

Social Benefits of Small Holder Wells - A Study from Orissa

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1. INTRODUCTION

Although many studies have been conducted in India on flow and modern lift irrigation projects, studies taken up on well irrigation are only a few in number. A study on well irrigation programme with high labour intensive indigenous manual lift technology is likely to provide interesting information both from the point of view of commercial profitability and social welfare. Besides, it will be of interest to examine, through empirical investigation, the view held by some that the benefits from government expenditure on such irrigation programmes do not substantially percolate down to the target groups like small and marginal farmers.

The Small Farmers Development Agency, Ganjam, took up the dugwell scheme under its Minor Irrigation Programme in 1972-73. The two Central Cooperative Banks in district took the lead in financing the small and marginal farmers for their dugwells. The Agency subsidized 25 per cent and 33.33 per cent of loans for dugwells advanced to the small and marginal farmers respectively. The Government of Orissa also provided 25 per cent over and above the subsidies provided by the Agency to make the scheme more attractive. As a result of such efforts, Ganjam, the lowest rainfall receiving district in the State of Orissa¹, occupied the first position among the S.F.D.As. in the progress of dugwells scheme.

The present study was undertaken in Ganjam with the objectives; (i) To find out the commercial profitability of this highly labour-intensive small scale irrigation scheme taken up by the small farmers; (ii) To find out the social benefits of the scheme; (iii) To observe the regional income distribution effects of the scheme and the redistribution of income in favour of the target groups viz., small farmers and agricultural labourers; (iv) To explore the possibilities of increasing the benefits of the scheme.

2. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from a sample of 118 well-owning