

ALL INDIA ASSOCIATION OF STATISTICAL INVESTIGATORS
(FORMERLY: ALL INDIA ASSOCIATION OF INVESTIGATORS)

SUBORDINATE STATISTICAL SERVICE,
MINISTRY OF STATISTICS & PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION, GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA

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Restructuring Of Subordinate Statistical Service (SSS)

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Introduction

In the dawn of Independent India our planners and policy makers felt the necessity to create a strong statistical base for economic planning and social reorganization. The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MOSPI), with its two main functional organs the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has been vested with the responsibility to collect and disseminate the entire gamut of statistics ensuring exhaustive coverage and quality of statistics released in the country. The statistics released are based on administrative sources, surveys and censuses conducted by the Central and State Governments and non-official sources and studies. The surveys conducted by the Ministry are based on scientific sampling methods and are guided under the overall supervision of a statutory body National Statistics Commission. The primary data is collected through its dedicated Subordinate Statistical Service (SSS) Officials, who have been trained with the concepts and definitions of items and the scope of the surveys. Being primary / core workers for collection / compilation, the officers of SSS play a vital role in the statistical setup in the GOI. The Service is more than five years old but most of its incumbents have completed a long inning of their lives in rendering a valuable service in the fields of core official statistic at the national level. The officers of the Service are mainly engaged in the supervision, data collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of data to the users, researchers and administrators in the Government of India and State Governments.

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It may be noted that the SSS incumbents are the only statistical functionaries who are conducting large-scale sample surveys in India. They are responsible for data collection in surveys that generate estimates and parameters that provide the tools for formulation of various plans and programmes of the Government of India. This service is engaged in providing a broad spectrum of data on various aspects like socio economic, agricultural and industrial sectors of the Indian economy. Data on education, means of livelihood, employment generation, demography, market prices, health and morbidity, agricultural yield estimates, land usage, industrial production of the organized as well as the unorganized sector of the Indian economy are provided through the toil of the incumbents of this Service.

Constitution of the SSS

The Subordinate Statistical Service (SSS) was constituted on the recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay Commission. While reviewing the pay structure for statistical functions posts in the Central Ministries/ Offices of the Government of India, the fifth Central Pay Commission observed that there were a large number of statistical functions posts spread over in different Ministries/ Offices of Government of India. Some of these were isolated and there were bleak chances of promotion for those posts. The Pay Commission recommended that these posts be constituted into Subordinate Statistical Service, by encompassing Group 'B' and 'C' statistical functions posts spread over in different Ministries/ Offices of the Government of India. The SSS was thus constituted in the year 2002 and operationalized w.e.f. 01.04.2004.

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Present Structure of SSS

Following the acceptance of the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission, the present structure of the service is given as under:

Grade	FOD		Non FOD		TOTAL	
	Sanctioned	Vacant	Sanctioned	Vacant	Sanctioned	Vacant
SI Grade I	1260	51	302	18	1562	69
SI Grade II	1967	1102	410	142	2377	1238
TOTAL	3227	914	712	160	3939	1307

It could be noticed that about 83 per cent SSS posts are allocated to the Field Operations Division (FOD) of NSSO and remaining 17 per cent posts of the service cater to the needs of 45 Ministries/Departments of Union Government.

Due to poor service conditions and poorer prospects of promotion in the SSS, the drop-out rate at the entry level itself (SI. Gr. II) is very high. For instance, a requisition intimating a total of 472 Gr. II vacancies was sent to SSC in 2005. The SSC forwarded the merit list of 463 candidates. All the 463 candidates were given offers of appointment. But only about 350 accepted the offer. In fact due to low scales of pay and poor promotion prospects, about 225 Officials have resigned from the Service during the past couple of years. The total number of

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vacancies in Gr. II of SSS is assessed at about 1238, whereas 69 vacancies are there in the Grade-I of the service. Therefore, there is an urgent need to make the service conditions of SSS more attractive to arrest the exodus.

Further, in the existing dispensation, the SSS officials worked in the same grade for more than 25 years and only then been able to get their 1st promotion in this service. Due to extreme stagnation, this service has become unpopular. This has led to demoralization among the SSS functionaries, who perform arduous duties of data collection in inclement weather conditions, hilly terrains, and traversing long distances in the absence of proper transport etc. All this adversely affect the quality of data. Therefore, the effective measures are needed to improve the Service Conditions of SSS.

Need for Re-Structuring of SSS

As already indicated above, NSSO (FOD) employs the major chunk of SSS officials and they are the worst sufferers in so far as the career growth is concerned. In the past, two expert committees had been constituted in the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India to review the functioning and cadre structure of NSSO: (i) Prof. J. Roy Committee, and (ii) Dr. N. S. Sastry Committee. Further, the National Statistical Commission constituted by the Government of India in 2000 had also given certain recommendations on SSS personnel. Briefly the recommendations of these bodies are discussed below.

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Prof. J. Roy Committee-Recommendations

An Expert committee under the chairmanship of Prof. J. Roy, recommended that since there was only a two-tier system in other Government Statistical Departments. FOD should also be brought on par with the staffing pattern of other Government Departments, with only two ranks – Junior Investigator and Senior Investigator, below Assistant Director (Gr. IV of ISS). Against this scenario, the committee examined the duties of these categories of staff and found little justification for the perpetuation of the three-tier system in FOD alone. The Committee accordingly recommended that FOD should have a two-tier system for primary field investigation. The senior level may be earmarked for surveys in non-household sector and the junior staff in household sector, keeping in view the higher level of skills and expertise needed for surveys relating to Institutions, Establishments, Manufacturing concerns etc. in the non-household sector. The senior level could be categorized as Senior Investigator and junior level as Junior Investigator. For supervising the work of Junior Investigators, a set of Senior Investigators may be engaged. The Senior Investigator's work may be supervised by an Assistant Director.

Prof. J. Roy committee further recommended that the activities presently being handled by Superintendents in the SROs may be placed under the charge of Assistant Directors, in view of the tremendous increase in the functions both qualitatively and quantitatively. The SRO under the charge of Assistant Director (Gr. IV or JTS in ISS) will be the laboratory for NSSO to build up a modern field set up. This is a functional requirement and is fully justified, especially in the era of

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modernization contemplated in FOD. One post of Assistant Director for every 4 erstwhile Superintendents may be created for the purpose.

Dr. N.S. Sastry Committee-Recommendations

A committee under the chairmanship of Dr. N.S. Sastry was constituted in the Ministry of Statistics & PI in January 1999, which had gone into the issue in great detail in the light of the expanding role of NSSO, specially the activities of FOD and recommended 2-tier set up for the field; the Superintendents to handle surveys like ASI, ICS and for supervising the job of Investigators and, the Investigators to carry out the socio-economic surveys. Dr. Sastry Committee recommended that the post of Assistant Superintendent may therefore be abolished as alternative mechanism for supervision was proposed.

National Statistical Commission-Recommendations

National Statistical Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan in its recommendations in para 14.10.24 & 14.10.25 also recommended that SSS may consist of two tiers and SRO should be headed by JTS level officer of ISS.

Functional Needs of NSSO (FOD)

The Field Operations Division (FOD), one of the four Divisions of the National Sample Survey Organisation, is responsible for conducting surveys in the field of Socio Economic, Industrial Statistics, Agricultural Statistics, Prices, etc. as per the programmes approved. It is

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also responsible for updating the frame for conducting Socio-economic Surveys in urban areas. This Division with its headquarters located at New Delhi and Faridabad functions through a network of 6 Zonal offices, 49 Regional Offices and 165 Sub-Regional Offices spread throughout the country and has staff strength of about 4422. The major Surveys conducted by NSSO (FOD) are highlighted as under:

The Socio-Economic Surveys conducted by NSSO are in the form of Rounds, each round being normally of one-year duration. The subject coverage of SE inquiries for different rounds is decided on the basis of a 10 year time frame. In this cycle, 1 year is devoted to land and live stock holdings, debt and Investment; 1 year to social consumption (education and health care, etc.), 2 years to quinquennial surveys on household consumer expenditure, employment & un-employment situation and 4 years to non- agricultural enterprises, namely, manufacturing, trade and services in un-organised sector. The remaining 2 years are for open rounds in which subjects of current/special interest on the demand of Central Ministries, State Governments and research organizations are covered.

As regards the Urban Frame Survey (UFS), it is conducted on a continuing basis to provide an updated frame of First Stage Units (FSUs) for conducting Socio-economic enquiries in urban areas. The UFS blocks are updated taking into account the change in the population of cities and towns and also in newly formed towns. Each town / city is divided into compact area / UFS blocks with natural or permanent boundaries. The work involves formation of compact areal units in urban sector, having a population of 600-800 and preparation of notional maps for

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each block. In the process, the number of households and the population of each block have to be estimated through collection of the information in 10% of the Houses/Structures. The norms of 4 UFS block per day fixed per worker long ago in FOD have become almost unmanageable. Even as per this norm, the staff component has not been augmented in keeping with the population growth over time and growth of cities, which has posed a lot of operational problems. Therefore, the revised norm of 3 blocks has been recommended by Dr. Sastry committee in the interest of quality of work. Further, the methodology of this survey has undergone a major change about 4 years ago and each UFS block now consists of 80-200 households and each and every House/Structure is visited to collect information in this regard. This has amounted to conducting of a census in the urban areas of the country and has increased the workload many folds.

This work is presently handled by personnel taken on contract basis and the SI Gr-II of SSS. Lack of strength in the supervisory cadre has affected the supervision specially that of contract personnel and hence affected the quality of work

Other major surveys, viz, Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) and Improvement of Crop Statistics (ICS) schemes, are handled by SI Gr-I of SSS. The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) is an important survey of the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), MOS&PI and NSSO (FOD) conducts its field work every year.

The ASI data are collected from registered manufacturing units with statutory support coming from Collection of Statistics Act and the

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rules made there under. The work involves compilation and verification of data compiled by the factory managements from the Books of Accounts maintained. The survey deals with collection and verification of secondary data. The job assigned under this survey requires knowledge and ability to read and interpret balance sheets and Profit & Loss Accounts etc., besides in depth knowledge in the measurement of concepts like 'value added'. While ensuring this, the Statistics Authority has also to see that the persons deployed in the survey work possess the requisite personality to have meaningful interaction with the managements to guide them in compiling ASI returns. However, this work has also been assigned to the officials in SI Gr-II in different offices of FOD as they have handled it successfully.

Under Agriculture Statistics Survey, Field Operations Division of NSSO has the overall responsibility of providing technical guidance to the States in developing suitable survey techniques for obtaining timely and reliable estimates of crop yield, bringing out uniformity in definition and concept and providing assistance in training to the State field personnel. The Division also exercises supervision over the primary field work of the State Governments in respect of area enumeration, area aggregation and Crop Cutting Experiments. The supervision on field work for qualitative improvement in Agricultural Statistics is carried out through well organised sample survey under Improvement of Crop Statistics (ICS) Scheme. The Scheme aims at locating, through joint efforts of Central and State agencies, the deficiencies in the State system of Crop Statistics and suggesting remedial measures for effecting lasting improvements.

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The ICS scheme is in operation in 19 Land Record States/UTs and 3 Non-land Record States. The responsibilities of supervisory staff of the NSSO (FOD) and State Governments inter-alia involve sample check in non-overlapping samples on (i) area enumeration and aggregation in about 10,000 sample villages in each season (ii) about 30,000 Crop Cutting Experiments in a year carried out by State primary workers. The findings of the sample supervision are brought out in the form of State-wise reports for two major seasons and an All India Status Report titled 'Review of Crop Statistics System in India through Scheme for Improvement of Crop Statistics'. Work related to planning of survey, compilation & analysis of data and publication of the reports is done at Agricultural Statistics (AS) Wing of NSSO (FOD) located at Faridabad.

The ICS scheme at the grass root level involves collection of information relating to the errors committed by State level primary workers in area enumeration and crop cutting experiments, by observation method. Therefore, NSSO (FOD) functionaries supervise the work of State level primary workers and are providing technical guidance to them. The persons deployed under this scheme are required to possess complete knowledge in agricultural practices and the scientific procedures developed to estimate crop area and crop yield. They are also required to maintain close liaison with the SSBs, Revenue Department, and Agriculture Department etc. operating in each District.

Another important activity of the FOD under Agricultural Statistics is the consolidation of results of General Crop Estimation Surveys carried out by State Governments every year for yield estimation. Based on

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these results, the AS Wing brings out an annual report titled 'Consolidated Results of Crop Estimation Surveys on Principal Crops'. These reports are primarily for official use but can be made available to public on demand.

This work is primarily handled by the SI Gr-I of SSS as they are largely supervisory in nature and requires a higher level of skill. But, in the recent past this work has also been assigned to SI Gr-II officials and they have been successfully doing this job too.

Rural Price Collection Surveys

The FOD collects data from 603 Villages on prices of specified commodities generally consumed by agricultural / rural labourers for compilation of Consumer Price Index (CPI) (base year 1986-87) for Agricultural / Rural Labourers on behalf of the Labour Bureau. The number of items/commodities covered is about 260.

Consumer Price Index CPI (Urban)

The market survey for the CPI (Urban) had been completed in 2007 and the regular price collection work has commenced from 1st May, 2008 for 1114 Quotations from 310 towns.

Ad-hoc Surveys

Gramin Dak Sevaks Survey (GDS)

Department of Posts with active support of NSSO conducted a field survey to examine the service conditions and facilities available to the Gramin Dak Sevaks (GDS) posted in branch offices and Panchayat

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Sanchar Seva Kendras (PSSK) located across the country during March-April 2008. The role of FOD was to supervise collection of data from 10% of the sample units. The supervision work allotted to it has been completed.

Current surveys in progress:

NSS 68th Round of Socio-Economic Survey (July, 2011 - June, 2012), earmarked for survey on

- Consumption Expenditure
- Employment & Unemployment

Restructuring of SSS in NSSO (FOD)

In NSSO, Statistical Investigator Grade-II in SSS, is the entry level post responsible for collection of data on large scale sample selection basis on various fields in the household and enterprise surveys as also in Price Collection. These officials are the *real grassroots* level worker collecting primary data on socio economic subjects from rural and urban sectors without any facilities. *They are required to undertake extensive, continuous and strenuous tours to far-flung rural and urban areas throughout the year in dense forests, deserts, +50 to below 0 degree temperatures, drought to flood, dacoit infested areas to diseases borne areas.*

The Investigators have a tough task ahead to accomplish the primary level of work of collecting qualitative data from the given work environment having poor infrastructural facilities in the rural and semi urban areas of the country. The low literacy level of the Indian

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population, non availability of medical facilities and unhygienic conditions adds to the hardship of the Investigator in the field. Along with the strenuous physical nature of work, the Investigator has to undertake intellectual work of canvassing lengthy & complex schedules of Inquiry, visiting each and every household in the selected hamlets of the villages. Investigators are also required to conduct Enterprise Surveys on formal and informal sector in respect of Non-agricultural economic activities. Eliciting qualitative information from the diverse and even illiterate population calls for a serious psychological efforts on the part of the Investigators covering a wide variety of subjects in each round of survey in different years.

The risk factor is also involved in carrying out the field duties. There are several instances where field functionaries of NSSO, FOD have been subject to physical assault, in several cases they had been put to behind bars in the impression that in the day, they take all information regarding cash, jewellery and other details of the affluence of the households and at night come to burgle the house.

The SSS structure in FOD needs complete overhaul so as to increase the efficiency of the survey mechanism. The survey mechanism currently followed on FOD too needs to be updated. Decreasing the journey time to and from the sample points by decreasing the dependence on public transport is one such method. Surveys can be conducted by a team of Investigators who move from one survey point to another using hired/government vehicles. Any movement of such team for survey should ideally be preceded by elaborate advance

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planning for other logistics and liaison for sample level contacts. With such systematic approach the team would be able to complete a similar work in a much lesser period of time as compared to that completed by Investigators moving alone from one place to another using public transport and conducting surveys individually. This will also provide a moral support and boost the confidence of the field officials when they confront arduous situations that often prevail in the field. Such measures will also have positive bearing on the quality of data collected.

Further, there is scope for conducting surveys aimed at generating estimates at a micro level, that is, state, district as well as block/tehsil. Furthermore, with the pool of available talent, new and novel surveys can be taken up to provide data on other national and international relevance. It may not be out of context to mention here that surveys on Situation Assessment of farmers, Situation Assessment of the displaced persons of the Sardar Sarovar Project, Well Being of Women and Children and HIV awareness (for the UNICEF), International Comparison of Price for the study of Purchase Power Parity, etc. were completed by the NSSO (FOD) in a timely manner with great success and much to the satisfaction and appreciation of the users of the data. These types of surveys can only be taken up if we have a forward looking and progressive vision. Such engagements not only provide a break from the monotony of regular surveys but also add variety and inject vitality to the organization.

From the above discussion it has been clear that the intermingling of the activities of the two grades of SSS has made a two grade

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structure redundant in the present scenario. In the Field Operations Division of NSSO SI Gr-II officers have been found capable and competent enough to handle the responsibilities of the higher grade. They have worked as team leaders for Socio Economic Surveys, worked in ICS schemes and have also shown their capability in the ASI surveys. Hence, a single grade structure in SSS would be sufficient to handle the requirements of FOD.

As far as the supervision of this work is concerned, it can be said that officers of the ISS cadre, who have a better understanding and knowledge in the field of statistics, can be assigned with the entire responsibility of supervision of all the surveys of FOD. For this purpose the strength of the JTS level ISS officers need to be increased and they can be assigned with the additional responsibility of heading the field offices of FOD.

SSS posts in other ministries/departments.

In most of the other ministries/departments, the existing officials are functioning in two grades of SSS. Officials are stagnating in these grades as there is hardly any opportunity to move further. This has created a situation of frustration at all levels. In the new scheme of restructuring, attempts have to be made for immediate upliftment in the career of these officials with a perspective vision of systematic growth path.

Hence, keeping in view the higher level of skills and expertise needed for large scale sample surveys, collecting data in difficult field conditions and enhancing the quality and credibility of statistical data collected by SSS Officers in the different Ministries of the Govt, there is

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an urgent need to tackle the severe stagnation problem to boost the career prospect of SSS officers. It may also be noted that the minimum qualification for the post of Statistical Investigator Grade II is Graduate in Mathematics /Economics/Statistics but the recent trend of qualifications of most of the applicants are found to be either Post Graduate or above.

Thus, to summarize, the problems that this service is presently facing are of two kinds. First, the entry grade to this service is much lower. Here an aspirant needs to be a graduate with a specialization in Mathematics /Economics/Statistics and again sit for a special paper on Statistics consisting of 200 marks in the Graduate level exam held by the Staff Selection Commission, apart from the other regular papers like, General Awareness, English, etc. Whereas, an incumbent of SSS gets an entry level Grade pay of only Rs 4200, incumbents in CBSE, CBDT and the Assistants of the CSS cadre enjoy a grade pay of Rs 4600. This problem can be tackled by enhancing the grade pay of the officers of SSS at the entry level.

Secondly, another major problem in the SSS is the lack of promotional prospects. The SI Grade I of the SSS is the feeder grade for the JTS level of Indian Statistical Service and 50% of these posts are filled through promotions. Hence, roughly 115 posts at the JTS level of ISS is reserved for the incumbents of SSS. This is meager as compared to the number of posts at the grade I level of SSS. Thus, to ensure a healthy career prospect to the officials of this service the number of posts at the JTS level of the ISS also needs to be increased.

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Proposed Structure

In the above background, it is proposed that SSS may be restructured in the following manner:

1. **The existing two grade structure may be modified by allowing a grade pay of Rs. 4800 as entry grade of the service.** This is because *SSS officers were always ahead of the Officers of CSS cadre* in view of the following:

- The basic qualification for Gr. II of SSS is Bachelor's Degree with Mathematics / Statistics / Economics as one of the subjects. Apart from this, knowledge in computer operation is also desirable from the incumbents. On the other hand, officers in CSS cadre need just a Bachelor's Degree without any specialization. Further, the incumbents of SSS need to appear for an additional 200 marks paper on Statistics during their recruitment exam;
- SSS officials are required to work in the most difficult and adverse conditions;
- They are also required to take 'instant' and 'on the spot' decisions without any help at the field level;
- They have to face different situations and different people at the same time. Risk factor is also involved in the data collection work
- On the other hand, CSS Officers are doing the work in a better and comfortable environment, sitting at the secretariat with full support of many Officers.

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- Again, 90% of the posts in the entry level of SSS, i.e., SI Gr-II are filled up through all India competitive examinations, whereas, in the CSS only 75% of the posts are filled through direct recruitment.

2. Keeping in view the acute stagnation prevalent in the service it would be desirable to place all SSS officers with 4 years of service in the grade pay of Rs 4800, in the grade pay of Rs. 5400 in the PB-3 band. However such a placement would be independent of the MACP scheme of Government. A similar provision has already been made for section officers, which can easily be provided for SSS officers also.

4. Given that both the grades of SSS are presently assigned the same duties, viz., supervision and scrutiny of Socio Economic Surveys, taking up of ICS work of Agriculture, conducting of Annual Survey of Industries, it is only logical to have a single grade in the SSS.

5. The field offices, i.e., the Sub Regional Offices, of the FOD may be headed by the JTS level officers of ISS as per the recommendations of the Prof. J. Roy Committee & NSC Recommendation.

6. The work of the Statistical Investigators of SSS will be supervised by the ISS Officers.

7. The multifunctional experienced workforce of the SSS can then be utilized in all the surveys of NSSO (FOD). The Socio Economic surveys will be supervised by the officials of this service and the primary work will be done by employing Field Investigators (FI) on contract basis.

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Team approach may be adopted for data collection. The team will be headed by the SSS officers who will be able to guide FIs in every aspect of data collection. The work of other surveys like ASI and ICS can be undertaken by these officers independently under the supervision of ISS Officers.

8. The Statistical Investigators may be designated as Statistical Officer (SO), while Statistical Officers with 4 years of service in their grade would be known as Assistant Directors (Grade II). An incumbent in this service will move from the entry grade of SO to the grade of AD (Gr-II).

The proposed SSS structure is as shown below:

Grade	Existing		Proposed	
	Pay Band	Grade Pay	Pay Band	Grade Pay
Proposed AD-II (Gr A Gazetted)	-----	-----	15600 – 39100	5400
SI Gr I, proposed, SO (Gr B Gazetted)	9300 – 34800	4600	9300 – 34800	4800
SI Gr II (Gr B Non – Gazetted)	9300 – 34800	4200		

The number of positions that need to be in placed in the different grades of the service and SI cadre is as under:

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Levels	Gr Pay Existing	DA as on 1.1.2011	Gr Pay Proposed	DA as on 1.1.2011	Cadre Structure		Approx Persons Granted MACP in	Expenditure involved (Rs in Lakhs)			Cost Implication (Rs in Lakhs)	Cost Implication considering MACP
					Present	Proposed		Present	Present considering MACP	Proposed		
AD II	5400	2754	5400	2754	0		650	0.00	636.01	0.00	0.00	-636.01
	4800	2448					1200	0.00	1043.71		0.00	-1043.71
SI Gr I	4600	2346	4800	2448	1562	3839	600	1301.96	500.11	3339.01	2037.05	2838.90
SI Gr II	4200	2142			2377		1489	1808.99	1133.19		-1808.99	-1133.19
LR	4200	2142	4800	2448		100				86.98	86.98	86.98
Total					3939	3939	3939	3110.95	3313.02	3425.99	315.04	112.97

The above table shows that there is net expenditure of Rs315.04 lakhs per annum in the expenditure of the government. However, if we consider the MACP granted till date the actual expenditure of the Government comes to only Rs 112.97 lakhs per annum. This amount would go down further in time as more and more persons reach the grade pay of Rs. 5400 through MACP. This structure would definitely help in arresting the current outflow of the quality and experienced manpower, by implementing the above mentioned promotional avenues. Further, as a one time amelioration measure, this positive budget should be granted keeping in mind that this is the first ever cadre review of SSS after its formation.

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