

An Appraisal of Watershed Development Programme Across Regions in India

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(Deemed to be a University)
Pune 411 004 (India)
2000

Reprinted from Artha Vijnana
Vol. XLI, No. 4, December 1999

Rs. 110/-

PRINTED IN INDIA

by Ankush Kakade at Maharashtra Sahakari Mudranalaya, 915/2, Shivajinagar,
Pune 411 004; edited and published by V S. Chitre at the Gokhale Institute of
Politics and Economics (Deemed to be a University) Pune 411 004 (India).

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FOREWORD

The technological change of the mid-sixties has certainly brought a significant change in the agricultural economy of the country, but it also threw up quite a few policy issues. Despite a substantial share of rainfed areas in the aggregate food economy of the country, the crops and population of these areas suffered in terms of resource allocation both from public and private sources. Considering the importance of rainfed agriculture in Indian economy, a strategy towards watershed development was worked out for the country as a whole during the mid-term review of Seventh Five Year Plan with an aim to improve the overall performance of the rainfed agriculture. The programme was entitled "National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas" (NWDPA). This programme either replaced or supplemented the ongoing programmes at the State level. After a few years of experience and evaluation of the programme, a complete review was taken by the committee of secretaries. The guidelines were subsequently changed during the Eighth Plan period and revised to incorporate the feedback received from various researchers.

At the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, we have conducted a series of studies on watershed development focusing on the evaluation and the impact of various programmes. In the process, a methodology to review such impact was also developed. The Agro-Economic Research Centre of the Institute was rightly chosen as the co-ordinator for the studies evaluating the impact of NWDPA in ten States in India. The studies were carried out by the Agro-Economic Research Centres from these ten States. The research reports prepared by these Centres were combined and brought together as a consolidated report. This study includes the findings of these reports as well as the insights gathered during the conduct of the various studies relating to watershed development programme, carried out by us as well as others. This study was conducted by Dr. R. S. Deshpande and Dr. A. Narayanamoorthy of our Institute. In the meanwhile, Dr. Deshpande left the Institute to join as Professor at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore. He subsequently helped to put together this volume.

This study, besides presenting the impact of NWDPA on cropping pattern, input use, water availability and productivity of crops, also incorporates the environmental impact of this programme in detail. Effectiveness of the administrative machinery in implementing the programme, people's participation, sustainability and adequacy of the programme are also examined systematically in this study. The results of this study show that while the watershed programme has increased the productivity of crops, availability of moisture and irrigation in most of the States, people's participation in the programme, which is essential for the sustenance of the programme, is less than satisfactory.

The results of this study have immense relevance for making policies for the persisting problems related to drought across different parts of the country. I am sure that the findings of this study will be quite useful to the policy makers and researchers working in the area of watershed programme in particular and rainfed agriculture in general.

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V.S.Chitre
Director

25 May, 2000

PREFACE

The new agricultural technology introduced during the mid-sixties bypassed the rainfed areas and fragile resource regions. This has given rise to a large number of area based programmes as well as problem specific interventions on the part of the State. Rainfed areas not only contribute largely to the food economy of the country but also carry the major share of poor of the nation. A comprehensive programme entitled "National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas" (NWDPR) was introduced at a massive scale across different regions of the country during the Seventh Five Year Plan period along with other programmes to improve the condition of the rainfed agriculture. As per the advise of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi, studies were undertaken to evaluate the impact of watershed development under NWDPR across ten States by different Agro-Economic Research Centres. In this study, we bring together the varied experiences of the researchers on watershed development programme across different States in the country including our own experiences from Maharashtra in detail.

While working on this study, we have benefited from different people at various stages. At the outset, we gratefully acknowledge the help rendered by different Agro-Economic Research Centres (AERCs) by completing the study based on the guidelines. The participating AERCs are located in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. We had asked for the secondary data from all the above States to analyse the programme at macro level. However, it was not available for all the States in the similar pattern. We are grateful to the AERCs that have sent these data.

Dr. Ghorai and Dr. Chitranjan, Advisers, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi, have taken substantial efforts in getting us the data for such an analysis and provided continuous support. We would like to place on record our gratitude to both of them.

We are grateful to Prof. V.S. Chitre, Director and Prof. D. C. Wadhwa, former Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune for their constant encouragement and continued support. This is the first study which brings together researchers from two social science Research Institutes and this was made possible because of the administrative support of these two Institutions. We wish to thank Smt. Anuja Chandrachud, Smt. Vidya Kher, Shri Dete and Shri V. B. Lokare of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics for providing research assistance in completing the study. Shri D. N. Bhagti helped us to compute a few tables and getting the study in the present shape. We are grateful to him. Shri T. Srinivasa Murthy and Shri M. K. Mohankumar of Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore have been responsible for neatly typing the manuscript through its various drafts.

Finally, we are also grateful to an anonymous referee of the journal for offering constructive comments on the study which helped to improve the overall presentation of the study. However, none of the above are responsible for errors, if any.

25 May, 2000

R. S. Deshpande
A. Narayanamoorthy

CONTENTS

Foreword	
Preface	
List of Tables	
List of Figures	
Chapter 1 Introduction	315
Chapter 2 Impact of Watershed Technology: A System Approach	333
Chapter 3 NWDPR: Western and Central Rainfed Zone	347
Chapter 4 NWDPR: Southern Plateau and Hills Region	359
Chapter 5 NWDPR: Northern Gangetic Plains	366
Chapter 6 NWDPR: Hills Region and Assured Rainfall Zone	372
Chapter 7 Watershed Approach in Fragile Resource Region	381
Chapter 8 Summary and Conclusions	393
References	411

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page No.
1.1	Treatments under Watershed Development Approach	317
3.1	Strategy of Watershed Management	347
3.2	Allocations on NWDPRAs: 1986-87 to 1988-89	348
3.3	Incremental Yield due to Watershed Treatment	350
3.4	Yield per Hectare of Principal Crops of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries in Madhya Pradesh NWDPRAs	353
3.5	Incremental Yield per Hectare under NWDPRAs in Maharashtra	355
4.1	Agro-Climatic Sub-Regions of the States under Southern Plateau and Hills Region	359
4.2	Yield per Hectare of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries	362
4.3	Net Income of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries	364
5.1	Allocation of NWDPRAs during Eighth Plan	366
5.2	Yield per Hectare of Participants and Non-Participants in Haryana NWDPRAs	368
5.3	Proportion of Unutilised Funds in Total Allotment of NWDPRAs in Uttar Pradesh	369
6.1	Crop-wise Net Returns of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries in Himachal Pradesh	373
6.2	Year-wise Funds Released and Expenditure Incurred in West Bengal under NWDPRAs	375
6.3	Productivity per Acre of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries in West Bengal NWDPRAs	376
6.4	Productivity of Crops in Kakodonga and Lakhinizaras Watershed in Assam	379
7.1	Basic Characteristics of Selected Watersheds in Maharashtra	382
7.2	Land Utilisation of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries in Maharashtra	383

7.3	Cropping Pattern of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries In Maharashtra	384
7.4	Yield Rates per Hectare of Principal Crops in Maharashtra	385
7.5	Input Intensity per Hectare in the Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries Groups in Maharashtra	386
7.6	Gross and Net Income per Hectare of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries	387
7.7	Difference of Means Test for Various Indicators: 'Z' Value	388
7.8	Zone-wise Number of Hours of Cattle Grazing and Purchase of Fodder and Fuel	390
7.9	Distribution of Farmers According to the Changes Noticed by Them	391
8.1	List of Watersheds Selected for Study by Different States	397
8.2	State-wise Allocation Proposed During Eighth Plan	405
8.3	Impact of NWDPRAs Parameters at a Glance – Western and Central Rainfed Zone	406
8.4	Impact of NWDPRAs Parameters at a Glance – Southern Plateau and Hill Regions and Northern Gangetic Plain	407
8.5	Impact of NWDPRAs Parameters at a Glance – Hill Region	408

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No.		Page No.
2.1	Watershed Impact System Model	336
2.2	Production Sub-System in the Impact of Watershed Treatment	338
2.3	WISM-SEP Model	340
2.4	Environmental Sub-System: Positive Externalities in Watershed Development Programme	342
2.5	Impact of Watershed Treatment Programme	345