Famine Relief Workers in Bombay Presidency in 1899-1900

By

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When the rains failed in 1899, crop production suffered, leading to an abnormal increase in the price of foodgrains in Bombay Presidency. People began to sell for nominal value their animals, agricultural implements, cooking vessels, clothes, etc. They tried to raise money by mortgaging their fields and other immovable property. Applications for suspension and remission of land revenue were made. The demand for taccavi loans increased. There was extensive tree cutting. People wandered from place to place. The numbers of street beggars, petty thefts as well as big grain thefts in villages increased. Besides, travelling alone was considered unsafe. Stealthy collection and sale of contraband salt was done. There were thefts and killings of cattle for food. Bhils surreptitiously cut trees in the reserved forests far beyond their demand for fuel and brought them in the bazar at ridiculously low prices.(1) The Famine Relief Code laid down that with the first indication of distress, test works should be opened. Employment should be offered to the needy and labour paid at the task-work rates which should not exceed the famine wage.(2)

In this background, enquiries were made in villages through the land record and other local agencies as to the number of persons likely to require gratuitous relief and employment in relief works. Lists of relief works were prepared after which surveys and estimates of cost were made. The Government opened test works from August to December 1899. Relief-workers were paid on piece-work basis and neither minimum nor maximum wages were fixed. Wherever the severity of the famine continued/increased, and the number of relief seekers rose, test works were changed into regular works which were divided large and small works. But some test works were discontinued like the test works in Sangola taluks on Sangola-Sholapur Road which were left with only three persons after the rains. At the same time, the Government made advances to agriculturalists under the Land Improvement Loans Act, 1883 for construction of embankments, eradication of weeds, well digging, etc., and Agriculturalists’ Loans Act, 1884 for seeds, cattle, fodder, etc. This was to generate self-employment among the farmers. To begin with, it was believed that the famine would afflict
Bombay Presidency during 1899-1900 only as in most parts of India. But in this Presidency it continued till 1902. This paper seeks to look into the relief works undertaken in 1899-1900 only and the subsequent period is outside its scope.

After 1860, the Government was inclined towards the large relief works vis-à-vis small works. Large works provided simultaneous employment for three months to at least one thousand persons. Other works were small works. Before the large works were taken up, extensive preparatory work was undertaken. A sufficient number of huts were erected, depending on the number of people expected to come for work. Trenches were dug beforehand and sweepers were employed to keep the surroundings clean. Residence on the works was not made compulsory, and many work people preferred after their day’s work to go and put up for the night in villages and hamlets at some distance from the camp. However, residence at the works could not be made compulsory for all the works because of the difficulty of providing sufficient hutting material. Besides, on road works the site of the camp constantly shifted.

The Famine Relief Code suggested that a guard should be placed over the supply of drinking water to prevent persons going down into it or washing of vessels, persons, or animals near it. Besides, care must be taken to see that the ground around the wells was kept clean. Wells were dug in river beds and elsewhere, and iron tanks kept to store water for distribution near the wells. Care was taken to maintain the purity of water and permanganate of potassium was used. To begin with, some people objected to using coloured water but thereafter gave up their resistance. Sources of water were hedged and guards appointed to prevent pollution. Only special persons were permitted to draw water who distributed it among the relief-workers. R.A. Lamb (Collector of Ahmednagar) issued instruction on August 30, 1900 regarding arrangements for water supply which could be broadly true for other districts as well. Each water-drawer should be provided with a small iron bucket attached to a rope and no other vessel allowed within the cistern. Sufficient carriers should be engaged from the relief-workers to convey to them at least one gallon of water per day per adult with two children reckoned as one adult. All vessels used in water supply should be soured every day with clean sand.

Arrangements were made to keep the conditions sanitary. Muccadams were employed to prevent relief-workers from answering the call of nature except on specified
Sweepers were employed to clean the latrine trenches and sweep the sites. Lamb also issued instructions on August 30, 1900 regarding the establishment and maintenance of latrines which could be broadly true for other districts as well. Separate trenches for men and women were to be dug to answer the call of nature, their number depending on the number of relief-workers. They were to be not more than 200 feet from the site of work and the trenches provided with four feet high screens. All adults were to be directed to use only these latrines and all ordure covered with earth to prevent flies settling on it.\(^{(6)}\) Rev. R. Winsor (Missionary, Poona) observed about sanitary conditions in Sirur that they were “…very fair indeed. I have been struck with that.”\(^{(7)}\)

The Famine Relief Code laid down that there should be one or more hospitals attached to every large relief work and that a medical officer or a subordinate qualified for independent charge should be posted to each hospital. It also said that in case there were more than three cases of an epidemic in a camp, the people should be moved to another place. Hospital sheds were erected and separate camps formed for cholera, small-pox, convalescents and doubtful cases.

On opening a relief work, hutting materials were ordered, camp sites elected, water-supply wells excavated, hospitals laid down, kitchens built, civil officer and hospital assistant appointed, sites for latrines were fixed, etc. Once this was over, labourers were admitted.\(^{(8)}\) Admission to the works was free to all persons ready to submit to the labour test. In other cases they came in an extremely emaciated condition. Hence, they were temporarily put in the free kitchens till they were fit to undertake physical work. These temporary inmates took up to a fortnight to regain strength to undertake ordinary work. No distance test was insisted upon. Working gangs of 50 to 60 persons were formed under a muccadam. In some works separate gangs for men, women and working children were formed. Arrangements were made to form family and caste gangs.\(^{(9)}\) People generally came to the works in batches from the same village and so it was convenient to put them in the same gang. Village gangs were popular with the labourers and led to a better outturn of work. Work left undone by the weak persons was completed by others.

To begin with, they travelled over long distances to reach the works. After the works were opened extensively, they preferred the work nearest to their residence. The distance covered by the people to reach a work depended on the density of population of a
place and the class of people. In Ahmedabad and Kaira with dense population, about 10,000 people came from a very small area, while Panch Mahals Taluka did not supply this number. Overall, 15 miles could be taken as a limit. (10) In the works in Surat and Broach, a flag on a prominent place was put up where they were admitted. They were classified, formed into gangs, mustered, provided tools and baskets, and work assigned. On the day of their arrival, no matter what time they arrived, they were given full wage in cash. This was continued for the first ten days without regard to the work turned out so that they could get used to their new surroundings and work. (11) Roll call of relief-workers was generally taken twice a day, i.e., once in the morning and then after the mid-day rest. Tasks were graduated according to the class of relief-workers, and the total task for the gang was arrived at by summing up the tasks for the individual relief-workers. Payment was made weekly to all the relief-workers except the new comers to whom bi-weekly or even daily payments were made in the first fortnight. A rest-day wage was given by way of an increase of one-sixth of the minimum wage for each day worked. The avowed policy of Bombay Government was “… to restrict relief to what is necessary for the preservation of life, which however includes the maintenance of fair health and strength, for prolongation of life beyond the period of famine would obviously be of little or no advantage if the constitutions of those relieved were so impaired by privation that they could not resume the occupations on which their livelihood depends or live long afterwards.” (12)

In most cases payment was made to individual relief-workers. Occasionally mistries and karkuns took from the workers a part of their wages. (13) Fines were imposed for non-performance of the assigned work. M.C. Gibb told the Famine Commission that the exaction of work depended more on proper management than on fining. If the assigned work suited the relief-workers, there was no need to impose fines. (14) The extent of the completion of work and imposition of fines varied from place to place. In Ahmedabad district, the work done was about 95 per cent of the task set and payments made were about 97 per cent of the total wages earnable, imposition of fines being very slight. H.O. Quin wrote, “There can be no doubt whatever that a family of honest relief-workers can make enough out of the Code wages to leave them a balance in hand after feeding and clothing themselves.” (15)
Weak persons were assigned nominal work such as sweeping and weeding camps, etc., and were paid the minimum wage laid down in the Famine Relief Code. Rates of wages were fixed with reference to the prices of the staple foodgrains commonly consumed like jowar and bajri. Several government officials and others complained about the laziness of relief-workers. W.L. Cameron wrote, “…the workers as a rule were incorrigibly idle. They appeared to think that the famine work was a picnic on a large scale devised for their benefit. They had their friends and relations about them, they had no cares, and their aged dependents and young children were well tended and had better food than they probably had ever in their lives…”(16) Such remarks were uncharitable to a certain extent. Rev. Robert Henderson observed, “… people often cling to their homes until they are so weak that they are quite unable to perform the task which payment by result imposes unless the scale is a most liberal one.”(17) After the works were in operation for some time, relief-workers willing to work were separated from those who were lazy to ensure that the former did not suffer for the laziness of others. Wages were paid in cash which did not rise in accordance with the rise in prices and they even fell.(18)

Minimum wages as laid down in the Code were paid by which was meant the wage sufficient to purchase the minimum ration. Generally it was nine chatak a day. But after some time it was found in Sholapur that there were many people who preferred to be idle and earn only this much, which showed that they had other resources. To get a fair equivalent return of work out of them, the Government reduced the minimum wages by 25 per cent and fined strictly down to them. It had the desired effect and the condition of the people did not suffer.(19) The hill tribes were fond of liquor willing to forego their necessary requirements to consume it. After the weekly payments, they often went to the liquor shop in the adjoining village and spent a good part of their earnings. For many other relief-workers too, opium and tobacco were indispensable necessities. This adversely affected their health.

Traders from the neighbouring towns were permitted to open shops. These shops were regularly inspected by the inspecting officers. When it was found that unwholesome grains were sold, the sales were stopped.(20) There were complaints about short weight and over charging.(21) In Central Thana the banias adulterated grains with lime and sand.(22) In one work alone, eight persons were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment from one to three months for malpractices. There was a marked tendency
among the traders to combine and force up prices for some days whenever they anticipated that new men would be found to take their place.\textit{(23)} In some cases shops sold sweetmeats, tobacco, bangles, etc.

Dependents were relieved on large public works with cooked food in kitchens attached to them and cash where no kitchen was attached.

The policy of the Government for many years was to provide employment to famine victims in small village works. Afterwards it concentrated on large works. Those large works which remained unfinished in the famine of 1896-97 were re-started and arrangements made for starting new works. They were generally at some distance from the native villages of relief-workers. They provided employment to at least 1,000 relief-workers for at least three months. The number of relief-workers in relief works varied from work to work. In Satara district relief work provided employment to 10,000 people, serving an area of 200-300 square miles.\textit{(24)} In Sholapur on an average there were 20,000 relief-workers in a relief work and in one work they numbered 5,000.\textit{(25)} The highest number of relief-workers in the relief works in July 1900 was 1,40,000 in Kaira.\textit{(26)}

Large works benefitted the people in some ways. It was easier to safeguard the water-supply on a few large relief works than on numerous small works. The whole family lived together in a hut from evening till next day morning. During the working hours the able-bodied men were at work and during the mid-day meals they could meet the dependents. The family life could be just as it was in the village with the advantage of cleanliness and pure drinking water.

However, large works presented some difficulties. They required professional supervision which was not always available. Large concentration people in one place became unwieldy and made them prone to epidemics. In Sholapur cholera broke out on two large works and camps were shifted.\textit{(27)} In Central Thana cholera broke out because of overcrowding and impure water supply, killing 1,000 to 1,200 people. The staff of the works ran away and dead bodies remained in the camp for days together.\textit{(28)} Sometimes cholera was brought by migrants from other villages. There were greater possibilities of irregularities. For instance, women and children of a muccadam idled away their time and their tasks were performed by other members of the gang.\textit{(29)} Besides, large works were not
always completed, enormous expenditure was incurred on hutting, sanitation and water supply.(30)

It was said that they caused shortage of labour in general. Employers of private agricultural labour complained that they experienced difficulty in obtaining labourers for weeding their fields.(31) This was because relief works provided employment for the whole week while landholders provided it for three or four days. Besides, they were stricter in their supervision.(32) Rev. Robert Henderson wrote that in Borsad after the rains commenced the farmers found it difficult to obtain labourers for weeding their fields, &c.(33)

The overwhelming evidence is that the relief works did not create shortages of labour. The Collector of Ahmedabad said, “Our measures have not been so-attractive as to interfere with the public demand for labour and our present provisions have proved sufficient to induce labourers to seek out other means if available even less remunerative.”(34) Collectors of Thana, Broach and Panch Mahals expressed similar opinions. J.K. Spence, Commissioner, C.D. wrote, “… reports of the collectors in the Central Division show that there is no reason to suppose that famine relief works have interfered with the supply of labour in the open market or that private employers of labour have had to raise rates of wages to attract work people.”(35) The Agent of the GIP Railway Company reported, “No reports have reached me from mainline officers that they experience difficulty in obtaining labourers for their works.”(36) This was corroborated by the Agent of the BB&CI Railway Company, “…on the R.M. Rly. And on the main line of the B.B. and C.I. Railway practically no trouble has been experienced.”(37)

There were social implications of large works. It was said that they disorganized family life or weakened social restraint. Waman Shivaji Nabar (Mamlatdar, Bulsar) wrote that in Viramgam Taluka “… many people who had gone to work on large works had left their wives and children behind with nobody to take care of them and in several cases I found the wives and children having no attachment to their husbands and fathers.”(38) In their evidence before the Famine Commission, witnesses made conflicting statements. Among the plethora of views expressed, those of N.K. Pendse may be quoted, “… Owing to the system of keeping large works, many families belonging to one or more adjoining villages found it convenient to get employment on one work and to live together in one camp. This has a good effect on the moral ties of the members of the families and it serves as
a good check on them. In rare instances the moral ties, especially of men and women having no other family ties, appeared to have been somewhat slackened, but it is impossible to prevent the occurrence of such relaxation among persons having no character at all.”(39)

Small works chiefly consisted of tank excavation, road repair, drain deepening, etc. Indian opinion favoured small works vis-à-vis large works.(40) They had some advantages. They enabled cultivators and field labourers to live near their homes, giving them the benefit of looking after their households and cattle. Hence, they were liked by the people. Persons having some resources of their own were willing to be employed on such works to earn a little, when no other employment was found. Supervision of these works was easier. Expenditure on account of hutting, kitchens, etc., could be avoided. There was no danger of an epidemic breaking out. Small works were especially suitable for aboriginal tribes. They preferred to stay near their homes even if it meant privation and hated camp life. They were afraid that if they left home, their cattle would be stolen. Besides, they showed interest and zeal when they worked in their ‘own tank.’(41) But the proximity of the place of work induced many people to seek employment in them earlier than necessary.

Weavers were a class in themselves. They were reluctant to go to the relief works for they were unfit for manual work. Moneylenders stopped advances to them and many of them went to Bombay for employment in the textile mills or returned to their upper India. The Famine Relief Code suggested that they could be asked to weave coarse cloths which could be used in poor houses, and coarse woolen fabrics for use as blankets or horse clothing. They were given relief from the Famine Relief Fund through the Municipality to continue their trade. The experiment in Sholapur was noteworthy in terms of its scale. Three weaving sheds were opened for the most destitute, and work was given in their own homes to the better class of people. Yarn was given and finished articles taken from them. This arrangement cost practically nothing to the Municipality. The cloths of the weavers was more durable than those manufactured by the mills and some people preferred to use them.(42) Many private individuals also bought cloths from them.(43)

Advances were made to them on approved security. According to A.F. Maconochie (Collector, Sholapur), there were about 15,000 weavers of whom 8,000 to 9,000 were given relief.(44) To this J. Weir added, “There is no guide as to the number of weavers who went on relief works in the Presidency, but judging by my experience in Sholapur it
could not have exceeded 12 per centum of the total weaving population even on the works specially reserved for them near Sholapur.”(45)

However, separate arrangements were necessary for the relief of aboriginal tribes. They were averse to leave their homes for relief works, particularly if the works were more than five miles or so. Stone-breaking was utterly abhorrent to them. In some cases a specially reduced task was given to them. They killed the cattle of others and subsisted on it. It became proverbial that the cattle which went to the hills did not return. After some months they lived almost entirely on wild products like leaves, etc., which affected their health. They were generally satisfied with the minimum wages. They had to be sought and provided relief. Works which were opened in Panch Mahals and Khandesh failed to fill their needs until distress became acute. In Panch Mahals with 300,000 inhabitants only 16,000 persons on were relief works and 21 persons on gratuitous relief at January-end 1900 whereas in Betul (in Central Provinces) with about the same population around 110,000 persons were on relief.(46) Dr. Farrar (District Medical Officer, West Khandesh) wrote that the Bhils were “living skeletons in the last stages of emaciation” and they did not have “…the enterprise required for crossing the Tapti river and unless work is actually brought to their doors they will wander about till they starve as they are actually doing by hundreds or probably thousands, sooner than go to a distant relief work.”(47)

Hence, relief work was provided to them in the form of grass and bamboo cutting. They earned good wages from the Forest Department in Navapur Petha. This kind of employment was congenial to them. When they did go to a relief work in Nawapore, about 4,000 of them stayed there on minimum wage without doing work.(48) Divisional Forest Officer, Panch Mahals suggested erecting stones along forest boundary, repairing existing cairns, cutting and extracting dead teak trees to minimize the danger of forest fire, cutting bamboos for the Public Works Department, fire tracing and watching as works for them. He said that this relief of “a very urgent nature” was needed in “the widest possible area” for “it is conducive to the preservation of all available fodder in forest.”(49)

Railways also provided employment to the famine victims. G.A. Anderson (Secretary to Government, Railway Department) listed the potential railway projects. At the same time he clarified, “All are of course not equally to be recommended; while some are large, compact and manageable; other are more scattered, and while being more
unmanageable on that account, would also provide for fewer labourers."(50) Tapti Valley Railway employed many labourers.(51) Gujarat Feeder Railway Co. was also formed as a famine relief measure. But the government of India did not agree to some conditions regarding the guarantees demanded. Hence, the proposal fell through.

Table: Government famine relief works in Bombay Presidency (excluding Sind)

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<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Aggregate no. of persons relieved by wages in return for work done</th>
<th>Expenditure for work done</th>
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<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>11965</td>
<td>85905.79 (35.11)</td>
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Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Problems in Relief Works

The relief works were plagued by several problems. Important among them are mentioned below:

1. There were delays in opening relief works. The Collector of Ahmednagar wrote, “The demand for relief-work is very large and there are at the big centres thousands who it has not been possible to take on, owing to unreadiness in the works and want of establishment in the Public works Department. The demand is evinced by people going as much as 50 miles or more to a work, by their remaining on even when under the piece-work system in force, i.e., without a minimum wage, they earn the barest subsistence, and by their waiting about at camps in the hope of being taken in.”(52) In Sholapur district hundreds of labourers were turned away from the relief works on the pretext that there was no work for them or there were no tools for them. When the relief-workers offered to bring their own tools, they were told that supervisory staff was not there.(53) At times there were delays in converting the task works into regular relief works and opening some large works because the number of relief seekers exceeded the estimates, and tools and plants were not readily available. In September 1899 tools were available for about 20,000 relief-workers but by the middle of December the number of relief-workers increased to about 1,40,000 in Khandesh.(54) Emaciated labourers was assigned work which was align and repellent to them. Breaking
stones under the sun in summer was oppressive. Additionally, the broken stones were not always used as the roads were not completed. (55) The government’s choice of relief works was sometimes incorrect. S.N. Seddon (Special Famine Officer) wrote, “I found that wells were being dug out of place, and at unsuitable times and in an extravagant way, and I had no confidence either in the permanent utility of the wells or in the supervision of the work, which I therefore regarded as wasteful and demoralising.” (56)

2. The staff of the Public Works Department was often incompetent. Nor were the relief works adequately supervised. C.N. Clifton wrote, “One of the greatest difficulties we had to encounter was the want of proper establishment.” (57) In many relief works there were three cashiers and two of them were generally absent, necessitating the employment of school masters. Consequently, wages were not paid regularly. (58) In the work at Vanjari Bhakar (Khandesh) nearly 5,500 relief-workers were employed but the number of cashiers was so inadequate that payments were delayed for a week. (59) In Panch Mahals, the people were kept waiting for two or three weeks for their wages when the piece-work system commenced. During this time they subsisted by killing their cattle. If they did not have their own cattle, they robbed the cattle of others. (60) When the relief-workers did not receive wages, the grain dealers refused to sell them provisions on credit except at very high prices. In addition, relief works faced problems because of the immigrants. They flooded Sholapur and its vicinity so much so that the government had to close the relief works for new arrivals and direct the people to go to works 20 miles away. (61)

Many witnesses told the Famine Commission that the wages were insufficient. Bombay Samachar reported that the wages were extremely low and work was exacted from the labourers with unrelaxing rigour. (62) Hubli Patra too felt that the wages were inadequate for the subsistence of labourers. (63) In Shiroli (Khed Taluka, Poona district), when the work was opened, about 2,500 persons joined but found that the daily average wage was low at two and half pice per head. Besides, the work assigned to them was of metal breaking. Since most of them were artisans, they were not accustomed to it and so left. (64) Relief-workers in Kapurbawli tank in Ahmednagar district were disappointed when they found that their wages were two pice a day. Nyaya Sindhu wrote, “Owing to this bitter disappointment, many are now gradually leaving the work and going elsewhere. We doubt very much how far the object of affording relief to the famine-stricken is really attained under such a
system.”(65) *Kal* (Poona, dated January 12, 1900) thought that the wages were too low considering the price rise of foodgrains and people sought relief in the works because they did not have alternative employment. (66) *Kesari* too held that the wages were slender. (67) Vaughan Nash wrote that in India the “harshest treatment” to relief-workers was meted out in Broach district. Wages were of “skeleton standards” resulting in “semi-starvation, sickness, and an appalling death rate, and in the villages, starvation on a wholesale” because of the government’s policy to deter people to go to the relief works. (68) Report of the famine in the Bombay Presidency, 1899-1902 corroborated, “There was little doubt that a considerable proportion went to the work when they were hardly in a fit state to earn a living wage: many others were deterred from going at all, and the state of people in the villages at this period showed that the number of persons on works was often no adequate indication of the number in need of relief.” (69) B.M. Bhatia too remarked that a large numbers of people earned only the penal minimum in Gujarat and Deccan districts. A part of the wages was paid as interest on weekly advances made by the grain dealer. Since the cash wage was generally calculated on the basis of a price lower than the actual market price, the cash received by the relief-workers purchased less grain in the market.

But the Indian opinion was not unanimous regarding the wage level. *Surat Akhbar* suggested that only the poorest persons should be employed and wages should be bare minimum. (70) Rev. Robert Henderson (Irish Presbyterian Mission) wrote, “Many of them sold their ornaments, their cooking vessels, in some cases the doors and tiles of their houses, before hunger forced them to set out for the relief works.” The articles which he purchased from them were carts, cooking vessels, tiles, doors of houses, old bricks, old beams, land, etc. (71) 3. The Famine Relief Code had directed that the vigilance of all officers should be directed towards the prevention of *dasturi* or ‘perquisites.’ This did not happen resulting in irregularities in the disbursement of wages. C.N. Seddon wrote, “I commonly found that payment was made in the lump to one person its proper division as the subject of quarrel or of doubt, and a karkun was often called in to calculate the right distribution – a very undesirable position of affairs.” Occasionally the mistries and karkuns took a part of the wages paid to relief-workers. (72) In Sholapur temporary government functionaries had “very strong” temptation to do financial irregularities. (73) In Panch Mahals the muccadams
received the earnings of their gangs and disappeared. (74) Near Athni and Jambigi (Belgaum district), relief-workers complained of underpayment. (75) Jagadadarsh regretted that the money spent on relief works did not reach the targeted people. Nearly 80 per cent was absorbed by engineers, supervisors, overseers and well-off functionaries. (76)

Relief-workers faced a scarcity of drinking water in many works. About 20,000 relief-workers were employed in the relief camp at Eklagna (Khandesh). Eleven carts brought water for the works of which one cart was set aside for clerks and Brahmin officials. Each worker was given three seers of water per day which they found inadequate. When they went to fetch their own water from a mile and half, they were not able to complete their task work and fined. Many relief-workers left the works because of water shortage. (77) Besides, contaminated water caused diseases.

There was a shortage of hospital assistants. In a relief work in Sholapur, there was only one hospital assistant for 2,000 to 15,000 relief-workers. (78) Major T.E. Dyson (Deputy Sanitary Commissioner) said that in large camps there were upto 20,000 relief-workers in Gujarat and the number of hospital assistants was inadequate. In one case there was only one hospital assistant for 30,000 workers-workers. Hospital assistants were generally overworked. (79) Dr. J.H. Walsch (District Medical Officer, Ahmedabad) said that the hospital assistants rarely did consistently good work. (80) At times the medical staff was composed of indifferent members who were not acquainted with medicine and their working was disappointing. (81) In several cases hospital assistants were not available and compounders were appointed who were not an efficient substitute. (82) Nash wrote, “The “hospital assistants” and “compounders” were often… unequal to their work, and sometimes scandalously incompetent.” Because of this and other reasons, mortality was high. Nash said, “The death-rate at Visapur Camp is high. The week before my visit twenty-six children had died of diarrhea, fifteen of “emaciation”… and one of dysentery.” (83)

Conclusion

With the outbreak of the famine, agricultural and other classes were in problems. The government advanced taccavi loans. Although the area under irrigation in the Presidency declined, the well-irrigated area increased by about 100,000 acres, thanks to the taccavi loans. This naturally generated employment. But the patels and other village underlings extracted their customary charges from the agriculturalists. (84) The government
followed its earlier policy of opening relief works. Able-bodied men were employed in relief works. This included women and grown-up children too. The relief-workers did benefit from these measures, but they also faced problems. Special efforts were made for the relief of weavers and wild tribes. Railways too tried to provide some relief to the famine victims. But in their case, the employment generated was marginal as compared with the cost involved.

References


(14) Written statement, FCBP, II, Q. 37.

(15) Written statement of Quin, Ibid., Q. 34.

(16) Written statement of W.L. Cameron, Executive Engineer, Nasik, FCBP, I, Q. 37.

(17) Ibid., para 32.


(20) Written statement of N.K. Pendse, District Deputy Collector, Ahmednagar, Ibid., Q. 98.

(21) Written statement of D.H. Herbert, Executive Engineer, Khandesh, Ibid., Q. 98.

(22) Written statement of G.M. Ryan, Divisional Forest Officer, Central Thana, Ibid., Q. 98.

(23) Written statement of C.S.F. Crofton, Assistant Collector, Satara, Ibid., Q. 98.


(26) Oral evidence of C.A. Beyts, Assistant Collector, Kaira, Ibid., p. 552.

(27) Oral evidence of B.P. Milson, Ibid., p. 408.


(29) Supplementary answers by R.E. Holland to the questions. FCBP, II, Q. 28.

(30) Written statement of S.M. Barucha, FCBP, I, Q. 58.

(31) Ibid., Q. 110.

(32) Supplementary answers by R.E. Holland to the questions. FCBP, II, Q. 108.

(33) Written statement. FCBP, I, Q. 105.

(34) Letter dated Camp Gogho, no. N/1496 dated April 18, 1900 to the Commissioner N.D. 1900. Revenue Department Famine. Vol. 48. Famine Department. No. 264 Effect of the state system of famine relief on the labour supply of the country. MSAM.

(35) Letter from Poona no. F.-2523 of 1900 dated June 1, 1900 to the Chief Secretary to Government Famine Department. Ibid.

(37) Letter no. 5179 dated May 31, 1900 to the Consulting Engineer for Railways, Bombay. Ibid.

(38) Written statement, FCBP, I, Q. 112.


(40) See Indian Spectator, Bombay (dated June 17, 1900) and Rast Goftar, Bombay (dated June 17, 1900), Report of native papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the week ending 23rd June 1900 (no. 25 of 1900), paras 33 & 35. (Hereafter referred to as RNPBP.)


(42) Oral evidence of T.E. Pitre, Secretary, Sholapur Municipality, Ibid., pp. 1041-43.

(43) In this context also see Report on the famine in the Bombay Presidency, 1899-1902, vol. 2. – Appendices (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1903), Appendix 39, p. 135.

(44) Oral evidence. FCBP, I, p. 391. Also his written statement, Ibid., Qs. 63 & 91.


(47) Letter no. 256 dated March 7, 1900. Revenue Department. 1900. Vol. 100. Relief works and other measures adopted to alleviate the distress in certain districts of the Bombay Presidency. MSAM.


(49) Letter from the Divisional Forest Officer, Panch Mahals to the Deputy Conservator of Forests in Charge N.C. No. 851 of September 30, 1899. Revenue Department Famine. 1899 Famine Department. Vol. 53, No. 17S Relief Works. Sholapur. MSAM. Also see
Memorandum from the Collector of Thana, no. 6932 dated September 20, 1899.

Revenue Department. Famine Vol. 31. No. 57. Official correspondence. MSAM.

(50) 1899. Revenue Department. Famine. No. 51 Railways vol. 48 Note for guidance of Railway Department. MSAB. Tapti Valley Railway employed many labourers.


(53) Kalpataru (Sholapur), dated December 24th 1899. RNPBP... for the week ending 30th December 1899 (No. 52 of 1899), para 38.


(56) Written statement of C.N. Seddon, Special Famine Officer, FCBP, I, Q. 61.

(57) Written statement of C.N. Clifton, Acting Superintendent Engineer, Central Division, Ibid., Q. 20.

(58) See, for example, oral evidence of G.M. Ryan, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Thana, Ibid., pp. 700-01.

(59) Deshakalavartaman (Erandol) dated December 18th 1899. RNPBP... for the week ending 23rd December 1899 (No. 51 of 1899), para 26.


(62) Bombay Samachar (Bombay) dated December 14th, 1899. RNPBP... for the week ending 16th December 1899 (No. 50 of 1899), para 21.

(63) Hubli Patra (Hubli) dated December 13th, 1899. Ibid.... for the week ending 16th December 1899 (No. 50 of 1899), para 26.

(64) Arunodaya (Thana) dated November 26th, 1899. Ibid.... for the week ending 2nd December 1899 (No. 46 of 1899), para 26.

(65) Nyaya Sindhu (Ahmednagar) dated December 4th, 1899. Ibid.... for the week ending 9th December 1899 (No. 49 of 1899), para 23.

(66) Kal (Poona dated January 12, 1900). Ibid.... for the week ending 15th January 1900 (No. 2 of 1900), para 18.
(67) Kesari (Poona, dated January 27, 1900). Ibid.... for the week ending 13th January 1900 (No. 4 of 1900), para 36.


(70) Surat Akhbar (Surat) dated January 8, 1900. RNPBP... for the week ending 13th January 1900 (No. 4 of 1900), para 27.

(71) Written statement, FCBP, I, para 91.

(72) Written statement. Ibid., Q. 40.

(73) Sholapur Samachar (Sholapur) dated January 16, 1900. RNPBP... for the week ending 20th January 1900 (No. 3 of 1900), para 36.

(74) Written statement of B.B. Stewart, FCBP, II, Q. 40.

(75) Notes on the inspection of relief works by the Collector of Belgaum. General Department. 1901. Vol. 52. MSAM.

(76) Jagadadarsh (Ahmednager) dated January 28, 1900. RNPBP... for the week ending 3rd February 1900 (No. 5 of 190), para 31.

(77) Khandesh Vaibhav (Dhulia) dated November 24, 1899. Ibid. for the week ending 2nd December 1899 (No. 48 of 1899), para 24.


(80) Oral evidence of Dr. J.H. Walsch, District Medical Officer, Ahmedabad, Ibid., p. 1071.

(81) Oral evidence of Dr. E. Maynard, District Medical Officer, Ahmednagar, FCBP, I, p. 133.

(82) Written statement of D. George, Ibid., Q. 22.
