Accelerated Irrigation Benefits & Flood Management Programme

Water is a critical natural resource for humankind, and its efficient management, conservation and utilization for productive purposes is important for the growth and development of any country. In India, water management assumes an even bigger role as: i) more than half the workforce in India is employed directly or indirectly in the farm sector for which irrigation holds the key to increasing productivity; and ii) many parts of India continue to be ravaged by floods, causing great damage to life and property. The restructured AIBP&FM scheme under the 12th Plan seeks to assist states through an incentive-based funding structure to improve the status of irrigation and flood management in India. It subsumes 3 previous schemes of the 11th Plan implemented by the Ministry of Water Resources, viz – Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), Command Area Development Programme (CADP) and Flood Management Programme (FMP).

Extent of the problem

- In 2008-09, only 45.3% of the gross cropped area in India was under irrigation. Further, out of the total irrigation potential of 140 million hectares in area, 85% is presently being utilized (State of Indian Agriculture Report, 13)
- Water use efficiency in agriculture (which accounts for 80% of total water usage) is a mere 38%. Israel, Japan and China have a much better efficiency of 50-60% (12th Plan)
- More than 40 million hectares (12% of total) of land in India is prone to floods and river erosion.

Objectives

The scheme is aimed at achieving the following objectives:
- Bring more farmland in India under irrigation by accelerating the progress of major, medium and minor irrigation projects in different States.
- Bridge the gap between potential and utilization through better maintenance of existing sources of irrigation.
- Encourage a participatory approach to irrigation management through direct involvement of farmers in water-user associations.
- Provide financial assistance to flood prone states for flood management schemes and initiatives.

Restructuring under 12th Plan

A major problem identified with irrigation schemes is that creation of infrastructure has not been sufficiently complemented by maintenance of such infrastructure. This explains why a large part of our irrigation potential remains unutilized. For example, in several cases, siltation of canals, low water discharge, diversion of cultivable land for other purposes in the command area have been found to be reasons for poor utilization of irrigation potential. To address this concern, it has been proposed that Command Area Development (CAD) (for better capacity utilization) be linked with all future projects sanctioned under AIBP (for creating new capacity). Such an integrated approach to water management is expected to create more sustainable assets, and also improve the efficiency of water use in Indian agriculture. The diagram below depicts this approach illustratively:
A revised set of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Water Resources for AIBP for the 12th Plan period, include the following:

- AIBP works for creation of irrigation potential and Command Area Development works for utilization of irrigation potential would be taken up simultaneously in case of new projects
- Extension/Renovation and Modernization (ERM) Projects could be included in states which have taken steps to improve water management like micro-irrigation initiatives, participatory water management, or where CAD works have already been taken up and are likely to be completed soon.
- Surface minor irrigation schemes will also be eligible for assistance in some special cases and in certain category of States

**Funding mechanism & monitoring**

- For general category states, the rate of Central assistance would range from 25 to 50%.
- Ongoing MMI projects and Surface Minor Irrigation schemes for Special Category States will be eligible for Central assistance up to 90% of the project cost.

The release of funds from the Centre under different schemes depends on the States contributing a minimum percentage of their earmarked share. This is summarized below for 2 categories of funding:

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<th>Projects receiving Central Assistance (CA) upto 50%</th>
<th>In such projects, 90% of Central Assistance would be released after the State releases at least 50% of its share</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projects receiving Central Assistance (CA) upto 90%</td>
<td>In such projects, 50% of Central Assistance would be released after the State releases 100% of its share</td>
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The state governments are required to submit a quarterly report of financial and physical utilization of funds under the scheme to the Central Water Commission (CWC) field officer, and a Quality Assurance Report stating that all mandatory checks were carried out. For minor irrigation projects, periodic checks would be carried out by regional offices of the CWC

**National Irrigation Management Fund**

The 12th Plan proposes to create a non-lapsable National Irrigation Management Fund with the following essential features:

- The NIMF would be used to reimburse to each state a contribution equal to its irrigation service fee (ISF) collection.
- In order to avail of grants under NIMF, States will need to present certified and audited data on total ISF collected from irrigators. This would create an accurate database of irrigation statistics at the command area level.
- In order to incentivize participatory irrigation management, NIMF will also provide a bonus on the portion of ISF collected through Water User Associations (WUAs).

Further, the bonus amount would be granted only if WUAs are allowed to retain 50% of the ISF collected by them

**Flood Control assistance in 12th Plan**

All existing projects which were sanctioned under the 11th Plan would continue to be funded according to the previous fund sharing formula of 75:25 between Centre and State. Under the Scheme, new projects would be sponsored by through Central Assistance for all categories of states as given below:
The release of funds for flood management works would be similar to that of AIBP (previous page); Under the new guidelines, preference would be given to those states which have adopted the Flood Plain Zoning Bill drafted by MoWR (The Flood Plain Zoning Bill provides for regulating the land use in flood plains to contain the damage caused by floods). The projects taken up would be monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC), Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC) and Brahmaputra Board (BB) in their respective jurisdictions. These organizations would conduct sample checks on the quality of construction materials used for flood control works.

**Water User Associations – an example from Chhattisgarh**

In India, participatory irrigation management (PIM) is increasingly seen as an important method to improve water use efficiency and increase agricultural productivity. PIM was first formally articulated as a policy of the Government of India under the National Water Policy 1987. Since the mid 1990s, several state governments have enacted legislations to enable and enforce participatory irrigation management in their respective states. Madhya Pradesh enacted this legislation in 1999, while Chhattisgarh (carved out of MP) enacted a similar legislation under the name “Chhattisgarh Sinchai Prabandhan Me Krishakon ki Bhagidari Adhiniyam, 2006” Under this legislation, farmers organize themselves in the form of Water User Associations (WUAs) which are elected bodies. These bodies have a fair representation of women (34%) to make them more democratic and inclusive. Under the Act, these WUAs get to keep 25% of water fees levied from users, which provides valuable funds to carry out small repairs/ upgrades according to members’ needs. The WUAs in Chhattisgarh have also been involved with the Water Resources Department of Chhattisgarh in the planning and construction of irrigation projects. The WUAs also have legally guaranteed rights to obtain information about water availability, opening/closing of main canal, closure of canals etc.

Participatory management has led to increase in harvests, especially for small-holder farmers. WUAs also permit collective farming and marketing, which lowers costs and improves the margins for many of these farmers. The strengthening of WUAs is being carried out under the Chhattisgarh Irrigation Development Project, funded partly by the Asian Development Bank.