The famine of 1866 extended in the South to several districts of Madras presidency, which included Gangjam, Bellary, Salem, Coimbatore, South Arcot, and Madura. Except in the first named district where stress was felt early in February, the distress in the presidency arose from the rise in prices as the result of export of food grains rather than from absolute failure of crops or cessation of agricultural employment. Rainfall in these districts of Madras in 1866 was delayed. It did not start till late in July, abundant rain fell in August even in Ganjam and distress began to ease off.

The presidency exported by sea, in 1865, one million cwt of food grains. As against this usual quantity of export on the past, Madaras had every year imported food grain from the neighboring provinces principally from Orissa, through Ganjam district, for feeding its own population. The total imports in 1864-65 amounted to 1,400,000 cwts. But in 1865-66 they fell to 1,100,000 cwts. And in the next year came down still further to 8, 15,000 cwts\(^1\) the shortage of supplies combine with the delay in the arrival of rains in the presidency created severe scarcity and raised prices to famine levels. Thus in Coimbatore rice sold in September 1866 at 4 ½ seers, in Salem at 5 ½ seers, and in parts of North Arcot and Trichonopoly at 6 seers a rupee. In Bellary, ragi sold at an average price of 12 Lbs per rupees in September as against the average price of 41 Lbs. In the previous year in Ganjam, where on account of the cessation of agricultural operations, as the result of failure of rains in 1865, the conditions were those of famine rather than a mere pressure of high prices, the highest recorded price for ragi was 15 ½ lbs. to a rupee in August 1866. In spite of high prices and severe scarcity in some of the districts, the exports from the presidency continued, again merchants Seeding their grains to other places where prices were higher or equally high I preference to selling at home.\(^2\)

Except in Ganjam and Bellary districts, there was not much dislocation in agricultural employment in the Madras presidency what was required to relive the distress in this part of the country therefore, was a strict government control over exports and price the relief measure adopted by the Local Government, however took the usual from the employing able bodied sufferers on relief works and
distributing charitable relief to those unable to work a total of 1,82,425 persons found employment on relief works from April 1866 to June 1867 in thirteen districts of the presidency. But the relief works were not organized in right earnest till August 1866, when distress became acute; the total number employed in the three preceding months, April to June, being 1,358 only. The highest number on relief works in any month during the famine was in January 1867 when 33,019 persons got this form of relief. The wage rates were more liberal than in Bengal and Bihar. In Bellary, wages were at first 3.2 and 1 ½ annas respectively for man, woman and child. In Salem and North Arcot, 2 and 2 ½ annas were respectively paid to the famine labour. Simultaneously, gratuitous relief was organized for the relief of those unable to work. A total of 5,02,279 persons were given this form of relief over a period of 15 months from February 1866 and May 1867, or an average of 33,485 per month. The total cost on gratuitous relief was Rs. 5,08,068, while the cost of relief on public works was Rs. 6,60,562 or a total of Rs. 11,68,630 of which the cost to the Government was about Rs. 10 lakhs the rest having been raised by public subscription. The total mortality from the famine in the presidency was estimated at 4,50,000.³

Impressed as he was by the novelty of the situation when an area suffered from high food prices and famine conditions ever when there was no widespread drought and crop were more or less normal, Mr. Dalyell, who was appointed to enquire into the circumstances of this famine, in his Report raised important issues with regard to import of food on Government account, control of food prices and opening of supply depots for sale of food grains to the people at cheap rates. He quoted from Adam Smith and J.S. Mill to prove that these writers had not advocated, as was generally believed a policy of non-interference with private trade in grain in a situation like the one that existed in Madras in 1866-67. On the contrary, he pointed out, the most effective means that could be adopted by the Government of the relief of distress when prices were rising beyond the limits of those prevailing in the neighborhood, and the grain merchants were not importing adequate quantities into the famine area, was for the Government “to create account or by offering a bounty on imports, or making advances to merchants, or
any similar measure which would have the effect of throwing a supply of grain in to the distressed county.⁴

**Famine in Madras:** The troubles in Madras began as far back as 1875 when due to the failure of the south-West monsoon in parts of the Presidency, particularly in the eastern district of Bellary, famine conditions prevailed on a small scale. The South-West monsoon of 1876 again proved a complete failure and by August 1876 it became apparent to the local government that the impending calamity was of a great magnitude. An area of 83,000 square miles, containing a population of 19.4 million, was affected. The distress reached the maximum intensity in the curliest months of 1877, and the number of relief workers touched the highest point a total of 5,35,000 tons of grain was imported into the presidency from the beginning of the trouble till May 1877, prices began to fall little as summer months advanced, but the south-west monsoon though not so deficient in 1877 was yet fitful and irregular. In August, things looked bleak and there was a fear that the north-east monsoon might also prove deficient. The viceroy visited the presidency in that month with a view to reorganizing relief works and consulting with the local government on relief policy, but with the arrivals of rains immediately after, people began to retain to their lands. The distress, however, continued in some parts of the presidency till the early months of 1878 due to low stocks and high of food.⁵

The system and policy of relief adopted by the Madras government gave rise to number of controversies. In the first instance the provincial government fearing shortage of food in the presidency and the rise of prices due to withholding of stocks by the traders, arranged with Messrs Arbuthnot & Co. to hold 30,000 tons of grain for the government. The reason given by the government for this action made interesting reading. “The rise of prices was so extraordinary, and the available supply, as compared with well-known requirements, so scanty that merchants and dealers, hopeful of enormous future gains, appeared determined to hold their stocks for some indefinite time and not to part with the article which was becoming of such unwonted value. It was apparent to the government that facilities for moving grain by rail were rapidly raising prices everywhere, and that the activity of apparent importation and railway transit, did not indicate any addition to food stocks of the presidency … retail trade up-country was almost at a standstill. Either
prices were asked which were beyond the meant of the multitude to pay, or shops remained entirely closed." The strategy of the government was to keep a reserve and throw it into the market wherever traders indulged in hoarding or prices show a tendency to rise beyond the levels reached in neighboring markets. This policy of keeping reserves of food for such emergencies, however, met the disapproval of the government of India on the ground that is constituted an interference with private traders.

The size and nature of relief works also gave rise to the different of opinion between the central and the provincial and the government. The provincial government advocated the construction of large work of permanent utility but the Central government wanted small retail Works to be opened to begin with. The Provincial governments’ views were ultimately allowed to prevail in the matter.

More important than this, was, however, the divergence of views on the policy regarding relief wages. When Sir Richard Temple first visited the presidency on 14 January 1877, he found one million labours on the relief camps in the three districts of Bellary, Kadapa, and Kurnool which had a total population of 4 millions this excusive portion of 25 per cent of the population on relief works, was attributed to what he called an important circumstances which then became noticeable, namely, that “rural classes who are not yet pressed by want, who are able to sustain themselves, and to live without government aid, will largely resort to relief work so long as those works are close at hand, as the labour is easy and the wage worthwhile.” In the rural classes, besides others, he included “pattadar ryots that is the peasant proprietor, rtots having beneficiary interest in the soil under ryotwari settlement, and paying land revenue to the government. “A family not in need of relief would be able to earn Rs. 10 a month (Rs 33/4 for man plus 23/4 for woman and 31/2 for two elder children) or Rs. 40 for 4 months, which is a considerable amount for a rustic family and would help it in digging or deepening an irrigational well, replacing dead cattle and so on.” These were, according to him, undesirable results of Madras Relief Policy which made “public charity indiscriminate.” He suggested, therefore, that fresh admissions to relief works should be stopped, the existing labour force on relief camps should be properly screened with a view to eliminating those who are not in need of relief, to reduce the wage from 11/2 lb of
grain to one lb of grain (from 2 annas to 11/2 anna per day) and to pay wages everywhere in cash instead of grain, the one lb ration on relief camps, nick-named “Temple Ration.” Had the effect of driving away large numbers from the relief camps. The number of relief works fell from 9,07,316 in the first week of February to 6,62,195 in the last week of March but the numbers “too weak for work requiring cooked food in the relief houses” increased from 38,163 in the first week of March to 99,113 in the last week of the same month. The complaints about the inadequacy of food in relief camps resulting in heavy incidence of diseases due to malnutrition and exhaustion and increased mortality reached London and the secretary of State advised the Government of India not to place too much restriction on the discretion of the local government.

Under this pressure from Home and the growing criticism of the inadequacy of wages especially from medical experts, the government of India ultimately relented and permitted the local government in May 1877 to revise upward wages of the famine labour.

The number of relief camps was over one million in January 1877. The introduction of stricter discipline, higher task and the lower wage scale in that month had reduced the number for the time being, but shortly afterwards, it began to increase again (especially of people on gratuitous relief), and was over a million in May 1877. In September 1877, it reached the maximum figure of 2,218,000. Of this over 1 million were labourers on works, the rest receiving gratuitous relief. The total expenditure on relief works was Rs. 94, 94,369 in 1876-77 and Rs. 230, 54,463 in 1877-78 making a grand total of Rs. 325, 48,832 in the two years simultaneously Rs. 170, 33,889 were spent during the same period on gratuitous relief. There was terrible loss of life in the Presidency as a result of the famine. The Famine Commission estimated on the basis of comparison of census returns of 1871 and the test census taken in 1878 that the total loss was 31/2 million lives.

An interesting feature of the Relief Policy of the Government was the liberal money advances made to the distressed population for the purchase of seeds and for the construction of wells and tanks. The advances during the famine amounted to over 18 lakhs of rupees. Another indirect form of relief was revenue remission. While the Madras government was in favour of remitting a large portion of land...
revenue, it was compelled under pressure from Sir Richard Temple to limit remission to the minimum and grant instead suspensions only. The total loss of revenue to the government as the result of the famine was Rs. 150 lakhs.

(c) **Mysore:** The native state of Mysore was under British regency at the time when the failure of the south-west monsoon in 1875 resulted in heavy damage to the autumn crop and later also to the winter crop. There were signs of distress among the people of the State but it was not so acute as to receive the attention of the Administration. Since the agricultural security was provided by the Tanks, wells and irrigation channels in Mysore, this state had an advantage over the neighboring British Province of Madras and it was able to tide over the difficulty for the being human. Due to the failure of rainfall for the second year in succession in 1876, the tanks and wells dried up to and there was severe distress and high mortality both among man and cattle. The total deaths from famine and cholera in two years were estimated at 1.05 million\(^{12}\) out of a total population of 5.05 million.

There was a sharp rise in prices of food grains. the price of ragi, which was a staple food of the people of Mysore, rose to 22 seers per rupee, or more than double the usual price, in November 1875, to 18 seers in August 1876, and to 61/2 seers in December 1876.\(^{13}\) From November 1876 to July 1878, a total of 2,37,179 tons of food grains were imported from the state by private trade. No attempt was made by the Government to import food grains on its own account or control prices.

The relief measures were belated. The Commission of Regency was found to be absolutely unprepared when the famine came and they displayed an utter lack of sense of urgency in the initial stage. As one writer put it at the time, “there was the usual bewilderment, the usual vacillations and it was not until the evil had reached the climax that it was seriously grappled with.”\(^{14}\) When the Government understood finally that was required, there was no holding back, but by that time it was too late. A total of 1,069,290 were found work over a period of 20 months, December 1876 to July 1878, or a monthly average of 53,470. In October and November 1877, the average was 75,000. Simultaneously an average of 90,575 persons were afforded gratuitous relief for 11 months from December 1876 to October 1877 and an average of 1,23,000 for the next 9 months at the total cost of Rs. 21.25 lakhs.
(d) **Hyderabad.** The drought of 1876 extended to the southern half of Hyderabad territory that is to the tract lying in the angle between the famine districts of Bombay, Ahmednagar, and Sholapur, Belgaum and Dharwar on one side and the famine districts of Madras, Bellary and Kurnool on the other. A total area of 30,708 square miles containing a population of 1.9 million was affected, of which 6,942 square miles with a population of 729,000 were affected severely. There was, however, a rich harvest in the northern part of the states which continued to export grain both to Bombay and Madras. In 5 months ending with January 1877, 40,000 tons of food grains were exported from the state. Prices raised under the influence of local scarcity of *jowari* rose in January 1877 to 9 seers to a rupee. Conditions deteriorated as the summer advanced, and July and August 1877 were the worst months. The outlook improved with the arrival of rains in September.

With the onset of the famine, instructions were issued to the effect that “no interference was to be permitted with prices of food grains”; “useful public works were to be opened in districts where relief was wanted” and ordinary works in progress at the time, in other parts, were to be stopped. Weekly reports were called for from all districts on points indicative of the conditions of the country.

Relief was provided, as in the British territory, by offering employment on relief works and feeding destitute in poor houses. On an average, 18,290 persons were employed on relief works for 11 months. The total cost on this form of relief was Rs.8,38,122. A daily average of 6,471 persons received free food in the poor houses for 10 months at a total cost to the State of Rs. 2, 44,347.

**Scarcity of rain fall in Madras Presidency 1884-85**

In Madura, Coimbatore and Kadapa the rainfall for the period from 1 April to 30 September was, in 1884, nearly one-half less than the normal, in Bellary and Tinnevelly more than one-half less, and in Anantapur nearly two-thirds less. Other parts of the presidency were not affected but, in the affected districts, the failure of south-west monsoon was more complete than in the famine of 1876. Writing in the middle of October the madras Government described the position as “vritical.” There were, however, copious rains in November and December in all districts and the Government’s anxiety disappeared excepting in respect of Anantapur and Bellary where “the comparatively high prices pressed heavily on people
accustomed, as are the people of Bellary and Anantapur, to cheap food.”
No attempt was made by the Government to control prices or divert supplies of food grains to the famine districts but it attempted to relieve distress by providing work to those who required it. The Government was not ready, when the famine came, with any scheme of useful work, and employment had consequently to be provided on earthwork which was continued till June 1885 when the monsoon set in. The Government described the situation in the two districts as “a state of distress not amounting to famine.”

**Scarcity in Central Provinces 1886-87:**
The rice crop in Bilaspur and Raipur districts of the Central Provinces was damaged in 1886 on account of a long break of rains August and September. During the year the rainfall in the Central Provinces averaged 29 inches as against the normal of 40 inches. The deficiency extending to Mandla, Seoni, Narsingpur, Hoshangabad, Bental, Chindwara, Wardha, Balaghat and Bhandara districts. The Chhatisgarh division was the worst affected. Distress was feared in the two districts of Bilaspur and Raipur in the hot months of 1887 but it did not appear. The explanation given was that the tract had great resources, that the previous season was good and good and consequently there were ample stocks in the villages, and that though prices were higher than usual, rice selling at 20 to 24 seers against 30 to 40 seers in 1885, they reached the scarcity level. Relief measures of the Government were confined to the offer of work by District Boards on digging of tanks.

The state collected its full revenue demand, the total collection in the year of scarcity amounting to Rs. 62.57 lakhs as against Rs. 60.60 lakhs collected in the previous year.

**Scarcity of rain fall in Madras, Bombay and Bengal: 1890-92**

With the exception of Central Provinces and North Western Province and Oudh, all other parts of the country had deficient rainfall in 1891. The overall deficiency for the country as a whole was 9 per cent but is the Madras Presidency it was 15 per cent, in Bengal and Bihar 13 per cent, Bombay 14 per cent, and Hyderabad 25 per cent. In Madras, rainfall was deficient both in 1890 and 1891 in Bengal deficiency was experienced in 1891 and 1892 in Bombay 1891 was a bad year but the monsoon both in 1890 and 1892, more than the average rainfall. Local
scarcities and famines were, therefore, experienced in different parts of the country over the three years 1890 to 1892.

(a) Famines in Madras, 1890-92. The Madras Government had hardly wound up its relief operations in Ganjam when it found itself faced with deficiency of rains throughout the presidency in 1890 and 1891. The principal areas affected by drought were Kadapa, Nellore, Chingleput, North Arcot and Coimbatore which suffered the most in the first six months of 1891. At the end of February 1892, the affected area in the presidency amounted to 31,069 sq. miles covering a population of 4.98 millions. As a result of partial failure of crops there was a sharp rise in prices of food grains. Rice in 1891-92 was only 10.5 seers to a rupee, as against the average of 15.6 seers in 1887-88; Ragi was 17.8 seers and 30.4 seers respectively and cholum 16.88 seers and 27.9 seers. No action was taken by the Government to check the rise in prices but the Ganjam famine had taught a lesson that the failure of crop of a “single season was sufficient to cause extensive distress a fact which had formerly been doubted.” Early steps were, therefore, taken at organizing relief and a total sum of Rs 161/2 lakhs was spent by the Government for the purpose. “Charitable” relief was administered to those unable to work in the form of cooked food which people were very reluctant to accept.

The famines were accompanied by cholera which took its usual toll among those suffering from deficiency of food. The death rate in the affected districts was higher than the normal; in Kurnool 44.1 per mile against a normal of 31.8 per mile, in Bellary 32.2 against 28.7 and in Anantapur 29.4 against 26.2. But the famine Commission did not consider the increased mortality as “abnormally high, “from which it deduced that “famine was successfully managed” at not an excessive cost. But the management of a small local scarcity which causes a mortality of about 45,000 can hardly be described as “a success.”

Famines of 1896-97

The famine of 1896-97 was more widespread and severe than any the country had experienced before. It was officially described at the time as the most disastrous famine of the century. Besides the four Bundhelkhand districts of Allahabad Division where famine conditions had already prevailed since 1895, the
famine of 1896-97 affected, more or less, every part of India. Among the provinces affected were Bihar, Bengal, Bombay Deccan, the Deccan districts of the Madras Presidency, the North Western Provinces and Oudh, the Central Provinces, the Punjab and Burma. Distress was particularly severe in the Central Provinces, the North Western Provinces, Hissar district in the Punjab, and the Deccan districts of Bombay presidency, narrative of this famine put the total area of the famine track at 504,940 sq. miles and the population affected at 96,931,000 persons. If, however, we exclude native states and take only British India including Burma, the famine tract covered an area of 224,828 sq. miles and affected a population of 62.4 million.

The immediate cause of the famine was the failure of the autumn rains over a large part of the country. Over a wide area there was no rainfall from the middle of August of the middle of November a period during which India gets normally about one-third of her annual rainfall. The autumn food crops such as millets, pulses, and rice was badly damaged. In the Central Provinces the crop yield for the year was estimated at 45 per cent of the normal, in NWP and Oudh 60 per cent, in Bengal 67 per cent, in Bombay 65 per cent, in the Punjab 75 per cent and in Madras 80 per cent. The loss of crop in the year was estimated out of one-third of the Average annual production of “18 or 19 million tons.” Against this the total imports from Burma during the period of famine amounted to 6 lakh tons. The deficit had therefore to be meeting almost holy from accumulated reserves, if any, or by a reduction of consumption under the stress of high prices. In the North Western and the Central Provinces, the famine had been preceded by short crops in the previous one or two years and in the former by a famine of considerable severity in the Allahabad Division. Food stocks in these provinces were naturally low at the time when the famine came. In Bombay, Bengal and Madras, on the other hand, heavy exports of grains in the previous years had drained away whatever surplus there might have been. Exports continued unabated from the Bombay presidency even up to September 1896 when the famine was found the corner, with the large shortfall in the outturn of food grains and in the absence of any large stocks accumulated from previous years, the country was faced with a food shortage of unprecedented magnitude.
The first intimation of famine came to Government from north Western province at the end of September 1896. Famine took a violent turn next month. There grain riots in Delhi, Agra, Nagpur Muzaffarnagar and Mhow. Grain shops were looted in Mhow on the morning of 15 October 1896. There was civil commotion and unrest in Bombay against continuing exports of food grains from the presidency at a time when people faced the threat of famine. There was a growing demand for imposing a ban on food exports and for encouraging imports of food from aboard on Government account. The Government of India, however, refused to change it food policy and steadfastly clung to the view so far held that, “even in the worst conceivable emergency so long as trade is free to follow its normal course, we should do far more harm than good by attempting to interface.”

The policy of non-intervention in trade was carried to absurd limits. Thus the Bengal Government was censured for a proposal made by it of making advances to landlord and traders to import foodgrains, while in Bombay some municipal committees which tried to open fair price shops were reminded that, under the Local Authority Funds Act, the committees were not authorized to use their funds for meeting “any loss incurred or in interest due on sums borrowed for the supply of grains.”

The only exception to this general policy was the importation of grain on Government account in such remote area as Palamau district in Bengal, the Bhadrachalam Taluk of the Godavari district in Madras, the Shetpal relief work in Poona district in Bombay, and in Mandla and Balaghat districts in the Central Provinces.

Barring these minor cases, in the country as a whole the adjustment of the reduced supply to the demand for food grains was left to the operation of the price mechanism. It was natural, under the circumstance, for prices of food grains to shoot up. According to the Famine Commission of 1880, “in times of very great scarcity prices of food grains rise to three times their ordinary amount, so that were as in ordinary years the price of food grains of the mass of the people may be from 20 to 30 seers a rupee, in times of great scarcity, it will rise to 8 to 10 seers a rupee, or even higher.” The course of prices during the famine of 1896-97 was in accordance with the past experiment. For example, in Darbhanga the common rice was 24.21 seers a rupee in 1895, 13.25 seers in October 1896 and 9 seers in
June 1897. In Bellary district (Madras) Cholum was 29.7 seers a rupee and ragi 30.35 seers a rupee in 1894, but by June 1897 the former was selling at 10.7 seers and the latter at 15 seers. In Cawnpore (NWP) wheat was 17.9 seers a rupee in 1894 and 8.12 seers in November 1896.

**Extension of irrigation:**

Within the limits of the finance available, the choice of irrigation schemes for execution by the State had so far been guided by two main considerations: (i) the development of the country’s resources, and (ii) the financial productiveness of the investments in irrigation works. Protective works, that were important for their value as providing insurance against famine, could not be financed out of the current revenues of borrowed funds. The Famine Insurance Fund, which was the only source of finance for such works, was too meager to support any considerable programme of protective irrigation works. The irrigation policy of the Government thus bore no relation, till the end of the nineteenth century, to the requirements of the situation. The appointment of an Irrigation Commission in 1901 was, therefore, not merely an indication of the readiness of the Government to devote greater attention, in its future programmes of public works, to schemes of irrigation; it also marked a fundamental change in the thinking of the Government on the purpose of irrigation works in India. This was clear from the instructions of the Government. “The main question as regards new works,” the Commission was told, “is not whether they will be likely to prove directly remunerative but whether the net financial burden which they may impose on the State, in the form of charges for interest and maintenance, will be too high a price for the protection against famine which they may be relied on to afford, and it is from this point of view that we should consider proposals for the extension of irrigation in districts in which it (rainfall) is very insecure or precarious.” This of course, did not mean stopping further extinction of productive works which the Government constructed “as a matter of business.”37 It only marked the beginning of a move in the direction of providing irrigation facilities to those large areas in the country, including some of the portions which were most liable to famine, “where no works of productive class are possible, and which must be protected, if at all, at a certain cost out the revenues.”38
The Commission found that it was something of a physical and financial impossibility to protect all parts of the county against failure of crops and famine. In areas like the Deccan districts of Bombay and Madras, the Central Provinces and Budhelkhand, where protective irrigation was most urgently required, there was “not a prospect of any new irrigation works on any considerable scale proving directly remunerative.” In some of these construct works of irrigation; the cost would have been prohibitive. There was the Commission felt, “a limit to the expenditure which may be incurred and a risk of imposing a burden on the country which may be even greater than the famine itself.”

However, the Commission pointed out that irrigation works had not in the past received the attention that they deserved, that there was still great scope, in some parts of the country, for the extension of irrigation works which would directly prove remunerative, that there had been over the last 25 years very little increase in the area covered by the minor irrigation works which had suffered from comparative neglect, and that, besides extension of State protective works, much could be achieved by encouraging construction of private irrigation works, such as well, through State advances and revenue concessions. A twenty Year irrigation plan, involving a total expenditure of Rs. 44 crores, was drawn up by the Commission of this sum; Rs. 15 crores was proposed for investment on productive works, Rs. 20 crores on protective works and Rs. 9 crores on the intermediate works. The Commission also recommended that while “the programme of future expenditure on irrigation should provide for the construction of as many productive works as can be proposed, in whatever parts of the country they are situated and without reference to the urgency of protection to the locality,” the sanction of a proposal for a protective works should not the “withheld simply on the ground that investments elsewhere are more profitable.” Each individual scheme, it was recommended, should be considered on its merit, the criterion being that “productiveness” should receive greater consideration than “protectiveness.”

The solution to the irrigation problem of the tracts most liable to failure of crops, the commission felt, lay in the encouragement of the construction of well and minor irrigation tanks which were best left to the individual or private care. But the state could stimulate the extension of these works in the country by exempting from
land tax the benefits accruing to the landholder from permanent improvements in land and by granting him financial assistance to enable him to undertake these works. The Commission pointed out that in Madras “permanent exemption of improvements from taxation has justified itself as an effective encouragement to the construction of wells and that its trail for that purpose in other provinces, where exemption is at present only temporary, would be justified in tracts exposed to famine in which special encouragement are required.” A similar recommendation had been made earlier by the Famine Commission of 1880 and a provision to that effect had been included in the land improvements, loans bills, but in the course of the debate on it in the legislative Council, the provision was dropped. The famine commission of 1901 repeated the recommendation.

The Government of India, in its comments on the recommendation of the irrigation commission, welcomed the declaration made by the commission against the prevailing popular view that the “Whole of India can be securely protected against famine by the construction of irrigation works.” This declaration by an authoritative body of experts, the Government felt, “Supplies an answer to those who hold that because, taking one year with another, the rainfall in India was sufficient for its irrigational needs, it is both possible and our duty to store the surplus of good year and to render failure of crops impossible.” The reference was obviously to General Sir Henry Cotton who had died a few years earlier. The Government pointed out that so far as the extension of productive works was concerned no question of principles was involved. Their construction would be pushed forward so far as finance was available, and the Government undertook to find Rs. 220 lakhs a year of Rs. 44 crores over the next 20 years, as recommended by the commission, for irrigation works. The recommendation for abolishing the official distinction between productive and protective works, made by the Commission, was turned down, but he Government undertook to devote in future greater attention to the construction of protective irrigation works, “The real justification for laying a burden upon the whole of India in order to protect the inhabitants of an insecure area from famine is,” the Government of India wrote, “not that expenditure or pecuniary loss will be thereby avoided, but that the construction of the works will prevent an infinity of human suffering and save a
number of human lives.” In deciding whether to protect a certain tract at a certain cost, the Government went on to say that “the element of sentiment” could not be excluded. Quoting the example of Bombay Deccan in which protective works were not expensive and were likely to yield small net return in normal years on expenditure incurred on irrigation the Government pointed out that this part of the country was “so exposed to the ravages of famine, and the distress, when it comes, is so general and so acute, that the Government is under a moral obligation to do something to protect its inhabitants if it is in any way possible.

Another recommendation of the Commission related to the question of classification of minor irrigation works. The practice of the Government of far had been to treat all such works as protective, irrespective of the amount of revenue yielded by the, and to charges all capital expenditure incurred on these works to the current revenue. Under that system of accounting, the importance of such works was liable to the minimized because some of the existing works of this class were really productive but were not being shown as such. The Commission therefore recommended. That “all existing minor works, for which both capital and revenue accounts are now kept, and the revenue account of which can be accepted as indicating, with reasonable accuracy, the true return due to the capital expenditure should be transferred to the class of major works, whether they fulfill the conditions of a productive work or not.” The Commission thought that of this recommendation were accepted, “the productive and protective value” of such irrigation works would be greatly increased. The Government however, turned down this recommendation of the Commission on the ground that it was based on “the understanding that the distinction between productive and protective works would be removed.” As the Government had already indicated its intention to “retain the distraction,” it followed that only those minor works which had proved “productive” could be transferred to “major Works” so as to be improved and developed from loan funds. On the general question of paying, in future, greater attention to the development of minor works, the Government admitted that during “the period of financial stress which accompanied the fall in the sterling value of the rupee, it was impossible to devote any considerable additional sums from general revenue to expenditure under this head It was, however, realized how that
works of this class were of great importance to the country and the Government expressed itself in full agreement with the Commission “as to the advisability of increasing expenditure on them. as for the private irrigation works such as wells, the Government expressed its willingness to give financial assistance for their construction but in the matter of permanent exemption of land improvements from taxation, it stuck to its earlier decision embodied in the Land Revenue policy Resolution of 1902.

The Commission’s recommendations and the Government’s action thereon could not have, in the nature of things, produced immediate results; but they6 paved the way to a broader and bolder approach to the problem of irrigation in India, with a view to ultimately saving the country from the menace of recurring famines.

**Improvement in Economic Condition of Agriculturists:**

There is growing unanimity that Indian agriculture has been passing through a phase of serious crisis. The crisis in agriculture has many manifestations. If it was not possible by means of irrigation works to secure the country completely against occasional drought, it was necessary, if occurrence of famine was to be prevented, to improve the economic condition of that section of the agricultural population which was the main victim of famines, in order to strengthen its power of resistance against famine. Three principal factors which weekend the staying power and mostly accounted for the poverty of the poor peasants were their indebtedness and consequently large yearly payments of interest to the moneylender, the exaction land revenue demand of the State, and the high rental charges of the landlord. The distributive system in Indian Agriculture worked to the disadvantage of the actual tiller of the soil and the most important reform needed for improving his economic condition was regulation of the share of the moneylender, the State and the landlord in the produce of the land. Reference to indebtedness and its evil consequences was made by the successive famine Commission, The attack on the land revenue system came mostly from the critics of the Government, and the exactions of the landlord found prominent mention in the Government’s Land Revenue Resolution of 1902. The period that we are surveying was marked by notable action on the part of the Government to tackle the problem of indebtedness and limitation of the land revenue demand of the Government.\(^{43}\)
The state which continued to export grain both to Bombay and Madras, in five months ending with January 1877, 40,000 tons of food grains were exported from the state. 157% prices rose under the influence of local scarcity of jowari rose in January 1877 to 9 seers to a rupee. Conditions deteriorated as the summer advanced, and July and August 1877 were the worst months. The outlook improved with the arrival of rains in September.

With the onset of the famine, instructions were issued to the effect that “no interference was to be permitted with prices of food grains”; “useful public works were to be opened in districts where relief was wanted” and ordinary works in progress at the time, in other parts, were to be stopped. Weekly reports were called for from all districts on points indicative of the conditions of the country.

Relief was provided, as in the British territory, by offering employment on relief works and feeding destitute in poor houses. On an average, 18,290 persons were employed on relief works for 11 months. The total cost on this form of relief was Rs. 8,38,122. A daily average of 6,471 persons received free food in the poor houses for 10 months at a total cost to the State of Rs. 2,44,347.

**Scarcities in the parts of Madras 1884-85:**

In Madura, Coimbatore and Kadapa, the rainfall for the period from 1 April to 30 September 1884 was nearly one-half less than the normal, in Bellary and Tinnevelly more than one-half less, and in Anantapur nearly two-thirds less. Other parts of the presidency were not affected but, in the affected districts, the failure of south-west monsoon was more complete than in the famine of 1876. Writing in the middle of October the Madras Government described the position as “vritical.”

There were, however, copious rains in November and December in all districts and the Government’s anxiety disappeared excepting in respect of Anantapur and Bellary where “the comparatively high prices pressed heavily on people accustomed, as are the people of Bellary and Anantpur, to cheap food.” No attempt was made by the Government to control prices or divert supplies of food grains to the famine districts but it attempted to relieve distress by providing work to those who required it. The Government was not ready, when the famine came, with any scheme of useful work, and employment had consequently to be provided on earthwork which was continued till June 1885 when the monsoon set in. The
Government described the situation in the two districts as “a state of distress not amounting to famine.”

Accordingly to Andhra Pradesh Directorate of Economics reports 2014, more effects shows not only sequence of fall down of the rainfall but also drought. The observation of the report in Kharif season drought reveals clearly. Almost all in Andhra pradesh out of 664 mandals there is an abundant rainfall accorded in only in 9 mandals, and remaining 99 mandals very less rain fall was recorded. Compare to previous time in 461 mandals less rains are fall down, form the begging of the Kharif season to till date Andhra Pradesh Directorate of Economics reports are observed, the table clearly shows percentage and more or less rain fall conditions in the state:

Table-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Recorded</th>
<th>Percentage of lack</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Lack</th>
<th>More lack</th>
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<tr>
<td>Srikakulam</td>
<td>959.8</td>
<td>861.3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>526.6</td>
<td>-48.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. Godavari</td>
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<td>564.1</td>
<td>-43.3</td>
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<td>892</td>
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<td>423.7</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anantapuramu</td>
<td>466.1</td>
<td>258.0</td>
<td>-44.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurnool</td>
<td>585.3</td>
<td>396.2</td>
<td>-32.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total A.P</strong></td>
<td><strong>781.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>506.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>-35.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>461</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
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</table>


The Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh consists of four districts - Kurnool, Kadapa, Anantapur and Chittor. The entire Anantapur district, major parts of Kadapa and Kurnool, and parts of Chittor, are reeling under severe drought conditions. The Rayalaseema Drought Relief Movement (RDRM) (a group of
eighteen rural NGOs), and the Independent Commission for People’s Rights and Development, (ICPRD), New Delhi organized a two day regional level workshop of farmers for Coalition Building to Combat drought (at Kadiri, Anantapur district). As part of a pioneering advocacy effort, on the issue of drought, the workshop, made a detailed and systematic analysis of the factors / policies leading to the severe crisis and social upheavals. Practical strategies to alleviate the severe economic stress and social turbulence were outlined by multi-stake holders. (67 participants including 20 NGOs from 4 districts of Andhra Pradesh participated in the effort). The major impacts of drought as highlighted by the report are given below.

**Major impact of drought**

- Loss of crop - Debt bondage Suicides
- Distress migration
- Increase in child labour
- Rampant corruption in food for work program
- Fodder scarcity leading to selling livestock
- Trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, labour.
- Pauperization of farmers.

The Human Rights Forum claimed that distress migration has left many villages almost empty, with the exception of the elderly and young. Those who had not left their mandal (smallest administrative unit) were at the vagaries of the contractor. For example, a contractor took a group to Kerala, during which time, three women missed the bus. They resorted to begging in order to survive. Only one woman returned to the village, while the other two are still missing. As they were children of rural folk, they did not know traffic rules of the city and some of the children died as a result of traffic accidents. Language was also a barrier. For e.g.: Some of the migrants were accused of theft and evicted without receiving remuneration as they could not express themselves in the local language.

Historically in Anantapur, it is evident from the stone carvings in ancient temples, for example the Laxmi Narasimha Devalayam in Kadiri, and the reports during the British Government that there were many famines in the area, the
agricultural conditions were unfavorable. Owing to famines and the scarcity of food grains, many died of starvation, however there is no indication of suicides during these periods. Why have suicides suddenly become rampant in the area?

In the year 2000, there were 48 suicides; in 2001 there were 93; and in 2002 there were 102 suicides. Of these, 55 were women and 5 were girls. Why are people committing suicide? Has the mental stability of Anantapur farmers weakened and, as a solution, resort to suicide? Agriculture is the only occupation in the area, though precarious, and often manifests loss and liabilities. The continuous loss of inputs and crops engender a quagmire of debts and the pressure from the money lenders generates hopelessness.

Are the farmers avaricious? Do they want to make rapid profits and hence resort to mono-cropping of commercial crops - i.e. groundnuts? How and why did the farmer fall into this trap of mono-cropping of groundnuts and why are they not able to come out of it? Around 1990, the groundnut cultivation became popular in the district. The government encouraged groundnut cultivation with input subsidies and the price became favorable. The farmers continued the crop due to its ability to withstand low water inputs. Even without rainfall for two to three years, groundnuts can be cultivated. During this time, the government began to import palm oil and created competition, causing the price for groundnuts to fall. It is these policies that provided impetus to groundnut cultivation on the one hand and imports on the other hand - yet played havoc with the lives of the farmers in the area. The modern day famine is different from that of the old. Today, a good network of rail and roadways are available and the granaries are full. Yet people are dying of hunger. It is within this context that public interest litigation, positively acknowledged by the judiciary, led to the Food for Work (FFW) program. This emerged as a consequence of the directive of the judiciary. Two lakh bags of grains have been claimed in the district, most of which has been recycled in the godowns. Did not governments, political parties, social activists, NGOs and networks fail to advocate and ensure its access to the poorest? Anantapur has been declared a “desert area after crores of rupees have been spent on it when it was initially labelled drought prone”. The failure of civil society organizations in the area is evident, he complained. Approximately 7 crore rupees are provided as input subsidy.
However, this has turned out to be a subsidy for suicides as many of those who died were using a harmful pesticide. The State Government’s ‘Vision 2020’ in the agriculture sector is aimed at reducing the number of people dependent on agriculture as a livelihood to 7%. Mr. Basha questioned whether these suicides are a means to achieve the goal of decreasing the number of farmers? Downsizing…. He said that it was contractors that mainly benefitted from the Food for Work (FFW) program. The government was able to distribute rice freely and ask the farmers to work in their own fields.

Having analyzed the effects of the policies and their implementation, Mr Basha claimed that politics has become criminal and questioning policies or asking for transparency led to victimization. There are so many schemes operating in every village; how many news reporters or NGOs know the number of beneficiaries under the Annapurna scheme? For a single work, ten bills are often raised and sent; every village has at least ten schemes amounting to approximately two to three lakhs. Mr Basha argued that NGOs and civil society should ensure that the benefits reach the poorest and target groups by using the right to information act.

In the discussions that ensued, Mr. Basha said that it is not easy to obtain water from the Krishna River due to a clash of interests. However, solutions in the interests of people from both areas are possible. Some areas have groundwater, but Anantapur does not, he agreed. It is necessary to convince and start discussions amongst people. Mr. Basha further explained that the Bachawat tribunal allotments for water allocations ended in May 2000 and a new commission is being established. Some of the waters allotted to Andhra Pradesh have not been utilized, Mr. Basha pointed out. This may prove difficult in requesting future quota allotments in terms of higher requirements, he cautioned. Karnataka State has already tried for higher allotments (through Almetti), but the current authorities were not willing to discuss these issues, he concluded.

Visweswarao, an activist cum journalist from Anantapur (Andhra Jyoti), examined the history of drought and its linkage to the current crisis of suicides. An historical assumption of the drought in the region is based on the theory that drought occurs when there is no rain, he said. Through it is not linked directly, yet, if there is no water, there is drought. “What could the government do? It all depends
on the rain god; the government is not the cause of the problems of the farmers”, claims the general perception, he lamented.

The rain in the region, particularly in Anantapur, is less than that of Jaisalmer or Israel. In a period of 124 years, there was a shortage of rain for 64 years. In September 2001, 143tmc of water flowed through Anantapur but did not bring any change to people’s lives!

History speaks of large granaries in the area; pears were sold on the streets during the time of King Sri Krishna Devaraya, it is argued that during this period, there were no perennial rivers in the area. Gazettes are available in which the expenditure on drought may be found and the severity of the droughts can be estimated. Examples highlight the severe and remorseless nature of the droughts and famines in the area that have resulted in the heavy loss of human lives and livestock. It was these conditions during the British Colonial period that forced Sir Arthur Cotton to take up irrigation projects, he pointed out.

Mono Cropping-Cash Crops: The Technical Mission for Oil Seeds identifies necessary measures to fulfill the needs in this sector. When there was a shortage of oil seeds, the government encouraged groundnut cultivation through a number of inputs and marketing facilities in this area. A higher number of farmers initiated groundnut cultivation. At the same time, the New Economic Policy withdrawal of subsidies came into force. This increased the input costs of fertilizers and pesticides.

Under the Open General License Policy, imports of palm oil were initiated. Even when record crops were grown, there were no remunerative prices. Generally, crop cultivation depends on local geographical and climatic conditions. However, remunerative prices and market demand also play a crucial role. Where there are irrigation facilities, the farmer can produce crops in relation to market demand. In a crisis situation, farmers are able to rely on paddy due to its market demand and can receive some form of remuneration. Other crops do not have the same effect.

However, paddy cultivation in the region is minor; rain-fed crops, such as groundnuts and grams, do not command adequate prices. The dilemma is acute, he highlighted. Scanty rains, loss of fertility, and lack of irrigation causes untold sufferings for the Rayalaseema ryots. Further, liberalization policies and economic
reforms have pushed farmers to the verge of suicide, he argued. During the times of
the historical figure and monarch, Sri Krishna Devaraya, digging tanks and building
temples were the primary works undertaken. Tanks to store water for irrigation and
temples were necessary in order to fight the unequal palegar system. The rulers of
the period focused on the needs of the agricultural sector. However, it seems that
the major progress made in the agricultural sector was in the 14th-15th centuries.
There has been no further progress since this period; it could be said in a manner of
speaking! The present day public works concentrate on roads and other types of
construction. Emphasis is given to the ten per cent commission system, required by
the upper political echelons, (as their share) in terms of public works, he said.

Visweswarao maintained that regional development is directly linked to the
proportion of lands irrigated in the area. The state average for irrigated land is 36
per cent, while in coastal Andhra Pradesh the irrigated area is 63 per cent, a meagre
14.25 per cent in Anantapur district, 13.89 per cent in Kurnool district, 26.77 per
cent in Kadapa district, and 36 per cent in Chittor district. However, this irrigated
land cannot be compared to the irrigated lands of Krishna and Godavari districts, as
the majority of irrigated lands in Rayalaseema are fed from small tanks and ponds,
which are filled once in every three-four years. Approximately 2.67 lakh hectares of
cultivable lands are lying idle in Rayalaseema - the highest in the state.

Furthermore, the area of uncultivable land in Rayalaseema is also the highest
(6.84 lakh hectares) in the state. Thus, from 30 lakh hectares of cultivable land in
the region, only 5.6 lakh hectares have irrigation facilities. 24 lakh hectares of land
is devoid of irrigation facilities. Another misconception is about the direct linkage
between trees and rains. Trees are a crucial part of the environment in attracting the
rains. Despite several crores of rupees that have been spent on increasing forest
cover, there is a significant lack of trees and deforestation in the area. The extent of
monitoring reports indicates that the available area of the district would not have
been sufficient, if all the saplings said to have been planted were alive in reality!
CIDA, the donor agency, it is said has stopped funding this program citing the
above issues particularly the poor survival rate as a primary reason. In the process,
seventy crores of rupees have gone down the drain, he lamented. In a discussion
relating to watershed projects, it was highlighted that if there are adequate rains,
then these could be harvested into the lands. What use are watersheds when there is no rain? he questioned. A mere nine per cent of rainwater is retained in the soil. Therefore, if rainwater is to be utilized effectively, it should be stored during rains and used later.

However, Visweswarao argued that this very concept is misplaced. He claims that through watersheds, corruption is decentralized and vested interests have converged together. In order to permanently solve the problems of Rayalaseema and, in particular, Anantapur farmers, he emphasized the need to provide irrigation sources through the Krishna River water. The government has highlighted the chronic drought situation to the Bachawat tribunal in order to obtain more water allocation from the Krishna River. However, this should be provided to the Rayalaseema farmers. In the past, people died due to famines but now it is due to the policies of the government; During the British period, the area was under the Madras Presidency and there still was a supply of grains and fodder to the area, he concluded.

**Trafficking of Women and girl child**

Describing the situation of women in the area, Bhanuja (REDS) said that the conditions caused by drought have played havoc with the lives of women in the rural sector. Women have always been an integral part of agricultural operations. Approximately 55 women from agricultural families have resorted to suicide. Even children have resorted to suicide due to the difficulties faced by their parents. She quoted a case study; Jayalakshmi, a 14 year old girl, was considered a very good student by both villagers and teachers. Considering the difficulties faced by her mother following the migration of her father to earn a livelihood, Jayalakshmi resorted to suicide.

The continuous failure of crops, debt trap, and suicides has all forced women to become sole breadwinners in many families. Drought has also destroyed supplementary livelihoods by making the maintenance of milch animals difficult. Bhanuja recalled that many sugali women (a tribe) in Lakkiredypally and Galiveedu Mandals of Kadapa district have been trafficked for sexual exploitation due to loss of their livelihood. Personal values have been eroded to such a degree that families have begun to accept this as a livelihood option, she lamented. Many
trafficked women have gone to Pune, Bombay and Delhi. Locally they are involved in such activities in nearby towns, highway dhabhas (wayside cafes) and few brothel houses. As a result, women headed families have to carry their children along with them. The children are also often perverted from the childhood in terms of sexual attitudes. A majority of sex workers are affected by the STD, HIV / AIDS, leading often to high mortality rates, amongst this group, she said.

Similar situations are occurring and increased in other areas of Kadiri in the past five years. Approximately 78 trafficked women were identified in a single place. Some women were promised jobs as housemaids in distant cities but were sold to brothel houses in the metros mentioned above. Some women were sent without the knowledge of their parents. Using the abject poverty of the families, some men, on the pretext of love, have eloped and sold the girls to brothel houses. Lack of livelihoods and marriage difficulties (dowry) in such poverty stricken conditions have forced the girls to elope; often, falsely lured and trapped into the sex work net. Bhanuja lamented that the right to a decent livelihood is being eroded in the face of the severe challenges to survival.

The following tables shows the activities planned in terms of short term (less than a year) and long term activities (more than a year) drawn up by the RDRM/ICPRD Workshop on Rayalaseema Regional Level Farmers Coalition Building on Combating Drought. Activities involving demonstration projects are to be taken up at least in one Gram Panchayat by each NGO while activities involving training, orientation, are being planned to be taken up in at least one mandal by each NGO. Resources for the activities and collaborations are being planned and sought.
**Dry Land Agriculture**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Problem/issue</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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**Improvement of Natural Resource Management**

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<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.No.</td>
<td>Problem/issue</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of food Security</td>
<td>Ensuring food Security</td>
<td>Rice Credit Line - Improvement of - Food for Work program - Annapurana - Antodaya as per</td>
<td>DPIP, DRDA District &amp; State Administration AGRMI AFPRO</td>
<td>1 Mandal</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Livelihood/ Migration / Trafficking /Convergent Community Action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Problem/issue</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fodder Scarcity Drinking Water</td>
<td>Procurement of fodder from other places; Plantation of trees useful as fodder Raising fodder in tank beds/waste lands; Minimising fodder wastage; Construction of water tanks for livestock near tube wells/ water taps</td>
<td>Sensitising the farmers and VSS. Sensitising farmers on urea treatment and chopping fodder Lobbying</td>
<td>Animal Husbandry Forestry department Grama Panchayat MPDO</td>
<td>1 Mandal</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creating Alternative Livelihoods</td>
<td>Viable Income Generating activities Providing skills Micro- Finance delivery- SHGs (Financial Assistance) Marketing Assistance</td>
<td>Conducting studies (by an expert organization) for identification of viable income generating activities with market potential Mobilizing women into SHGs- Creating Access to micro-credit Capacity Building</td>
<td>SC/ BC/ Minority Corporation / DWCW DPIP/ APRPRP / Drought Relief Commissioner ICPRD</td>
<td>1 Village</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Trafficking Prevention</td>
<td>Building peoples coalition (including rescue)</td>
<td>Police/ Women’s Groups Mytri Sanghams</td>
<td>1Mandal</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stay. Shelter After rescue ./ return Providing shelter and feeding</td>
<td>Providing shelter in shelter homes, short stay homes of Govt. / NGOs Facilitation for new homes</td>
<td>1Mandal</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Many similar activities being taken up individually by programs of different government department Coordination between departments, projects of Government; Convergence</td>
<td>Lobbying with the district administration for a coordinated approach by the various departments and projects</td>
<td>District administration projects</td>
<td>1Mandal</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Mandal = Average of 70 – 100 Hamlets DPIP – District poverty initiative project; AFPRO – Action for Food program; DWCW – Department of Women & Child Welfare; APRLP – Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project; MPDO – Mandal Parishad Development Officer ;RWS – Rural Water Supply.
The threat of famine in Rayalaseema has attracted d countrywide attention though near famine conditions are endemic to this area. If the cry of distress s has at last attracted attention' it is because a continuous drought for five years has produce d its deadly effects on a population whose economic resources and physical stamina have been progressively undermined by it. All the tanks and most of the wells, which are the principal source s of water supply to the people, have completely dried up. Widespread stop page o fall agricultural operations, scarcity of food, high prices of food grains , and extensive unemployment among the landless agricultural workers, who constitute the over whelming bulk of the population all these physical manifestations of famine conditions are present.

The susceptibility of Rayalaseema to famine is not unknown to the authorities, and it is not as if the present calamity has come suddenly and taken the authorities or the public unawares, On the contrary, that Rayalaseema is the epicenter of the famine belt of the Madras State has long been recognized and there ha s never been any dispute about it . In a monograph Rural Problems in Madras published by and under the imprimatur of the Madras Government a few years ago, it was admitted, for instance, that " the most insecure districts (from the point of view of liability to famine) are those known as the Deccan district, comprising of Kurnool, Bellary, Kadapa and Anantapur, which have frequently suffered from famine during the last one hundred years" To these must be added the Chittor r district, adjacent to Madras, and forming for all practical purpose s an integral par t of Rayalaseema.

The four district s mentioned cover a total area of 27,50 0 sq. miles with a population of about five millions, the vast majority of who m depend solely on agriculture for their livelihood. The average annual rainfall in the region is 2 5 inches, but it is only once in five years that Rayalaseema has an abundant monsoon instead of its being spread out evenly over the period, while in four years out of five , the rainfall is so precarious that cultivation is extremely difficult . The area is drained by the Krishna and the Pennar river s and their tributaries, but there are practically no irrigation works in the area worth the name, with the exception of the Kadapa Kurnool canal, the Kambam tank in Kurnool(presently in Prakasam district) and the Tungabhadra channels in Bellary. The utilisation of the
Tungabhadra waters to relieve the irrigational and drinking water problems of the area will be practicable only when the Tungabhadra project is completed and the canals distributing its waters begin to function. There are other irrigation projects under examination to utilise the Pennar and the Krishna waters for the benefit of the area, but none has been taken on hand, let alone being in actual operation. As matters stand, in Rayalaseema at least, agriculture is a gamble in rain. The local government and its officials must take the blame for their inexcusable failure to appreciate the consequences of the drought during the preceding two years and for taking no heed of the warning provided by the failure of monsoon for four years. If at the first warning of the oncoming crisis, a properly planned scheme had been taken on hand for deepening wells, repairing minor irrigation works and constructing catchment basins for the mountain streams, and other measures essential for mitigating the effects of drought, the worst could have been averted. Nor would the crisis be so overwhelming in its incidence, if a systematic programme of road construction and of other emergency public works schemes had been kept ready for implementation, and put into operation as soon as the need for them became apparent. Had proper measures been taken in time, food production would not have been so poor, the economic conditions of the smaller ryots and landless labourers would not have become as deplorable as they are now and the word 'famine' would not have been writ large on the face of Rayalaseema.

Once the official machinery was lugged into motion by the demands made upon it by the gathering volume of distress, relief measures have gone forward; but even so, it is evident that they are not moving at the pace they should. Red tape takes its toll and relief is distributed in terms of the provisions of the Famine Code which, while "protecting the people from starvation in times of distress" does not impose much further obligations on the State.

Outstanding among the essential needs of the affected area is recognized to be provision of drinking water. Next in importance is employment for the agricultural classes, particularly landless labourers, whose resources have been completely exhausted on account of the absence of normal agricultural operations for the last three years. The third is the problem of preventing the outbreak of
epidemics and diseases, incidental to prolonged malnutrition, undernourishment and the heat of summer and providing medical relief to the suffering.

Construction and repair of roads and repair of tanks and bunds have been the traditional methods of mitigating unemployment and ensuring necessary purchasing power of the poor labourer. According to the figures of Shri C. Rajagopalachari, Chief Minister, about a lakh of persons on the average are being employed in famine works. This does not, of course, exhaust the number of those who are without work but cannot get it and for whom employment has to be found. The number of such forced unemployed is variously estimated at about half a million. The problem of feeding the destitute and extending gratuitous relief to the disabled and the children is a complex and costly procedure. There were 950 centers opened in the famine area at which nearly two lakh persons are being fed on standard gruel. Besides Government gruel centres, there are a few relief centres run by private agencies whose number is unascertainable, where food is distributed, milk powder is supplied for children and so on. Even at the incredibly low cost of supplying the gruel, which works out at one anna per head per day, expenditure on this item of relief alone amounts to Rs 14,000 per day; nevertheless, even under the Famine Code, financial considerations are inapplicable when the desideratum is prevention of starvation. In the case of a number of persons, the gruel supplied at the feeding centres is a supplementary ration, adding to the food which can be procured at the fair price food grain shops. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the people in distress, the price of rice, millets and ragi at these shops is prohibitive, and a proposal to sell millets, the staple food grain of the rural population, at subsidised rates, is still under examination by the-Government. The Army has been pressed into service for deepening wells and relieving water scarcity. Under the supervision of Lt. Col Talwar and Lt. Col Mullenox, Army Engineers, the Army has been engaged in the- stupendous and urgent task of fighting the famine on the water front both by deepening existing wells where they had gone dry and by utilizing Army trucks and water curriers to distribute drinking water to the villagers in the interior, where its scarcity is most acute. The extreme scarcity of water in this area renders the services of the Army doubly welcome The speed at which the well-digging is going on may not be as rapid as one would wish, but the Army is proceeding
according to a prescribed programme, beginning with Kadapa district and extending its operations to Kurnool and then to Anantapur districts, and results cannot be striking when, as has been found by experience, some wells had to be deepened up to 60 feet or more, before water is struck. It is good to know, however, that consideration of cost is not allowed to deter efforts in this direction.

Movement of food grains into the affected areas is also not as expeditious as it should be or could be; but in any case, unless the problems of high prices and absence of purchasing power in the hands of the vast majority of the working population are resolved by dispatching larger quantities of millets and ragi to the affected areas and the fair price shops are well-stocked with grains while more repair and construction work is undertaken which would provide employment to the able-bodied, the pressure on State resources and public charity will remain undiminished. The long-range social effects of gratuitous relief will also be highly deleterious.

The part played by private and philanthropic organisations in providing relief, however, deserves every commendation. The State is concerning itself mainly with providing grants for well-digging and land improvement and in making subsistence grants to enable the smaller ryots and the middle class families to get through the crisis that confronts them. While the brunt of the burden of providing relief is being borne by the State Government, to whom the cost cannot matter so long as distress persists, the Government of India have made available a sum of Rs 2.48 crores for subsistence loans and financing of gruel centres. Other sources for relief operations are the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, from which a grant of Rs 3.75 lakhs has so far been made, and the Governor's Relief Fund, contributions to which total Rs 2½ lakhs now. The Rayalaseema Relief Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Congress has collected about Rs 2 lakhs, while the " Express " group of papers fund has swelled to about Rs 2 lakhs. Besides, there has been a liberal flow of private charity from the surplus northern Circars districts and some districts in the South in the shape of grain and clothes and, what equally important, food for the cattle is. The cattle have been as unfortunate and helpless victims of the water and fodder famine in Rayalaseema as men, and feeding and keeping them alive through the current distress period is a vital need for the agricultural economy of the area.
Among the organisations rendering notable service by managing gruel centres, distributing cloth and organizing other kinds of relief, mention must be made of the Ramakrishna Mission.

If action to relieve distress is delayed till the crisis actually overwhelms the people, it involves expending much larger sums of money besides, of course, much avoidable misery, than if preventive measures are taken well in time. Even in 1938, the Madras Famine Code Revision Committee prescribed the remedial measures essential in such conditions: State intervention has been largely designed to save life and mitigate suffering.

Among others, the Committee recommended the following multi-directional programme: development of irrigation, namely, provision of irrigation facilities and tank restoration: introduction of improved methods of agriculture, such as bunding and dry farming; exploitation of the mineral resources and development of large scale industries and cottage industries. These remedies are as appropriate and necessary today as they were in 1938, though not quite adequate in themselves to meet the demands of the situation that has arisen. In the intervening years, precious little has been done to give them a purposeful and vigorous push. What Rayalaseema needs more than anything else is protected irrigation, as an insurance against the ravages of drought and as a means of increasing food production and development of industries, big and small, for which her rich natural resources, so far untapped, afford abundant opportunities and scope. The Tungabhadra project, now under construction, is a part of the solution; but it is neither an immediate nor a full solution, because, the project will take another two years to complete and its benefits will be derived largely only by the Bellary and parts of Anantapur districts. Other irrigation schemes are essential, besides the execution of an extensive programme of minor irrigation works and construction of wells, which can be worked by pumps, wherever possible, run on electrical energy. The Rayalaseema Development Board set up in 1941, solely to carry out schemes which would contribute directly to the prosperity of the area, has no spectacular achievements to its credit. The financial resources at the disposal of the board are meager not commensurate with the requirements of the situation and a number of its recommendations have got enmeshed in departmental red tape. If it is converted
into a statutory corporation and sufficient funds are placed at its disposal, and if it is enabled to initiate and execute development schemes on its own responsibility, it can prove an effective agency for good.

Shri C. Rajagopalachari, Chief Minister of Madras, has said that the famine conditions in Rayalaseema might ease by September, by which time the area would have received the benefit of the main monsoon. That is, of course, dependent on nature and providence; but in the meantime there can be no relaxation in the relief operations or in efforts to devise and push through long-range schemes for famine prevention. The farmers can turn to the land and make it yield its fruit only if sufficient water is made available to them.

In this direction, it is only purposeful and systematic State action that can prove helpful. It is also essential that some of the irrigation and power schemes, which would directly benefit this backward area, should be taken in hand under the Five Year Plan and the Planning Commission has a special responsibility in this regard. Famine conditions, though not as acute as in the five Rayalaseema districts, obtain also in some other parts of the Madras State in parts of Guntur and Nellore districts, in South Arcot, Ramnad and Chingleput districts. This fact emphasise' that about a third of the Madras State experiences conditions ranging from shortage to scarcity year after year. This year, the rice production in the State is in deficit to the extent of a million tons and production of millets by about four lakh tons. This deficit can be made good mainly by the Centre, which has already declared that it would supply only about half the quantity, of which no more than two lakh tons will be in the shape of rice. Fortunately, the surplus districts had a good crop, and to them the Government must look for fulfilling the procurement targets, which alone can obviate a greater shortage later in the year. The increase in procurement prices for paddy announced by the Government should prove an inducement; but to counterbalance it, there is the increase in food prices consequent on the stoppage of food subsidies by the Government of India. Altogether, what with famine and unforeseen expenditure on relief measures on the one hand, and the potential danger of food shortage, which may grow as the year advances, on the other, both the finances and the general economy of the State as a whole face prospects which are dismal indeed.
Important Political and Economic Changes: 1854-1866

Between the famines of 1854 and 1866 certain important political and economic changes took place in India. The effects of which were experienced by Andhra along with other parts of the country. Politically, India witnessed a great rebellion in 1857, which shook the British raj to its foundations. The British however were able to reassert their authority after suppressing the movement with great effort. The East India Company’s rule was abolished. The Crown and the Parliament assumed direct responsibility for the Government of India in 1858. The administrative machinery was geared to buttress their rule and during the next half century paternalism became the keynote of their policy. India was made the "pivot of the British Empire."

From the economic point of view, India came under the vortex of the British industrial capitalism. By the middle of the 19th century Britain made rapid strides in Industrialization, Steam power, steel, cement, machine tools, etc., began to play a dominant role in British Industry. It became the "forge of the world. The world's clearing house and the world's entrepot" the emergence of France, Germany, U.S.A. and even Japan on the industrial map of the world created a competition among the industrial powers including Great Britain for the control of raw materials and markets." Such a control was deemed essential for the very survival of these advanced countries." In this context Britain regarded India as a "prized possession" not to be renounced under any circumstances. viewed from this angle, it is no surprise that the British saw with skepticism attempts by enterprising Indians in the latter half of the 19th century to mechanize their industries. Many direct and indirect steps were taken to prevent industrialization of India almost up to the end of the British Raj."

Development of Communications:

To facilitate the movement of the British goods into the interior parts of the country and to fetch raw materials and foodstuffs, railroads, metal roads and navigable canals were constructed from the middle of the last century. Where
as in 1853 there were only 20 miles of railway in India, by 1866 it rose to about 4,000 miles and by the end of the century to 25,000 miles built at a cost of Rs.340 crores. These railways did not help to promote the industrialization of India. Agriculture, therefore, continued to be the main occupation of the people."

As for Andhra most of its towns were connected by rail and road with the rest of the Madras Presidency by 1866. The towns of Nellore, Guntur, Vijayawada, Machilipatnam, Vishakapatnam, etc., were linked with the interior parts of the region and with places like Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Bombay. Among the towns in Rayalaseema which had communication facilities in the sixties of the last century mention may be made of Anantapur, Bellary, Kadapa, Kurnool, Adoni, Guntakal, Chittor, Tirupati, etc. The availability of such outlets for farm produce contributed to the growth in the export trade and to the general rise in prices.

Another cause for the increase in prices in Andhra and elsewhere during the sixties and the seventies of the last century was inflation due, among others, to the steady growth in the population and the consequent increase in the demand for the necessities of life. The population of Andhra (including Rayalaseema) rose from about 9.8 million to about 12.5 million between 1855 and 1865. In the next decade it rose to about 19 million. As for Rayalaseema the increase was from about 4.4 million to 4.9 million between 1855 and 1865 and to 6.4 million in the succeeding decade. Further the influx of European capital into India in the form of investments in railroads, irrigation works, navigation canals, plantations, etc. from the mid-fifties increased money supply in the country. The adoption of cash crop culture in preference to food crops added to the dearness of food. The ryots of Rayalaseema as their brethren in the rest of the country devoted their "best and most fertile land" to the cultivation of cotton in view of the handsome prices obtained following the outbreak of the civil war in the U.S.A. (1861-65). The home authorities had also pressurised the Government of India to encourage cotton cultivation to enable the British textile industry to tide over the cotton crisis. The average under cotton had thus more than doubled in Bellary
(including Anantapur), Kadapa, North Arcot, Kurnool, Ganjam and Vishakapatnam between 1862 and 1864." The average price of cotton in Rayalaseema rose from Rs.70 in 1861 to Rs.240 in 1864 per candy of 500 lbs. The average price of cotton in Rayalaseema rose from Rs.70 in 1861 to Rs.240 in 1864 per candy of 500 lbs.

The net result of all these factors was the unprecedented rise in the price of food grains in Rayalaseema and elsewhere in Andhra: The increase in the prices ranged from 50 to 100 per cent in Circar districts of Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari and Krishna between 1855 and 1865 the same were the case in Nellore and Rayalaseema. The following tables would give a comparative picture of the prices of food grains in the several districts of Rayalaseema since 1859 and would illustrate the gravity of the problem in the famine year of 1866. The increase in prices naturally affected the vulnerable sections of the society whose sources of income continued to be meagre.

Table 3 Food grains of Rayalaseema 1859-1866.

Average prices of Rice, etc., in the Bellary district in rupees per Madras Grass of 3200 measures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
<th>1860-61</th>
<th>1862-63</th>
<th>1863-64</th>
<th>1864-65</th>
<th>1865-66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Rice</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Paddy</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholam</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsegram</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Average prices of Rice, etc. in the Kurnool district in rupees for Madras Grass of 3200 measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
<th>1860-61</th>
<th>1862-63</th>
<th>1863-64</th>
<th>1864-65</th>
<th>1865-66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Rice</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Paddy</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholam</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>391</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horsegram</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Average prices of Rice, etc. in the Kadapa district in rupees per Madras Garce of 3200 measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
<th>1860-61</th>
<th>1862-63</th>
<th>1863-64</th>
<th>1864-65</th>
<th>1865-66</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Rice</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Paddy</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholam</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horsegram</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>454</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

IV. Average prices of Rice, etc. in the North Arcot district in rupees per Madras Garce of 3200 measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
<th>1860-61</th>
<th>1862-63</th>
<th>1863-64</th>
<th>1864-65</th>
<th>1865-66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Rice</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second sort Paddy</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholam</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>337</td>
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<td>194</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excessive Taxation:

The increase in the price of food did not contribute to the prosperity of the agriculturists owing to the high incidence of taxation in the *Ryotwari* areas of Rayalaseema, and elsewhere in Andhra. Land tax continued to be heavy even after 1857. When the new revenue settlement was put into operation it was generally agreed that land revenue should not exceed one half of the net produce.

The secretary of State Sir Charles Wood reiterated this point in his dispatch of 1864. However, as Sir Louis Mallet has rightly observed. "In practice the rates levied have often absorbed the whole rental and not infrequently. I suspect encroached on profits also." Besides land revenue and water assessment (amounting to over 50 per cent of the net produce) payable to the Imperial Government the ryots in Rayalaseema and in such other *Ryotwari* areas were obliged to pay additional sums to local Government in the form of cesses. Impartial observers therefore
concede the fact that, by and large, Agriculture taxation "proved to be excessive in the Madras Presidency" even in the third quarter of the 19th century.' There is an interesting passage in an exchange of notes between the Boards of Revenue of the Madras and the Bengal Presidencies with reference to the incidence of land revenue in these two provinces. G.S. Forbes. Collector of Ganjam, in his remarks on the Bengal's proposal for increasing the tax on salt in Madras observed: When the Bengal authorities ask why the inhabitants of Madras districts should pay less for their salt than those of Bengal it might justly be retorted on them, why should the' Bengal ryot pay a lower land tax by about forty per cent than the Madras ryot.65

All this would show how the ryot of Rayalaseema was not only overtaxed but was also not certain of how much he should pay next year in view of the increasing demands of the Government. Until 1880, even the 30 years rule for the revision of assessments was not adopted causing great hardship to the cultivators in the Ryotwari areas of the Madras presidency.

Their counterparts in the delta districts felt the pressure of land revenue more by the ryots of Rayalaseema. Whereas the ryot of Rayalaseema paid around Rs.12 as land revenue for a holding of 10 acres of which about 90 per cent constituted dry land the ryot of Godavari paid Rs.19 for a holding of 11 acres of which 61 per cent was classified as wet.66 As the latter was able to produce more grain he was able to obtain better profit than the former and was able to pay the land revenue without much difficulty."67 On the other hand the Rayalaseema root had to devote greater energy and resources to produce grain from a generally inferior soil practically with no assured water supply."68 For want of resources majority of these roots were unable to effect any improvements in their land.69 Therefore, except in the years of normal rainfall they could not afford to pay the land revenue promptly and fell into arrears. The rigidity of the rules of remission added to their woes. Moreover land had very little salable value, particularly in the districts of Bellary) and Anantapur. Frederick Nicholson. Collector of Anantapur vouched this fact in his report of 1887. He observed "the ryot of these districts] has little exchange value in land. It is hardly a marketable article. No loan could be had by mortgage of lands.70

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This inevitably led them to seek loans from the moneylenders who generally belonged to the trading community. They advanced money at usurious rate of interest ranging from 24 to 50 per cent which was collected with the principle at the time of harvest to clear the loan the roots were obliged to part with their produce at a price far below the market rate. After discharging all their obligations they were left hardly with any surplus to tide over the loan seasons. They therefore fell victim to the vicissitudes of drought and famine more easily than their counterparts in the coastal districts of Andhra.

Lack of irrigation facilities made the roots of Rayalaseema depend mostly upon monsoon rain which was normally below that of the coastal districts. While the average annual rainfall in coastal Andhra exceeded 40 inches it was generally below 30 inches in Rayalaseema, among the districts of the region. Bellary (including Anantapur) happened to be the driest. In the five years preceding the famine of 1866 the annual rainfall in the district was far below the average of 23 inches.” As a consequence it became the theatre of famine in that year. Paradoxically Ganjam which happened to be one of the wettest districts of Andhra, receiving an average of annual rainfall of over 45 inches fell victim to the famine of 1866 due to the unprecedented drought of 1885-66. The construction of the K.C. Canal in the sixties of the last century provided to sonic extent irrigation facilities in Kurnool and Kadapa districts usually therefore, the effect of drought was not as severe in these districts as in Bellary. However, the extreme distress suffered by the people of Kurnool and Kadapa during 1876-78 famine along with those of Bellary, North Arcot, etc. revealed the fact that they too were not immune to famines caused by severe droughts.

**Condition of landless labourers:**

The condition of landless labourers the bulk of whom was drawn from the lower castes of the society such as Malas, Madigas and Boyas continued to be deplorable in Rayalaseema during the second half of the 19th century.73 The relative poverty of the ryots prevented them from engaging laborers in the same measure as their counterparts in the delta districts." The majority of the labourers were attached to substantial ryots. Their wages usually were paid in
kind which ranged from about 1 1/2 Madras measures of grain to 2 per day during the agricultural seasons. In some places cooked food was also given as well as particularly during busy seasons of sowing and harvest." In the absence of alternative sources of employment, their wages remained pretty low. During the off seasons when there was no work the labourers fell easy prey to the money lenders merchants and well-to-do ryots who lent money in advance and extracted ‘kork cheaply during the cultivation seasons.” So their living conditions continued to remain as miserable as ever. The Collector of Kurnool observed: Their food and clothing were of the same kind as what they were before. They ate the same coarse grain and used as condiments the same chutney composed of hemp leaves or tamarind fruit. They wore the same coarse clothes and slept on the same rope cots.

The labourers in Kurnool and Kadapa however were somewhat better off as they could find work on the K.C. Canal project where an ordinary labourer working with his wife and children was paid between 12 annas to one rupee per day. the Canal Company. However could not provide employment to all those in need of alternate work when agricultural operations retarded due to drought. In the North Arcot district, where the practice of cash wages was percent the wages did not increase commensurate with the increase in prices.

During 1860’s male coolies were paid two annas and a female coolie one anna per day during the cultivation season.” When rains failed even this small wage could not be obtained while high prices kept food beyond their reach. Hence they became the first victims of famine. Skilled workers, such as carpenters’ masons etc. earned nearly a rupee per day as wage. They also became vulnerable to the effects of famine since their principal customers were the agriculturists.

Low-paid Government servants:

The condition of the low-paid Government employees was deplorable during the sixties of that last century. A peon in the revenue office, for instance, received a monthly salary between Rs.3 and 7 and a lower division clerk received about Rs. 15. These wages had not undergone any significant change ever since the establishment of the British Rule in India in consequence. The
family of a low-paid employee survived on hardly one meal a day requesting for amelioration of their lot. J.I. Minchin, Collector of Kurnool wrote to the Board of Revenue: "I am sure it will meet the full consideration of Government and that measures will be taken to relieve the low paid servants of the state from their present difficulties and distress." Nothing seems to have been done until the great famine of 1876-78 when the Government sanctioned an increase of Rs.2 to the salaries of its native employees.

**The great famine of 1876--78**

In the Annals of Anantapur the years 1876-78 corresponding to the Hindu cyclic years Dhatu and Iswara have attained great notoriety. For, during those two years this region was visited by a famine which had truly "put all the subsequent as it did all the previous afflictions in the shade..." It had in fact affected vast tracts of India south of the Vindhyas. In the Madras Presidency 14 out of the 21 districts experienced famine, of which the most affected were the districts of Bellary (including Anantapur), Kurnool, Kadapa, Nellore, North Arcot, Salem, Madura, Chingleput and Coimbatore. Almost all sections of the society barring the traders, were affected by the famine. The small ryots or the landless agricultural labourers the artisans and the low-paid employees suffered most from the rigour of famine as on earlier occasions.

To sum up the narrative of this chapter the scarcities that India experienced during the sixteen years, 1880 to 1895, were of local nature and confined to such limited area that they did not make any difference to the overall supply of foodgrains in the country. The rise in the prices in each case was consequently limited and food was freely available to the people in the market. To overcome this problem by means of providing work to the unemployed to enable them to earn wages to purchase food.
References:

1. Dalyell, Report, P. 107 quoted in Famine Histories p.74 this writer of Famine Histories, however, points out that “this seems a forced concession from Ellis’s report which is to the effect that though prices might be his at home, they would send grain away to other places where it was higher than raise prices to the same high rate at home and incurodioum”

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5. Vide Famine Proceedings Nos. 19 and 23, containing Reports from madras dated 12 January and 23 January 1878 respectively to India.


7. Letter from India to Richard Temple No. 198, dated 16 February


9. Telegram No. 43 (Revenue), 3 May 1877.


11. Ibid., p. 211.

12. Ibid., p. 255.

13. Ibid., p. 264.


15. Vide Memorandam concerning the scarcity in the Nizam’s territory Famine proceedings No. 113, March 1877.


17. Ibid, para 21.

18. Ibid.

19. This was said to be average over the preceding 20 years, vide Adtration Report, Central Provinces, 1886-87, p. 29.

20. Madras to India, No.226 (Rev.), dated 22 March 1892, statement “A”.


22. Famine commission (1898) Report, Chapter II, para 36.

23. Madras Government letter to Secretary of state, 21 June 1892.

24. The appellation was later given to the famine of 1899-1900.

25. Later called United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.
29. Vide note of Bombay Government Revenue Department, 336 (famine date 9 may 1898).
30. Vide report on Famine in Madras para 43, Madras Revenue and Agricultural Department proceedings, July 1898.
31. Vide Letter from Bengal to India No.7-TR, dated 3 November 1896.
32. India to Bengal dated 4 January 1897.
34. Bengal to India No. 5183, dated 12 December 1896 and also No. 25, dated January 1897.
38. Dispatch from India to Secretary of State No. 18, dated 18 May 1896.
39. Dispatch from India to Secretary of State No. 17, dated 18 May 1896.
41. Dispatch to secretary of State No. 18, dated 18 May 1905, para 4.
42. Lady hope, Life and Works of General Sir Henry Cotton, Chapter XIII.
43. Summary of Lord Curzon’s Administration R and A Department, part I, para 22 to 52.
44. Famine commission (1898) report, chapter II, para 20.
45. Ibid, para 21.
46. Ibid.
49. L.C.A. Knowles, the industrial and commercial Revolutions in Great Britain during the Nineteenth Century (London, Reprint, 1950), p. 139.
50. Between 1862 and 1882, the import duties on the finished products of Britain were abolished under pressure from the industrial lobby in Britain. When the Government was in dire need of money it was compelled to reimpose the tariff duties on British goods in 1894. However, care was taken to exempt the Lancashire and Manchester textiles from these duties. In order to protect the British goods a counter-wailing excise duty was levied on Indian manufactures. These 'unjust-duties' were not abolished until 1925. In 1932 India was obliged to sign the Ottawa Trade Agreement which gave preferential treatment to British imports into this country. Indian commodities exported to the countries outside the British Empire were

51. Romesh Dutt. The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age, pp.548-49.
57. Revenue Consultations, Madras. 4 August 1861, (A.P.S.A.), Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Madras. 18 June 1861 and 9 August 1864 (A.P.S.A.).
58. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Madras. 18 June 1861 and 9 August 1864 (A.P.S.A.).
60. The average price of second sort rice rose from Rs.116 per garce of 3200 Madras seers in 1855 to Rs.230 in 1865 in Ganjam. In the other three Districts the increase was from Rs.166 to Rs.260. Ibid.
61. In Nellore the price of second sort rice rose from Rs.182 per grass to Rs.300 between 1855 and 1865. In the districts of Bellary, Kurnool and North Arcot the average price of second sort rice per grass increased from Rs.194 to 340 in the same period. Ibid.
63. Although the Ryotwari system was intended to advance the interests of the ryots by its innovators. "it did not fulfill the promise held out by them". As Nilamani Mukherji aptly put it "the chief arms of the new mode of land revenue administration had been good collection of revenue and amelioration of the condition of the ryots. The system realized the first objective admirably well, in the second, it failed: Nilamani Mukherji, "The impact of the Ryotwari System on the Economy of the Madras Presidency," in B.N.Ganguli (ed.), Readings in Indian Economic History (Delhi. 1964), pp.135-136.
64. Revenue Dispatch to Madras. 24 February 1864. No.7 in Romesh Dutt, The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age
67. S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency, Appendix, Section V. p.1
68. It is estimated that during the sixties of the last century, an acre of dry land in the Presidency yielded about 190 seers of rice as against 370 seers obtained from an acre of wet land. See R.A. Dalyell, Memorandum on the Madras Famine of 1866, p.70.
69. Although the average holding of 15 acres of Ryotwari land in Bellary was the highest in the Presidency still this happened to be the most backward district in the province.
70. S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar, Memorandum, Appendix, Section V. p.CC1.
71. Quoted in W. Francis, Anantapur District Gazetteer, pp.53-54
72. The average rainfall during this period was 18 inches. In 1865 only 8 inches of rain fell in Bellary, R.A. Dalyell, Memorandum p.51.
73. The K.C. Canal having a length of 190 miles diverts part of the Tungabhadra water to irrigation in Kurnool and Kadapa. It was built by a British owned Company and nationalized in 1882.
76. S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar. Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency, Appendices, Section III. p.IXXX. VII.
78. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue. Madras. 11 November. 1872, quoted in S. Srinivasa Raghava Aiyyangar, Memorandum, Appendices, Section III. p. LXXXI.
79. J.D. Robinson to the Board of Revenue. 12 May 1864
80. J.I. Minchin to the Board of Revenue. 12 May 1864. Ibid. 10th August, 1864.
83. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 7th September and 24 October 1876.