

Public Works (1899) Department.

G.O., No. 373 I

DATED 21st April 1899.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Revenue Report of Irrigation Works in the Bombay Presidency (excluding Sind).

Govt of India review of the — for 1897-98
communicated to the Chief Engineer for
Irrigation for information.

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To
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SUBJECT.

Review of the Revenue report
of Irrigation works in the
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No. 246 C. W. I.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

CIVIL WORKS.

Irrigation.

Simla, the 21st March 1899.

Review of the Revenue Report of Irrigation Works in the Bombay Presidency (excluding Sind) for 1897-98.

READ—

Letter No. 59 I., dated 21st January 1899, from the Government of Bombay, forwarding the above, and the Resolution of the Local Government reviewing it.

OBSERVATIONS.—The greater portion of the Capital Outlay was incurred in starting work, for the purposes of famine relief, on three tank projects which have been sanctioned as Protective Works, the amount spent on them being Rs. 1,90,447. On the old works in operation the expenditure amounted to only Rs. 37,950 as compared with Rs. 85,993 in the previous year. The Minor Works accounted for very little of this outlay, the expenditure on the Gokak Canal, 1st Section, which is now nearly complete, being only Rs. 4,349. The total expenditure against Capital Account for all works amounted to Rs. 2,21,177 as compared with Rs. 98,625 expended in 1896-97. This raised the total Capital Outlay at the end of the year to Rs. 2,65,81,047.

2. The area irrigated from all works amounted to 273,283 acres and exceeded that of the previous year, which was the highest on record, by 10,448 acres. Of this total 126,516 acres were irrigated by works for which Capital Accounts are kept, the principal contributor being as usual the Nira Canal, a Protective Work, which irrigated 47,574 acres, or more than a third of the total. In the case of this canal the increase was entirely in the kharif crops of which the area irrigated was nearly double that of the previous year. This increase must have been of great value during a season of severe famine.

There was, however, a falling off in the area irrigated by most of the Productive Works, the Lakh Canal in particular having watered only 950 acres as compared with 1,674 acres last year. Taking all the Productive Works together, the area exceeded the record area of the previous year by 3,245 acres.

The Minor Works, Imperial and Provincial, irrigated 1,670 acres more than in 1896-97, the three works on which the improvement is most noticeable being the Ojhar Canal and Matoba and Bhadalvadi Tanks.

The area irrigated by works for which only Revenue Accounts are kept amounted to 146,767 acres, or 1,941 in excess of the area of the previous year.

3. Of works for which Capital Accounts are kept, the working expenses of the year amounted to Rs. 4,03,898 as compared with Rs. 3,59,944 in the previous year and Rs. 3,20,071, the average of the last five years. As compared with 1896-97 there is an increase of about Rs. 17,825 in establishment charges, of which not more than Rs. 5,000 is attributable to increased collections. There was an increase also in the charges for works and repairs due mainly to silt clearances and other works being undertaken that would afford employment to famine labour.

The direct establishment charges on these canals, exclusive of collection fees, vary considerably, but appear to be increasing. The figures for four years are as below:—

	Rs.
1894-95	1,48,362
1895-96	1,24,108
1896-97	1,65,273
1897-98	1,77,210

The increase during the last two years is attributed to the fact that under the system of distribution of establishment charges an undue share of the cost of the establishments in the Imperial or Irrigation districts has been charged against the canals. This is probably the case, but apart from the difficulty of proposing a more equitable method of distribution there are objections to altering the present system as long as the Irrigation Works are treated in the accounts as Imperial. The long table given in paragraph 15 (a) of the report is of little value in connection with this subject, and is not required by the Government of India.

Of the works for which only Revenue Accounts are kept, the expenditure fell to Rs. 1,75,011 from Rs. 2,56,815 in the previous year. This decrease was due mainly to the reduction of the amount expended under the head Maintenance and Repairs, from Rs. 83,159 in 1895-97 to Rs. 35,997 in the year under review.

4. The financial results of the works in operation for which Capital Accounts are kept may be summarised as follows:—

	Capital Outlay to end of year. Rs.	Net Revenue. Rs.	Return on Capital Outlay. Per cent.
Protective Works	77,43,417	55,318	0.71
Productive Works	1,09,10,421	1,89,531	1.28
Minor Works	74,36,695	37,060	0.50

The average return on works of all classes was thus 0.9 per cent.

Of the two Protective Works in operation the Nira Canal shows a marked improvement on the results of the previous year. The net revenue rose from Rs. 15,967 to Rs. 74,011, and the return on Capital Outlay from 0.28 per cent. to 1.3 per cent. The returns from Mhasvad Tank, on the other hand, are not so favourable. The working expenses were Rs. 34,091 as compared with Rs. 14,670 in 1896-97, this large increase being caused by the repairs being carried out by famine labour, and the gross revenue fell short of the working expenses by Rs. 18,693.

The Productive Works paid a return of 1.28 per cent. as compared with 1.45 per cent. in 1896-97, the falling off being due partly to the increase in the working expenses and partly to the large balance, Rs. 1,18,745, of the assessed revenue unrealized at the close of the year.

5. On all works the uncollected balance amounted to the large sum of Rs. 1,58,293, rather more than 24 per cent. of the total demand.

Last year the outstandings also amounted to 24 per cent of the demand, and the Government of India directed the attention of the Local Government to the subject. The delay in recovery is stated in the Report to be generally due to lateness in preparing the demand statements owing to deaths and desertions on account of plague, and to the impoverishment of the rayats on account of famine. Some allowance must no doubt be made for the effects of plague, but the occupiers of irrigated lands are placed in an exceptionally strong position in a famine year, when prices are unusually high, and should be in a position to meet the demand more punctually.

6. From Works for which only Revenue Accounts are kept the gross receipts were slightly larger than in the previous year, while the reduction in the working expenses, as has already been stated, was considerable. The result was a satisfactory increase of net revenue from Rs. 3,04,183 to Rs. 3,89,786.

7. In spite of the increase of 8,512 acres in the area irrigated by Major Works the assessments of the year show a decrease of Rs. 24,086. This is due to a smaller percentage of sugarcane and other high rated crops. The decrease in the area under such crops is attributed to the inability of the cultivators to obtain the usual advances in the absence of money lenders from Poona owing to plague. The water that was rendered available by the reduction of the cane area was however utilised in the irrigation of lower rated food crops, the area under *bajri* exceeding that of the previous year by more than 15,000 acres. In ordinary years these canals are mainly dependent on the high rated crops for their revenue, but the cultivation of such crops appears to have only temporarily fallen off, and it is a matter of satisfaction rather than otherwise that in a famine year their place should have been taken by a larger area of the cheaper food crops, even though this may have involved a reduction in the total amount of the revenue assessed.

It has long been recognised that these irrigation works are never likely to prove directly remunerative, and there is no indication in the present report that any great improvement may be expected in their financial position. It is, however, satisfactory to find that during a year of exceptional drought these works have not failed, as has sometimes been anticipated, but that on the contrary the area irrigated by them has exceeded any previously recorded, so that their protective value has never been greater than during the year under review.

8. The report was received on the 24th January 1899, and the Government of India desire to express their appreciation of the efforts which have been made to expedite its submission.

ORDER—Ordered, that copies of this Review and of the Report be forwarded to the Revenue and Agricultural Department for information.

The Governments of Madras, Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the Punjab, and Burma.
The Chief Commissioners of the Central Provinces and Coorg.
The Agents to the Governor General in Central India, Rajputana and Baluchistan.

Ordered, also, that copies of the Review be forwarded to the Government of Bombay, and to the Local Governments and Administrations in the Public Works Department, noted on the margin, for information.

Ordered, further, that this Review be published in the *Gazette of India*, and that copies of the Review be forwarded to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

J. Bidduin.

Joint Secy. to the Govt. of India.

To The Secy to the Govt of Madras.
P. W. Department.

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