

# STRUCTURAL AND POLICY IMPACTS OF WOTR IN RESPECT OF THE INDO-GERMAN WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (IGWDP), MAHARASHTRA

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Watershed Development in India is considered as a strategic intervention for poverty reduction. This is especially so since over 70% of arable land in India is rainfed on which over 60% of rural India draws its subsistence from.

1. In the early 80's when the Govt. of India launched the National Watershed Development Programme for rainfed areas (NAWDPRA) it was largely a Govt. implemented and supplied driven project. Over the years, especially in the late 90's, it was realized that without people's participation and involvement such interventions, however well intentioned, would not result in lasting benefits to the target group. The entire programme has since been structurally and operationally recast to include the experiences gained and insights achieved.
2. The IGWDP (the Indo-German Watershed Development Program )was the first large-scale program in the country which made village self-help groups (VSHGs) as the direct implementers of watershed measures with NGOs acting only as facilitators. It also established the precedent of giving funds directly to these VSHGs to plan, organize, implement and maintain the watershed measures in their villages. This pattern has now been routinely adopted in other programs in the country.
3. WOTR, through the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme (IGWDP), has been instrumental in influencing several of these structural and operational changes as follows.
  - i. WOTR designed and implemented a large scale, focussed and integrated Capacity Building Programme (known as the Participatory Operational Pedagogy – POP) as a prelude to and necessary condition for large-scale project implementation.

This practice of Capacity Building as a separate, prior and integral component of watershed development is now accepted and adopted by other programmes in the country as a pre-condition and integral part of watershed programmes.

- ii. The Capacity Building approach designed by WOTR (as opposed to a training approach only) has been specifically mentioned in the ‘Common Approach to Watershed Development Guidelines’ (Pg 14) adopted by the Govt. of India. The CAPART funded projects (Council for the Advancement of People’s Action and Rural technology – a Govt. supported institution), as well as the DPAP projects (Drought Prone Area Program) through NGOs have introduced a capacity building phase. The National Watershed Development Program for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRRA) has also adopted the separation of Capacity Building (called “Community Mobilization”) and Full Implementation Phases in its program
- iii. The concept of capacity building and accompaniment of implementing NGOs has been adopted by the Government of Maharashtra (GOM) in its watershed programme (DPAP) and is known as the “Mother NGO” concept. Here, selected NGOs are given accompaniment responsibilities for participating NGOs within defined districts. WOTR is a “Mother NGO” in the Ahmednagar district.
- iv. WOTR developed and operationalized a process called the Participatory Net Planning Method (PNPM), for involving the farmer couple in the development of their farms and lands. This method called the “Net Planning Method” is now common practice (with local variations) in all major watershed programs (Drought Prone Area Program (DPAP) in Maharashtra, APRLP-DPAP (Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Program – DPAP) in Andhra Pradesh, and the National Watershed Development Fund located at NABARD) and is now increasingly seen as a tool not only for planning but also people’s mobilisation. This has been a significant pedagogical and conceptual tool for participatory planning and ownership building.
- v. Concepts and processes developed and adopted by WOTR and the IGWDP such as Ridge-to-Valley treatments, site specific and community determined measures, people’s ownership and civil society-public sector partnership have been incorporated in government-run watershed programs and are now widespread across the country and part of the normal developmental discourse.

- vi. Permission to treat degraded forest land was also obtained by WOTR for the IGWDP. This was a singular achievement as such lands come under the purview of the Forest Conservation Act, which is a very strict Act.
- vii. A major structural initiative from the replication and upscaling point of view in this direction has been the setting up of the National Watershed Development Fund (NWDF) by the Government of India (GOI) at NABARD. This idea was presented by the Executive Director of WOTR (Mr. Crispino Lobo) as well as the then Chairman of NABARD (Mr. Y. C. Nanda) to the then Finance Minister of the GOI (Mr. Yashwant Sinha) in February 1999 during the Pre-Budget Consultations held in Delhi. The NWDF is intended to carry the experience of the IGWDP across 100 of the poorest rainfed districts in the country. WOTR has supported NABARD in this role by conducting training and exposure programs for its officers, govt. officers as well as participating NGOs from different states of the country.
- viii. Through its outreach efforts of training, extension support and capacity building, as well as actual implementation of successful projects (own and partner NGOs), WOTR has contributed in a singular way to building up the competencies, skills and knowledge of watershed practitioners (villagers, NGOs, government functionaries) across the country as well as Internationally. A total of 98123 villagers, 7641 NGO personnel as well as government officials and 169 persons from 17 countries have participated in and availed of WOTR's training and Exposure Dialogue Programmes as on December 2004.
- ix. Today in several Indian states, especially where the IGWDP is now looking to expand (Gujarat, AP and Rajasthan), several NGOs who have participated in WOTR's training programs have acquired a fair degree of competency to successfully implement large-scale watershed projects. Dozens of "replicators" have been created thus spreading the practice of watershed development across the country.
  - In the Government of Maharashtra's Watershed Development Program, in fact, most IGWDP-related NGOs were invited to participate in this Program and in some cases, actively pursued. A spin-off is that even in non-

watershed programs, the participation of these NGOs is now sought by the Govt. – a recognition of the capacities, competencies and credibility they have acquired.

- In order to facilitate international dissemination of the concepts, practices and learning of the IGWDP, WOTR has over the years organized 8 training programmes in which 92 people participated as well as 5 Exposure Dialogue Programme (EDP) in which 69 people from 17 countries participated.
  
- x. In order to facilitate efficient management of information/ data, scrutiny/ review of the same as well as ensure timely and effective monitoring, WOTR has developed simple but comprehensive IT-based Management Information (MIS), Decision Support (DIS) and Diagnostic Expert (DES) Systems for both the IGWDP as well as its own works. Seeing its potential, the Government of Andhra Pradesh commissioned WOTR to develop a large-scale DIS to manage its watershed program (APRLP). The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) also asked WOTR to develop a MIS for its partners in Karnataka.