

## **Proceedings of Workshop on Water Governance and Improved Implementation of Water Based Interventions under NREGA Schemes in Madhya Pradesh**

**August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**

**Betul, Madhya Pradesh**

SPWD along with its sub-basin partner in Madhya Pradesh, Samavesh Society organized a one day interactive session on experiences on water related works under NREGS in Madhya Pradesh. Twelve NGOs, most of whose work was spread in southern parts of Madhya Pradesh, participated in this workshop cum interaction. These organisations were ASSS, PGVS, Yashodeep, Pradeepan, SRUB, BYPASS, NAMAN Seva Samiti, JP, RECHA, and GVS. Amongst the organizers, Amit Gaumat and Jeetendra Saxena represented Samavesh Society and Alisha Vasudev and Surya Prakash represented SPWD. *The workshop was initiated with a brief introductory theme by SPWD and Samavesh team followed by brief presentations by all the NGOs and a discussion session.*

### **Background Session:**

The workshop started with a briefing from SPWD team whereby a background of SPWD's inception, past and present activities were mentioned. The work done by SPWD and its partner organisations, particularly in Madhya Pradesh under the Water Governance Project was the major theme of the briefing. The basic conceptual aspects of the project like selection of river sub-basins as study units, governance and livelihood features, catchment and command area characteristics and the basic hydrological modelling concepts were clarified to the participants. The participants were also explained on SPWD's motive to shift from a watershed approach to river basin approach in this project. Based on the above background, the workshop's focus was then diverted to the NREGS work under the NREGA. The nine work classifications as mentioned in the Act comprises of seven which are under soil and water conservation activities. So, keeping this in mind it was urged from the participants to share their own field experiences with works related to water under the NREGS.

Amit from Samavesh briefed on the water availability, consumption patterns and requirements as per different sectoral needs over time. He maintained a balance on the issues of water and livelihoods and expressed his concern on changing policies and laws which can influence the local governance and water management systems under the NREGS works. Some important points were raised by the participants.

- Akhilesh from BYPASS added that the NREGS work has one objective to be fulfilled and that is the employment and it was very tough to convert it into rural livelihood mainstreaming as after hundred days there is no scope for sustainability.
- Uma Goswami from ASSS expressed her concern to strengthen the works with respect to water management as it is the major focus of allocated works but still

there was no training to proper execution in terms of where and why these are to be done. She also cited an example where water related works were done by a group of farmers, planning and executing on their own, and which helped in sustaining their livelihoods.

- Satish from RECHA emphasised on the groundwater component to be taken care of while executing the construction of any structure related to water conservation or discharge. He clarified that groundwater and surface water are quite dependent on each other and any work done on the surface should ensure that the contribution is being made to groundwater. Though specific training has to be imparted for this but this has been ignored under the NREGS works.
- Rekha from Pradeepan focused on NREGS' role on sustainable livelihoods through soil and water management. She was critical on questioning the training of community to work on the seven issues of work that were focused on soil and water conservation under the scheme. She also criticised that the faults at implementation level in the sense of visualizing the role of works under the scheme and as a result the community has taken it only as an employment guarantee scheme rather than integrating it in the form of resource mobilization and regeneration. This also includes bringing about a change in social dynamics like change in the migration pattern in rural areas and the efficiency and effectiveness with which the decision making rests on community participation.
- Shishir from Naman Seva Samiti added that the policy level changes that are being talked about and the water management issues are completely different. He said that the application of policies at grassroot level is very difficult and as a result the Panchayats, which are the implementing agency, should be trained for water management and also for proper utilisation of funds. He then specifically mentioned that identifying a watershed with respect to hydrological lineaments is critical as this is an efficient way to identify the watershed with respect to the recharge zone.

Amit then mentioned of the disintegrated way in which the government machinery has been functioning for different uses of water. He mentioned that depending on the varying uses, different departments have been formed like the irrigation department, rural water supply department, public health and engineering department etc, but their roles have been defined very clearly and there is lesser or no scope of interaction amongst various departments looking up for these water allocations. As a result, there is a general confusion on the unified approach towards the actual water demands/requirement, usage and conservation works. Overall he briefed upon the spatio-temporal trends of different components of water which relate in some way or the other with the works related to water conservation under NREGS.

### **Presentation Session:**

The presentation session focused on the activities and areas of work of the participants. It was meant to get a broader understanding of the nature of work and the specific

issues/themes that were of relevance with respect to their involvement, participation and knowledge sharing in terms of water specific works under the NREGS.

**01. Yashodeep:** *Ashish Bagale and Vinod Talikhit*

They shared the experience and spread of works of Yashodeep. Yashodeep mainly focuses on works related to child, health, education and nutrition in Bhowra block of Betul district. Of recently, they have also been working on watershed activities in Shahpur block of the district, whereby they have completed watershed work in over ninety thousand cubic metres in ten villages. Treatment works like farm and stone bunding have been done at the upper catchment. As a consequence, people have started reaping two crops in a year and there is evident crop diversification in the watershed. They were of the view that there is an urgent need to demonstrate and spread the awareness amongst people on the basic issues of whys and hows involved in any process.

**02. Naman Seva Samiti:** *Shishir Kumar*

Shishir mentioned the works of the organisation on tribal livelihoods. The organisation covers overall three hundred and sixty three villages in thirteen blocks under four districts of Madhya Pradesh viz. Betul, Chindwara, Tikamgarh and Hoshangabad. The major issues of their advocacy have been livelihoods for poor, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, handicapped and women. NSS has worked on wastelands development using the principle of soil moisture conservation and they are also working as per the issues mentioned in the perspective plan under NREGS, reproductive child health, self help groups and disability issues.

He then mentioned the two models adopted by NSS:

- i) Watershed only
- ii) Soil and Water Conservation

He cited a case from Kavla village in Athner block, where they have been working for quite sometime, and where NSS has adopted the soil and water conservation model in fifty hectares of land. Drinking water in the area is mainly through *Jhiris*, as a result there is immense planning for drinking water in the village as the water level is very low. The yield from the handpumps was very low and at many places they were running dry. The village comprised 90% ST population. NSS approached the work through a PRA exercise where the community identified the sites and keeping in accordance with the hydrological findings, later on the physical works like the construction of storage structures, wells, hand pumps etc were implemented. The cost-benefit ratio for such exercise is very good as it had been calculated that an expenditure of Rupee one generated almost 27 litres of water. Overall, there is good improvement in the ground water level and consequently the availability of water. This has changed the migration pattern also which was distress based but now more oriented because of commercial/business activities. He finally clarified that the success rate is very high in this case.

**03. BYPASS:** *Akhilesh Yadav*

Akhilesh started with the vision and mission of BYPASS and informed that the organisation had been working on livelihood through natural resource management, community empowerment and health in several districts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. He informed that central and western Madhya Pradesh faces the problem of micro-nutrient deficiency and there is an immense need of water quality testing in these places. He also informed that the organisation selected to work in places where already prior work had been done and further emphasised on water use efficiency, water quality studies, prioritization of rights (water, land etc) and work allocation. He then mentioned of the organisation's working on perspective plan development and mentioned the priorities in NREGS work which varies as RCC road, M/B road, wells, plantation to other water conservation activities. The major problems reflected by the works under the NREGS as per his experience were uneven financial targets, no or lack of planning, absence of technical know-how, lack of mobilization, control and approach and insufficient staff on ground.

**04. SRUB:** *V.K. Choudhary*

SRUB is engaged in various activities in Ghodadungi block of Betul district. The watershed activities undertaken by SRUB have resulted to increase in water availability and a clear reflection is given by the change in the cropping pattern. As a consequence, there is an overall livelihood diversification in the area. He criticised that under the NREGS works, activities are being done which are of not much use like the construction of roads in areas where people even do not use them. He also emphasised that there was an urgent need to orient the Panchayat for prioritization of works under the scheme.

**05. PGVS:** *P.K. Naik and Sushil Ragde*

They informed of PGVS' involvement of working on tribal livelihoods and in extreme remote areas. The area of their work was totally inaccessible and when their works started paying off, the authorities did not accept the reports of change. It took a long time for them to convince the authorities. Later, they formed village level committees and planned for the overall development of the infrastructure in the village. Under the NREGS work, it was a general feeling that the work allocation was not done properly and people are being misguided at times.

**06. ASSS:** *Uma Goswami*

Uma advocated for a people centred and community based approach for all the activities. She also said that the planning and evaluation of works under the scheme should be community based and this can be achieved by integrating their traditional knowledge with the technical know-how. She urged that there is an immediate need for collective work by civil society organisations at the Panchayat and Block level. It was only after integrating all the above with the watershed activities under the NREGS that may result into some positive outcomes.

**07. Pradeepan:** *Rekha Gujre*

Rekha informed that Pradeepan started its work in Bhimpur block of Betul district which was mainly inhabited by Korku tribes. The topography was quite uneven and it was very

difficult to initiate any work over the area. The dominant crops then were *kodo*, *kutki* and *maize* and there were also some cases of migration. The condition of living was worse and forest ecology was being badly disturbed by the nexus between mafia and the government department. Pradeepan then initiated works on watershed management and land regeneration. Based on above experience, when NREGS was launched, the works were prioritized mainly for water and land development as some background on the know-how aspect already existed there. She expressed her concern that though the major hindrance is faced while motivating the panchayats, there is a scope for positive impacts of panchayats for water resource development under the NREGS works. Her major thrust was on the nature of the implementing agencies for the NREGS work, i.e the panchayats as they have become a hard core part of the government machinery rather than the decentralized governance system.

**08. RECHA: Satish Raghu**

Satish had been related with water related activities for past three decades. He emphasised on protection of natural springs as they are the major source of freshwater, but springs have extincted at many places because of anthropogenic activities. Citing an example of rain water harvesting model, he talked of a correlation between the money spent as an input and the water coming out as an output, which emphasised that any water conservation activity should be cost effective so that it can benefit all sections of the community. Under the NREGS work, he emphasised on the working on Shelf projects, whereby community is involved and should be extended to all the villages and stressed that this can lead towards sustainability, livelihood support system, water based interventions and ultimately a reduction in migration from rural to urban areas.

The emerging points from the presentations and short discussion can be mentioned as follows:

- Integration of groundwater component in the activities to improve surface water conditions
- Training and awareness at CSO/CBO and panchayat
- Proper work allocation and priorities under NREGS
- Advocacy, experience sharing and collective work by NGOs
- Training and emphasis on cost-benefit analysis of works done under the scheme
- Ensuring the tracks and works of Panchayat in lines with the decentralized governance system

**Discussion Session:**

After the presentations, many issues were discussed based on water and soil conservation under the ongoing NREGS scheme in particular and the normal water requirements and availability in general.

Satish asked the participants from Yashodeep if there was any comparison between NREGS work and the organisation's work in watershed activities. Ashish responded

positively and elaborated that the payments delay under the NREGS work has caused the villagers to demand work through the organisation's intervention. So, overall, there was thrust development. Rekha added that the organisation must be looked up as an alternative institution in such a scenario.

Shishir urged Satish to elaborate on changing conditions over time with respect to water management. He mentioned that the lack of ownership feeling has resulted into a general mismanagement tendency amongst the water users. Citing an example of handpumps and wells, he said that with the advancement of technology and introduction of handpumps for drinking water, the wells were dumped and they relatively extincted from the scenario. He also explained that the human tendency is very casual as nothing is happening to us; it is generally assumed that the conditions of water quantity and quality are alright.

Uma mentioned the presence of the indigenous knowledge of water conservation but not being acknowledged. She gave an example whereby a government official locates a well without considering the community. In such a case, people always assume that the repairing and maintenance is the job of the government whereas in reality, these can be executed by the community if provided some training. Rekha intervened saying that all the works of newer construction of wells/borewells etc would continue but the major aspect is to work towards better implementation.

Akhilesh added that the increase in the demands in various sectors like high water consuming HYV seeds in agriculture, industries etc and the lifestyle requirements in urban areas have caused a major shortage of water. Coming to the issue of reducing recharge to groundwater, Satish stated that people/villages should move towards the free artificial recharge whereby water is drained directly into the aquifer through an already existing bore hole. Surya responded that this needs to be done very carefully as there are examples in Maharashtra where dirty water was added up through artificial recharge and as a result people drinking the groundwater suffered from various water borne diseases.

Satish and Shishir also argued for the discrepancies faced by the people in the rural areas as a result of the demands, usage and wastage of water in the urban areas. They clarified that though people in the villages are more aware and more active nowadays in conserving water, the similar trend is not visible in the urban areas. Satish mentioned that there is an urgent need to link roof water harvesting with groundwater recharge, especially in urban areas.

There was a general consensus among all the participants towards the end of the discussion. Everyone agreed that planning is needed in a concrete manner taking into account all the stakeholders. The technical aspects of water budgeting should be simplified and spread amongst all the beneficiaries and better implementation measures are the need of the moment.

### List of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact No.</b>	<b>Email ID</b>
Uma Goswami	ASSS, Betul	09425685623	-
A.S.Yadav	BYPASS, Bhopal	09425393744 07552428244	byassindia@yahoo.com
Anil Bhusari	GVS Chicholi, Betul	09424408224	gvs.95@rediffmail.com
K.K.Chouhan	JP, Betul	09826181457	-
Shishir Kumar	NAMAN Seva Samiti, Betul	09425636770 09993360747	ngonaman@yahoo.com
P.K.Naik	PGVS, Betul	09425685340	pgvshgoi@yahoo.co.in
Sushil Ragde	PGVS, Betul	-	pgvshgoi@yahoo.co.in
Rekha Gujre	Pradeepan, Betul	09301810514	pradeepan_05@yahoo.com
Satish C.Raghu	RECHA, Betul	09425685407	rechango@rediffmail.com
Alisha Vasudev	SPWD, New Delhi	09953203283	alishavasudev@gmail.com
Suriya Prakash	SPWD, New Delhi	09868007482	suryaprakash.rai@gmail.com
M.K Kamal	SRUB, Ghoradongri	09406533232	kamalkhalid@yahoo.co.uk
V.K.Choudhary	SRUB, Ghoradongri	09406546728	jujhurpur@yahoo.co.uk
Ashish Bagalo	Yashodeep CFCDP, Bhoura	09425638655	yashodeepcfcd@rediffmail.com
Vinod Tahkit	Yashodeep CFCDP, Bhoura	09425668761	yashodeepcfcd@rediffmail.com