CHAPTER- 3

IMPACT OF DPAP/DDP - A REVIEW

3.1 An expenditure of Rs.1470.92 crores has been incurred under DPAP and Rs.468.50 crores under the DDP since inception of these programmes upto September, 1993. Major expenditure was incurred on activities such as soil and moisture conservation, water resources development, afforestation and pasture development while some expenditure was incurred on fisheries, animal husbandry, horticulture, dairy, drinking water supply etc.

The physical targets achieved under these programmes are summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Core activity</th>
<th>DPAP (000 hectares)</th>
<th>DDP (000 hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Land development and soilconservation</td>
<td>2740</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Water Resources Development</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Afforestation &amp; Pasture Development</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5289</strong></td>
<td><strong>413</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 The area treated under DPAP so far comes to about 5 million hectares which constitutes only about 10% of the geographical area of the blocks selected for DPAP. The area treated under DDP comes to only about 0.4 million hectares which accounts for only about 1 percent of the total area in the blocks selected for DDP. Although it would be necessary to cover only a part of the area in the selected blocks for treatment under the Programmes, it is reasonable to conclude that a very large part of the eligible area still remains uncovered by the Programmes. It becomes obvious then that with such a small coverage, one cannot expect to make a real dent in the development of drought prone and desert areas.

3.3 Since the activities under DPAP/DDP are not spread over the entire length and breadth of the problem areas, but are restricted to identified smaller areas, it would be logical to expect the impact of these programmes only over such limited areas.
3.4 Despite the fact that the Drought Prone Areas Programme and the Desert Development Programme have been in operation for almost two decades, it has been observed that the Programmes have not made a substantial impact. On the other hand, it is widely believed that drought conditions in the country are increasing and ecological degradation is proceeding unabated especially in drought prone and desert areas. The main reasons for this degradation have been large scale denudation of forest cover leaving the land vulnerable to soil and water erosion. In Rajasthan, 18 drought years of different magnitudes have been observed in the past 32 years. Another study in Rajasthan reveals that, on an average, as much as 40.4% of precipitation or rain water goes untapped, and only 6.9% is used for recharging the ground water. In some districts of Tamil Nadu, water table is reportedly going down by 1 ft. every year. It has been reported to us that in the dark blocks in Uttar Pradesh where more than 75% of groundwater has been exploited and where rainfall level is 700 mm, as much as 50-70% run-off from rainfall is wasted.

3.5 Despite the fact that nearly 2,000 crores of rupees have been spent on these programmes since their inception and despite the recommendations of the Central Sanctioning Committee to commission evaluation studies from reputed non-official institutions, no such evaluation has been undertaken at the micro-level. Therefore, the Committee had to depend basically on field visits and discussions with the beneficiaries and officials at the field level for evaluating the performance of these programmes.

3.6 Of the many factors responsible for the unsatisfactory performance of the Programmes, the most important one is that under both the programmes, a wide range of activities not necessarily related to the core objectives were taken up in the past by spreading them thinly over a widely dispersed area. This tended to defuse focus on efforts to be made for achieving the core objectives of the Programmes. The attempt at mitigating the sufferings of the people were aimed at the provision of adhoc relief through income generating activities funded from the area development programmes without integrating such works with programmes for land and water conservation.

3.7 Though it has been accepted that watershed based integrated development programme is the basic means for drought mitigation and control of desertification, the programme works in the field have been undertaken more on sectoral basis and in isolated patches. Planning is still done on an adhoc basis merely by arithmetical consolidations of sectoral budgetary proposals. At the district level, efforts are rarely made to appraise the proposals received from various sectoral heads and to prepare integrated watershed development plans. There is also no attempt to co-ordinate different sectors in a manner that drought mitigation can be achieved. Lack of proper integration of various schemes both in the
central and state sectors and inadequate control that the Project Directors in charge of the Programmes have over the Line Departments resulting in their inability to play an effective role in multi-disciplinary planning have also contributed to the slow progress in programme implementation. The concept of integrated land and water management on watershed basis through active involvement of the people which alone could improve the environment and productivity of resources was not duly focussed. Although, the Central Sanctioning Committee in 1987 made an attempt to sharpen the focus of the Programmes by limiting to those activities which directly contribute to drought proofing and containing of desertification, the sectoral approach of working continued and watershed based planning and implementation could not make an effective beginning. However, the Committee notes with some satisfaction that some State have initiated steps to plan and implement the Programmes on watershed basis.

3.8 As per guidelines of DPAP & DDP, micro-watershed should be the management unit and in each selected block the micro-watersheds may be classified into high, medium and low priority areas according to their vulnerability to droughts. The highly vulnerable areas should be taken up for development on a priority basis. However, in actual practice, due to lack of adequate data and to pressures from vested interests, selection and finalisation of watersheds for development gets considerably delayed. There is no appropriate multi-disciplinary agency at the district, block and the watershed level to prepare integrated plans which could be taken up for implementation. Most of the schemes taken up are of adhoc nature and without due consideration of cost-benefit ratios. Essential data which are crucial for watershed planning are rarely available with the planners at the district and block levels. Perspective planning for micro-watersheds is seldom done and the plans are mainly prepared on annual basis. Also, the annual plan is prepared on the presumption that rainfall will not exceed the average rainfall of the area. Whenever there is a good rainfall, the administration is caught unprepared and finds itself unable to make use of the excess water available in the area. The excess of rain water runs off causing considerable soil erosion. In the absence of perspective planning, the outlays on drought relief are also not spent wisely on the construction of assets required for mitigation of drought.

3.9 For integrated development, it is necessary to dovetail other central and state schemes in each selected watershed. Pooling of funds and implementation of the Programmes planned for the area through a single multi-disciplinary agency has not been observed at many places. Various developmental programmes are taken up by Departments/Agencies in drought/desert areas which may even run counter to the objective of drought proofing or control of desertification. Thus, while some programmes may stress restoration of ecological balance, others such as promotion of tourism, industrialisation of the area etc. may cause influx of population
which may disturb the optimum land-man-livestock ratio and thereby disrupt the efforts towards restoration of ecological balance. So far, works have been taken up on community lands and the treatment of farmers' fields was conspicuous by its absence in most of the States. Even improved crop production technologies were not visible in most cases. The main components observed in operation are rain water harvesting through minor irrigation works and afforestation. However, neither the catchment area nor the command area is treated for its sustainability in many cases. Afforestation programme has different connotations in different States. Individual stake holders are allowed to benefit from the Programmes in the form of collection of fuel-wood, fodder and small timber, but only in a few States. In most cases, choice of tree species is limited to the list approved by the State agencies. The farmers' choice is very rarely considered. In regard to pasture development, there is very little effort to introduce good quality and nutritious grasses like Cenchrus and legumes like Stylosanthes hamata

3.10 Maintenance of the assets created has suffered, especially in respect of water-harvesting structures. In several places, beneficiaries were not motivated to assume responsibility for maintenance after the works are completed even when the benefits accruing from such works are substantial. Moreover, the concerned departments do not have adequate provision for maintenance in their budgets. As a result, in a majority of cases visited by the Committee, the water harvesting structures were silted and otherwise damaged in less three years of their completion.

3.11 Except in rare cases, the participation of people was conspicuous by its absence either in the preparation of plans or in their implementation. The people were found to be passive at best and sceptical and even hostile, at worst. In quite a few cases, the structures created by the departments were demolished by the farmers, as, for example, in certain areas as many as 25 per cent of the bunds laid on the fields were demolished. However, where people have been motivated to participate from the inception, i.e., from the planning stage, their enthusiasm was visible and the structures were protected by them. Quite a few of the afforestation programmes in West Bengal and Orissa, for instance, demonstrate how people's participation and their vigilance by providing social fencing can greatly contribute to the success of these programmes.

3.12 The issue of additionality aspect of these programmes also needs a special mention as this has been raised quite often in the past. Both these programmes were conceived of as integrated area development programme, with the long term objective of restoration of the ecological balance through optimum utilisation of natural resources. These were designed as an additionality to the existing sectoral schemes within the State Plans. In blocks which were identified as drought prone, 75 per cent of the funds
were earmarked for three major components namely, Land Shaping and Land Development including Soil Conservation, Water Resource Development and Afforestation and Pasture Development. Hence the expenditure under the three heads needs to be examined to ascertain the extent of additionality.

3.13 The PEO has recently completed an evaluation of the DPAP. The data for 12 selected districts indicates that DPAP funds have provided additional resources for each of the three components and that the non-DPAP funds flowed in larger amounts.

3.14 However, evidence from a PEO evaluation of the DDP in selected districts, reveals that for some activities in particular districts, the DDP funds are used as substitutes for sectoral funds which should normally flow from the budgets of the State Government. For instance, in Gujarat and Rajasthan over 70 per cent of the expenditure under animal husbandry was from DDP. In fact, in Rajasthan, 90 per cent of the expenditure under soil and water conservation and land development, and 96 per cent of the expenditure under forestry and pasture was from DDP. Even in Haryana, 60 per cent of soil and water conservation works were financed by DDP.

3.15 To the extent that DPAP and DDP funds are additive to normal sectoral funds for specific activities, which are important for drought-proofing, there is little problem. However, in the event that in particular districts, this additionality is not achieved, it is now possible to provide additional resources from other employment generation programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development. The resources available under the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and the intensified JRY can be dovetailed with the DPAP and DDP within a watershed plan. In most of the DPAP and DDP areas these Schemes will operate. It can be stipulated that at least 50 per cent of these funds should be diverted towards the DPAP and DDP, for purposes of soil and water conservation and treatment within an identified micro-watersheds. This will enable the taking up of additional micro-watershed, within a block/district, than would be possible with the resources available for DPAP/DDP as such. Also, as these programmes are to be implemented by the DRDA, greater integration would be possible. For better coordination between different line departments, the details are spelt out later.

3.16 The Committee finds that despite these programmes, ecological degradation is continuing especially in drought prone and desert areas. Water table has gone down. Drinking water problem has not been solved. Forest cover has been depleted. Severity of drought has increased. Thus, ecological degradation in the dryland areas in the country today appears greater than a few decades ago. However, it cannot be concluded from this that the DPAP and the DDP did not make any contribution towards the mitigation of drought. Rather, the position would have been worse in
the absence of such Programmes. With larger coverage of area under the Programmes and with better planning and effective implementation of such Programmes, ecological degradation would undoubtedly have been less serious. It is clear, however, that the Programmes as they have been operating have failed to neutralise the adverse impact of the overall processes of degradation underway in these areas.

3.17 The degradation of environment in the dryland areas is basically attributable to the increasing biotic pressure on the fragile eco-systems in the absence of adequate investments and appropriate management practices to augment and conserve the land and water resources. Population growth and poverty on the one hand and the pressures of rising demand from affluence on the other have been exerting powerful pressure on the eco-systems. The macro-economic policies which provide inducement to the over-exploitation of natural resources, that is, at a higher rate than the rate of regeneration, are also responsible for denudation of environment. For example, in the dryland areas, the pumping of water has been proceeding at a faster rate than the rate at which groundwater is being recharged. This is on account of the availability of electricity at a flat rate regardless of the amount of electricity used for pumping water.

3.18 The breakdown of traditional institutions for managing common property resources and the failure of new institutions to fill the vacuum has also been responsible for the denudation of natural resources. The traditional community based institutions have given place so far to individualised or market-driven exploitation of natural resources without any regard for adverse externalities of such actions and to numerous official programmes for the development of land and water resources which are dependent almost entirely on the top-down bureaucracy with very little participation from the village communities.

3.19 The outstanding examples of success at Ralegaon Sidhi and Adgaon in Maharashtra, Kabbalnala and Mittemari in Karnataka and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh show that drought can be beaten, provided concerted efforts for development on watershed basis are made with motivated and determined leadership from the administration and with the involvement of voluntary organisations together with the participation of local farmers who are willing to undergo sacrifices and share benefits. For example, a study by National Remote Sensing Agency, Hyderabad, reveals that due to intervention of check dams under DPAP in Jhabua district, the area of water bodies have increased significantly from 30.09 sq.km in 1987 to 38.72 sq.km in 1993. Similarly, there has been an increase in green cover from 297.01 sq.km to 484.99 sq.km over the same period.