



## Editorial

# Time To Celebrate

At the 5th World Water Forum, the world's premier entity dedicated to water issues, Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR), was awarded the coveted Kyoto World Water Grand Prize at a glittering closing ceremony to mark the closure of the Forum on World Water Day i.e. March 22, 2009 at Istanbul, Turkey. The award was presented in recognition of the outstanding contribution made towards organising rural communities for watershed development and rain water harvesting in an inclusive, equitable, sustainable and gender sensitive manner.

The World Water Forum attracted the largest ever gathering of well over 33,000 attendees including delegates from 155 countries. The Kyoto World Water Award received 67 entries from all over the world out of which India's WOTR emerged as the winner. It assumes huge significance as it is the world's premier water award given to successful grassroots initiatives that are innovative replicable and sustainable.

Organised by the World Water Council, The World Water Forum takes place once every three years. This year saw a large congregation of world leaders, educationists, economists and environmentalists from across the globe engaging in discussions and debating on key issues like raising the importance of water on the political agenda, supporting the deepening of discussions towards the solution of international water issues, bridging the various divides in the 21st century by formulating concrete proposals, bringing their importance to the world's attention and generating political commitment.

This has indeed been a significant moment and milestone for WOTR, more so because it proves that it is the push from within our own selves that matters more than the pull factors that work from the outside. Villagers in India have to realise that the development of rural India lies solely in their hands – yes, they can do it themselves with just the right

assistance from government agencies and NGOs. There will be, hopefully, no need then for our villagers to migrate to the cities and overload them.

For us at WOTR, all these years of experimenting with the Wasundhara approach have been akin to learning curves. Steadily and surely, we have witnessed the positive changes taking place in our project villages and this has further helped build our confidence to move ahead. The Kyoto World Water Grand Prize belongs to each and every person in the WOTR family, including our village partners and our donors. It's a credit that must be shared and utilised to develop more of such strategies. Therefore, it is only right that we should dedicate this issue of the WOTR newsletter to the Wasundhara approach, especially so that many more may benefit from we have learned.

**Huned Contractor  
Editor**



Dr Marcella D'Souza receiving the Kyoto Grand Prize in Istanbul

## OUR SUPPORTERS

A special mention must be made of the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) that gave us the flexibility to innovate and at the pace that was required. The SDC funded the initial bulk of the projects. Without their support, we would not have had the critical mass to say, 'yes, this can work'. As also the Andheri Hilfe, who were willing to take in delays in fund utilisation.

The willingness of Andheri-Hilfe to set aside the time-bound spending of funds in the interest of local ownership of equity is what made the difference. Credit must also go to the BMZ, GTZ, KfW and NABARD. It was on the base of the initial solid foundation of people's participation and sound technical work with the physical results being visible in the IGWDP that we could now take implementation to a more challenging level. And thanks to all our other donors too who, in one way or another, have contributed towards evolving this process.

# Wasundhara: A Form Of Caring

*Wasundhara is a synonym for 'WOTR Attentive to Social Unity for Nature, Development and Humanity in Rural Areas'. In our Indian languages Wasundhara means 'caring earth'. It is therefore an approach that denotes caring*

By Ganesh Rajapure

The Wasundhara approach is to create a strong inclusive 'push' or urge for change and betterment from within the rural communities. This is done by empowering villages and all groups within so that they become protagonists of their own development. Accurate data and information on the actual socio-economic, poverty and infrastructure situation in the village (and its hamlets) is collected, analysed and provided back to the villagers (in graphic form) so that they get an overall and informed picture of the conditions obtaining in their village.

The idea is to empower them and spur them to engage with the concerns of all groups in all hamlets in the village and envision together the development of their village / villages as a whole while prioritizing the needs of its poor and the under-served areas. Group-wise and as a community, they assess needs, set priorities, and identify government schemes and projects and plan measures, which are then documented as an 'action plan' in the local language. The entire community, its CBOs and the Gram Panchayat then ratifies this plan. The Village Development Committee (VDC), to be selected by the respective groups and ratified at the Gram Sabha level and the Gram Panchayat (PRI), then takes the necessary steps to pro-actively link up with the various service / development providers.

## Innovation Factor

Rather than have the so-called 'beneficiaries' of the projects merely 'participate' in the implementation and even monitoring of a particular activity, the village becomes responsible for its own development – it envisions its future (step by step), sets the priorities, tone and pace of development. They can do this because they are informed, empowered and know how to access the various 'service providers' and schemes available. The village and its leaders have information of the village situation and they know the economic and marginalized status of its people. This knowledge of their village helps them to make informed choices.

The Gram Panchayat (GP) and Village Development

Committee (of men and women) obtain local contribution according to the economic status of household and avail of government and other schemes to address their needs. Rather than decisions being taken at the general Gram Sabha level (where usually the few better-off and powerful hijack the process), representatives are selected and decisions are taken at the smallest units (hamlets, communities, wards) from bottom up. These are then ratified at the Gram Sabha level. The VDC is officially linked to the GP and works under it.

## Addressing The Problem

The Wasundhara approach equips the villagers with information and knowledge of their village (not as individuals but as a village body). It helps them set a vision and dream for themselves and for their village, equips them with tools and skills for inclusiveness, setting of goals and objectives, project designing, transparency and accountability

etc so that there is a strong 'demand' from within the various groups and the village as a whole. In other words, the development is now 'push' or demand-led and is able to access the existing opportunities. The process thus initiated continues even after the facilitating agency withdraws and may require only a little occasional hand-holding from outside.

## Components

WOTR through this approach works together with the village and watershed community towards the creation of a 'wholesome earth,' where every household - landowner, landless and otherwise – comes together to restore and maintain their patch of mother earth. In this approach, attention is given to the 'poorest of the poor' household. Every group, however marginalised, is brought into active decision-making and the community as a whole sets goals as well as tracks their progress.

Villagers have to first identify their problems and then prioritise their objectives



Constituency building and representation in the Village Development Committee (VDC) seeks to ensure effective identification, selection, articulation and representation through participatory constituency building, especially of the marginalised groups. It is worked out from the bottom up (the hamlets / groups etc) and is ratified in the Gram Sabha. This mechanism gives a chance for every household of every sector to be actively involved. The village is guided to work out their developmental goals and objectives based on a participatory prioritisation of their problems and the needs and the ways to address these.

An adapted version of the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) and the Goal Oriented Project Planning is taught and used. This village envisioning process also includes identification of sources of funds, obtaining funds, and their utilisation for the decided purposes. It involves working with various developmental agencies towards the realisa-



**Villagers are guided through the process of collective partnership so that the village remains at the centre of all development activities.**

tion of the plan. What is important is that the village remains at the centre of the process.

Further, addressing equity begins with an identification and categorisation of all households according to their economic status. This is done through Wealth Ranking (WR) in a public forum (either by the women's self help groups) or in the Gram

Sabha. Once the WR is done, and displayed, it is now used to avail of the various government schemes and benefits as well as for the share in local contribution. Thus the poor will contribute less as compared to those who are better endowed.

Having the Village Watershed Committee (VWC) or the Village Development Committee (VDC) independent of the Gram Panchayat proves to be beneficial in the implementation of developmental initiatives. The continuity of the committee lasts only as long as the particular initiative is being implemented. The energies generated and experiences gained last only as long as the particular project. But when the VDC is linked (officially) with the Gram Panchayat as a sub-committee, their work continues beyond the project period, while at the same time is not affected by change of local government.

**The formation of a Village Development Committee is important for the implementation of various projects**



**A Sustainable Idea**

Once empowered with information and knowledge, the process of how to address their needs and progress will become a culture within the village. Hence is sustainable. It is also replicable because since the past four years we have been developing, fine-tuning and testing the pedagogy, and its various tools. As of March 31, 2009, this process has been initiated in over 80 villages of the various projects of WOTR and its sister organisation, the Sanjeevani Institute of Entrepreneurship and Development (SIED) in the states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

# Pangan Turns Progressive

*Turning problems into objectives is what has kick-started the development of this village*

**By Sharad Bhangade (WOTR-RRC, Dhule) / Namdeo Nagre (SIED)**

Pangan is a tribal community village situated at the extreme end of Dhule district. It is 85 kms to the north-west of the district and 35 kms away from the taluka headquarters. The population of Pangan is 2,185 residents, comprising 381 families. The total area it covers is 703 ha. In August 2007, a village development project was started with support from Andheri-Hilfe. In the initial phase, capacity building of local CBOs and soil and water conservation work were initiated. The village thus man-

which was presented to and ratified by the Gram Sabha.

## Stakeholder Analysis

The different stakeholders were categorised as (a) big farmers (b) marginal farmers (c) landless (d) women (e) youth. Each stakeholder group discussed their problems on a collective level and ranked the problems according to the severity and importance they attached to them.

- Unemployment and lack of work opportunities
- Shortage of drinking and irrigation water
- Poor communication facilities in terms of transportation, access to the market etc

## Problems And Solutions

This was a challenge. In the Pangan VDC, there are a greater number of youth and therefore employment and meaningful livelihood opportunities are their greatest concerns. Most of them were seasonally migrating to Surat to work on construction sites or to Nashik to work in the grape vineyards. The concern of women was that of drinking water and for a majority of farmers, it was water for agriculture. The poor had difficulty in identifying their main problems. The first was lack of education and the next, distress migration. After much discussion with the landless poor, water for agriculture was given priority, because they would obtain work opportunities within the village if water for agriculture was made available.

Observing the priority of all groups, the water issue emerged as the most important. The availability of water in a village can lead to an enhancement in agricultural productivity so that work is available for a greater part of the year for the youth, the landless poor and the farmers. An important aspect that surfaced was that the poor found it very difficult to state their problems. Their vision was limited to their experience. The WOTR team realised that for now the water issue (through watershed development) will be given primary attention and later on, more discussions and working with the landless poor would be required to help them 'push' their own selves out of poverty.

## Conclusion:

After the priority problems were identified the group worked on a logical framework and thus converted the 'Problem Tree' into an 'Objective Tree'. Positive results are therefore expected soon.

## Women play a vital role in village governance under the Wasundhara approach



aged to acquire an understanding of how the project could be implemented and why it was necessary for everyone to be fully involved. It was then taken to the next stage – that of building a plan for holistic development.

The village envisioning concept was explained in the Project Planning and Management (PPM) training and was followed by a Village Envisioning (VE) training programme conducted for representatives of CBOs. Later, ward-wise meetings were conducted to obtain data to analyse the status of the stakeholders, problems and objectives. Once this was obtained, the CBOs were guided to prepare the LFA

## Problem Analysis

After each group listed and ranked their problems, the results were clubbed and the prioritisation process was carried out. The identified problems included shortage of water for drinking and agriculture, requirement for better farm equipments, need for capital, lack of transportation, shortage of electricity, unemployment, lack of education facilities, poor sanitation and health facilities, distress migration, fuel scarcity, absence of a library and facilities for sports etc. From the various problems identified, the following were prioritised in a descending order of importance.

# Creating Leadership Positions

*An account of the formation of a village development committee at Kalikhet*

**By Roadaji Thakare (SIED) / Namdeo Nagre (SIED)**

Kalikhet is a tribal village located in the Sakri taluka of Dhule district with a population of 843 residents, including 408 women. All the 130 families belong to the Scheduled Tribe communities of Bhillas and Kokanis. The financial support for the implementation of this project was from the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT). The project began with an awareness phase in January 2008. The community completed the formalities of shramdaan in February 2008, following which the Letter of Offer was given to the village on February 16, 2008. The physical work was initiated in March 2008.

To mobilise project implementation, a special Gram Sabha was organised during which the Wealth Ranking (WR) concept and procedure was explained. The village contributed the components for the classification of the WR, and once understood and accepted, all the 130 households were categorised accordingly. Wealth Ranking was finally conducted in April 2008 and it resulted in the categorisation of families as very poor (12), poor (45), average (66) and better-off (7).

Following the WR process and land-holding grouping, the formation of a village devel-

opment committee (VDC) was conducted on May 5, 2008. The size of the VDC was decided during the Gram Sabha. The results of the WR and land-holding analyses were also presented to the Gram Sabha. As per the analysis, 11 wards were finalised. Further, the caste-wise and sex-wise ward allocation was done and the ward members were asked to conduct separate meetings to select their representative. These ward meetings were facilitated by SIED's field staff, supported by WOTR. As per the VDC formation's strategy, 11 members were selected for this project.

During the Gram Sabha, two of the villagers were selected as vice president and secretary. Both were from Kalikhet. The president, Lashya Yadu Pawar, was selected from Chapaban. Pawar has passed his Class X examination and is therefore able to read and write. The project team advised that there should be one woman member out of the three main office-bearers and Kalabai was nominated to the post of secretary. She too can read and write and is therefore considered educated.

However, the one major difficulty faced during the formation of the VDC was regarding the wealth ranking concept in the village. There was a conflict. The argument was that 'we all are equal'. A debate took place and the project team had to go to great lengths to explain the wisdom behind the concept.



**The primary objective is to create a good water resource**

Meanwhile, one of the learnings in this project was that the villagers gave preference to labourers as VDC members, as against those who do not work on project site. Out of the existing 11 members, 10 are labourers. The Kalikhet is managed under the group Gram Panchayat of Waki and the former sarpanch of Waki, Hiranman Ahire, opposed the method of selection for the VDC. However, the villagers decided to ignore his protest considering that he does not belong to Kalikhet even though he has a ration shop in the village. However, having sorted out such internal problems, the VDC is now functional and able to plan for progressive activities.

**The development of a village depends on the successful implementation of the Wasundhara strategy**



# Lighting Up Homes

*The watershed project of Wankute is a clear example of how the Wasundhara approach can help put equity high on the development agenda*

**By Rajendra Pansare (SIED)**

The most challenging issue while addressing development, especially in rural areas, is the issue of equity. Those who have, always benefit more. The poor, and especially the poorest, are voiceless, hence are usually left behind. Through the Wasundhara approach WOTR attempts to put equity high on the village development agenda. For activities that benefit the individual household, the local contribution varies according to the Wealth Ranking category of the household, and according to the cost range of the goods.

Wankute is a village in the Sangamner taluka of Ahmednagar district. It has a mixed population of caste communities and a sizable number of tribal households. The watershed project was initiated in 2000 and received funding from various sources for watershed and other developmental components. In 2007, through SDC funding, the enhancement of activities was taken up, but this time the Wasundhara approach was introduced. Wealth Ranking (WR) plays an important role in the Wasundhara approach. By 2007, this was introduced in all new and on-going project villages.

Being a 'pre-Wasundhara' project, Wankute had experience of the norms for local contribution that were set earlier. These

were fixed and equal for all (except for the local contribution / shramdaan for watershed work where the landless and women-headed households are exempt). Between 2003 and 2006, activities such as composting, NADEP, improved agriculture equipment and other such components that benefited households were promoted. All individual households that wished to participate in the activities contributed 50 per cent of the cost while the balance was borne by the project.

Hence, when the Wasundhara approach was introduced with its differential contribution, there was an outright rejection by the average and better-off households. They expected that they would contribute the same as that of the poor and very poor households. Their argument is that all households in the village are the same.

When the activity of providing renewable energy (solar home lighting system) for the individual households was introduced, the village level proposal had to introduce a differential local contribution based on the economic status of the household (which was decided on by the WR). In the case of the solar home lighting systems, the cost that the better-off and average households would have to bear

**Solar lighting has been of tremendous help in Wankute**



was 80 per cent and 60 per cent respectively, while that for the poor and very poor was 30 per cent and 15 per cent. On hearing this there was an opposition from the better-off and average groups. Their demand was that the contributions should be 50 per cent for all households. This was not acceptable to WOTR. The renewable energy project came to a standstill.

The local WOTR-SIED team and the VDC then organised a Gram Sabha to explain the benefits of the various initiatives of the watershed development project and the amount of benefits that the land-owning households had received. The villagers thus saw that the financial inputs into the land of the farming households and the benefits received in terms of water and increased productivity were far greater than that received by the poor and very poor households.

This resulted in a change of outlook. Meanwhile, by way of compromise for this 'mid-way' project, WOTR adjusted the local contribution. It was finally accepted that the better-off households contribute 65 per cent, the average households contribute 40 per cent, the poor 20 per cent and the very poor 10 per cent. And with this adjustment the solar home lighting systems have now brought light to the remote rural households, especially useful during failure on the part of the state electricity board to supply electricity. Wankute is now proud of the fact that 158 households have benefited from this initiative and in an equitable manner.

**A bird's eye view of the village**



# Narlewadi: Making The Right Links

*Size does not matter but the community spirit does. This is what Narlewadi has proved*

By Haribhau Nagre (SIED)

Narlewadi is a tiny hamlet of Jamkhed village in the Ambad block of Jalna district. It has 34 households and a total population of 185 inhabitants. A total of 371 hectares of land belongs to this hamlet. The village activities are managed by a Group Gram Panchayat. The watershed project in this hamlet was initiated in April 2005 and completed in March 2008. Various activities were taken up besides the watershed development works. The Village Development Committee (VDC) is very active and so too are the four women's SHGs. They also have one youth group and one men's SHG. Special attention is given towards the four very poor households.

Despite its limited size and resources, Narlewadi has witnessed a lot of unique development initiatives. What has made this difference? The active VDC and the women's SHGs proudly tell the visitors of their proactive role in the development process thanks to the Wasundhara approach that gave them the opportunity. For instance, the dung of the large ruminants not only feeds the biogas plants but its slurry is then utilised for vermicomposting (together with other organic wastes) and then used to fertilize the organic sweet lime groves. Last year, the 18 hectares of sweet lime groves produced 80 tonnes of fruit. This is besides the many other changes that the village has to show.

The village has obtained four houses under the Indira Awas Housing Scheme, two of which went to elderly widows. The youth group of the village provided them with their labour and skills in the construction of these houses. The other two poor households now have a small groceries shop and a flour mill provided through the women's Samyukt Mahila Samiti (apex body of women's SHGs) to add to their other income sources. Today, all homes, including the very poor, have solar home lighting systems.

When the Wasundhara watershed project was started in April 2005, Narlewadi had one of its members in the Group Gram Panchayat. They could barely wield any benefits being just a tiny hamlet. A year after the Wasundhara approach was initiated, the VDC chairman was elected the sarpanch. This, together with the village envisioning exercise, helped the hamlet. Now the VDC and the Gram Panchayat work together. Today, 30 of the 34 households have biogas plants (functioning since 2006), and they

## Collective support makes things easier



have received a government subsidy of Rs 90,000 towards this.

They have four solar street lights that brighten the paths even on a night when the electricity has failed. These were set up at a cost of Rs 1,20,000. The hamlet school had a compound constructed from government funding sources (worth Rs 2,85,000). And besides the four houses mentioned above, this hamlet of only 34 households has in its kitty Rs 6,15,000 that has come about due to a community that is united, aware and proactive. They now feel that the littleness of the hamlet has been a boon. And this, as the villagers say, is only the beginning.

## SHARING IS CARING

As the Wasundhara approach shows, it is the building of bridges between communities and people that leads to real progress. As such, we would like you to participate in this movement by sending us your feedback, views, experiences and real life stories about the various issues connected to watershed development, community empowerment, education, environment conservation, climate change or any other related topic. Let others know what you think or what your own experiences have been. After all, development does not mean walking alone.

Your articles or letters will be published in any of the subsequent issues of the WOTR Newsletter. You can also send us photographs of development activities in your village or of people whose inputs have been of immense benefit. Please mention your name, address and telephone number in each of your editorial contributions. Write to us at WOTR, 'The Forum', S No: 63/2B, Padmavati Corner, Pune Satara Road, Parvati, Pune – 411 009 or email us at: [pune@wotr.org](mailto:pune@wotr.org).

# Interview With Dr Marcella D'souza

Following is an extract of the interview of Dr Marcella D'Souza, Executive Director, WOTR, that was published by One World South Asia on their website in the wake of the Kyoto Grand Prize

## How significant was the 5th World Water Forum held in Turkey?

The World Water Forum attracted the largest ever gathering of well over 33,000 attendees including delegates from 155 countries. The Kyoto World Water Grand Prize received 67 entries from all over the world. The 10 finalists made their presentation before a jury of 12 international experts in the water sector. India's WOTR emerged as the winner.



**Dr Marcella D'Souza,**  
Executive Director, WOTR

## What has been the outcome of the Wasundhara approach?

The outcome of such an approach creates the necessary dynamics and incentives for the Village Development Committee, the Samyukta Mahila Samiti (apex body of the women's self help groups) together with the PRI (Panchayati Raj Institution) to demonstrate their ability to shoulder the development of their village. Tools and strategies (such as wealth ranking) are put to use that provide a positive discrimination in favor of the disadvantaged. The abilities of the capacity building organisations are developed in technical, managerial, social, accounting and reporting skills.

## What has been WOTR's role in women empowerment?

The last decade has seen a huge change in the lives of rural women. Today there are approximately 40 – 45 per cent women in the VDCs. The self help groups played a major role in giving the women the opportunity they required. As women got engaged in watershed development, they began to assert themselves and consciously, even at a price. Today, they tell us of the cost of a drinking water project or a sanitation project and the cash equivalent of the amount they have contributed in kind, labour and cash.

## What are the environmental challenges of the future?

We are now actively engaged in issues related to climate change. Our major area of intervention is in building the adaptive capacities of rural communities to respond to the effects of emerging climate changes by regenerating the eco-systems they live in, diversifying livelihood sources in order to reduce risks, and adopting new agricultural and renewable energy technologies.

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