

# The Indo-German Watershed Development Program Maharashtra

1989-2009



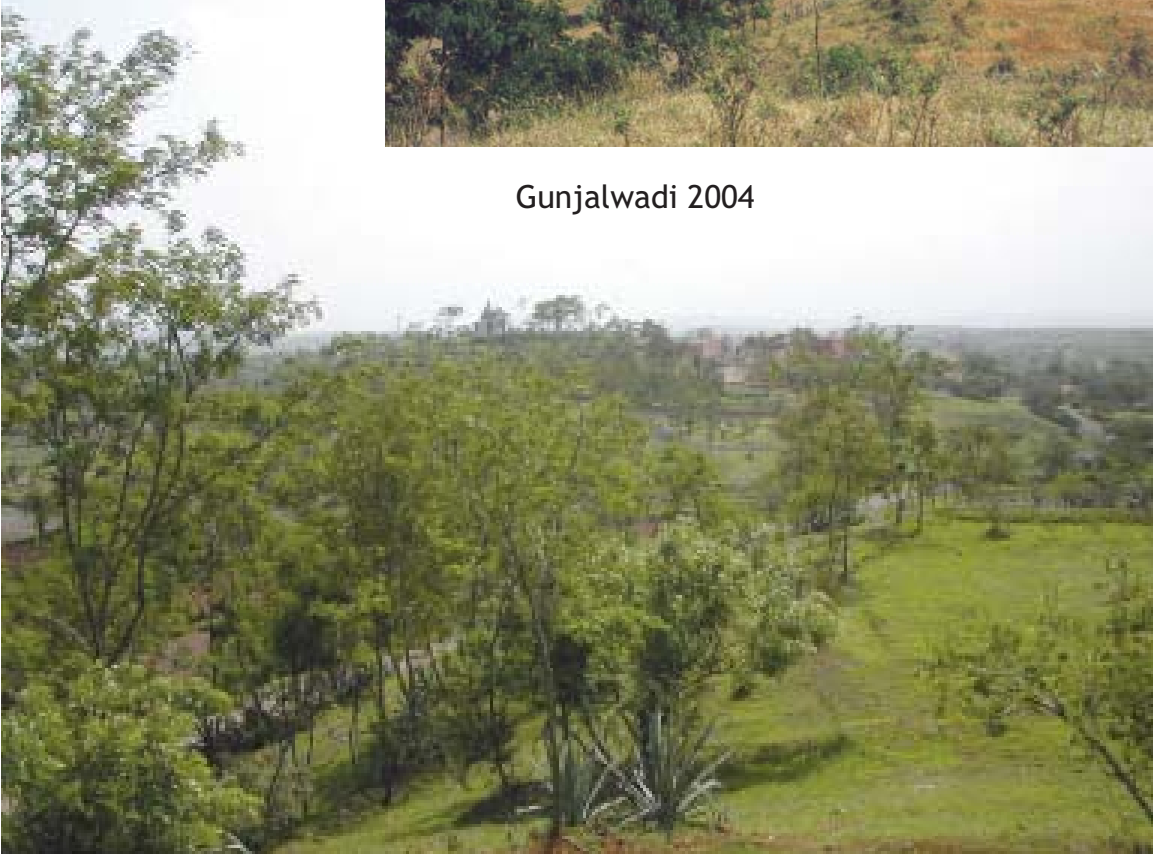


Gunjalwadi 1996

Gunjalwadi 1999



Gunjalwadi 2004





## Introduction

In 2009, the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme in Maharashtra (IGWDP-M), a large bilaterally funded program, completes 20 years of existence.

Initiated in 1989 and operationalised in 1992, the overall goal of the programme is poverty reduction through people-managed environmental regeneration and resource mobilization along watershed lines.

Despite significant challenges and uncertainties in the initial years, the program has grown to include 88 NGOs working in 442 villages covering over 221,000 hectares (553,000 acres) and impacting around 310,000 people in Maharashtra. Its success has led it to spread to 3 other states- Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

In its course, it gave rise to a number of innovative institutional arrangements and methodologies, secured important policy changes, influenced major watershed programmes in the country and became the basis and pattern for the setting up of a large replication fund by the Government of India and NABARD called the National Watershed Development Fund.

The IGWDP (Maharashtra) is widely acknowledged as a successful public-private-civil society partnership involving multi-actor, multi-level and multi-sectoral interventions.

## The Context

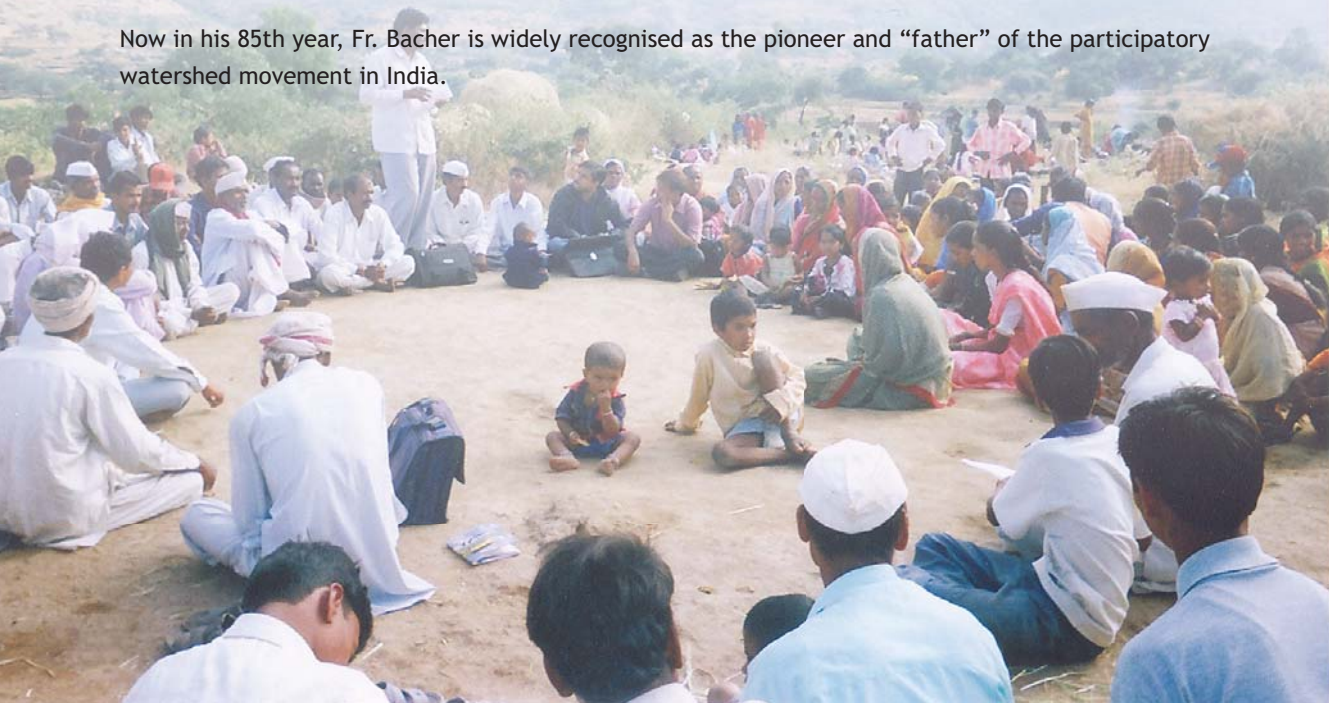
The IGWDP arose out of a confluence of several events and processes.

During the 1980's, German Development Cooperation underwent an intensive review<sup>1</sup> and supported by a unanimously passed Parliamentary Resolution in 1988, reoriented itself to increasingly support by way of grants, programs that focused on poverty reduction, environmental regeneration, self help and women's empowerment.

In India, on the other hand, participatory watershed development had come to be seen as crucial to stabilizing and productivising rainfed farming systems, which comprise 70% of India's agriculture. There was also, officially, a growing acceptance of the voluntary sector as a necessary and important partner in the national effort of poverty alleviation. It was also recognized that the poor had to be in the "driver's seat" of their own development if sustainable improvements in welfare and quality of life were to be achieved

Fr. Hermann Bacher, who has been actively involved in the developmental sector in India for over 60 years and who was also participant in the review process on the German side recognized the opportunity and the "confluence of interests" that arose from these unfolding events and conceived of a large scale government-supported, NGO-facilitated and community-led program for poverty reduction through environmental regeneration along watershed lines. This proposed project (later called the IGWDP-M) fitted in well with the new orientations and institutional climate in both countries and in 1989, the first official agreement approving the program was signed.

Now in his 85th year, Fr. Bacher is widely recognised as the pioneer and "father" of the participatory watershed movement in India.



<sup>1</sup> This was organized by the German Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ) through a Unit called ES 31 which was led by Dr. Karl Osner.

## ***Fr. Hermann Bacher***

The first footfalls towards the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme echoed more than 40 years ago. A young Swiss Jesuit - Fr. Hermann Bacher - saw the urgent needs of marginalised and small farmers in the drought-prone Ahmednagar district and he responded unreservedly.

The first step was to help these farmers grow in self-reliance, to give them a sense of achievement and self-respect. For this, Fr. Bacher established a voluntary organisation, the Social Centre, and actively enlisted the cooperation and backing of government departments, financial institutions and the local political establishment.

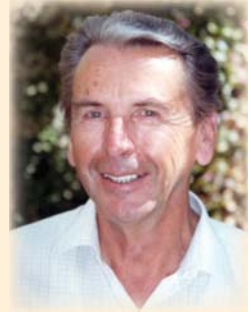
He organised farmers, linked them with financial institutions, provided them with technical support in collaboration with the Agricultural University and government extension departments, entered into service agreements with the private sector, mobilised government support and secured substantial donor assistance, notably from Misereor and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). A large number of works pertaining to land development, water harvesting and water resources development, modern agricultural and farm based livelihoods, involving thousands of villagers were undertaken.

The experience and network of relationships built up during these many years laid the early foundations of the IGWDP. In 1987, a year in which Maharashtra was ravaged by a severe drought, NGOs and villagers who had gathered at Aurangabad, made a fervent plea for assistance in combating drought and pauperization. This demand led Fr. Bacher, who was also present at the meeting, to conceive of a large scale program for participatory watershed development in Maharashtra, namely, the IGWDP.

In order to capacitate varied and especially small NGOs and Village Self Help Groups (VSHGs) to participate in the IGWDP, facilitate its expansion and replication in other states, he co-founded the Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) in 1993.

At the same time, Fr. Bacher evolved a unique model of inclusive and participatory development called the "Sangamner Pattern"<sup>2</sup>. This approach brought together the local elected representative (MLA), local self government bodies (Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samittee), local cooperative bodies, Govt. Depts, educational institutions, business organisations, NGOs and villagers in a partnership where decisions concerning projects under the IGWDP were jointly arrived at and work responsibilities apportioned and fixed. Actual execution of works was done by the villagers supported by all these agencies, as required. Regular review meetings were conducted under the leadership of the MLA. This created a "developmental dynamic" in the region and generated considerable political interest and support in the state.

In March 1994, more than 46 years after he first set foot in India, the German Government recognised Fr. Bacher's services to the marginalised and his contribution to development cooperation between Germany and India. He was awarded the Federal Cross of the Order of Merit, Germany's highest civilian award. Later that year, the Government of Maharashtra honoured him with its 'Krishi Bushan' (Agricultural Award) for sparking "a social revolution in the villages... and proving that all adversities can be overcome if only people come together to help themselves in a cooperative spirit" (quote from the Governor's address, January 1995). In 1996, he was awarded the 'Vanashree' ("Friend of Forests") Award for outstanding work in afforestation by the Government of Maharashtra.



---

<sup>2</sup> Named after a town called Sangamner which is the headquarters of a Taluka having the same name, located in the Ahmednagar district

## Institutional Arrangements

The IGWDP consists of 2 Phases: The Capacity Building Phase (CBP) and the Full Implementation Phase (FIP). The CBP is distinct from the FIP and is prior to it. No project enters the FIP unless it qualifies through the CBP.

The FIP is funded by the KFW (the German Bank for Development) through NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) and the CBP was funded <sup>3</sup> by the GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) through WOTR upto 2009.

From August 2007, however, the KFW also began funding the CBP <sup>4</sup>, for additional projects, through NABARD which, besides WOTR, also included 2 other NGOs acting as Resource Support Organisations (RSOs). With the GTZ supported project having ended in September 2009, the CBP is now funded by the KFW through NABARD.

The relationship between the CBP and FIP, their broad components as well as the institutions/agencies involved, is represented diagrammatically below:

The institutional relationships in the IGWDP are schematically represented below:



---

<sup>3</sup> This included trainings, on-going support, project measures over a demonstration micro watershed and dissemination measures.

<sup>4</sup> Here only training and on-going support funds are given to the RSOs with funds for project measures going directly to the NGOs in the CBP

## Overview of the Capacity Building Phase and Full Implementation Phase

Phases	Phase 1	Phase 2	
	CBP : 6 -18 Months	FIP 48 Months	
		Interim Phase	Implementation
Components	Identification/Mobilisation	Feasibility Study Disposition Funds *4	Full scale implementation
Activities	<p>a) Selection of watersheds (up to 1500 ha.), NGOs and personnel.</p> <p>b) Social Mobilisation - Group Formation (Village Watershed Committee/Forest Protection Committee/Self Help Groups and SMS*1)</p> <p>c) Human Resource Development (Training / skill up- gradation/ on-going and on-site accompaniment)</p> <p>d) Implementation in micro-watershed (upto 250 ha.)</p> <p>e) Initiation of women's promotion activities</p> <p>f) Linking up with local Govt. Departments, resource agencies and service providers.</p>	<p>a) Preparation of Project Proposal using the Net Planning Methodology (PNP)</p> <p>b) On-going work by NGOs who have completed CBP pending sanction</p> <p>c) Sanction by NABARD /Project Steering and Sanctioning Committee and disbursement of funds</p>	<p>a) Afforestation, Pasture development, Soil and Water conservation measures, Horticulture, Agriculture, Livelihood Measures</p> <p>b) Women's Promotion Activities</p> <p>c) HRD- On-going training</p> <p>d) Linking up with resource agencies and service providers.</p>
<b>Responsible Agency</b>			
In India	WOTR *2  WOTR*4	NABARD/Project Steering and Sanctioning Committee/ Program Coordinator *3/	NABARD / Project Steering and Sanctioning Committee/ Program Coordinator *3
In Germany	GTZ*5	KFW	KFW

1 SMS: Sanyukta Mahila Samittee-Joint Womens' Committee which is a federation of the SHGs at the village level.

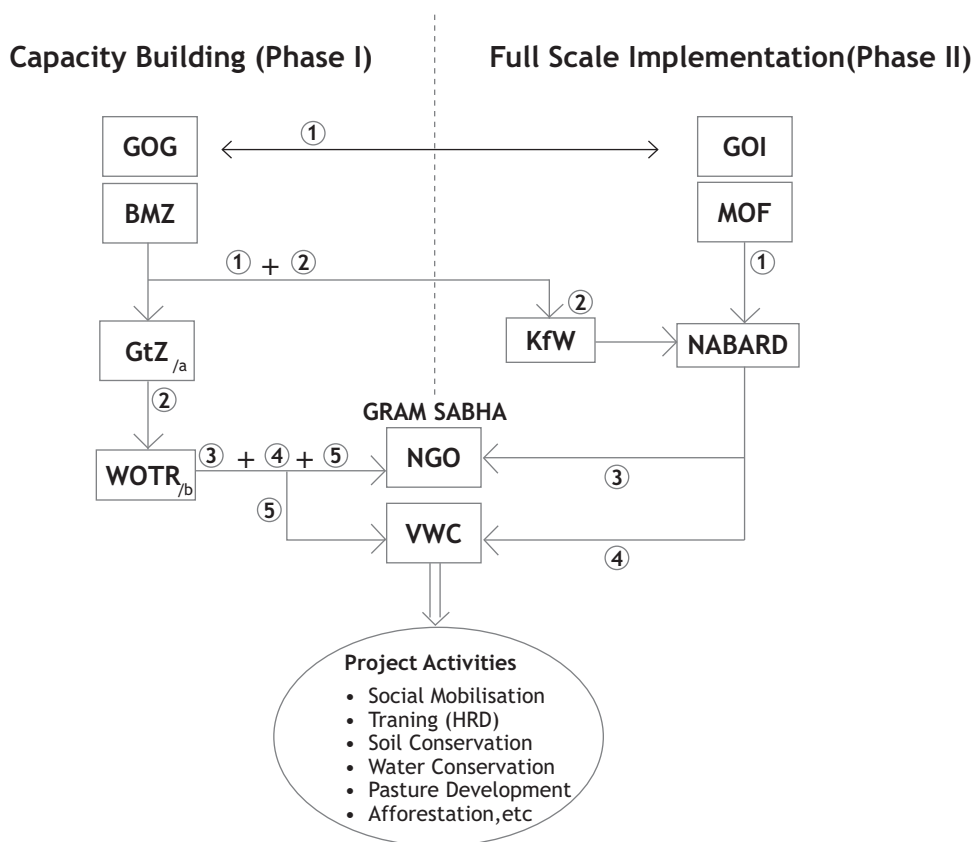
2 This arrangement officially continued upto September 2009. However, since August 2007, in addition to WOTR, two other NGOs are also playing the role of Resource Support Agency for new projects in selected districts.

3 This arrangement continued upto May 2001 after which the office of the Program Coordinator (PCO) was abolished and replaced by a Program Coordination Unit which is a committee consisting of representatives of NABARD and WOTR, which, from August 2007 also included representatives of the other two RSOs

4 Disposition Funds were routed by NABARD through WOTR upto March 2001. Thereafter funds were given directly to the NGO once the CBP was successfully completed.

5 From August 2007, the KFW through NABARD also began funding CBP activities.

## Overview of the IGWDP : Interrelationships and Services (Upto September 2009)



### Key

- 1 Administrative Approval + Support
- 2 Finance / Funds
- 3 Management Costs to the NGO
- 4 Project Funds to the NGO in case of CBP and to a joint A/c of NGO and VWC in case of FIP
- 5 Mobilisation + Technical + Administrative + Management Support

### Abbreviations

BMZ	Ministry of Economic Cooperation	KfW	German Development Bank
CBP	Capacity Building Phase	MOF	Ministry of Finance
FIP	Full Implementation Phase	NABARD	National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development
GOG	Govt. of Germany	NGO	Non Government Organisation
GOI	Govt. of India	VWC	Village Watershed Committee
GtZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation	WOTR	Watershed Organisation Trust
HRD	Human Resources Development		

/a From August 2007, the KfW through NABARD, also began funding CBP activities.

/b This arrangement officially continued upto September 2009. However, since August 2007, in addition to WOTR, two other NGOs are also playing the role of Resource Support Agency for new projects in specified districts.

## Impacts

- Three other states -Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan - invited NABARD to launch a similar program in their respective states and the same have begun, also funded by German Development Cooperation.
- The Program has made a very important contribution to the way watershed development is being implemented in the country. Several approaches and instruments pioneered under the Program such as Capacity Building as a prior and integral component of watershed development, Participatory Net Planning (PNP), Ridge-to-Valley approach, greater emphasis on soil conservation over water harvesting, making village communities responsible for project implementation and providing them with financial resources directly, public accountability mechanisms, civil society-public sector partnership, etc., have been widely adopted in donor, state and national watershed development projects.
- Communities living in watersheds that have degraded forest lands, and whose projects were sanctioned were permitted to treat them and were granted usufructory rights thereon. This was a singular achievement as such lands come under the purview of the Forest Conservation Act, which is a very strict Act and is probably the only instance of its kind in the country.
- The IGWDP provided the basis and template for an important structural initiative, the National Watershed Development Fund (NWDF) which is a replication fund financed by the Government of India and NABARD. The Fund which is managed by NABARD has supported hundreds of participatory watershed projects across the country.
- Large numbers of NGOs who have participated in the various training programs have become effective “replicators” in several states in India, supported by government or donor funds.
- Many of the village youth who were trained in the program (the PLS<sup>5</sup>) and became key functionaries for project planning and implementation in their own villages have now moved to other regions/ states as resource persons and members of Watershed Development Teams (WDTs), thus promoting replication.
- In villages where WSD activities have been successfully undertaken by the people there has been a marked improvement in the ground water regime and net cropped area, increased agricultural diversification and productivity, improvement in numbers and quality of livestock, increase in incomes and local employment especially in the agricultural sector, reduction in migration, increase in school attendance especially of girls and increased food, water and livelihood security. More importantly, there is a noticeable improvement in social relationships in the villages, a sense of hope, greater confidence in dealing with drought and an increased ability to access government officials and schemes. All of which are important constituents of sustainability and long term development.

---

<sup>5</sup> Panlot Sevaks - Watershed Volunteers- who were local youth.

## Success Factors

Some keystone factors were as follows:

### *At the Project/ Village Level:*

1. Devolution of responsibilities for delivering outcomes to village communities and matching it with financial resources accompanied by sustained “learning-by-doing” capacity building. Huge funds were channelled directly to village communities.
2. Establishment of transparency and robust public accountability mechanisms.
3. A women’s empowerment strategy that effectively mainstreamed them in the decision making processes of the village with the active cooperation of the menfolk. Women were the project’s strongest votaries.
4. Selection of NGOs who enjoyed the confidence of the communities and could mobilise them to accept, implement and enforce the required social and organisational disciplines.
5. Insertion into the local developmental network and building of strong linkages with Govt. Depts.

### *At Programme Level:*

1. Design and formulation of the program was done in active consultations with all stakeholders - villagers, PRIs, officials, concerned institutions (governmental and civil society) and political representatives thus securing “buy-in”.
2. Substantial, steadfast and flexible funding and political support provided by German Development Cooperation (BMZ, KfW, GTZ and members of Parliament) complemented by exceptional on-going policy, administrative and convergent financial assistance offered by the Government of India as well as the Government and political establishment of Maharashtra.



3. The “self-selecting conditionalities” and the “qualifying and proofing phase” also called the Capacity Building Phase (CBP). The former transferred the sensitive task of village and NGO selection to these stakeholders themselves rather than to Program agencies, thus ensuring inclusion of villages with a high “success quotient” as well as minimizing extraneous considerations and undue political influence. The CBP, as a prior and necessary requirement, ensured that only mobilised and capacitated communities accompanied by competent NGOs were sanctioned for full implementation, thus minimising risks and failures.
4. A unique institutional partnership model which drew upon the strengths of both the public and civil society sectors and brought the two actors together in a partnership based on mutual interest, complementarity and subsidiarity consolidated by arrangements that incentivised mutual cooperation for achieving both the common goal as well as own institutional interests
5. The crucial and synergistic roles played by NABARD, WOTR and the facilitating NGOs.
  - NABARD being a national institution not only anchored the project, steered it, effectively managed the substantial funds and undertook monitoring and evaluation but also, very importantly, represented government sanction and therefore legitimacy in the eyes of the governance and political establishments. The setting up of the National Watershed Development Fund (NWDF) has enabled NABARD to upscale and widely disseminate the experience gained to several other states in the country.
  - The capacity building pedagogy developed by WOTR resulted in a large pool of competent NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) being created which led to the rapid upscaling of the IGWDP as well as widespread dissemination of skills and competencies across the country. Being a Resource Organisation, also involved in project implementation, enabled WOTR to quickly and flexibly respond to emergent situations and develop effective field-validated tools and approaches [such as Participatory Net Planning (PNP)] which were disseminated across project partners.



- The facilitating NGOs were the cutting edge of the Program at the field level. Without them the program would not have grown nor enjoyed the success it has. They mobilised the communities, mediated conflicts, forged consensus, braved criticism, secured the support of local authorities, kept the momentum going in times of resource crunches and managed to hold the communities together over the several years of project implementation.

6. Innovative institutional mechanisms such as:

- Inclusion of WOTR, an NGO, in the bilateral agreement concerning the program which enabled WOTR to receive ODA funds (GTZ) directly without attracting the provisions of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Thus official development funds could go directly to village bodies.
- Permission granted by the Forest Department to treat degraded forest lands ensured comprehensive treatment of watersheds on a ridge-to- valley basis. This was a very important enablement.
- The Office of the Program Coordinator which had official status, besides representing the NGO sector, facilitated networking across all level of the program, both in India and Germany, from the village level upwards. This facilitated free flow of information on a continuous basis and resulted in the creation of a shared perspective and a common goal.
- The establishment of Regional Resources Centers (RRCs), in collaboration with established regional NGOs <sup>6</sup>, in various parts of the state to support local NGOs and villages participating in the program.
- The Exposure Dialogue Program (EDP) which included a village immersion (undertaken in collaboration with the Exposure-und-Dialogue Programme e.V<sup>7</sup>) followed by policy dialogue in which parliamentarians, policy makers and high ranking govt officials participated. This helped decision makers to get an insight into ground realities that confront the poor.



<sup>6</sup> In later years, these RRCs become part of WOTR's outreach

<sup>7</sup> Founded by Mr. Karl Osner

- The Disposition Fund or Interim Fund which bridged the gap between the end of the CBP and sanction of a project (beginning of the FIP) ) and allowed continuation of work . This maintained momentum of the project and enthusiasm at the village level.

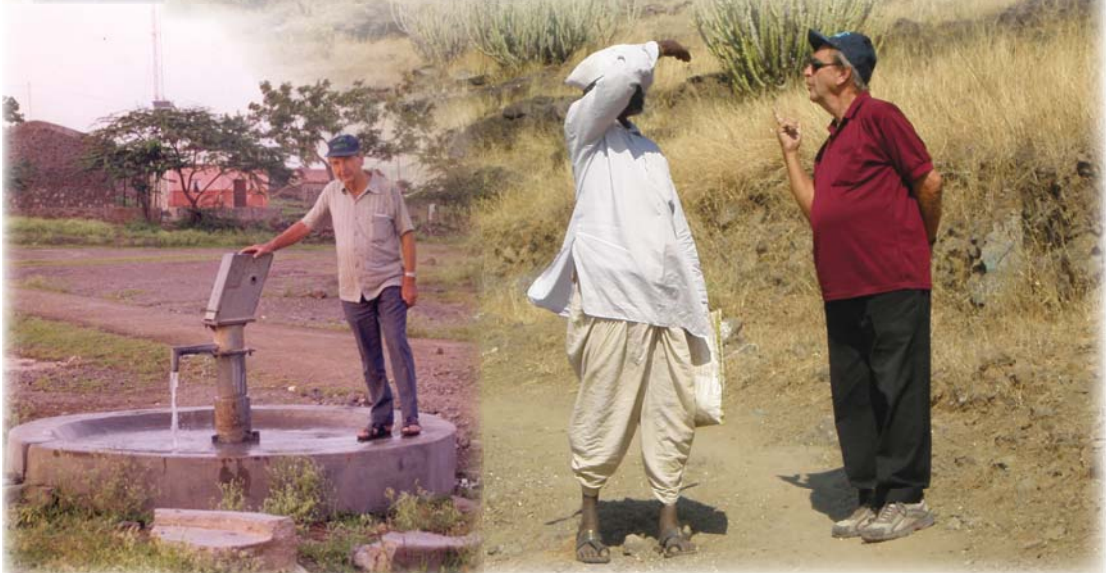
7. The commitment and passion of key personalities on both the German and Indian sides, from all sectors of society and related levels of government, which played a singular role in facilitating the program and providing administrative and policy enablements that engendered large scale expansion and replication.

## The Way Ahead

The The Indo-German Watershed Development Program, Maharashtra, owes its success to a confluence of fortuitous events and the generous, effective and committed efforts of many individuals, institutions and organizations in India and Germany, not forgetting the villagers of Maharashtra.

Given the impact it has had, it stands as an abiding tribute to the vision and dedication of Fr. Hermann Bacher who believed that “ watershed development is the only effective answer to drought” and dared to dream and work perseveringly, towards realizing a “people’s movement for watershed development”, unfolding across the drylands of India.







Darewadi 1996



Darewadi 2008



**Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR)**

'The Forum', 2nd Floor, S.No. 63/2B, Padmawati Corner,  
Pune Satara Road, Parvati, Pune 411 009  
Phone : +91-20-24226211 • Fax: (91) 241 2451134  
Email: [info@wotr.org](mailto:info@wotr.org) • Website: [www.wotr.org](http://www.wotr.org)

Supported by:

