

Foreword

Watershed development has been advanced as a policy response to environmental crisis in rural areas and the non-sustainability of agriculture, especially in dry land and semi-arid regions. In India, this programme has been implemented since 1975. Although originally conceived as a soil and water conservation programme, during the last decade, watershed development has been rearticulated as a comprehensive programme for rural development. Even so, watershed management is a location-specific programme in terms of agro-ecological and socio-cultural conditions. As such, the panchayati raj institutions and community based organisations have a crucial role to play in this programme.

What are the institutional capacities of panchayats and community based organisations involved in the formulation and implementation of the watershed programme? What are the linkages and interactions between panchayats and community based organisations in this regard? Going beyond watershed development, what are the prospects of designing innovative strategies for participatory natural resource management? Thanks to an endowment grant from Sir Rattan Tata Trust, in the instant study, Dr. M. Gopinath Reddy of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad and Dr. N. Sivanna of the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore collaborate to answer these questions.

Data for this study come from five villages in Kolar district in Karnataka and two villages in Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. For in-depth examination of the key issues, Dr. Sivanna and Dr. Reddy have followed two different strategies; their analyses appear in Chapters II and III respectively. In Chapter IV, they present the main findings of their analyses in comparative perspective and arrive at policy recommendations. Scholars and policy makers dealing with watershed management programme and decentralised planning and governance will find this monograph useful.

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