

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:340
ANSWERED ON:18.08.2006
NATIONAL WASTELANDS UPDATION MISSION .
Adsul Shri Anandrao Vithoba

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether National Wastelands Updation Mission (NWUM) was initiated in 2003 to monitor changes in wastelands;
- (b) If so, the objectives of the said mission;
- (c) Whether the Government has issued guidelines to the States for the implementation of wastelands/watershed programmes;
- (d) If so, the details thereof;
- (e) Whether the Government has constituted a Task Force for the better utilization of wasteland/watershed programmes;
- (f) If so, the suggestions made by the said Task Force; and (g) The action taken by the Government thereon?

Answer

MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH)

(a) to (g): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (g) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 340 DUE FOR ANSWER ON 18th AUGUST 2006.

(a) & (b) No Sir. The National Wastelands Updation Mission

(NWUM) was neither proposed nor set up in 2003. In March 2000, the Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Ministry of Rural Development, in collaboration with the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA), Department of Space, Hyderabad had brought out the Wastelands Atlas of India with the objective of creating a reliable data base of the extent of wastelands in the country. Subsequently, the DoLR had again commissioned the NRSA to undertake a project for updating the Wastelands Atlas of India (2000) in order to monitor the temporal changes in the extent of wastelands in the country. On the basis of satellite data pertaining to Rabi season 2003, the revised and updated version of the Wastelands Atlas of India was brought out in November 2005.

(c) & (d) The Department of Land Resources issued guidelines to the States for implementation of wasteland development programmes on participatory basis based on watershed approach with effect from 1-4-1995 on the recommendations of the Hanumantha Rao Committee Report of 1994. These guidelines were subsequently revised in 2003 to assign the pivotal role to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in accordance with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. These guidelines were issued as 'Hariyali guidelines'. The salient features of the guidelines are at Annexure-I.

(e) to (g) No Task Force has been constituted for wastelands/watershed development in the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development. However, a Task Force headed by Secretary (Rural Development) was constituted in March 2002 to suggest measures for promoting involvement of credit/financial institutions in mobilising additional funds for wastelands/watershed development projects. The Task Force submitted its report in December 2004. The report was circulated to the secretaries of the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment and Forests and Water Resources, all State Secretaries of Rural Development Department, Planning Commission, CEO, Indian Banks Association, Reserve Bank of India and NABARD in January 2006 for necessary action. The recommendations of the Task Force are at Annexure-II.

Annexure - I Annexure referred to in part (c) and (d) of reply to Lok Sabha Starred Question No.340 due for answer on 18-8-2006

HARIYALI GUIDELINES

The Department of Land Resources has brought out the Guidelines for Hariyali with an objective of empowering PRI's both financially and administratively in implementation of Watershed Development Programmes in the country.

2. Under these Guidelines, the Gram Panchayats shall implement the projects under the overall supervision and guidance of Project Implementation Agencies (PIAs). An intermediate Panchayat may be the PIA for all the projects sanctioned to a particular Block/Taluka. In case, these Panchayats are not adequately empowered, then the Zilla Panchayat can either act as PIA itself or may

appoint a suitable Line Department like Agriculture, Forestry/Social Forestry, Soil Conservation etc. or an Agency of the State Government/ University/ Institute as PIA. Failing these options, the ZP/DRDA may consider appointing a reputed Non- Government Organization (NGO) in the district with adequate experience and expertise in the implementation of watershed projects or related area development works as the PIA after thoroughly examining their credentials.

3. As envisaged in the earlier Guidelines, under Hariyali Guidelines also, the Project Implementation Agency (PIA) will provide necessary technical guidance to the Gram Panchayat for preparation of development plans for the watershed through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise, undertake community organization and training for the village communities, supervise watershed development activities, inspect and authenticate project accounts, encourage adoption of low cost technologies and build upon indigenous technical knowledge, monitor and review the overall project implementation and set up institutional arrangements for post-project operation and maintenance and further development of the assets created during the project period. However, under this initiative, total funds will be released in 5 instalments (@15%, 30%, 30%, 15% and 10%). The work component has been enhanced from 80 to 85% of total project funds. 10% is kept for administrative expenses and remaining 5% for training and community participation.

4. New projects under the ongoing area development programmes namely IWDP, DPAP and DDP shall be implemented in accordance with the Guidelines for Hariyali with effect from 1.4.2003. Projects sanctioned prior to this date shall continue to be implemented as per the earlier Guidelines.

5. Detailed Guidelines of Hariyali have been circulated to all States and Union Territories for operationalization.

6. The details of Hariyali and earlier guidelines are available at Department of Land Resources web site <http://www.dolr.nic.in>.

Annexure - II

Annexure referred to in part (e) to (g) of reply to Lok Sabha Starred Question No.340 due for answer on 18-8-2006

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE FOR LINKAGE WITH CREDIT INSTITUTIONS FOR WASTELANDS/WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

India has now entered a post-Green Revolution stage that requires new strategies to enhance land productivity and reduce rural poverty. A move to an intensive diversified farming system with strong forward and backward linkages is the next evolutionary step in the country's future development. Economic liberalization and adjustments to the market economy are placing new demands on the land use system and farming business. However, the speed and extent of such a change and its impact on rural development through multiplier effects would depend on the availability of adequate credit facilities and adoption of improved technologies.

2. At present, projects for watershed development and wastelands development are being financed by different Ministries/Departments at the Central as well as State levels. NABARD has been assigned the specific task for development of wastelands under which States are being provided credit under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). NABARD has already developed infrastructure for it and it is expected to play a greater role, not only for providing credit to watershed projects but also provide refinance to Banks for providing credit to Self-Help Groups, specially during the post-project period, to ensure sustainability of the projects and public participation.

3. NABARD should develop/identify viable models of watershed development projects for different categories of wastelands and geographic locations. They should develop necessary appraisal machinery for successful implementation of the projects.

4. NABARD should also be involved by the concerned Ministries at the Centre as well as in the States while formulating policy issues for watershed/wasteland development programmes to ensure their meaningful interaction at every stage.

5. In order to involve banking/credit Institutions in watershed projects, it will be desirable that Orientation Programmes as well as Exposure Visits of Bank officials are arranged specially to successful watershed projects so that they can realize for themselves the economic viability of these projects.

6. The lead Bank in the District should also be involved, in formulation of watershed projects. Members from such Banks as well as AGM, NABARD of each District may be nominated to the District Watershed Advisory Committee. When the watershed project is sanctioned, the nominee (preferably Branch Manager) from the concerned Bank, which is required to provide necessary credit especially for livelihood activities, should be invited to the meetings of the Watershed Associations.

7. For appreciation of watershed development programme by bankers and the district administration on credit modalities and problems faced by the bankers, it is recommended that training programmes be held for bankers to create awareness on watershed development programme and natural resource management and with District Administration and Implementing Agencies for exploring definite avenues of investment in this sector.

8. On the part of NABARD/Banking/Credit Institutions, necessary MoUs could be drawn up to have their commitment for making credit available for physical infrastructure works and for farm and non- farm livelihood activities before they are associated at the National level or District level as recommended earlier.

9. Wasteland development projects/activities should not be undertaken only with the subsidy/finance provided by the States or Banks but should also have an element of commitment from the individuals benefited. In the case of individual private land, there may not be any difficulty for such a contribution but in the case of community land, the PIAs/Gram Panchayats could take the lead to ensure contribution from the beneficiaries.

10. Once the watershed project is sanctioned, the Watershed Committee should prepare a detailed Comprehensive Action Plan which may involve not only taking up the activities, as provided in the Common Guidelines for Watershed Development but may also involve certain plus activities relating to livelihoods for the weaker sections or self-help groups during the project period as well as the post project period. The Action Plan should include funds provided from the Banking Sector, Government, as well as beneficiaries (cash, kind or labour) for successful implementation of the projects. The Plan shall also address the recovery of past defaults, to facilitate further fund flow from Credit Institutions.

11. The integrated watershed plan prepared on the above basis involving funds of the Government, Banks and community shall be discussed in the DWAC and shall form part of the annual credit plan of the district.

12. In order to ensure smooth recovery of the loans provided by the banks, the District Rural Development Agencies/Zilla Parishads/Watershed Associations should come forward to stand as guarantor for the repayment of the loans advanced by the Banks/NABARD. In such a case, the Banks should not shy away from extending credit for activities relating to development of wastelands/degraded lands.

13. The Banks are providing credit for infrastructure development such as land development, pond etc. and for promoting production activities involving agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry in rural areas, etc. It is recommended that such Schemes of the Bank should systematically be dovetailed with the schemes of watershed development and development of degraded/wastelands. For this purpose, Banks, especially NABARD, should prepare area specific models for watershed development so that the credit worthiness of such projects does not require scrutiny on a project-to-project basis.

14. The infrastructure, so developed with the credit provided by the Banks, is to be safeguarded and mortgaged with the Banks till full recovery of the funds provided by them. If there are any impediments in this regard under some State laws, the State should make amendments to the local laws or issue necessary instructions/clarifications so that such physical infrastructure could be mortgaged with the Financial Institutions.

15. In order to make the project successful, there is need to provide technical guidance and expenditure support for selection of suitable species for specific soil and agro-climatic conditions. In addition to the activities relating to in situ soil and water conservation, techniques could also be evolved for soil treatment including nutrient management, organic management, vermiculture, farm biomass generation, etc. Medicinal plants could also be encouraged on wastelands/degraded lands to generate profits. Studies may also be made on the economics of reclamation and returns to establish viability and sustainability.

16. DRDAs/PIAs should assist groups of farmers in documentation for obtaining necessary loans from Credit Institutions. NABARD/Financing Institutes should prepare necessary guidelines in this regard for preparing documentation for obtaining loans from the Banking Sector.

17. The Guidelines for Watershed Programmes should be modified to provide for Watershed Functionaries and for proper orientation on preparation of credit plans in the watershed. The Watershed Secretary and PIA should prepare the actual credit requirement for the forthcoming financial year in advance in consultation with the Service Area Branch Manager and submit to Zilla Parishad/DRDA by December of the preceding financial year. Zila Panchayat/DRDA will consolidate for the whole District and give it to the District Lead Bank Manager by January for being incorporated in the Annual District Credit Plan of the next financial year. The approved credit plans will be communicated to the watershed functionaries for interaction with the financial Institutions. The item of credit linkage should be included for periodic review of District Credit Plan.

18. There is need to make a provision in the Panchayati Raj Act so that the Gram Panchayat can stand as guarantors.

19. Many projects aimed for development of rainfed/degraded land are being implemented on watershed approach by different Departments viz.

(i) Department of Agriculture & Cooperation,

(ii) Department of Land Resources,

(iii) Ministry of Environment & Forests,

(iv) Ministry of Water Resources, and

(v) Planning Commission. Further, it is felt that having the watershed programmes under various Departments results in wastage of funds and overlapping of work. It is, therefore, suggested that for effective coordination among all the Schemes and projects, all watershed programmes should be handled by one single Ministry/Department in Govt. of India/State Governments. The funds should be provided to one nodal Ministry and be implemented and monitored by that Ministry so as to ensure proper utilisation of funds for achieving set targets.