

Capitalization of Experiences «Water, Land and People»

Lessons learnt

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Important lessons

The main objectives of Capitalization of Experiences: Water, Land and People in India (CE-WLP) were to access lessons across regions and evolve strategies to institutionalize and scale up success factors, understand the constraints and challenges in water management and generate knowledge that can contribute towards improved program design and policy dialogues. Sharing of knowledge and lessons learned among the learning group members formed the basis for the CE process. Innovative methods such as a narrative story telling process was adopted for sharing of experiences and identifying focus areas.

Lessons pertaining to the focus areas under the broad subject of “Institutional dimensions of water resource management”

The focus areas identified based on the story telling method by the learning group members for further deepening of experiences included: Rules, regulations and systems for improved water resource management; Bridging information asymmetries to strengthen community organizations; Models for convergence, linkages and collaborations among institutions (for sustainability and upscaling); and experiences of watershed development for growth. The lessons based on the subgroup members experiences, interactions and discussions include:

Topic 1: Rules, regulations and systems for improved water resource management

- In general
 - Common properties are best taken care of by the common people
 - Strong community organization can be the basis for local priority setting
 - Most often participation in development processes (coming together and being a part of a process) itself leads to empowerment
 - Empowered communities can negotiate with multiple stakeholders to protect their interests and also plan for their future
 - Promotion of leadership that is efficient, transparent and accountable to the common people
 - Overarching framework of human rights and gender empowerment, as well as instruments like rules and regulations, helps in inclusion of vulnerable, increasing their power of negotiation
 - Gender sensitiveness means a balanced approach that is inclusive of both women and men
 - Social regulations and adherence to these norms important for management of natural resources and common property resources such as groundwater, tank water, common pasturelands
 - Village level institutions are good grooming ground for prospective leaders
 - Investments in human and institutional development can lead to sustainable outcomes much beyond project duration
- Regarding groundwater management
 - It is time to shift focus from development to management of water resources by improving water management mechanisms to address quantity and quality issues associated with competition for a finite resource such as groundwater
 - A paradigm of water sharing enables food and income security during water scarce situations
 - Community level agreements form the basis to put in place water sharing systems



- Regarding tank management
 - Watershed development must be tank centric, radiating from the water body outwards and integrating management of soil, water and forests.
 - Traditional tank management systems have existed to ensure food security. Modern tank management institutions can be built on these systems.

Topic 2: Bridging information asymmetries to strengthen community organizations

The main focus was on demystification of technologies and provision of technical skills and information to the community. Some lessons:

- Given space and encouragement, technical complexities can be demystified and managed by the communities
- The notion that women and illiteracy are the stumbling block for undertaking various activities (financial and technical) can be dispelled through appropriate training. Illiteracy need not be a barrier.
- Simple techniques help in making monitoring and management of intangible resources easier for communities
- A combination of measurement devices provides for improved information for farmers to make cropping decisions
- Capacity building activities in one program can benefit and have impact in many other ways and programs (generation of positive externalities)
- Smaller scale interventions, conceptualized by the local communities, can keep external interest groups (contractors) away and at the same time have larger impacts at local level and better ownership

Topic 3: Models for convergence, linkages and collaborations among institutions (for sustainability and upscaling)

- At local village level
 - Enhanced organizational capacities of the community in Village Development Society (VDS) can be transferred to the larger Panchayat system
 - Integration of institutions for mainstreaming of development activities within CBOs for sustainability of activities undertaken as part of various programs
 - Common platform created in the form of gram sabha for involving all the members of the community in decision-making processes especially during the selection of beneficiaries for development programs
 - Discussions in the Gram Sabhas on the plan, progress and other project related issues openly ensured that information and decision making on all aspects including finances was in the public domain
 - Participation can be understood in many ways. Despite cultural limitations, women can participate and exert their choices through various means (through husbands, sons). Type or extent of participation (of women) may differ among the villages depending on socio-cultural factors but as long as transparency and accountability are maintained in the decision-making processes (through grama sabhas), it is possible to achieve positive results.
 - Preparedness of the community to own up the responsibility to manage and maintain
- The key elements for successful collaborations among institutions (Government - NGO) are trust, agreements that are respected, sharing of information, roles and responsibilities and flexibility shown by the institutions to accommodate.
- Requirements for successful collaborations :
 - Transparency is a necessary condition
 - Role and responsibility should be defined clearly
 - Written and documented communication and agreements ensures accountability
 - A clear understanding of strategy and goals amongst stakeholders is necessary



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Topic 4: Experiences of watershed development for growth

- Even small interventions (value addition) can have a multiplier effect when the intervention suits the needs and available local resources are properly utilized (for example, NRM based livelihood activities)
- Role of NGO/project implementing agency in the post-project period: The facilitator should be in touch with the communities even after the project period through visitors, trainees, participating in the workshop watershed villages, melas so as to provide stimuli and support for the community based organizations created in the project period to adapt and grow with new opportunities.
- Integration of livestock and farm based livelihood strategies such as horticulture into watershed activities
- Establishing linkages with various institutions / service providers so that the community can avail of services required.



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