

Main Findings / Recommendations of Parthasarathy committee

- **An increased thrust to rainfed areas** through greater emphasis on a reformed, **more intensive and improved watershed development** programme may hold the key to meeting the food and water security in future.
- At the current level of outlay, it would take around 75 years for watershed treatment to be completed. For the work to be completed by the year 2020, the **government needs to allocate around Rs.10, 000 crores per annum every year for the next 15 years.**
- The amount could come from 2 main sources: **doubling of current programme outlays** on watershed development that would yield around Rs. **5,000 crores** and an allocation of around **Rs.5,000 crores from the National Rural Employment Gurantee Scheme** specially earmarked for watershed programmes. This makes perfect sense since the NREGS is already primarily focused on watershed-related activities.
- A National Authority for Sustainable Development of Rainfed Areas (**NASDORA**) needs to be set up as a quasi-independent authority to manage the entire primarily Central Government funded **watershed programmes under one umbrella** with a view to implementing them **on a Mission Mode**. Such an Authority must be endowed with the autonomy, functionally focused, operationally integrated and attuned to collaborate with the diverse set of stakeholders.
- An **Apex Rainfed Areas Stakeholders council** will provide overall policy support and guidance to the Apex Board of NASDORA and review its performance. The Prime Minister will chair it.
- **The duration of the programme may be increased from 5 years to 8 years.** This is because most of limits of the currently implemented programme strongly suggest the need for such an upward revision. The most important weaknesses of the programme all stem from the fundamental shortcoming that durable village-level institutions have not got set up and the crucial participatory processes have not had sufficient time to be put into place. As a result, the

qualitative dimensions of the programme have suffered. At the same time, it has not been possible to realise the livelihoods potential of the programme, which is widely seen as a major weakness. In order to provide sufficient time to overcome these weaknesses, it is proposed an 8-year **programme divided into 3 phases. Preparatory Phase of the programme of 2-year period, II Phase of Resource Augmentation and Institution Building of 4 yrs and Phase III of Sustainable Livelihoods and Productivity Enhancement of 2-years.**

- **The cost norm may be raised from Rs.6000 per hectare to Rs.12000 per hectare.** The per-year per-hectare norm becomes Rs.1500. Rs 12,000 is a **maximal ceiling**. The projects will be funded as per the actual cost of the action plan. The tendency of PIAs to simply multiply the area of the watershed with the per-hectare norm is to be very strongly discouraged.
- Proper **monitoring system** is one of the key areas of the programme. A separate provision must be made for time and money to be allotted for social, physical and financial audit of the programme. Committee proposes a separate head of expenditure -- Impact Assessment, Monitoring and Research. These are deeply neglected and extremely important aspects of the programme for which **2% of total expenditure can be provided**. The importance of this head lies in the fact that releases for each year will take place only if the report of the assessment at the end of each year is positive. Especially after the first phase of two years, it is likely that many projects are shut down if they do not come up to the mark. Thus, monitoring is to be given due time and resources, within the programme.
- **People's Participation** may be seen as a two-way process of intense dialogue between the local people and the outside agency, be it government, NGO or professionals. The watershed action plan as neither a romanticisation of people's knowledge nor a debunking of the expert. Rather a process of demystification of expertise in the process of valorising popular understanding, through a creative dialogue between the two.
- Special provisions must be made for the **landless and the dalits**. Close attention needs to be paid to **developing common lands** and making sure that

landless/dalit access to them is not reduced as in many watershed projects so far.

- **Transparency and accountability** must be ensured. For this, Committee suggests mandatory presentation of the action plan for approval at the Gram Sabha meeting, all labour payments must be made in public, regular jan sunwayis (public hearings) must be held where detailed accounts are presented to the people, including all documents – sanction and release letter, pass books, cheque books, muster rolls, vouchers etc., boards should be put up in public places and at each major site, which display details of work done, costs, volume of water harvested, employment generated etc.
- There has to be clear **prioritisation of objectives** – drinking water and protective irrigation, along with fodder and fuel must come first
- What is required is to find ways of not just increasing water supply but much more critically reducing demand and regulating end-uses. For this a package of **sustainable dryland agriculture practices** must be mandatorily incorporated into the watershed programme.
- Livestock management, animal husbandry, dairying fisheries and other land based activities must be integrated in watershed development programmes.
- Watershed programmes may be **executed** and implemented by the **Village Watershed Committee (VWC) as a standing committee of the Gram Panchayat (GP)**. The Secretary of VWC must not be the secretary of GP. The VWC must have **50% women members and 33% SC / ST members**.
- A WVC (**Women Village Council**) has been recommended to be formed to protect the needs and interests of women. Similar organization for SC/ST may also be made.
- A **national initiative for training all levels/kinds of functionaries** at different stages of the programme in specific subjects (already worked out in detail by the Eswaran Committee) can be carried out on a war-footing, so that the watershed programme can attain requisite quality within a reasonable time-frame..
- Committee has also suggested separate technological approaches of implementation for areas such as desert, ravenous, coastal, saline etc..