

**FIELD REPORTING ON THE WORKING OF SCHEMES
RELATING TO SMALL FARMERS IN FAMINE AFFECTED
DISTRICTS OF WESTERN RAJASTHAN - 1970**

1. The Study

During the late 1960s, the farmers of Western Rajasthan had to cope up with a lot of hardships in terms of complete dependence on monsoon, lack of irrigation facilities, small cultivable land holdings, unfertile sandy soil, shortage of agricultural implements, poor and underfed livestock, shortage of credit, lack of off-season employment opportunities, distant marketing facilities, poor means of transport and communication and, above all, abysmal poverty and illiteracy. Their plight was compounded by regular famine and scarcity conditions caused by lack of drinking water, food and fodder. All this led to the migration of human and cattle populations which resulted in the sufferings of unsettled life.

The Programme Evaluation Organisation as part of its periodic field reporting undertook a study during March-July, 1970, on the working of the schemes relating to small farmers in 4 famine affected districts of Western Rajasthan with a view to assess their problems and requirements and to see as to how far the schemes were successful in improving the living conditions of the small cultivators of the selected districts.

2. Objectives

- i) To study the specific problems of the area and the impact of famine and scarcity conditions on the rural economy;
- ii) To ascertain the specific problems and requirements of small cultivators; and
- iii) To examine the extent to which they derived benefits of the facilities provided by various governmental and non-governmental agencies.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

The four selected districts included Ajmer, Nagaur, Jodhpur and Sirohi. From each selected district, two blocks were chosen keeping in view the intensity of

scarcity conditions and the highest percentage of affected villages. Three villages were selected from each chosen block with probability proportional to the population affected by famines. 10 cultivators with the smallest land holdings were selected from each chosen village. The 240 small cultivators who were chosen from the 24 selected districts constituted about 7.8% of the total population of the 8 selected blocks.

4. Reference Period

The field work of the study was initiated in March, 1970 and completed in July, 1970. Most of the data were collected for the three year period, 1967-68 to 1969-70.

5. Main Findings

1. 80.5% of the villages in the selected districts were affected by famine and scarcity conditions.

2. Of the selected farmers, 27.5% owned holdings of size less than one acre, 49.2% owned 1 to 5 acres and the remaining 23.3% owned 5 acres and above.

3. Only 7% of the gross cropped area of the selected farmers was under irrigation. More than 1/3 rd of the area owned by small farmers with holdings less than 2.5 acres was under irrigation. Two major sources of irrigation were wells and village tanks and ponds. No attempt at providing irrigational facilities in the selected blocks of Jodhpur district was recorded.

4. Wherever irrigation facilities were available, more than one crop was grown. Principal crops in the order of area commanded by them included bajra, maize, jowar, wheat and barley.

5. The official and non-official agencies which extended financial assistance for the development of agriculture included State Bank of India, other nationalised commercial banks, land mortgage banks, co-operative societies and Agricultural Department (through Panchayat Samiti). However, most of the fruits of financial assistance were grabbed by large and medium farmers. Small farmers were neglected because they could not offer any tangible securities.

6. No land reclamation work was reported from Jodhpur and Sirohi districts. Of the total reclaimed land, 80.5% was in Ajmer district and the remnant was in Nagpur district.

7. In the selected districts, use of electricity for agricultural purposes was not reported. It was used negligibly for domestic purposes.

8. Every seventh member of the selected sample was reported to be a member of one or other co-operative societies.

9. Lack of finances, small sized holdings and lack of water were the main problems reported by the farmers in the region.