

Public-Private Partnership in Surface Water Irrigation: A Case of Kolhapur

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Radhanagari project situated in Kolhapur district has shown a very high capacity utilization rate and high the financial sustainability. Over this system major proportion of water conveyance and entire water distribution takes place through privately run schemes either individually or through formation of irrigation co-operatives. The sugar factories within the project area manage autonomous irrigation schemes and also play an important role in the smooth operation of the irrigation system. Radhanagari Irrigation Project throws open host of strategic issues in front of the Indian irrigation sector including the involvement of agro-businesses in irrigation service provision.

Geographical area of Maharashtra state is 30.8 million hectares with a cultivable area 22.5 million hectares. Although 32 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture, the share of agriculture in the gross state domestic product is only 13 per cent. This shows that agricultural production and productivity needs to increase. The role of water and of irrigation in agriculture becomes a focal point. Availability of water in Maharashtra varies both spatially and temporally enhancing the importance of irrigation in agriculture. Total Water availability in the state, comprising of five river basins namely Narmada, Tapi, Godavari, Konkan and Krishna, is around 163820 million m³. The total water endowment available for irrigation is around 112568 million m³. By the end of June 2003 there were as many as 53 major, 212 medium and 2445 minor irrigation projects in Maharashtra with a gross command of 5.08 million ha. Over the years irrigation water use has faced stiff competition from non-irrigation purposes at least in relative terms (Irrigation Status Report, Maharashtra State, Government of India, 2003-2004, p. 3). The state has given priority to industry over irrigation for use of water (Government of Maharashtra State Water Policy 2003, pp. 9-10). This enhances the need for improving the performance of irrigation projects in

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