

# **WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT: CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN**

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**ANNEXURE 1 : TOWARDS A GENDER-FOCUSED PARTICIPATORY  
OPERATIONAL PEDAGOGY (POP) : A PHASE-WISE SCHEMATIC  
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**ABBREVIATIONS :**

CBP	:	Capacity Building Phase
FIP	:	Full Implementation Phase
FS	:	Feasibility Study
GS	:	Gram Sabha (A village-level meeting of adults)
GTZ	:	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
IGWDP	:	Indo-German Watershed Development Programme
KfW	:	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Bank for Reconstruction and Development)
LUP	:	Land Use Planning
MM	:	Mahila Mandal (Women's group / organisation)
MP	:	Mahila Pravartak (Village Women Promoter)
MSS	:	Mahila Samaj Sevika (Lady Social Worker)
NABARD	:	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NRM	:	Natural Resource Management
SHG	:	Self-Help Group
VWC	:	Village Watershed Committee
WOTR	:	Watershed Organisation Trust
WS	:	Watershed
WSD	:	Watershed Development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a previous article titled, "Gender and Watershed Development"<sup>\*1</sup>, I had outlined the impact watershed development (WSD) was observed to have on women's lives and on gender relationships. I had spelt out some of the difficulties and the significant benefits involved, as well as how women perceive these impacts. I had indicated that while WSD does initially increase the workload of women it would, if consciously attended to, offer them unique opportunities to better their economic situation as well as to enhance their status in their own eyes and that of their society.

## 2. THE CONCERNS OF WOMEN - AN OVERVIEW

There is no denying that WSD, at least in the initial years, does increase the workload of women. Nevertheless, in my many encounters with the various watershed (WS) villages, the women have indicated their willingness to shoulder these extra burdens, provided, it leads to the fulfillment of 4 basic needs .

### **Laxmibai of Kasare village, Ahmednagar District** (project completed in 1995)

Before WSD work, we had no work in summer - we would rest long under the trees, but we were worried and unhappy because we did not know whether we would be able to get by the coming days securely. Now however, we have no time as we have regular work, both from the project and increased farm production. We don't mind this since we now have a sense of security of food and income and also the possibility of making a future at least for our children.

#### **They want :**

- i. access to continuously available safe drinking water within reachable distance and improvement in their health and hygiene status.
- ii. access to a steady flow of income in order to enjoy food, fuel and financial security; the latter especially for times of crisis e.g. if abandoned by their husbands or widowed.

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<sup>\*1</sup> "Gender and Watershed Development", Research Note published by the ODI in AgREN - July 1997.

- iii. to ensure the future of their children by sending them to school, because they realize that unless their children get educated, their future lives would be as filled with hardships as their own, if not more so.

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**Shantabai of Jadgaon village, district Aurangabad :**

One of my daughters has studied upto the 5th Std. The second and third girls upto the 3rd Std. I could not send them for further studies because of our poverty. Now, however, I can afford to send my children to school; but alas it is too late since all of them are past school age. How I wish they were able to complete their studies. If they had studied well, they would have got jobs and would not have had to suffer as I have.

- iv. to participate in decision making at home (utilization of funds, upbringing of their children, land use) and in the village affairs and thus be accepted and respected by society.

## **PART A :**

### **3. THE FOCUS AND KEY ISSUES**

In this paper we shall focus on some possibilities of how to mitigate the negative impacts of WSD and work out approaches to capitalize on the opportunities offered to make women more self-reliant, develop a positive self- image and insert themselves in a meaningful and effective way into the fabric of the society they live in.

Some of the key questions that confront somebody who has responsibility to address issues of concern to women and gender in WSD are :

- a. What are the opportunities as well as the attendant difficulties / problems that arise as a result of implementing a WS project ?

We have already addressed this issue in the published article mentioned above and hence we will not repeat the issue in this article.

- b. How can one capitalize on the opportunities offered and mitigate some of the key problems or difficulties ?

- c. What should be the approach, the organizational framework and mechanisms required to address (b) above ?

- d. How does one ensure that what is achieved becomes part of the fabric of society such that it is not only accepted by the leadership, but also provided for by them?

In this article I propose to attempt a response to the above mentioned points (b) and (c) specifically from the perspective of both the Programme (indicators) and project levels (organization and measures), in the context of a large-scale on-going WSD effort in Maharashtra (India), namely, the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme (IGWDP).

Point (d) will not be specifically dealt with as we believe it will largely be the outcome of how we perceive opportunities and problems (a) and go about addressing them [(b) & (c)]. To the extent that the leadership and the predominant group accepts and feels comfortable with the changes, to that extent assimilation and promotion of their women-folk is reasonably assured (d).

## 4. CAPITALIZING ON OPPORTUNITIES AND REDUCING THE DOWNSIDE

In the following section I shall attempt to address this issue under the following headings :

- financial security
- food security
- water for household use
- education
- health and hygiene
- decision-making

### 4.1. FINANCIAL SECURITY :

In the context of rural Maharashtra, financial security comes from :

- i. wages i.e. preferably a regular source within the village and
  - ii. returns on investments and inputs.
- i. Wages : have two aspects. A desirable wage would be a “living” wage which not only meets the survival needs, but also social needs as well as investments for further contingencies (sickness, old age) and acquisition of more income-generating assets like milch cattle, etc. Furthermore, it should be preferably available within the village.

In village Dhanora, Jalna district, at the start of the project women were able to save initially only Rs. 10/- per person / month. However, as the Program was paying a wage higher than the “minimum wage” (survival wage), not only were household needs met, but also investible surpluses increased. The saving rate increased to Rs. 25/- monthly within a period of 6 months.

It is important therefore, that any WS effort externally supported by government and other funding agencies, should provide a wage that is a living wage. Savings obtained would then provide some buffer for the period following the end of the project as well as, equally important, allow for investments in livestock and other livelihood / income generating assets. Moreover it also allows for increased travel, participation in social, cultural and religious and other events which contribute significantly to widening of horizons and acquiring of a sense of self worth and confidence.

The inhabitants of Khodpakhindi, a remote tribal village of Yavatmal district, had never ventured beyond their distinct headquarters (about 40 kms away). However, within 3 years of project implementation some of them (including women) undertook a long tour by hired vehicle for pilgrimage and social purposes (covering approximately 1200 kms) at their own cost !

The problem arises once the project is completed. Generally, the locally available wage for agricultural labour is lower than project-assisted wage. Wages are a function of supply and demand for labour - the latter being a function of market requirements while the former, a function of availability of labour. The post-WS average agricultural wages tend to be higher than would have normally been (assuming favourable agro-meteorological conditions), due to increase in net irrigated area, increased agricultural and land productivity and withdrawal from the labour force of the bulk of small and marginal farmers - peasantry - who revert to own farms once their productivity increases.

However, in order to ensure that at least a fair wage (a wage above survival, though slightly less than a full living wage) is made available, it is important that measures during WSD implementation should be undertaken that will increase substantially the productivity of the land. It is not sufficient to merely do soil and water conservation. A substantial portion of arable land should be able to produce at least two crops per year.

ii. Return on investments : This is generally from 4 sources :

(a) income from ones own farm      (b) Farm-based allied activities

(c) non-farm activities

(d) SHG<sup>\*2</sup> activity

(a) Income from own farms :

Generally, own labour/family labour is discounted as a cost item on own farm production, even though it comprises a significant part of the inputs. The return on this investment is the net surplus available after costs, excluding own labour, are deducted.

The experience generally is that in rain-fed agriculture, household requirements are barely met, let alone having surpluses. While increases in agricultural productivity might occur as a result of WS intervention, nevertheless, on-farm gains are usually appropriated by men while the increased drudgery is disproportionately borne by women. It might be difficult to alter this current practice, but it would be possible to introduce improved agricultural implements and mechanization that will reduce her drudgery and save her time. Much has to be done in this area of improving and disseminating non-mechanized agricultural implements.

On common lands or private fallow lands, grass production and cutting is generally perceived as a woman's chore. This can also provide a source of income for women specially when through project intervention, intensive cultivation and management of nutritious and improved fodder species is undertaken. Introduction of effective working and cutting implements would be a big help.

(b) Farm-based allied activities (agro-based activities) :

With a ban on free grazing, soil and water conservation measures and improved grass and tree plantations, fodder production increases both on common as well as private lands. Moreover, availability of water for drinking purposes is increased. This combination of factors leads to an increase in the purchase of cross-bred animals and stall fed goat rearing. Pisciculture, availing of water in the check-dams becomes another source of income and serves as a nutritious diet supplement.

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<sup>\*2</sup> SHG - Self-Help Group

Smaller animals - like goats are usually the preserve of women. Income from these is often retained by the women. Care should however be undertaken to ensure that small ruminant livestock are penned (not allowed to graze freely) and as far as possible managed collectively. This would deny an excuse of apprehensive males to take over the management of these livestock assets (on grounds of alleged incompetence and destruction of plantations "they've" raised due to free grazing of goats). This also provides some assurance that earnings generated will remain with the women themselves.

The rearing of poultry (preferably homestead) for both flesh and eggs is also a valuable source both of nutritious food and income.

(c) Non-farm livelihood Activities :

Due to the fairly large demand that arises for forest and horticultural species during project implementation, raising of nurseries can provide not only substantial income but also a "training ground " in the dynamics and requirements of group functioning and action. This enables the acquisition of valuable skills in negotiations, conflict resolution, bargaining and management which are necessary to successfully run any micro enterprise.

In Malegaon Pathar village of Ahmednagar district, the women's SHG of 60 members took a loan of Rs. 6000/- to start a nursery (1995). In 1996, they made a net profit of Rs. 10,000/- on sale of these plants and re-invested Rs. 6000/- towards raising another nursery. This they sold in 1997 for a profit of Rs. 47,000/- ! This was possible for such a large group primarily because they had an effective management and accounting system.

Once project implementation is completed, the demand for forest species declines (if external markets have not been obtained in the meanwhile) though the demand for high value horticultural species both locally and in nearby areas is likely to remain. Hence, nurseries raised

should be of a composite nature, well managed and on scientific lines. Appropriate skills and trainings in seed selection, nursery raising, grafting etc. would have to be imparted to women.

With the increasing preference for organically grown crops and food products, the production of compost manures, bio-fertilizers, vermi-composting, bio-pesticides (the collection and processing of seeds of Neem and other locally available plants) could provide not only a source of income but also farm inputs that improve the quality and productivity of farming lands.

And fortuitously, this is an area that is traditionally seen as women's work. Inputs should however be provided in the area of technology, management and marketing. This is necessary from the outset as activities undertaken by SHGs are particularly sensitive. They can only function if there is the required competencies among the members and a fair sharing of tasks, responsibilities and benefits. Until such time that requirements have been realised and established, particular and timely attention would have to be paid to these groups. Marketing of products would also have to be actively pursued right from the outset.

Establishing income generating activities is a rather difficult proposition for remote villages. Non-farm livelihood activities are specially important during the lean period (when there is no work or less work in the fields) or when there are elderly at home.

These activities should be of a nature where the raw material is available preferably locally (farm or forest) and where there is a demand for the end product. Generally, for products other than from farm/forest produce, competition is high from automated / semi-automated processes and comparatively larger units.

Activities that do have a comparative advantage such as mushroom cultivation, leaf plate production, etc. could be taken up depending upon the local situation..

(d) Saving and Credit activities :

The savings and credit activities of the SHG is an important expression of women's owning and controlling their own finances. Individual savings from various activities (such as mentioned above), after household expenditure, is pooled to form the group capital. These are used as loans to meet their own productive and consumptive needs. This cash is readily available as and when required.

It is important that women are made to realize that “**cash floating is cash alive.**” i.e. cash given in loans multiplies. Thus the SHG activity can prove a profitable source of income if surpluses are saved and are made available as needed by the women.

Women when taught simple accounting and maintenance of their ledgers, can themselves have control and access over their funds<sup>\*3</sup>. It will help them take decisions regarding which loans should be prioritized. It will also enable them to withstand pressure from their male folk, if necessary, by claiming helplessness in the face of group ownership and solidarity.

## 4.2 Food and Fuel Security :

With the increase in land productivity, there is usually the tendency of the male to increase the cash crop production ( e.g. sugarcane, timber, cotton etc.).

- It is important therefore that women be included in land use planning (LUP) and crop planning. This would ensure that the food requirements

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<sup>\*3</sup> WOTR has developed a simple but effective system which has received an enthusiastic response from hundreds of SHGs. A Manual with an accounts register for this purpose has been developed and is available with WOTR

(vegetables, fruit and a variety of grains) are not neglected but provided for adequately. The same can be said of poultry, fish and milk production. There is the usual tendency to sell the entire produce for ready cash.

- Hence it is important that both men and women be given knowledge of the nutritive value of various foods and their importance for health, so that the family readily sets aside sufficient amount for home consumption especially that of the mother and child.
- Furthermore, as fuel for cooking is a scarce commodity in rural areas, it is important that women be involved in the selection and plantation of fuel and fodder species. Moreover the distribution of interim and end products from these plantations should be handled by women themselves and their groups.

### **4.3 Education :**

Women lay great store by education, namely :

- i. formal education for their children and
  - ii. information, knowledge and skills for themselves.
- i) Middle and secondary schools (distances to middle / secondary schools may range from 4-8 km) and higher education centres are often far from the village. This is a limiting factor especially for young girls. Besides, it is the fact of poverty and cultural elements that necessitate that the girl child attend to the household chores and look after the younger siblings, cattle.

Sources of income provided by the project work (wages) and project related developments (described earlier) can help reverse the situation. Since the project works with the entire WS village, the opportunity should not be missed to promote education for all, especially, of the girl child. Many NGOs / projects take advantage of this and initiate classes for young girls, where various trainings and skills are imparted and thus confidence is built up in them. Encouraging further education also promotes marriage at a later age.

In village Patalganga of Nanded district, the NGO has started a "Kishori Varg" (Classes for teenage girls) where they are taught home management.

These girls have in turn started literacy sessions for the illiterate women of the village.

With tribals living in remote areas, the problems are particularly acute. In their case, apathy and a lack of hope in obtaining productive employment is a result primarily of their poverty and isolation from society in general. A subtle discrimination against them further compounds the problem. In mixed villages (i.e. where tribals and other cultural groups live together) the fact of working shoulder to shoulder on the WS site, attending meetings of the VWC\*4 , SHGs, Mahila Mandal\*5 activities, Gram Sabhas\*6 etc. breaks down barriers and encourages them to avail of other advantages of development including sending their children to school. However, in homogeneous tribal villages special attention and efforts have to be made to promote education.

- ii. With the increasing integration of urban and rural areas, markets and the widespread use of mass media (radio and TV), the breakdown of traditional thought patterns is being increasingly witnessed. Women, in however remote areas, are beginning to realize that they are being increasingly bypassed by the forces of change and progress and that they are therefore unable to enjoy the benefits of modern development. And they are becoming vocal about their backwardness.

The women of village Dhanora, district Jalna, insisted of the NGO that, in addition to watershed activities, they also teach, train and educate them. As they put it "Henceforth, teach us step by step. We want to learn and we will. We are ashamed of our ignorance and illiteracy."

They fortunately are beginning to be supported in their quest by their men folk who are gradually realizing that their home situation is a reflection and consequence of the level of knowledge, information and skills their women folk possess. Thus, if the woman is active and capably manages the home, the status of the man is also increased particularly in the larger society with which they socialize or conduct commerce.

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\*4 VWC - Village Watershed Committee

\*5 Mahila Mandal - Women's Group / organisation

\*6 Gram Sabha - A village-level meeting of adults

Thanks to global TV and mass media, gradually but surely, a man's status in rural society is being measured by the image his wife / womenfolk socially present. While previously even womenfolk themselves would not think of spending a night away from the family, now-a-days the men increasingly permit their women to participate in trainings of 2-3 days outside their villages.

When the IGWDP initiated measures for women's promotion the NGOs and VWCs insisted that trainings be only day sessions, the women returning home in the early evening. Two years later, however, the picture has changed. We've now conducted over 18 training programmes (691 women) and 15 exposure visits (830 women) involving overnight stays of 2-3 days outside their villages. Moreover the men-folk actively endorse their participation.

- As experienced in the IGWDP so far, the demand for "literacy", as traditionally understood, comes later, usually after 2-3 years. Their initial quest is for information, knowledge and skills related to their daily responsibilities and lives. The NGO field worker (Mahila Samaj Sevika [MSS]<sup>\*7</sup> in the case of the IGWDP) should be sensitive to this need. Simple, short, "Action-oriented-Learning" sessions that touch upon their daily lives and needs should be organized accordingly.

In watershed Tondoli, Ahmednagar district, waste water from households flowed freely into the roads between houses. The children played in this muck and contracted diseases. The women were made aware of the relationship between their children's sicknesses and the waste water. It resulted in their digging soak pits which absorbed the water underground. This opened up another possibility - kitchen gardens where possible or planting vegetable creepers / fruit trees around these pits thus obtaining a nutritious supplement to the household's daily diet

- Furthermore, exposure visits, training programs and melawas (social gatherings) when organized, give the women opportunities to express themselves in public and to grow in self confidence.

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<sup>\*7</sup> MSS - Mahila Samaj Sevika

- Moreover, as confidence increases leadership emerges. These leaders or village women promoters (Mahila Pravartaks - MPs) should be identified and selected. These MPs should gradually be trained to conduct such women's group meetings and sessions. This will ensure continuity and functioning of women's groups even after the project period is completed.

#### **4.4 Water for household use :**

While WSD increases the ground water table and assures water availability in the village throughout the year or, at least for longer periods in the year, obtaining water for household needs still consumes on an average one and a half to three hours of a woman's day. Besides, the source of water (specially the open wells) are often very unhygienic causing health hazards to the family.

- Attention should be given to this aspect by giving the women the required information, exposure and knowledge of causes of contamination of drinking water, its consequences on health and well being and simple ways of purifying it.
- Water sources (open wells, hand pumps, springs) that are susceptible to contamination should be suitably protected by building masonry aprons or structures around them. Wherever possible, a piped drinking water supply scheme within the village should be established through government schemes, other projects, people's contribution or a combination of these financial sources. This would have the advantage of making potable water available within short distances of habitations.
- Moreover, it would be possible through an appropriate management regime to ensure clean and safe water. Formation of a village level committee or habitation-wise user group committees should be established for drinking water (of women preferably-since water touches them particularly) so that water for household use is made easily available to all, is rendered fit for human consumption and the water sources (wells, hand pumps etc.) are well maintained and protected.

#### **4.5. Health and Hygiene :**

It is usually the woman who bears the burden of the ill health of the children and family despite themselves not enjoying good health. The health and nutrition of the woman and the girl child is usually the last priority.

- With information on Nutrition and the simple means of kitchen gardens, poultry etc., the nutritional status can be improved. Hence efforts along the lines of "Action-Oriented-Learning" sessions concerning health, hygiene, sanitation, family planning and nutrition would have to be made. Interventions like raising of kitchen gardens, homestead poultry, building of latrines would help address some of these needs.
- Establishment of soak pits which drain the waste water as well as improve the hygiene of the surroundings would lead to a decrease in skin and diarrhoeal infections . Inputs should also be given on family planning and child care as smaller families and healthier babies / children would also improve the health and well being of the mother.
- The use of improved energy conserving improved chulhas\*<sup>8</sup> and biogas units will reduce time and energy spent on fuel collection (on an average 8 hours a week), as well as reduce the smoke situation of the kitchen (which is usually the cause of many respiratory illnesses) where the woman and her small children usually sit.

#### **4.6. Participation in Decision Making :**

Realizing their disadvantaged position at home and in the power structure of the village, women repeatedly stress that any change in gender equations must be obtained in a manner that does not threaten the harmony of their homes or the security of their persons. Gender bias against women is the trait of the present rural Indian society; hence one must realize that both men and women are affected and react to any drastic changes in the status quo, albeit differently.

- In order that space be created for women in the society in which they live, sessions on gender sensitivity should be organized for men as well as women. Men should be encouraged to actively involve their women folk to

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\*<sup>8</sup> Chulha - Earthen stove

participate progressively in various activities and events which would gradually include them in decision making processes. The approach and method adopted for awareness generation and integration should be consensual and gentle, even if at times change appears imperceptible and slow in occurring. Strategies should be planned such that men are not unduly threatened and so react adversely.

- An analogy of the household that I have found useful in such sessions is that of the TWO WHEELED BULLOCK-CART. It moves ahead only if both the wheels are of the same dimensions. The bullock-cart represents a family and the husband and wife, who bear equal responsibility, represent a wheel each. As in the present situation, if the wheel which represents the woman is much smaller than the other, the family and in fact the entire village community makes no headway. Only when the girl child and the woman is encouraged and respected by her parents, brothers and husband, can she take her place as an equal by their side; only then will both shoulders (wheels of the household) be equal and the family progresses. Along with the family, the village and the community also develops.
- Some accompanying initiatives that could prove helpful in accelerating the inclusion of women in decision making roles would be :-
  - (a) increasing women's participation in the Gram Sabha :

This would require a determined effort at getting women to actively share their problems and seek solutions first within their own self help groups. Furthermore, their level of skills especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy would have to be increased. This would build up their self-confidence. Participation in savings and credit operations could prove a "nursery" for the acquisition of crucial management, negotiations and bargaining skills.
  - (b) ensuring a minimum of 33 % representation of women in the VWC. This is further supported in India by legislative and institutional arrangements. While a 50 % representation is aimed at, this may not be achieved immediately.
  - (c) active participation in LUP and crop planning as well as selection of plantation species and raising of nurseries wherever possible.

- (d) fostering and facilitation of activities of the MM and SHG that are managed exclusively by the women themselves.
- (e) various trainings to enhance information, skills and capabilities.

## **PART B**

### **5. THE INDO-GERMAN WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND THE WOMEN'S SECTOR**

#### **The Context :**

When the Programme was launched in 1993, women were considered included in the overall Programme strategy but not as a separate sector. However it became clear that unless they were given special attention and possibilities their effective contribution towards a sustainable WSD would not be realized. Moreover it was recognized that without the active participation of women in the various aspects of the project, the sustainability of the effort would be highly doubted.

Hence the Women's Promotion Sector was introduced in late 1995.

This late insertion has had several disadvantages :

(a) Several of the projects which had begun in 1993 were focused on land and water problems and the issues of concern to women had been taken up by only very few projects and only at the initiative of the concerned NGOs. These efforts were incidental to the Programme. Since land and water issues are primarily the domain of male influence and power, women were given practically no role or say in the decision making of WSD. Women became mere labourers. At this stage it unintentionally became a male-dominated programme.

In fact of 43 projects upto end 1995, only 8 had undertaken some isolated activities (kitchen gardens, nursery raising, MM meetings, etc.) and only 5 had established Savings and Credit groups.

(b) The focus of the NGOs as well as the villagers was mainly getting the work done as well as enhancing the productive status of the land. They believed that they were concerned with current real issues. Introducing an intervention for women's promotion was perceived by quite a few as an unnecessary

distraction. Where it was accepted, it was viewed as a sectoral intervention, isolated from the main effort of natural resource management (NRM) and was therefore unrelated to the processes of decision making in the project.

(c) Furthermore, not all NGOs give equal priority to women's development as they do land and water issues and income-generating activities. They do not even give equal support to the women staff. This results in loss of enthusiasm, inefficiency and discouragement. Besides, the MSSs (Lady Social Workers) also have cultural bias working against them. As village women are only free to meet at night for meetings, a simple, young woman (MSS) is unable to travel to the village alone. If she does, she would have to be accompanied by another woman or would run a risk which no NGO would like to take. Hence this sector is viewed as a burden imposed on the NGOs resulting in its being given step motherly treatment. Moreover, the turnover of staff is very high (especially if the MSS is young and unmarried), resulting in a lack of continuity and problems in coordination.

Therefore the challenge facing the Programme in the given situation was :

How does one organize a meaningful and productive effort for women's integration and involvement for sustainable WSD in a manner that elicited men's interest and active support ?

## 6. TOWARDS WOMEN'S INTEGRATION : A GRADUATED RESPONSE

### 6.1 The Overall Goal, Objectives, Guiding Principles and Strategy :

#### 6.1.1 The Goal :

The Goal of intervention in the Women's Sector is to develop the capacities of the women of the WS community so that they actively participate and take up their responsibilities for integrated and sustainable development of their watershed.

#### 6.1.2 The Objectives :

- to enhance financial and food security and improve the health, hygiene, nutritional and living conditions .
- reduce the drudgery and burden / mitigate some of the effects of the additional workload.
- help her to be integrated and involved especially in decision making processes in the family, institutions and village life.

#### 6.1.3 Guiding Principles and Strategy :

- i. *In order to empower women, their men folk must be taken into confidence.*

Hence, the focus will not be on women *per se* but on the **family**. Without the support of the men folk, they will make little or no progress.

- ii. *Strength is derived from fellowship and partnerships which arise from group formation and organization.*

Women would therefore be encouraged to organize themselves into groups to address issues of their concern. Activities even when individually undertaken, will be promoted and supported by their group.

- iii. *Knowledge and understanding is the key to motivated action and efficiency.*

Efforts would have to be made to enable women to gain more information and knowledge. They would also have to be introduced to better ways of managing their natural resources, to managerial skills for other activities as well as to those that increase efficiency and reduce their drudgery.

- iv. *Access to financial resources empowers and gives societal status*

Attempts will have to be made so that women have access to sources of income, as well as control over income earned. In this regard, the potential of women to save will be capitalized upon, especially on a group basis. To the extent possible group activities that provide livelihood opportunities would be encouraged.

- v. *Possessing skills and competencies that are valued by both the household and the village ensures an active role and a valued membership.*

Measures will be undertaken to improve the skills and competencies of women and their groups so that they are enabled to play a contributory role in project implementation and in village and family affairs.

- vi. *Owning an asset, even a common one (e.g. land) gives a sense of identity and also enables alliances for mutual support and advancement.*

Efforts will be made to get land either transferred on the name of women's groups or on lease. Moreover they would also be enabled to acquire various income generating assets, which will contribute towards a sense of self-dependence and fulfillment.

- vii. *"Women-to-women" and "group-to-group" extension is not only effective but also offers a learning and feedback mechanism as well as creates enthusiasm and synergies*

Local women as facilitators and mobilizers individually and in groups should be actively encouraged and employed. This enables quick rapport building as well as bonding which greatly promotes group function and consensus building and inspires commonality of purpose and enthusiasm.

viii. *Work and Needs unite.*

When activities are taken up within the WS in which all desiring persons can avail of work, caste and social barriers are broken down as people rub shoulders as labourers. People rediscover each other as persons. This has profound implications both for social dynamics as well as the quality of life in the village.

Women with common needs and concerns from all social groups will be encouraged to come together irrespective of caste, creed or financial status.

ix. *Sustainability and replicability is greatly enhanced when local institutional actors such as governmental as well as private agencies are involved in delivery of goods and services.*

Wherever possible, existing governmental programs and networks will be accessed and schemes and other projects availed of. This will help create a sense of "joint ownership" of the project which is necessary from the point of maintenance and continuity.

x. *In order to ensure sustainability of the programme, it is important that lessons learnt and experiences gained be transmitted from one generation to the next*

Hence, as the future lies with the child, children should be introduced to the WHY, the HOW and the WHAT of environmental regeneration and conservation. However since addressing this issue requires a long-time horizon (8-10 years, whereas generally a WSD project is expected to be completed

within 5 - 6 years) and since this article is primarily concerned with creating space for women in watershed projects we shall not dwell on this issue here.

## **7. PHASE-WISE PROPOSED MEASURES : PROGRAMME AND PROJECT LEVELS**

### **7.1 Background :**

Most of the NGOs entering the Programme are generally small and relatively young, having had little experience in large scale implementation of Natural Resources Management projects. Usually their experiences are restricted to sectoral interventions. Furthermore, even in the case of well experienced NGOs the initial period following entry into a WS village is one of uncertainty.

- An intervention like WSD which involves all the social and economic groups of the village and effects their livelihood necessarily challenges the existing power groups of the village as well as the existing relationships and transaction arrangements. It creates anxieties, insecurities, expectations and aspirations. In the initial period, the situation is often one of ambiguity and the response of the village is unclear.

During the initial phase the entire effort of the NGO is geared towards creating awareness, motivation and mobilization of the village's traditional and civil structures. Not much time and energy can be given to gender-related issues.

- Hence, at this stage, it is important that, given the complexity of the situation and the sensitive nature of "men-women" relationships in the village, the expectations with regard to women's promotion and gender integration be minimal, non-threatening and easily achievable. Interventions and measures should be simple, where results are quickly visible. This would encourage and promote women's organization for self help.

In the IGWDP, since 1993, each project goes through 2 phases : the initial Capacity Building Phase (CBP) where both the NGO and the village grapple with understanding participatory WSD, comprehend its implications and

experience the initial benefits. The CBP is supported by WOTR assisted financially by the GTZ<sup>\*9</sup> .

This is followed by the Full Implementation Phase (FIP) when both the NGO and the village especially the Village Watershed Committee (VWC) are deemed capable of undertaking the implementation of the entire project. This phase is supported by NABARD<sup>\*10</sup> assisted by WOTR and financially aided by the KfW<sup>\*11</sup> .

## **7.2 The Capacity Building Phase (CBP) :**

This consists of 2 stages .

### Stage 1 :

At this point, the initial motivation and mobilization of the WS village is undertaken by the NGO. Both the NGO and the people have to establish their willingness, their basic ability and need to implement a WSDP in the IGWDP. One of the crucial inputs in this regard is the Exposure Visit to successfully completed or on-going projects in the Programme.

- At this stage the NGO should encourage the participation of women in the Exposure Visit as well as initiate dialogues with the men about women's promotion.

### Stage 2 :

consists of a “hands-on” experience of understanding WSD by undertaking soil conservation and plantation activities in a small micro-watershed and observing in a small manner the benefits thereof. This serves dual purpose of demonstration and training. This stage normally lasts for about 10-18 months.

- The effort at this stage should be to prepare the ground for gradual insertion of women in decision making roles of the project.

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<sup>\*9</sup> GTZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)

<sup>\*10</sup> NABARD - National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

<sup>\*11</sup> KfW - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Bank for Reconstruction and Development)

- Having obtained during stage 1 the initial green signal (i.e. the support of men for women's activities) this period should be used to strengthen and establish women's organizations (Mahila Mandals) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the village.
- Organizationally, a Mahila Samaj Sevika (MSS) should be appointed preferably within 3 months of the beginning of micro-watershed implementation.
- Small simple activities that bring quick results should be encouraged e.g. kitchen gardens, soak-pits, improved chulhas (earthen stoves), homestead poultry etc. would be means that motivate the women to work together and thus build group confidence.
- Savings and Credit activities particularly encourage the women and also men to permit their women folk to participate in group activities.
- During the CBP , a small fund (upto Rs. 60,000/- in the case of the IGWDP) may be used for activities that will strengthen the group. If used for small income-generating activities women should be encouraged to treat this as a loan and thus create a revolving fund of the returns.
- By the end of this phase women should have at least a 33% active representation of membership in the VWC.

### **7.3 The Full Implementation Phase (FIP) :**

This also consists of 2 stages.

Stage 1 : The Feasibility Study Phase (FS) : Having successfully gone through the Capacity Building Phase the NGO and the VWC now prepare a project proposal - the feasibility study - for the entire WS. This normally takes about 6 months.

- By now the women's groups should have developed a sense of identity, cohesiveness and competence in areas like managing their finances, for instance, savings and credit operations. By this time too, women's groups would also have seen the benefits accruing from small activities e.g. kitchen gardens, improved chulhas, etc. As a group they should have acquired a measure of confidence in each other and have experienced the possibilities and benefits offered by group action. This process initiated earlier should now be further strengthened during the FS.
- The focus would be to ensure that women are involved wherever possible in the different aspects of project planning, especially with regard to land use. In this area men should be encouraged to consider actively the women's point of view resulting preferably in joint decisions being made.
- By now the MSS and the Mahila Mandal having identified and prioritized the needs of women, a project proposal to this effect should be developed and incorporated in the FS. This proposal should attempt at activities that will lighten the load on women, support child care and development and even plan for income-generating activities that will be exclusively managed by the women's group .
- Meanwhile, there would be emerging local women leaders - Mahila Pravartaks (MPs) who should be identified and who during the course of the project period would be given trainings to conduct their own group meetings and promote various issues and activities.

Stage 2 : Implementation : This begins with the sanction of the project to its conclusion. This normally lasts for about a maximum of 48 months after the sanction of the feasibility study. It should be noted that in the IGWDP, once implementation starts in the CBP, it continues without break (assuming favourable conditions) even though a complete project proposal will not have been prepared and formally sanctioned. This is to ensure that there is no break in mobilization, enthusiasm and organisation.

- Until now the measures and steps undertaken have largely been in the nature of organization, bringing the women folk together around activities and confidence building. They discover their capabilities and strengths both as individuals and as groups. The focus till now was not on income generation

but on simple activities that have direct impact on women's lives e.g. kitchen gardens, soak-pits, chulhas, savings and credit operations. Income generation is a consequence of their activities rather than the primary objective.

### **Objectives And Action :**

Stage 2 of the FIP would have two key objectives :

(1) The primary focus will be not only to strengthen further and elaborate the processes initiated in the CBP, but also to undertake specific activities which will strengthen their technical and managerial capacities, their financial position as well as their abilities to collaborate in a meaningful way in the decision making processes within the village.

- During this stage, for the insertion of women, a two-pronged effort is necessary. Women (those not already in SHGs) should be motivated to come together and be organized into SHGs on the one hand and on the other, the men folk should be actively involved in supporting them in this effort. By support we mean that they are made aware of what is proposed to be done and that their misunderstandings and queries are addressed. Men's SHGs should be encouraged as this will promote a better use of their income saved.
- During this phase, the activities would generally be in the nature of training and exposures directly or indirectly related to WSD and other farm or non-farm livelihood supporting activities. Care should however be taken during this phase that activities in this regard do not additionally burden or distract the women and village as a whole from the main task of doing watershed development. They should be sequenced so that they gradually gather momentum such that when the project period is over these activities provide livelihood opportunities. Emphasis would be placed on the acquisition of skills by the village women promoters (Mahila Pravartaks), MSS, SHGs etc. in planning, implementation and management.

(2) Another objective of this stage is to see that there is a reduction in the drudgery and uncertainty in women's lives.

- Therefore other activities having a bearing on women should also be included. e.g. arrangements for obtaining potable water within reachable distance, as well as fuel for cooking and fodder which are high priorities for women.

Sanitation, child care, health and hygiene, as well as non-formal education sessions would also have to be considered.

Progressive inclusion of women who were not earlier involved in the programme is to be encouraged.

- Linkages with govt. departments as well as village institutions should be actively promoted.

Efforts will also have to be made to ensure that the dependence of the women's group on the NGO and MSS is progressively reduced. Active thought would also have to be given to the transferring of these values and learnings beyond project period, so that women themselves can manage successfully what they have begun.

Children and village schools will have to be integrated in the process if long term sustainability of the project is to be ensured.

- During this phase the expected outcome will be a definite improvement in the financial position of women, acquisition of income generating assets where possible and regular and active participation in decision making meetings (VWC and GS). Furthermore, stopping and reduction of distress migration, increased food security as well as increased school attendance of children would also be expected. It is important that by now, active support from the government and political establishment should have been achieved. This is necessary both from the point of view of sustainability and in order to ensure on a long-term basis productivity gains.

## **8. TOWARDS A GENDER-FOCUSED PARTICIPATORY OPERATIONAL PEDAGOGY (POP)**

We shall now weave together the various strands of objectives, proposed actions and measures and expected outcomes in a comprehensive manner to arrive at a pedagogy, which is practical and participatory in nature. In the schematic representation in Annexure 1, based on the objectives to be achieved, the action plan, required intervention and organisational requirements are planned to meet the expected outcome. The indicators help in evaluating the results.

## **9. THE WAY AHEAD . . . . .**

Watershed Development, if addressed in a gender focused and sensitive manner right from the beginning, can provide a space for women to realise their potential and to insert themselves meaningfully into the polity of their community. It, nevertheless, calls for a gentle, inclusive and sustained effort that brings men to recognise and accept the singular contribution that a self-confident and fulfilled woman can bring to their own welfare and that of their family.

The road ahead is strewn with many a disappointment and setback. It is patience and the ability to anticipate and plan for crises that are the pre-requisites if real and lasting gains are to be realised. Women bloom in an enabling and supportive environment. If this is achieved, beginning from the homesphere, it will radiate outward to touch all levels of the country, ensuring, in the process, a recognized and appreciated role for women as co-builders of the home, community and the future.



## ANNEXURE 1 : TOWARDS A GENDER-FOCUSED PARTICIPATORY OPERATIONAL PEDAGOGY (POP) : A PHASE-WISE SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION

### PHASE I: CAPACITY BUILDING PHASE (Upto 18 months) [VWC / NGO-WOTR-GTZ]

Focus : The CBP is concerned more with process and organisation than with activities.

Note : The sequence does not necessarily imply linearity, viz. the order of the steps does not necessarily imply that they follow each other sequentially.

Sr. No.	Objective	Expected Outcome / Result	Activity / Action	Required Intervention	Indicators	Organizational Requirements / Framework
1.	<p>NGO is made aware of the need for Women's Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formation and Strengthening of Women's Organisations for Self Help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NGO takes step-by step measures to involve women right from the beginning</li> </ul>	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointment of MSS</li> </ul>	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSS is a member of the NGO field staff</li> </ul>
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification and Prioritization of expressed basic needs of women.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women get organised for self-help.</li> <li>Enhanced and systematized women's saving capacity and organisation</li> <li>Increased self-confidence</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realization of desired and agreed upon interventions addressing the expressed needs.</li> <li>Linkages with the Government developmental system for availing of various schemes where possible.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing participation (both in quality and number) in women's organisations.</li> <li>Kitchen Gardens and Soak Pits in houses where technically possible (at least in those of the SHG members)</li> <li>SHG activity focused around Savings and Credit.</li> <li>Promotion and use of improved cooking stoves (chulhas)</li> <li>Exposures to projects that have successful women's activities.</li> <li>Organised interaction between women of different villages.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSS orientation trainings</li> <li>Inputs at village level</li> <li>Establishment of women's organisation (Mahila Mandal - MM)*<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Establishment of Kitchen Gardens and Soak Pits around</li> <li>Formation of SHGs</li> <li>Savings and Credit</li> <li>Trainings for Savings and Credit leaders</li> <li>Contact MEDA or any suitable agency for installation of chulhas</li> <li>Exposure visits</li> <li>Mahila Melawas</li> </ul>	<p>Active Women's organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kitchen Gardens &amp; Soak pits in SHG members' houses - wherever technically possible.</li> <li>A minimum of 3 SHGs involving around 50 - 60 women.</li> <li>Improved chulhas installed wherever required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of Mahila Pravartaks (MPs) for Savings and Credit, SHGs.</li> </ul>

Sl. No.	Objective	Expected Outcome / Result	Activity / Action	Required Intervention	Indicators	Organizational Requirements / Framework
3.	Support of the men-folk for women's participation in the project	<p>i. Men become aware of the importance and need for women's active involvement and support the same.</p> <p>ii. Women become more active in village level bodies.</p>	<p>i. Women participate in Exposure Visits to watershed projects.</p> <p>ii. The participation of women in the Gram Sabha and VWC meetings</p>	<p>i. Gender Sensitivity sessions in NGO staff trainings.</p> <p>ii. Gender Sensitivity sessions included in PPM-I &amp; PPM-II (These training programs are primarily for the VWCs in which the NGO also participates). MSSs also participate in these trainings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Women participating in Gram Sabhas</li> <li>A minimum of 33 % women members in the VWC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women members selected and nominated onto the VWC</li> </ul>
4.	Implementation of "easy-to-do" activities responding to immediate needs of the women.		<p>i. Preparation of project proposal for Rs. 20,000/-</p> <p>ii. Accessing government schemes in this regard where possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trainings for MSS</li> <li>Trainings for MPs for specific activities.</li> <li>Trainings and exposures for village women for selected projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which sanctioned Project proposal has been implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of MPs<sup>2</sup> for different activities</li> </ul>

\*1 Women's Organisation : These are fora such as a Mahila Mandal (Women's club) or any other arrangement wherein women or SHGs meet together to share, discuss and address issues.

\*2 Mahila Pravartaks (MPs) are members of the SHGs selected to promote the various activities among the group. There may be different MPs for different activities.

**PHASE II : STAGE 1 : FEASIBILITY STUDY : (Upto 6 months) [VWC/NGO-WOTR-NABARD]**

Focus : Women's groups participate in the planning of developmental and income generating projects.

Sr. No.	Objective	Expected Outcome / Result	Activity / Action	Required Intervention	Indicators	Organizational Requirements / Framework
1.	Preparation of project proposal for women's sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information obtained with regard to the family situation and the needs of the women</li> <li>Specific proposals concerning developmental and livelihood activities for women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings and participatory sessions with MM and SHGs</li> <li>Identification and proposing of concrete activities for women for inclusion in Feasibility Study (utilization of the minimum 5 % of the project measures) in consultation with the VWC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training in participatory methods and tools for MSS and CO*<sup>3</sup>.</li> <li>Training for MPs / groups for specific activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project proposals on               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drinking Water</li> <li>Developmental Activities - (Specify)</li> <li>Livelihood / IG*<sup>4</sup> activities</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSS participates in socio-economic study with focus on issues related to women</li> <li>Initiatives taken for the formation of committees for projects selected.</li> </ul>
2.	Incorporate women in decision-making processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evolution and formation of a LUP that also reflects the priorities of women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of husband and wife in deciding land use for FS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active encouragement of the VWC by the NGO to involve women's groups in decisions like selection of species, cropping pattern, use of common lands, nursery raising, etc. and other support activities like running anganwadis / balwadis, management of water supply schemes, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cropping pattern includes household consumption needs.</li> <li>Plantations reflect household requirements.</li> </ul>	--

\*<sup>3</sup> CO : Community Organiser

\*<sup>4</sup> IG : Income Generating

**PHASE II : STAGE 2 : FULL IMPLEMENTATION PHASE :** (Max. 48 months) [VWC/NGO-NABARD]

**Focus :** The FIP is concerned more with activities and measures while continuing and strengthening the underlying CBP-initiated processes, initiatives and organisation.

**Notes :**

1. The sequence does not necessarily imply linearity, viz. the order of the steps does not necessarily imply that they follow each other sequentially.
2. The responsibility at this level lies primarily with the NGO. Inputs by way of trainings will be given by WOTR to the NGO on demand.
3. Each project will prepare its own plan according to the priorities. They should necessarily include drinking water projects (where required) and developmental projects besides livelihood / income generating projects, if found feasible..

Sr. No.	Objective	Expected Outcome / Result	Activity / Action	Required Intervention	Indicators	Organizational Requirements / Framework
1.	<p>Strengthening of women's group for :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial security</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in no. of SHGs and participants.</li> <li>• Women have access to WS related IG / livelihood activities</li> <li>• Use of loans for livelihood / IG projects</li> <li>• Support from Govt., financial and political establishment wherever possible</li> <li>• Women active in VWC and GS</li> <li>• Increase in self confidence as well as effective participation in decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued S&amp;C operations</li> <li>• Undertaking WS related and suitable, small farm-based and non-farm activities</li> <li>• Active linkage building with Govt. Depts., availing of benefits of Govt. schemes wherever possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued training and support by NGO / WOTR</li> <li>• Regular contacts and meetings with Govt. officers and wherever possible bringing them to the village/watershed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in no. of SHGs and participants</li> <li>• Increasing use of loans for productive purposes</li> <li>• Number of livelihood / income generating projects implemented both from within project finance or from Govt. or other sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial institutions / mechanism for linking up of SHGs</li> <li>• Linking with Banks wherever feasible.</li> <li>• Creation of portfolio in VWC for women's promotion</li> <li>• Committees for various activities</li> </ul>

Sr. No.	Objective	Expected Outcome / Result	Activity / Action	Required Intervention	Indicators	Organizational Requirements / Framework
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2.	Food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased availability of food for home consumption</li> <li>Improved nutritional status of women and children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A child care centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkage with ICDS</li> <li>Trainings / Village level meetings on nutrition, child care, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>“Road to health” Growth chart (for under 5) (refer ICDS Manual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of latrines, biogas, etc. implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active MPs</li> </ul>
3.	Improvement of health and hygienic conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved hygienic and surroundings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of Latrines, soakpits, biogas units</li> <li>Health camps and health project</li> <li>Establishment of an effective functioning potable water supply scheme wherever applicable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkage with Govt. schemes</li> <li>Training on health related issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active MPs</li> <li>Committee for various projects</li> </ul>	
4.	Widening of knowledge-base and acquisition of skills and competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women confidently manage their projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action oriented-learning</li> <li>Functional literacy session</li> <li>Classes for young girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trainings for MPs</li> <li>Region-wise issue based women’s get-togethers (melawas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased literacy levels among women</li> <li>Increased school attendance of the girl child</li> </ul>	