

## **Integrated Watershed Development Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Management Mission, Madhya Pradesh**

### **Background**

Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Management Mission (RGWMM), initiated in 1994, aims at improving the land and water resources in environmentally degraded villages. The larger goal is to move watershed management from being a techno-centric programme to a people's movement. RGWMM has, therefore, adopted direct people's participation as a core element of its strategy. The institutional arrangements, procedures and processes adopted for programme implementation mark a reversal from the past, and are geared to a participatory bottom-up approach, in which communities exercise control over programme activities at each stage and government and non-government agencies play catalysing, facilitating and coordinating roles.

### **Objectives**

The specific objectives of the programme include:

- ❖ Environmental regeneration and improvement of environmental resource base as a source of labour-intensive growth, while augmenting productive capacities, increasing resource-use efficiency and correcting regional and rural-urban imbalances.
- ❖ Integration of poverty reduction and environmental regeneration through participatory watershed management
- ❖ Provision of livelihood security to resource-poor households through just and sustainable access to basic needs such as food, fodder, fuel and water
- ❖ Location-specific interventions, given the diverse natural resource and socio-economic conditions across the state

### **The Thrust**

The thrust areas of RWGMM are as follows:

- Making substantial improvements in environmental conditions, irrigation facilities and land-use patterns, leading to an improvement in overall agricultural productivity.
- Providing immense relief to the landless and small and marginal farmers through direct wage employment opportunities.

- Making a significant contribution to household income, addressing immediate concerns at the household level and checking the daily movement to urban centres in search of work.
- Creating an appropriate environment for sustainable people-centric development.

## **The Strategy**

***The following strategies were adopted for appropriate implementation and success of RGWMM:***

- Aim for an increase in cropped areas were in the upper reaches, where the agriculture is risky due to poor soil and moisture conditions with appropriate watershed management.
- Improving the water availability for drinking and irrigation through various interventions.
- Creating livelihood opportunities for small and marginal farmers through afforestation and fodder development interventions.
- Providing opportunities for investment in the non-farm sector.
- Providing greater control over household level resources and decision-making power to women; reduce the drudgery (in fetching water, fuel and fodder) through drinking water improvements, afforestation and fodder development interventions.
- Equal wages (or the parity in wages) for women.
- Facilitating the emergence of leadership and management skill pools at the village level to complement the Panchayati Raj agenda.

## **The Project**

RGWMM is registered as a society under the Madhya Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 1973. As a registered society, it is mandated to coordinate the watershed development efforts of various line departments in the state; pool resources and expertise readily available to create synergy and lend focus to interventions; and work towards building an appropriate environment for sustainable people-centred interventions.

There are institutions for watershed development at three levels: the state, district and village. At the state level, the Mission Coordinator is the Secretary to the Chief Minister and therefore, the project is supervised directly by the Chief Minister himself. At the district level, the Collector is the mission leader and is responsible for fund flow and project progress. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Zilla Panchayat (District Council) is directly responsible for the project and reports to the Collector. There are two committees at the district level—

the District Watershed Advisory Committee (DWAC) and the District Watershed Technical Committee (DWTC). The milli-watershed is the planning unit for RGWM activities and is identified by the DWAC.

At the level of the planning unit, programme activities are managed by a Project Implementation Agency (PIA) selected by the DWAC. The PIA is normally a government department or an NGO, and is responsible for operationalizing the programme at the level of the planning unit. PIA members facilitate and coordinate village-level activities.



At the village level, village watershed committees (VWCs) plan and execute the programme. VWC members are usually from user groups (UGs), self-help groups (SHGs) and water thrift and credit groups (WTCGs), as well as from the panchayat.

Programme activities in a district commence with the formation of DWAC and DWTC. The DWAC plays a central role in selecting milli-watersheds for intervention. Milli-watersheds span an area of 5,000-10,000 ha and are divided for operational purposes into micro-watersheds of 500-1,000 ha. They are selected on the basis of low availability of drinking water, declining agricultural productivity, increasing fallow lands, higher SC/ST population and lower wage rates, using geo-coded maps. Proximity to treated watershed areas is another recommended criterion for milli-watershed selection. The PIA manages programme activities at the milli-watershed level. There is provision for undertaking entry point activities in the village during the preparatory phase, in which immediate and pressing village-level concerns are addressed, to gain public confidence.

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is instrumental in identifying programme activities at the village level and individuals likely to benefit from them. These individuals are organised into groups.

Typically, three types of groups are identified: UGs of beneficiary farmers; SHGs; and WTCGs of women who wish to undertake savings, credit and income-generation activities. The VWC is the key programme-specific institution at the village level and is registered with the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). Among its key activities are the preparation and implementation of village-level plans; collection of contributions from villagers for a fund created for maintenance of programme assets; developing appropriate benefit-sharing

arrangements; promotion of WTCGs; and assisting community mobilisation and other efforts of PIA members.

Villagers make a certain minimum contribution, in the form of cash, labour or material, to the programme activities. Contributions for community works on public lands are provided for at 5 per cent of the estimated cost of works. A similar contribution is expected from SC/STs and persons below poverty line (BPL) for works on private lands. Contributions expected from other categories are higher, at about 10 per cent. The contribution is deposited into a development fund for maintenance of programme assets.

### **Major Achievements**

The programme has led to substantial improvements in environmental conditions, irrigation facilities and land-use patterns, which have led to an improvement in overall agricultural productivity. The direct wage employment opportunities provided through the RGWMM have provided immense relief to the landless and small and marginal farmers. These opportunities have made a significant contribution to household income, addressed immediate concerns at the household level and checked daily movement to urban centres in search of work.

#### ***Some of the major achievements of RGWMM are as follows:***

- ✚ One of the major achievements of RGWMM has been the emergence of leadership and management skill pool at the village level, which can potentially challenge established power structures and complement the Panchayati Raj agenda of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- ✚ Land-use changes and improved water availability as reported in some project villages may be expected to affect livelihood favourably, especially agriculture.
- ✚ Creation of a right environment for the people to participate and take adequate interest in the activities
- ✚ Involving people from different fields, including politicians, bureaucrats, technical experts, NGOs and the beneficiaries, thus lending credibility and accountability to the programme
- ✚ Ensuring equity by involving and addressing the specific needs of different groups like the landless labourers and women.
- ✚ Emphasising transparency through robust monitoring mechanisms like periodic reporting and accounting system.
- ✚ Stressing the need for continuous training and capacity building activities.
- ✚ Empowering people by generating awareness and developing leadership.

## **Lessons Learnt**

RGWMM has sought to institutionalise a rigorous reporting system of gathering village-level data on a monthly basis and compiles it at the milli-watershed and district level to assess progress and shortcomings. The standard reporting format developed earlier has been adapted at the district level to reflect the priorities of the district leadership but typically contains information on area treated, progress of works, financial allocations and expenditure, and number of village-level groups formed. There also is a culture of introspection, and field data is considered to have utility beyond mere reporting.

The management of RGWMM activities is crucially dependent on the district leadership, availability of human and financial resources, quality of training and capacity building efforts, and monitoring, control and feedback mechanisms. Cumulatively, these are expected to ensure pursuit of the stated objectives in the right spirit, prepare programme functionaries and village-level institutions for the anticipated challenges and current and future roles, and ensure opportunity for identifying shortcomings and effecting mid-course corrections.

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