

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Proceedings of the Sitting taken by the Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Rameshwar Oraon on 02/07/2014 Representation Shri M. Alwas, Hon. Secretary, Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association, the Nilgiris regarding proposal for establishment of KVKs in Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu for Tribal Population separately.

Date of Sitting: 02/07/2014.

Lists of Participants: **Annexure I**

Chairperson NCST welcomed the participants and explained that the purpose of this Sitting was to promote formulation of policies to create tribal-led institutions in different tribal pockets around the country that would facilitate a two-way relationship, for transfer of knowledge and its assimilation, between tribals and agricultural research institutions established by the State and Central Governments. He then requested Secretary/NCST to commence the discussion.

2. Secretary/NCST explained that the system of agricultural extension including KVK, has been operating in the country for more than five decades based on a Transfer of Technology model that assumes that the farmer was without any knowledge and all that was required was agronomic input of knowledge on farm inputs and practices from external agencies to improve agricultural productivity and variety in relation to market needs. This experiment in the form of Training & Visit system and more recently, ATMA, was based on the idea that the extension agency would identify a model/contact farmer who would then spread the technology to farmers in the area. This system has not worked and had now been reduced to distributing input subsidies in an inefficient manner while the object of listening to farmers and imparting advice was not given importance. The situation was greatly accentuated in the case of tribals who, by their very nature and characteristic, were shy and isolated and avoided contact with outsiders especially experts who had little knowledge or sympathy with tribal customs and practices. Therefore, even for normal farmers, an Action Research style comprising in a Farmer Participatory Approach had been found desirable. In the case of watershed development too, collective action was essential for its success and this was not possible without farmers participating eagerly and leading the process with officials participating in the farmers activities and assisting with funds, knowledge and technical expertise where sought or required. The absence of this approach and continuance of the current process had left the tribals in a very backward state which needs urgent attention. In the context of milk development under the Anand pattern, Kurien's motto "Putting the Tools of Development in the hands of Farmers" has led to growth in the milk sector since Operation Flood I begin in the early 80s. This sector now has a large number of farmer controlled institutions: Societies, Unions and

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Federations. He emphasized the importance of creating the right kind of institutions that can deliver development objectives and a tribal-led KVK would fit into this role.

3. Secretary NCST explained that it was in this context that a tribal-led Krishi Vigyan Kendra had been proposed for Ooty hills by the Collector of the Nilgiris District, VC/TNAU, Coimbatore and the Government of Tamil Nadu and recommended by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs early last year. The tribal organization identified for this purpose was NAWA which is managed by tribals and works with several tribal communities in the Ooty area and also in the contiguous BR Hills of Karnataka. They have experience in agriculture in tribal areas, cluster farm development, watershed development and of areas related to the social and economic development of tribals and have considerable credibility among the tribals including the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). As explained by the Government of Tamil Nadu, they have employed competent staff and have reputed and experienced advisers in different fields of agricultural, horticultural development, animal husbandry, apiculture, and extraction by tribal SHGs of essential oils.

4. The office of the DG, ICAR had advised the Commission that currently, the existing Krishi Vigyan Kendra was run by UPASI, Coonoor and was set up in 1983. Further, that there was no scope for another KVK. However, information provided by the Collector and the status sheet provided by Secretary, DARE shows that UPASI's KVK is run by unqualified persons. The reports indicated that this KVK works exclusively on tea and coffee with the help of funds from ICAR and from the Tea Board and hardly benefitted farmers of the district who were now focused on horticulture, animal husbandry, agriculture, essential oils extraction, etc. which had high market demand. It was apparent that UPASI had been selected for a KVK in 1983 only in the hope that this institution could effectively promote and fund activities of this KVK. Instead, the institution had been orphaned by UPASI and functions in a parasitical manner, with little interaction with farmers of the district let alone tribals and PVTGs, with the result they have very little performance to show or relevance to the district's needs and there does not seem to have been any effective review of its working by the Central Government which had promoted and supported it over 30 years.

5. Secretary, Deptt. of Agricultural Research & Education & DG, ICAR explained that Krishi Vigyan Kendras (Agricultural Science Centers) were planned as innovative institutions for imparting vocational training to practising farmers, school dropouts and field level extension functionaries. The purpose was to accelerate agricultural production and improve socio-economic conditions of the farming community. The first KVK, on a pilot basis, was established in 1974 at Puducheri (Pondicherry) under the administrative control of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Coimbatore. At present, there are 638 KVKs, which include 400 under State Agricultural Universities (SAU) and Central Agricultural University (CAU), 100 under ICAR Institutes, 100 under NGOs, 1 under UPASI, etc. The main focus of KVKs were: Creation of technical manpower and relevant assets;

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Development of technologies to suit local needs; Showcasing frontier technologies; Capacity building among stakeholders; Disseminate technological information and inputs; and promote Participatory approaches in planning, implementing, executing and evaluation.

The KVKs were aimed at reducing the time lag between generation of technology at the research institution and its application to the farm for increasing production, productivity and net farm income on a sustained basis.

6. Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR further apprised the Commission that the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) is a Central scheme working since the last 30 years and roughly one exists in each district. Since this scheme is fully funded by the Central Govt. as Plan Expenditure, setting up a new KVK will require Cabinet approval. The alternative available was to verify the working of the existing KVK of UPASI and if it was not satisfactory and could not be rectified, then it could be closed and shifted to IARI (wheat) Institute or Potato Research Institute of IARI in Ooty. He cited an instance where the closure ordered was being agitated in Courts for the last eight years.

7. The Secretary, MTA referred to the instructions given in 2013 to show separate TSP budget and schemes and asked Secretary, DARE to indicate how the Ministry was planning the process and if any separate KVK for tribals could be contemplated. The Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR replied that there is no separate KVK for tribals and efforts are being made by their Dept to use the TSP fund in full only by imparting training and other activities in the tribal areas. Secretary, MTA also inquired if the KVKs were supporting farming of spices like turmeric and ginger by tribals to which Secretary, DARE replied in the negative.

8. With regard to the proposal of Secretary DARE that they would also consider transferring the KVK to IARI's institute in Ooty or the Potato Research institute, Secretary/NCST observed that if the land had been mortgaged by UPASI to ICAR, they would not give up the KVK without fighting the case in court which would go on for several years. He said that more relevant, active and recognized institutions like CSWCRTI, Ooty and State institutions such as the Horticulture Research Station (TNAU), Ooty were also available. However, all these institutions could not work as closely with tribals as an established tribal institution like NAWA could do and produce effective outcomes. It was also important that such an institution led by tribals would become an example for promoting similar institutions in tribal areas across the country and lead to desirable outcomes in terms of agricultural productivity, crop diversification and for linking the tribal economy with the larger market economy leading to their rapid assimilation into the mainstream. This accorded with this Commission's mandate under the Constitution to promote viable livelihood strategies for tribals. He reiterated that the objective was not to create a separate KVK for tribals but a tribal-led institution in such tribal concentration districts that could lead the livelihood improvement of all farmers. Therefore, the

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tribal KVK in Ooty could be got approved in addition to pursuing action against UPASI's KVK.

9. Secretary, DARE also advised the Commission that there was a system of five year evaluation of all KVK in India, which is scheduled in August after the current Budget Session of Parliament. For this review, 50 KVKs had been called for evaluation of performance, successes and failures. He invited MTA and NCST to participate in the evaluation and agreed to set apart one full day to evaluate KVK in tribal areas. After discussion, it was agreed that Secretary, MTA will identify knowledgeable tribal representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and capable representatives of Tribal Research Institute for participation in this meeting once dates are finalized. He also telephonically instructed the DDG, ICAR, Bengaluru to immediately inspect the KVK in Ooty and then have detailed discussions and obtain feedback from the Collector, tribals including NAWA, TNAU's Horticulture Research Station and CSWCRTI and send a detailed report on the KVK's performance.

10. While thanking the participants, the Chairman, NCST summarized the action steps as:

a) Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR shall arrange to obtain a detailed evaluation of UPASI's KVK after all local consultations and feedback and advise the Commission within one month.

b) Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR will organize a separate one-day evaluation of KVKs in tribal areas after the Budget session of Parliament and associate both MTA and NCST along with nominees recommended by MTA for giving feedback of tribals. This evaluation should also include an assessment of outcomes of training expenses under TSP and a format or evaluation system introduced to assess outcomes of all such training programmes organized by KVK's so that they are made really useful.

c) On the basis of this performance evaluation of KVKs in relation to tribal priorities, ICAR will design useful programmes that can utilize the funds under TSP allocated under the Ministry of Agriculture.

d) ICAR was requested to involve knowledgeable representatives and specialists in tribal agricultural matters in the Scientific Advisory Committee for KVKs.

e) Based on the interaction planned in August, Secretary, DARE will also look into the policy for KVKs with reference to tribal areas to formulate a view on creating institutions led by tribals for promoting their farm based livelihoods as also for development of their incomes from non timber forest produce (NTFP/MFP) and animal husbandry.

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2. Smt. K. Kamala Kumari, Hon'ble Member
3. Shri R. Vijaykumar Ph.D, Secretary
4. Shri Santosh Kumar, Joint Secretary
5. Mrs. K.D. Bhansor, Director
6. Shir N. Balasubramanian, Research Officer

Ministry of Tribal Affairs

1. Shri Hrusikesh Panda, Secretary

Ministry of Agriculture (DARE)

1. Dr. S. Ayyappan Secretary & DG (ICAR)
2. Dr.V.Venkatasubramanian, ADG (AE), ICAR

