

**MINUTES OF THE REVIEW MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP 'A' OF STATE  
PLANNING BOARD HELD ON 20-2-2004 AND 23-2-2004 IN THE OFFICE CHAMBER  
OF THE CHAIRMAN, STATE PLANNING BOARD YOJANA BHAVAN  
(SECRETARIAT ANNEXE).**

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**Members and Officers present at Annexure-A.**

**20-2-2004**

The Chairman, State Planning Board welcomed the Members who has spared their time to be present in the Working Group meeting and all officers present. He made a point that the purpose of the meeting is to review the achievements in the implementation of Plan Schemes during the year 2002-2003.

The following Departments were taken up :-

1. **Soil Conservation** :- The 9<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay for Soil and Water Conservation was Rs. 5750.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs.2950.46 lakhs. The Outlay for the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan (2002-2007) is Rs.5000.00 lakhs. The Annual Plan Outlay for 2002-2003 was Rs. 700.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs.696.75 lakhs.

The Chairman requested the Department to limit the discussions to certain points, with emphasis on specific schemes for recommendation by the State Planning Board and to highlight problems that need attention. It was also suggested that the Department should submit a brief write- up on the important schemes of the Department alongwith the statements.

The major schemes of the Department are Soil Conservation Scheme, Jhum Control scheme and Watershed Management. On the practice of jhumming, the Working Group wanted to know the extent of the problem in the state and the steps taken up to ease this problem. The Department informed that in order to wean away the people from the practice of jhumming, special incentives have been given to families like Cash Crop Development, terracing, livestock rearing, fishery etc. It also included development of permanent cultivable land with irrigation facilities, link roads and supply of inputs like seeds, seedlings, manures, fertilizers etc. It was also informed by the Department that jhum cultivation is still predominant in Garo Hills. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills Bun/Shifting cultivation is being practiced.

The Working Group felt that plantation of Tea, Rubber and Cashewnut which are favourable in Garo Hills should be encouraged. The main problems faced by the farmers are marketing of products and exploitation by middle men. It was informed that the price of rubber is fixed according to its grade, price of coffee is fixed by the Coffee Board and Tea is under Agriculture Department. It was observed by the Working Group that other industrial agencies should be encouraged to come forward to help the people set up small scale rubber based industries like making of cycles, chappals etc.

On the question of assistance to individual farmers, the Department pointed out that help to the farmers under general areas have to be restricted due to less fund allocation. Forestry and irrigation works are also under taken by the Department but it is pointed out that for terracing there is a shortage of fund. On Watershed Management Scheme it was informed that all the 38 watershed are functional. Maintenance cost of the projects is also extended upto 2 years.

Regarding marketing facilities the Department is trying to tie up with MCCDB to try easing the problem on the question of shortage of fund the Working Group felt that the Department should try to avail loan from NABARD, and other financial institutions for taking up some of the development works of the Department. However the Department requested the State Planning Board to recommend more funds for the Department as most of the normal programmes of the Department are affected due to shortage of funds.

In conclusion the Chairman suggested for a separate meeting with the MCCDB involving Soil Conservation, Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, to discuss on the market scenario of agricultural products in the state.

**2. Animal Husbandry & Veterinary :-** The 9<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay for this sector was fixed at Rs.5000.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs. 2546.98 lakhs. The outlay for the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan was Rs.5500.00 lakhs. The Annual Plan Outlay for 2002-2003 was Rs.700.00 lakhs and the actual expenditure was Rs. 604.34 lakhs.

The Working Group felt that Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department can play a very important role in uplifting the economic condition of the rural people. But presently it appears that establishment costs are very high compared to developmental costs casting doubts on the economic viability of Government farms and Dairy Plants. The Working Group questioned the Department for running these farms at a loss, when the market is running very fast.

The Department informed that it has been requesting the Government for a revolving fund in Poultry farms and Dairy Plants. There are altogether 10 Poultry farms in the Department, but if expenditure costs include establishment costs no farm can become economically viable. It was clarified that farms are necessary but due to shortage of funds for establishment, profits are marginal. The establishment cost and materials are very high. Hence net profit and loss can be assessed only if the Department has a revolving fund.

The Working Group advised the Department to submit a note to the State Planning Board with concrete justifications for the necessity of a Revolving fund by citing the Central Sector Scheme, where a Revolving fund is being operated. The Working Group would like to have a special meeting with the Principal Secretary, the Commissioner & Secretary and the Director, of the Department to discuss this issue.

On the question of production of skimmed milk it was informed that the Department would like to take up this scheme if more fund is available. On the question of feed it was informed that the capacity of the feed mill in Umsning is 200 tonnes a day and in Tura 100 tonnes a day and the ingredients are brought from outside the state. To bring down the cost of feed, the Department proposes to take up with the Government of India for setting up a Central Board or Godown in Gauhati for supply of ingredients to the N.E.States.

On the question of Slaughter House, the Department informed that the proposal has been pending for the last 20 years and no clearance has yet been obtained from the Butchers' Association. The location of the place has been finalized and legislation is yet to be passed by the Assembly. It was also informed that the N.E.C. is ready to fund the project. The Working Group asked the Department to give a history of the scheme on Slaughter House to be discussed in a separate meeting.

**3. Fisheries** :- The 9<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay was Rs.1400.00 lakhs and the expenditure was only Rs.354.31 lakhs. This is due to non release of Central Schemes. The 10<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay is Rs.700.00 lakhs. During 2002-2003 the Revised Outlay was Rs.110.00 lakhs out of which an amount of Rs.74.25 lakhs was spent during the year. The shortfall is due to non-sanction of Central Share for FFDA (Fish Farmers Development Agency).

Discussing the schemes of the Department it was informed that the scheme of FFDA is a Centrally Sponsored Project with 50% Central Share and 50% State Share. Recently, the Government of India had revised the pattern of assistance at 25% grant and 75% loan or own contribution at the revised rate of Rs.3.00 lakhs per hectare for the construction of fish ponds. Development of Fish Seed Farms is taken up to produce fish seed for supply and distribution to the fish farmers. Fish Seeds that are locally available are cheaper than the seeds brought from outside. The Department is proposing to take the expertise of ICAR for development of Fish Research Centre at Mawpun. Regarding requirement of fish in the state it was informed that requirement in the state is 20,000 metric tonnes, whereas the production is only 6,000 metric tonnes.

Financial assistance for construction of Community Village Ponds etc. is being extended by the Department in the form of subsidy. It is noted that although the Department is assisting the farmers but production is negligible as the ponds are small. The Department should encourage the farmers to expand their ponds for more production. Training is given to the farmers relating to measures for prevention of diseases like Ulcerative Syndrome etc.

The Working Group noted that Meghalaya has the longest river length in the North East but rivers have not been exploited to harvest more fish. The Department should take steps to control pollution of rivers by taking the confidence of the local durbars. It was also suggested to organize a Fishing Competition in the Ward's Lake as one way to promote tourism. The Working Group appreciated the Department's proposal for setting up 1000 fish ponds in the state to motivate farmers to take up fish production on a large scale.

The new scheme of the Department is setting up of fish seed hatchery in the private sector which aim at production of major carp fish seeds and other exotic fish seeds which could not be naturally bred under natural conditions.

**4. Forest** :- The 9<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay for Forestry & Wildlife is Rs.10050.00 lakhs, and the expenditure was Rs.2616.45 lakhs. The Plan Outlay for the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan is Rs.8650.00 lakhs. The Revised Annual Plan Outlay for 2002-2003 was Rs.700.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs. 561.64 lakhs.

The Department mentioned of a new concept of a Joint Forest Management in which the FDAs of all states will function in a joint management. The composition consists of the Chairman who could be the Chief Conservator of Forests, representatives from the District Council and non-official Members. The JFM will decide what people want to do at the village level, the FDA is at the District level which would channelise the funds to the people through the JFM. Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have gone ahead with this set up. For a JFM, there should be a minimum of 50 households otherwise the scheme will not be viable.

The Department brought to the notice of the Working Group of the problem of forest encroachment. Most of the private forests are difficult to control because land does not belong to the state and also due to lack of staff, action could not been taken up immediately. The Department confirmed on the continued use of charcoal by the public. It is observed that it is difficult to stop use of firewood but illegal exporting of timber should be stopped. On the question of Catchment Areas, the Department is trying to identify between critical and non critical area to enhance protection of Catchment Areas. The Working Group asked the Department to submit a note on the ways and means of protecting such Catchment Areas.

Regarding setting up of a National Medicinal Board the Working Group understood that it has not yet been resolved whether the Board should be under Health Department or Forest Department. Since this is an important issue the Working Group would like to have a meeting with both the Departments to be clear on the matter.

**5. Border Areas Department** :- The Outlay for the 9<sup>th</sup> Plan was Rs.1200.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs.2669.12 lakhs. The Approved Outlay for the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan is Rs.4470.00 lakhs. The Annual Plan Outlay for 2002-2003 was Rs.612.00 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs. 575.84 lakhs.

The Department informed the Working Group that there are 40 operational ropeways (39 - completed; 1- under construction) for transportation of commodity to outlying areas. Improvement of Border Trades is taken up so as to raise the standard of living and economic condition of the people of the Border Areas. On the question of scholarships an amount of Rs.33.00 lakhs had been sanctioned during 2002-2003 and the amount had been disbursed to the Border students. The rates are different according to class and merit of the students. Regarding

the foot bridge from Phlangwanbroi to Manai, it was informed that it was funded by the Border Areas Department

On the question of marketing of agricultural products in the Border Areas the Department informed that the Govt. of India have agreed in principle for a Border Trade between India and Bangladesh. 3 Border Hats have been identified - Muktapur in Jaintia Hills, Hat Mawdon in Khasi Hills and Mahendraganj in Garo Hills. The Working Group advised the Department to pursue the matter at different levels for speedy implementation of the Border Trade.

#### **23-2-2004**

1. **Housing** :- The Department stated that Rural Housing Scheme is the important scheme which was started from 1981-1982 under 20-Point Programme, Minimum Needs Programme. Since 1996-1997, it was included under Basic Minimum Services and from 2000-2001 implemented under Prime Minister Gramodaya Yojana. Under this scheme, 3(three) bundles of C.G.I.Sheets are provided to each beneficiary belonging to the Economically Weaker Sections of the Society as Grant-in-aid and who are willing to construct their houses upto roof frame level with their own resources.

The Department stated that from 2002-2003 onwards, the number of forms allotted to MLAs under this scheme was increased to 100 forms per MLA by a decision of the Cabinet as a result of which all the beneficiaries of the scheme were selected by MLAs. In view of this Cabinet decision, the District Level Housing Committees have become ineffective. As to an observation made by the Working Group on distribution of application forms, the Department clarified that Xerox copies of application forms are not accepted by the Department and the application forms from the Department are numbered. The Working Group was of the opinion that a certain percentage/ratio be kept with the Department for the deserving poor people who are left out in the process of identification by the MLAs and that there should be a Screening Committee in each District.

The Department informed that the scheme of Assistance to District Councils is stopped. While briefing the achievements made against each scheme during 2002-2003, the Department was asked to furnish details of approved 9<sup>th</sup> Plan Outlay and expenditure figures.

2. **Survey & Statistics**:- On learning that the printing of Handbook of Meghalaya is not regular the Working Group, impressed upon the Department to put efforts to bring out such publications regularly as this would facilitate Government Departments as well as Non-Governmental Organizations to assess the progress of the state and as a result, necessary viable projections could be made for subsequent years. The Department informed the Working Group that the Government Press is overburdened and could not take up the works of the Department.

While reviewing the progress of achievements of the Department during 2002-2003, the Working Group felt that submission of expenditure as incurred by the Department vis-à-vis the sanctioned amount was incorrect and as such, asked the Department to resubmit the financial statement. Regarding procurement of computers the Department stated that sanction is in progress from the State Government. The Department made a strong point for the need of strengthening the Districts with computers.

The Working Group strongly recommended that each District Office of the Department should be strengthened with computers and asked the Department to furnish a brief note on how the "State Domestic Product" is estimated.

3. **District Council Affairs**:- The Department stated that the Revised Plan Outlay for the 9<sup>th</sup> Plan was Rs.2500 lakhs and the present Plan Outlay for the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan is Rs.2500 lakhs as well.

While reviewing the progress of achievements during 2002-2003, the Working Group was informed that the JHADC was usually very prompt in submitting Utilization Certificates which was not the case with the other 2(two) ADCs. It was also learnt that most District Councils do not have the technical know how to prepare schemes.

On mobilizing of resources, other than JHADC, the other 2(two) ADCs viz., KHADC and GHADC face financial constraints. The Working Group agreed with the Department that the Government may take up certain steps as to how to make the above ADCs, financially sound since revenue from Forest etc. is not adequate.

The Department was asked to furnish a detailed list of schemes, those implemented/under implementation and not implemented with reasons thereof during the financial year 2002-2003 in respect of the 3 ADCs and also to furnish the amount of Finance Commission Award to the Department during 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.

In conclusion the Working Group asked the Department to prepare a Working Paper on the present status in the District Councils whereby a discussion could be had with related Departments of Power and Fisheries for optimum utilization of the water bodies of the state for more economic development.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks from the Chair.

**Sd/-  
(S.C.Marak)  
Chairman  
State Planning Board**