the estimated area of non-forest wastelands in the country.

These figures will have to be formed upon the basis of village-wise details. According to these figures we have two-third of the wastelands outside the forests and one third portion of the total budget for the development of the wastelands is for the development of non-forest Wastelands.

1.13 The Committee find that the Ministry of Rural Development under whose charge the Department of Wastelands Development has been placed has the overall responsibility for the development of non-forest wastelands. It is also responsible for laying down broad policy formulations in this regard. Though, the Ministry have stated that they have various schemes and some schemes are under implementation also but the Committee have found that ground realities are totally different.

As the Department of Wastelands Development is totally new the Committee are of the opinion that the strategies evolved for developing more and more wasteland in the country should be quite comprehensive and they should have the clear view of the problem.

1.14 The Committee note that the Department of Wastelands Development has posed a demand of Rs. 1165.00 crores for Eighth Five Year Plan which comes to Rs. 233.00 crores per year but a budget of Rs. 26.41 crores for the year 1992-93 and Rs. 50 crores for the year 1993-94 was allocated to the Department.

1.15 The Committee are of the view that Wastelands Development is a huge task and needs utmost attention. As the Department has the respon-

sibility to develop the two third of the total wastelands in the country, it should have posed more demand to the Planning Commission. The average of rate of assistance for the development of Wastelands per hectares come to Rs. 10,000 and the Department has the responsibility for developing approximately 936.90 lakh hectares. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Department should be given more budget in view of the enormous task it has.

1.16 The Committee are also of the view that the question of Development of Wastelands is intimately linked with the poverty alleviation, productive activities, employment generation and promotion of environment in the country. The Committee strongly recommend that the Planning Commission should clearly indicate the plan-wise/year-wise allocation of funds to this Department because the present pace of development and the amount available for this task will take more than hundred years to develop the existing non-forest wastelands for sustainable use. The country cannot afford to wait for such a long time. Thus, the Committee recommend that efforts should be made to complete the task within a span of 10-15 years.

1.17. The Committee also recommend that the Department of Wastelands Development should fully utilise the budget allocations and a proper planning and monitoring at regular intervals should be carried out so that the schemes are implemented more effectively.

CHAPTER II

IDENTIFICATION & DEVELOPMENT OF WASTELANDS

2.1 To make the sustainable use and development of the Wastelands a proper definition, its identification, categorization and generation of data regarding geographical, spatial, distribution pattern on various types of Wastelands at district and village level is necessary. In this regard the Department stated in a written reply that:—

“The DWD works on Wastelands, which have been defined as land which can be brought under vegetative cover with reasonable effort and which is deteriorating for lack of appropriate water and soil management or an account of natural causes.”

2.2 About the identification of Wastelands, the Secretary of the Ministry informed the Committee that they have been taking up the work of identification of Wastelands. So far, they were having only an assessment of Wastelands which were indicated by the Society for promotion of Wastelands Development. They have taken up a programme for identification of Wastelands through Satellite imagery, which had been going on even before the Department was created. According to the Department the work has already been completed in 147 districts. The work relating to identification of Wastelands is going on in phases. These 147 districts which were taken up for identification of Wastelands were with more than 15% of Wastelands and maps were prepared under the National Wastelands Identification Project. But the data generated by this project is not in current use as it is only partially complete.

2.3 According to the Ministry, “However, the Ministry of Agriculture, while arriving at an estimate of 175 million hec. of landmass affected by soil erosion and land degradation, has taken percentage of area under different land use as problem area. No mapping has been carried out either by the Department of Agriculture or the Society for promotion of Wastelands Development”.

2.4 Further, the representative of the Ministry stated that the Department is mainly concentrating in States where the Wastelands is found to be maximum. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan fall in the first category and Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat in the second category. The DWD are, however, working in other States also.

2.5 When asked about the further progress regarding identification of wastelands in the country the Ministry of Rural Development have informed the Committee that the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) has been entrusted with a second Project to take up the identification of wastelands in 84 districts in the country which have from 5 to 15% of wastelands and also

7 districts of Madhya Pradesh. Thus, the work of identification of Wastelands is currently in progress in 91 districts in the country through NRSA.

2.6 The Ministry have further informed that the National Wastelands Development Board has not yet done detailed study to identify the capacity zones of different types of Wastelands in different parts of the country to produce biomass on a sustained basis.

2.7 The over growing population, depletion of natural resources, Environmental and other pollution, climatic changes and its disorders like droughts, famines and floods have caused the rapid growth of Wastelands.

2.8 When asked about the work being done in regard to development of Wastelands and implementation of Developmental Programmes the representatives of the Department of Wastelands informed that it will be implementing many schemes and projects for the reclamation and development of Wastelands. The important schemes are (i) Integrated Wasteland and Development Project Scheme (ii) Support to Non-Governmental Organisation's for Wasteland Development (iii) A scheme of Investment Promotion which is basically for trying to encourage the participation of corporate sector in Wastelands Development.

2.9 When the Committee desired to know as to what has actually been done in this field, what is the total area that has been covered and what type of development taken place, in a written note furnished by the Ministry of Rural Development the Committee have been informed that:

“Since 1985 an area of 11.698 million hec. has been covered by afforestation/tree planting and 39289 lakh seedlings have been distributed for plantation upto 31.3.1993 under point No. 16 of the 20 Point Programme for greening of wastelands at an expenditure of about Rs. 4424 crores. The plantation of trees and other vegetation on wastelands, forest or non-forest is one of the effective way of providing permanent vegetal cover on Wastelands and preventing further degradation of these lands. This activity is further supplemented by activities like soil and moisture conservation, agro-forestry, silvi pasture, horticulture, etc.”

2.10 When the Committee expressed its concern over the slow pace of the development of Wastelands and pointed out that so far about one per cent of the Wastelands might have been developed, the representative of the Ministry agreed with the observation of the Committee. Wasteland reclamation cannot be completed by merely doing some afforestation or social forestry as the Department had tried in the beginning. The representative of the Ministry apprised the Committee about the new approach which is being adopted for Wasteland reclamation which he described as the Watershed approach being used as the banner approach. This means not only afforestation, but completely

treating the whole watershed through Soil Protection and Water conservation measures and changing cropping patterns.

2.11 Regarding the work done to suggest suitable remedies for the reclamation of each type of Wasteland the Ministry of Rural Development stated in a written note that the solution for each category varies from site to site and change of agro-climatic zones. However, the range of activities that would normally constitute the development of Wastelands are Land Development including in situ soil and moisture conservation, plantation, agro-forestry, Horticulture Development of Pasture Lands, etc.

2.12 The Committee were of the view that the erosion is one of the major problems of land becoming Wasteland and desired to know the extent of soil erosion taken place during the last 10 years and the changes that have occurred in the estimates and the reasons thereof. The Ministry informed the Committee through a written note that in the absence of comprehensive and Periodic Surveys in the country as a whole, quantum of soil erosion in the country during the last 10 years is precisely not known. However, according to available information as per 1981-92 Land use Data 126.6 million hectare are affected by soil erosion. Areas treated till the end of 1991-92 under various soil conservation programmes comes to 35.81 million hectare.

2.13 In a subsequent note the Ministry have stated that according to available information and land utilization statistics the estimated problem area is 173.64 million hectares and out of this 144.42 million hectares due to Soil and Water erosion. On review of the problem area statistics of the country, it has been observed that the existing estimates of areas affected by soil erosion and degradation are not realistic and serious anomalies/discrepancies have been observed.

2.14 The Committee were informed during evidence that the soil erosion takes place due to three reasons i.e. wind erosion, water erosion and flood erosion. The silt is being washed away from the rainfed areas in large quantities. How much exactly is it being washed away has to be seen with reference to the catchment areas and watershed areas. For the entire country the DWD do not have any precise figures. The representative of the Ministry also said that the Department has not made any estimates as to how much silt is going into the rivers and have no plans to do so at the national level.

2.15 In the hot dry regions of the country where the climate is hostile with unpredictable and insufficient rainfall, high temperature and movement of sand during dry and windy periods make the land almost useless for agricultural purpose. With the increase in wind velocity there is rapid increase in the movement of sand. This removal of sand from one place devoids it of the soil depth and its deposition at the other leads to the formation of hummocks and sand dunes. This way the productive lands are becoming wastelands. According

to the available data provided by the Department of Wastelands the estimates of wind eroded area in the non-forest area is 129.26 lakh hectares. When asked about the development of Land becoming degraded due to wind erosion the representative of the Ministry could not provide any satisfactory reply during evidence.

2.16 The Committee are of the view that so far no clear-cut picture has come out about the extent of non-forest Wastelands in the country. The Department of Wastelands is having only a rough assessment of non-forest Wastelands. The work of identification of Wastelands is said to be going on in phases under the National Wastelands Identification Project through National Remote Sensing Agency but the data generated by it are not in current use as these are partially complete. The Committee do agree with the Ministry that it is also true that in the absence of sufficiently reliable data and detailed information about the non-forest Wastelands, policies cannot be framed for development of Wastelands. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that there is a need to evolve a reliable methodology for identification and estimation of the Wastelands which could be adopted by all the agencies concerned with the land. On the basis of this methodology the agencies may generate data and could then be collected to arrive at a realistic picture of non-forest Wastelands in the country.

2.17 The Committee further recommend that the Wastelands in the Country may be got realistically identified and create a reliable data base with a view to ascertain that which particular Wastelands can be salvaged and made culturable. In addition, maps may be prepared to be used for identifying areas to be taken for micro-planning. Field surveys should be done to collect data and prepare plans on Watershed basis keeping in view the factors like land capability, site conditions and local needs.

2.18 The Committee find that the pace of progress in the field of Wastelands Development has been rather slow and limited in scope. There is a lack of proper coordination between Centre and States. Though, some important initiatives have been taken in some states but at the national level this has not been given a sincere thought. The Committee feel that the whole approach to the problem should be to impart a sense of urgency and make qualitative changes in all the ongoing programmes operating in the field.

2.19 To check further degradation and denudation of land is an important task. On the one side we are trying to reclaim the Wastelands and on the other side more and more land is turning waste. The Government have not been able to contain this trend. Every year the culturable Land is being reduced. Due to rise in population there is a fall in the per capita land. According to one report the per capita availability of agricultural land

which stood at 0.48 hectare in 1951 will be reduced to one Third, that is 0.16 hectare is 2000 A.D. The Departments concerned with the Land are not performing their jobs in proper coordination. Most of the schemes are salary oriented. The Committee need hardly emphasise that there should be proper planning for developing Wastelands and all the Departments should make integrated efforts in this direction to have an effective coordination at the district level throughout the country.

2.20 The Committee recommend that the Wastelands Development should be done by evolving mechanism for integrated development of Wastelands in a cost effective manner and to meet the needs of the people in the rural areas in respect of fuelwood and fodder and other products like crops and fruit bearing trees. The Committee are of the opinion that it is essential to take up large scale and need based programmes for community and Farm Forestry on non-forest lands, including Private Wastelands.

2.21 The Committee observed that in the absense of comprehensive and periodic surveys in the country as a whole, quantum of soil erosion is precisely not known. The Committee are of the view that this is one of the major causes of Land degradation. There should be proper management for wind water and flood erosion. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a detailed study in regard to this problem may be done and the objectives should be the appraisal of erosion problem and conservation of land and water resources.

2.22 The Committee also observe that where the percentage of rainfall is higher and land is uneven, the percentage of soil erosion is much more. Effective measures will have to be adopted to prevent the flow of water and soil erosion. The Committee strongly recommend that much emphasis should be laid on water retention measures and a dense vegetative cover may be created in the areas where the problem of soil erosion is acute due to run off water. It is also necessary to create a dense vegetative cover in the watershed areas because in the absence of impediments to the rushing water, we are having more and more flash floods every year. Floods result not only in loss of enormous quantities of good soil but of water as well through excessive run off. If there had been dense vegetative cover, more water would have seeped into the soil to augment groundwater. In addition, a better co-ordination should be maintained between the Agriculture, Forest and Wasteland Development Departments and the other Departments dealing with Water Resources.

2.23 The Committee are also of the view that due to depletion of vegetative cover and extensive soil erosion the siltation of big reserviors its taking place at an alarming rate and causing deterioration in their life

span. Thus, irreparable loss to our most valuable and irreplaceable potential for irrigation and power. The Committee recommends that it is absolutely necessary to protect these projects from siltation and to give special attention to the treatment of catchment areas.

2.24 The Committee are of the view that there is urgent need to check wind erosion where the land is becoming degraded due to it. Adoption of technologies for sand stabilization, soil and moisture conservation can go a long way in improving soil environment for higher and sustained plant production. Building of shelterbelts in Wastelands during rainy season depending upon the type of the plants to be grown and soil conditions, raising of micro-crop shelterbelts with irrigation facilities wherever available can be very useful in reducing the speed of hot dry winds, evaporative loss from the soil and the crop surfaces and in checking erosion and movement of sand.

2.25 In the opinion of the Committee indiscriminate mining activity also leads to destruction of the biological potential of the land which can ultimately turn to a Wasteland. The effects of such mining activities are degradation of land, reduction in agricultural land, land subsidence, development of salinity and vegetation degradation. In this regard the Committee suggests that it would pay dividend to consider ameliorative measures to rehabilitate the land after cessation of mining activity. It is essential that due attention be given to the hazards associated with the mining activities and to evolve appropriate reclamation measures.

CHAPTER III

SCHEMES UNDER IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Various schemes/activities are said to be under implementation on Wastelands Development. The main objectives of the schemes are to ensure integrated approach to Land Management and Wastelands Development. These schemes are also aimed at creating planning capability at the lowest possible level, promote a project approach and enhance people's participation in Wastelands Development Programmes. The main on-going schemes are:

- Integrated Wastelands Development project including Technology Extension.
- Grants-in-Aid Scheme.

Integrated Wastelands Development Project Scheme

3.2 The Scheme has been under implementation since 1989-90 with the erstwhile National Wastelands Development Board. At the time of reconstitution of NWDB under newly constituted Department of Wastelands Development 14 projects sanctioned in 1991-92 were transferred by erstwhile NWDB. 19 were sanctioned in 1992-93 and 39 projects have been sanctioned in 1993-94 under IWDP Scheme. Indicating the details about the scheme the Ministry informed that Integrated Wastelands Development Project Scheme is being implemented by the States through the District Rural Development Agency. The financial assistance under IWDP scheme is extended at the following rates:

	Cost per ha.
1. For Wastelands Development Project	Rs. 8,000
2. For Ecologically Fragile Areas	Rs. 10,000
3. For project having problematic lands	Rs. 12,000

3.3 For the success of every Project and its smooth working a close monitoring and evaluation of work is necessary. In this regard, the Ministry stated that monitoring of IWDP Scheme is being done on quarterly basis through quarterly progress reports being sent by the DRDA's/State Governments. Evaluation has been sought from independent agencies. The report of one evaluation has already been received.

3.4 When asked about the details and number of people directly benefited by the Scheme, the Ministry expressed their inability to quantify the number of people directly benefited by this scheme as this would vary from project to project.

3.5 People's awareness and their involvement in Wastelands Development Projects is very important. When asked what has been done to create awareness among the people, the Ministry stated that each project is encouraged to take up a component to raise awareness among the people about the benefits of conservation, maintaining ecological balance and participation in the programmes. This is done by organising meetings in the village and through use of local art form. This activity, however, is left purely to the District Administration to implement.

3.6 In this regard the representative of the Ministry informed the Committee during evidence that the DWD is also thinking of a range of schemes to mobilise the people for Development of Wastelands and also assured that the Department will put in a mechanism at the District level for involving the popular participation.

3.7 Technology Development and Extension which is the part of IWDP scheme, is an important aspect of the scheme. When asked whether the Department of Wastelands Development has any programme for evolving appropriate low cost technologies and whether any development work has been done so far by using the low cost technologies, in this connection, in a note furnished to the Committee, the Ministry of Rural Development stated as follows:—

“Under the Technology Extension Programme the Department of Wastelands Development promotes schemes for development of appropriate low cost technologies for development of wastelands. These schemes are being implemented through a cross section of institutions. Currently there are 54 projects under execution through the following institutions:

Agricultural Universities	39
ICAR Institute	05
Other Institutes	10."

Grants-in-Aid Scheme

3.8 During the Seventh Five Year Plan a Grants-in-Aid scheme was in operation in the erstwhile NWDB. Under the scheme 100% central grant is made available to registered voluntary agencies, cooperatives, mahila mandals, yuva mandals and other similar organisations for undertaking work directly or indirectly encouraging afforestation and wastelands development. The work could include actual implementation of small programmes like plantation and soil and moisture conservation, awareness raising, training and extension, organisation of people for protection, etc. This scheme is being implemented by the NWDB currently also.

3.9 When pointed out that the experiments of co-operatives are definitely

not very encouraging, the representative of the Ministry, admitting the fact during evidence with regard to the voluntary agencies and co-operative societies not doing well stated that they have been encouraging voluntary agencies in some areas and it is also true that some voluntary agencies have taken up this job and are not able to cope with it.

3.10 The Ministry furnished the following details of the amount released so far under the Grants-in-Aid Scheme:—

“Upto 31st March, 1992 NWDS sanctioned 735 projects and released 2744.13 lakhs under the grants-in-Aid Scheme as per details given below:—

Sl. No.	Year	No. of Projects approved	Amount released (Rs. in lakhs)
1.	1992-93	53	83.86 (as on 31.03.93)
2.	1993-94	63	105.79 (as on 15.02.94)''

3.11 The reconstituted Board has sanctioned 63 projects at a total outlay of Rs. 105.79 lakhs to develop 5149.50 ha. of Wastelands. The benefits would flow to the people in the form of employment, usufructs, prevention of soil erosion and moisture conservation.

3.12 When asked whether any private individual has come forward for allotment of wasteland for development, the representative of the Ministry replied that no individual has applied for giving the wasteland to develop it. In regard to demand made by private companies and Industrial Houses, the representative of the Ministry stated that they are having scheme to identify some wastelands which they will offer to the private companies for heavy investment. He further stated that there is long standing demand from the Industrial houses to allot the land but Government cannot allot land because ceiling laws are there. The Ministry wants to identify badly damaged land in consultation with the States and offer to those industries but so far no industrial house has come straight to them asking for land. They will give wide publicity and ask for their involvement.

3.13 The Committee stress that the Development of wastelands should not be undimensional and limited in scope. There should be integrated land use planning and planning capability shall be built up from below, starting from the village. Emphasis should be on conservation, Ecological Restoration and Natural Regeneration. Efforts should be made to meet the ever increasing needs of fuelwood, fodder and timber production. The Committee further stress that suitable remedies for reclamation of each type

of Wasteland should be evolved and local people should be involved in the process.

3.14 The Committee note that the schemes launched by the Ministry of Rural Development have not been able to make sufficient impact. A close monitoring is required in the case of on-going projects. Though, the details regarding amount released for the projects have been provided but information about utilisation of the funds has not been mentioned.

3.15 The work of evaluation of the Projects has also not been found satisfactory. So far, only one evaluation report has been received. The Committee recommend that effective steps should be taken to strengthen the monitoring system to ensure the proper implementation of the scheme and utilisation of funds for the purpose as well as evaluation of the project to check whether they are progressing in the right direction or not so as to get the desired results.

3.16 The Committee further recommend that as the monitoring is being done by the DRDA's/State Governments, they should be asked to ensure the progress of work done under the scheme and fix up the responsibility on the concerned defaulting officers and take the appropriate necessary action in the matter. The Committee desire that the Ministry of Rural Development should effectively discharge its role of proper management for the implementation of the scheme in letter and spirit.

3.17 The Committee feel that the Government departments alone cannot do much in this field unless they are not asked to receive co-operation of the local people. No programme, howsoever well conceived it may be, cannot succeed without the active participation of the people. People's involvement in the Wastelands Development Projects is necessary. The Committee would like to recommend that a general awareness should be created among the people for the successful implementation of the various programmes/projects for the development of Wasteland in the Country. Efforts may be made to improve communication by employing modern communication media for reducing the knowledge constraints.

3.18 People's participation should be attracted by evolving effective programmes as there is a lot of scope for providing employment to the rural poor which is an integral part of rural development. It will also generate the additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed men and women in the rural areas.

3.19 The Ministry has said that Technology Development and extension is the part of IWDP Scheme. The Committee recommend that the focus may be on research and extension, especially to develop low cost technologies. Available and proven technologies should be transferred on a

large scale. The Agricultural universities and other Institutes through which the projects are under execution may be asked to suggest suitable remedies for the treatment of problem lands and keep in view the local needs and resources available. The effects of technologies transferred under the lab to land programmes may be evaluated on regular intervals, continuous identification of technological, social, financial and natural constraints of technology transfer processes may be made through survey and research.

3.20 It has been observed that the experiment of Cooperative Societies and Voluntary Organisations is not that encouraging as expected. The Ministry have also admitted that some voluntary agencies have not been able to cope up with the job taken by them. In this regard it is suggested that the projects and Grants should not be sanctioned to those Cooperative Societies or voluntary agencies which are not competent and Ministry should be more careful about it. Care should be taken to release the Grant to those voluntary agencies only who have done good work and have excellent track record and are actively involved in the developmental process. Cooperation of established Cooperative Societies who are willing to do the job of Wastelands Development should be encouraged and assisted.

3.21 The Committee recommend that the Government should identify the semi-arid/semi-fertile wastelands and the same be distributed immediately to landless/rural poor (mainly Tribals/SC) in order to earn their livelihood. The Committee further recommend that the wastelands which are reclaimable and can be reclaimed with reasonable efforts and minimum investments, should be reclaimed by the Government and be given to the landless agricultural labourers/workers on priority basis. On the other hand, the wastelands which are badly damaged and where the Government finds itself helpless in the matter of providing adequate funds for development, such lands should be entrusted to cooperatives, NGOs or corporate sector to develop it.

3.22 The Committee feels that a massive campaign should be launched for reclamation and greening of the Wastelands. State Governments should be approached for taking suitable measures for encouraging reclamation of Wastelands and raising productivity of the land. Identification of badly damaged land, should be done without delay. The Committee suggest that the land should be given on lease, while the ownership should remain intact with the original owner and the investors may be allowed to take the produce. The condition should be that the land will not be allowed for any other purpose.

3.23 The Committee are of the view that the schemes/programmes

which have not been taken seriously so far, may be merged with effective schemes in order to make use of scarce resources for better results. The Committee further emphasise that district-wise time bound strategies should be worked out for the development of Wastelands through inter-related developmental activities. Besides, a competitiveness among districts should be inculcated so that all districts may do better work and produce good results in regard to the development of Wastelands through different schemes being implemented by them. Such districts should be provided more funds as a bonus for achieving better results.

NEW DELHI;
4 May, 1994

14 Vaisakha, 1916 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO B. BHOSALE,
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Standing Committee on Urban &
Rural Development (1994-95).