

AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING ACTIVITIES**Dipesh Jha**

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ABSTRACT

Watershed Program is expected to achieve "more equitable distribution of the benefits of land, water resources and bio-mass development." To achieve this, it is first necessary to acknowledge the importance of villagers' contributions to the village economy. It has been proved in various impact assessment study that, the developmental programmes which involve people or ultimate users of the community in all aspects of project management have greater chances of success. Active and voluntary participation of all stakeholders guarantees the successful implementation of watershed program. Therefore, watershed program always call for community participation and collective action. It is necessary because individual choices have collective consequences in the watershed framework as lots of externalities are involved. Action of one group of farmers in one location affects adversely or favorably other group of farmers in different location (off-site impacts). Often the different groups and locations have conflicting objectives with respect to their investment priorities and enterprise choices. These need to be converted into opportunities. The action of all the farmers in the watershed should converge in such a way that the positive externalities are maximized, and negative ones are minimized. To achieve this, the community or stakeholders have to develop their own rules, which resolve their conflicting objectives. It is believed and observed that better organized and effective people's participation would yield higher benefits (Joshi, et al. 2008). Thus, the community, its problems, its needs and aspirations along with its wisdom should be central to the programme. In this study it was tested that, whether 'The new common guidelines 2008' continued to flourish the watershed project with effective awareness and active participation of villagers, women and vulnerable groups by targeting beneficial economic activities for these groups or not.

Keywords: Awareness, Participatory Planning, Watershed.

Introduction:

Active and voluntary people's participation is a pre-requisite for the success of watershed development programs. Involvement of local stake-holders in planning, development and execution, monitoring and management of the watershed activities is as vital as the scientific input in deciding the technology intervention. The first generation watershed projects in the country were supply-driven. The government officials used to identify locations and decide various activities for implementation of watershed projects. This top-down approach did not match the needs of stakeholders in the watershed. In the absence of people's participation, the potential benefits of the watershed program could not be realized. To overcome this problem, the concept of Participatory Integrated Development of Watershed (PIDOW) was initiated in 1980s. However, only a partial success could be achieved and some radical steps were taken to involve the local stakeholders/people in planning, formulation and implementation of watershed program in the country. Overtime, people's institutions like Panchayati Raj Institutions, Non-Government Organisations, Self-Help Groups and watershed implementing committees were gradually involved into the project management systems by allocating more funds. They aggressively participated and emphasized the importance of people's involvement in the success of the watersheds informally. To make it formal, the 1994 watershed guidelines specifically included voluntary involvement and participation of village people as one of the conditions in the watershed development. Only voluntary participation (not forced one) would sustain the watershed program. It is, therefore, important to identify conditions under which the watershed beneficiaries would involve themselves in implementation during the project tenure and maintenance of structures after the project is formally over. To foster these need a 'Bottom-up Approach' was initiated in which the larger level of people's participation was attracted by involving the specific need based activities of local people. For this it is essential to integrate small and marginal farmers, women and landless laborers into the process right from the beginning. Through this approach more number of farmers started participating in watershed development program as they derived tangible economic benefits from the productivity enhancement activities and simultaneously landless and women could also find their share from the first phase itself. In this study it was tested that, whether 'The new common guidelines 2008' remained successful in balancing activities for men and women, farmers and landless people to enhance the impact of community watershed programs.

Research Methodology:

In order to study the objectives of the study, ex-post-facto research design was selected, for that a well-structured interview schedule was prepared. There are 34 watersheds implemented in 3 batches of IWMP Phase I in the Surat District of Gujarat, out of which 6 watersheds selected (2 watershed per each batch) and studied for this research. The interview schedule consisted of specific questions pertaining to awareness and participation of the respondents in watershed planning activities and its impact on various parameters was operated among total 300 watershed beneficiaries (150 core activity and 150 other activity beneficiaries) of the selected micro-watersheds. The respondents were selected by simple random method from the list derived from Watershed Development Team members and Village Watershed committees (VWC) and Watershed User Association (WUA). Information has been collected by recall technique and the difference in pre and post IWMP has been attributed as benefit from intervention.

Results and Discussion:

Community participation and participatory planning is of utmost importance towards the implementation. There should be equal participation of all categories of farmers, all caste system, village artisans and labourers and women, too. All the voices should be given equality for holistic development of a village. The strength, weaknesses, opportunity and threats (SWOT analysis) could be identified, by involving representation from each corner of village unit. Gram Sabha is responsible to take decision related to project work. One cannot call every time a Gram Sabha to take everyday decisions and suggestions. Therefore a representative body should be elected by the villagers themselves in a Gram Sabha which will undertake the everyday work of the project at village level and take decision on behalf of the community members. This body will be called Village Watershed Committee (VWC). The village watershed committee will be responsible for day to day functions of the project management at village level. There will be other institutions that need to be formed like the User Groups, Self Help Groups, etc. to carry out the watershed activities. The respondents recalled about this process and their responses were registered and analysed as given below tables and narrations.

The details shown in the **Table 1** indicated that, about 95.00 per cent of the total watershed beneficiaries agreed that the Gram Sabha was held for planning of the watershed programme. Only around 5.00 per cent of them were unaware for arrangement of such Gram Sabha. This result denotes positive sign for proper planning of watershed programme already.

Representation in Gram Sabha is pre-requisite for effective Participatory planning. It may provide an equal chance to put the 'voice of his need' for the betterment of life. Those who recalled about arrangement of Gram Sabha, more than 90.00 per cent of them remained present in Gram Sabha. This result seems the high aspirations of the respondents about developmental activities.

Manifestation of the issues raised or Suggestions given by respondent in Gram Sabha, gives efficacy to plan the developmental activities with collective bargaining. It reduces the biasness and ascendancy of particular caste or class. This ultimately brings smoothness of designing and implementing the participatory approach. Nearly 60.00 per cent of the core activity beneficiaries and half of the other activity beneficiaries, who remained present in then Gram Sabha, raised various issues related to natural resources which they felt important for the better livelihood. They also suggested the revolutionary activities to overcome these issues according to their indigenous technical knowledge. Concede of Issues or Suggestions given by the respondents in Gram Sabha have equally importance in giving assurance about the democratic way of enforcement of the activities. Almost cent per cent of the respondents have accepted that Gram Sabha conceded their issues and suggestions for consideration.

TABLE 1: SHOWING THE DETAILS OF AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS IN WATERSHED PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Awareness and Participation		Core Activity Beneficiaries		Other Activity Beneficiaries		Total	
		Count	Table N %	Count	Table N %	Frequency	Percent
Arrangement of Gram Sabha for Planning of Watershed Development Programme	Yes	148	98.7%	136	90.7%	284	94.67
	No	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00
	Unaware	2	1.3%	14	9.3%	16	5.33
Attendance of Respondent or any	Yes	139	92.7%	132	88.0%	271	90.33
	No	9	6.0%	4	2.7%	15	5.00

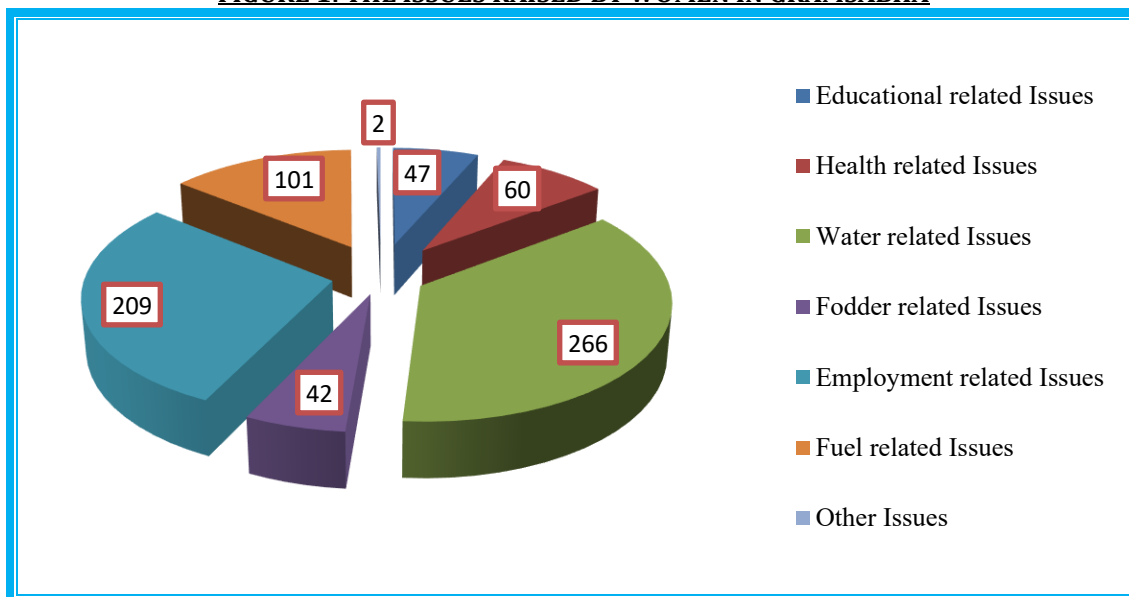
family member of thy in Gram Sabha							
Issues raised or Suggestions given by respondent in Gram Sabha	Yes	89	59.3%	75	50.0%	164	54.67
	No	50	33.3%	57	38.0%	107	35.67
Concede of Issues or Suggestions given by respondent in Gram Sabha	Yes	89	59.3%	72	48.0%	161	53.67
	No	0	0.0%	3	2.0%	3	1.00
Presence of Women in Gram Sabha	Yes	139	92.7%	132	88.0%	271	90.33
	No	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00
Concede of Issues or Suggestions given by Women in Gram Sabha	Yes	137	91.3%	132	88.0%	269	89.67
	No	2	1.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.67
Importance of Involvement of Women for Planning Watershed development Programme	Yes	139	92.7%	132	88.0%	271	90.33
	No	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00
Participation of all kinds of people in Gram Sabha	Yes	129	86.0%	107	71.3%	236	78.67
	No	10	6.7%	25	16.7%	35	11.67
Acquaint of Entire Information about Watershed Project in Gram Sabha	Yes	125	83.3%	113	75.3%	238	79.33
	No	13	8.7%	19	12.7%	32	10.67
Issues/disputes in the selection of Watershed Committee members in Gram Sabha	Yes	15	10.0%	39	26.0%	54	18.00
	No	121	80.7%	89	59.3%	210	70.00
	Unaware	2	1.3%	4	2.7%	6	2.00
Involvement of Women in Watershed Committee.	Yes	147	98.0%	149	99.3%	296	98.67
	No	0	0.0%	1	.7%	1	0.33
	Unaware	3	2.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.00
Total		150	100.0%	150	100.0%	300	100.00

Source: Field Data 2017-18

Women always remain mainstay of the entire family, as their engagement and attachment with all domestic entails. Agricultural and allied works may not debar from that. Women especially from the small and marginal farming families perform over 60 per cent of on-farm activities and almost all off-farm activities. It is discernible that, arrangement of natural resources for food, fuel and fodder may not exclude the share of women. One can't find any domestic work of women without suffusion of water in that. The sagacity of women about the issues related to water and other useful domestic resources, as well as the probable determination are incompatible. The inspiration of woman for revolutionary work is indispensable. Thus their presence in Gram Sabha is unavoidable for planning of such resources. The study area was not bereaved of this phenomenon. All 271 respondents who had attended the Gram Sabha for planning of watershed activities recalled the presence of women in then Gram Sabha. It was also egregious to note that, all of them (90.33 per cent) strongly felt importance of involvement of women for planning of Watershed development Programme and their valuable suggestions.

The watershed beneficiaries were asked to recall about the issues raised by women in Gram Sabha. The issues which were likely to be most important for rural women facing before implementation of the Integrated Watershed Management Programme were noted presented in Figure 1 given below.

FIGURE 1: THE ISSUES RAISED BY WOMEN IN GRAMSABHA



Source: Field Data 2017-18 *Figure shows total Frequency

The figured data shows, the major issues faced by the rural women in arid and semi-arid region which may hurdle the development process of such area. Among the various issues raised by women, the issues about domestic water were remained at the top against rest of them; overwhelming respondents of both the categories (88.67 per cent) recalled about it. The second foremost issue was related to lack of employment among rural women. Nearly 70.00 per cent of the women raised the issue of employment in Gram Sabha, among them other activity beneficiaries were emphasized this issue more (80.67 per cent) than core activity beneficiaries. The third weightage was given to shortage of fuel wood availability in rural area (33.67 per cent), followed by issues about health (20.00 per cent), issues about education (15.67 per cent) and issues about fodder (14.00 per cent) respectively.

When the watershed beneficiaries were asked the importance of appending the women for the planning of watershed activities, cent per cent of them were gave great significance for such involvement. Majority of them (89.67 per cent) also concur that the Gram Sabha had concede of issues or suggestions created by women. The reasons for involvement of women in Gram Sabha for watershed planning were derived and tabulated as per **Table 2** given below;

TABLE 2: SHOWING THE REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN GRAMSABHA FOR WATERSHED PLANNING

Reasons for Involvement of Women	Core Activity Beneficiaries		Other Activity Beneficiaries		Total	
	N	Percent of Cases	N	Percent of Cases	N	Percent of Cases
Involvement for Animal Husbandry Activity	41	27.33	51	34.00	92	30.67
Involvement for Safe Drinking Water Facilities	133	88.67	131	87.33	264	88.00
Involvement for Economic Accrual	98	65.33	123	82.00	221	73.67
Involvement for Fuel Wood management	60	40.00	63	42.00	123	41.00
Involvement for Collateralized Product (NTPF)	6	4.00	9	6.00	15	5.00
Involvement for Other Issues	1	0.67	1	0.67	2	0.67
Total	150	100.00	150	100.00	300	100.00

Source: Field Data 2017-18

The data presented in table 2 concluded that, overwhelming majority of the respondents (88.00 per cent) were ratified the involvement of women for safe drinking water facilities as a strongest reason. The second possible reason for involvement of women was, for economic accrual (73.67 per cent) followed by for fuel wood management (41.00 per cent), for animal husbandry activities (30.67 per cent) and Involvement for Collateralized Product (NTFP) (5.00 per cent) respectively. The results were not unexpected, as discussed earlier the rural women of arid and semi-arid region have main constraints of availability of safe drinking water and domestic water. Sometimes to fetch a bucket of water they have to spend valuable time and strength for the fulfillment of family requirement.

AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS, TRAINING AND PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL:

“Informed participation is necessary for transparency and equity in Watershed Management Programme. Participation is seen as a two-way process of intense dialogue between the local people and outside agency, be it Government, NGO or professionals. The watershed action plan should not be as romanticized by people’s knowledge or a debunking of the expert but, there should be a process of demystification of expertise in the process of valorizing popular understanding, through a creative dialogue between the two” (S.Parthasarthy Committee report 2006). Equity principles should be extended to conflict resolution, beneficiary selection, sharing of benefits and much more. These could not be possible without effective training about planning and organizing of watershed activities through participatory rural appraisal techniques as well as need based prioritization and appropriate budgeting. It will provide an opportunity to deepen programme focusing on people’s involvement through a transparent, inclusive and sustainable process. By this way programme will cover the poor and marginalized in bottom line of the watershed area by increasing participation of watershed inhabitants. This could gradually shift people’s dependence on only Government programmes towards a higher level of ownership of watershed activities. In the present study inquired, whether such process of planning, training and participatory rural appraisal was practiced in an efficient way or not. The watershed beneficiaries were asked the process of formation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of their watershed, training imparted for that and involvement of all the inhabitants in this process. The results were noted and presented after due analysis in **Table 3** given below.

TABLE 3: SHOWING THE AWARENESS ABOUT PLANNING PROCESS, TRAINING AND PRA

Particulars	Core Activity Beneficiaries		Other Activity Beneficiaries		
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Training for Watershed Planning	85	56.67%	112	74.67%	
A. Training for Survey and Rural Appraisal	51	60.00%	72	64.28%	
B. Training for Assessment of Natural Resources	53	62.35%	66	58.93%	
C. Training for Preparation of PRA Maps	65	76.47%	105	93.75%	
D. Other Training	0	0.00%	2	1.78%	
Trainer for Training about Watershed Planning	Through PIA Representatives	73	85.88%	111	99.11%
	Through Other Organisations	9	10.59%	1	0.89%
	Unaware	3	3.53%	0	0.00%
	Not-Applicable	65	43.33%	38	25.33%
Arrangement of PRA for Planning Watershed Programme	131	87.33%	124	82.67%	
Prior information provided for PRA to village people.	116	88.55%	116	93.55%	
Remained present during PRA	107	92.24%	86	74.14%	
Raised Issues/Suggestions during PRA	83	77.57%	58	67.44%	
Concede of Issues/Suggestions raised by respondent during PRA	83	100.00%	57	97.28%	
Presence of Women during PRA	105	98.13%	86	100.00%	
Concede of Women's suggestions during PRA	93	88.57%	85	98.84%	
Gram Sabha held to encompass the work among proposed work during PRA	135	90.00%	132	88.00%	
A. Priority and Inclusion of proposed work during PRA unanimously through Gram Sabha	83	61.48%	52	39.39%	

B. Priority and Inclusion of proposed work during PRA through Watershed Committee.	56	41.48%	77	58.33%
C. Priority and Inclusion of proposed work during PRA through Representative of PIA.	1	0.74%	1	0.75%
D. Priority and Inclusion of proposed work during PRA through other way.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Gram Sabha held to inform the sanctioned Detail Project Report.	139	92.67%	134	89.33%

Source: Field Data 2017-18

It was revealed from the data that, out of 150 core activity beneficiaries 85 respondents were trained for watershed planning. While nearly three-fourth of the other activity beneficiaries participated in training programme. Further the respondents were asked about the topic of trainings. More than Three-Fourth (76.47 per cent) of the core activity beneficiaries and majority of the other activity beneficiaries (93.75 per cent) obtained training for preparation of PRA maps. While, around Three-Fifth of the respondents in both the categories were trained for 'Survey and Rural Appraisal' and for 'Assessment of natural Resources'. It was also observed from the data that, majority of the core activity beneficiaries (85.88 per cent) and nearly Cent per cent of the other activity beneficiaries obtained these training from Project Implementing Agency's representatives. Nearly Ninety per cent (87.33 per cent) of the core activity beneficiaries and 82.67 per cent of the other activities beneficiaries agreed about arrangement of PRA for the planning of watershed programme in their village. Among them, 88.55 per cent of core activity beneficiaries and 93.55 per cent of other activity beneficiaries given consent that they got prior information for PRA process to remain present. Among those who had given consent, 92.24 per cent of core activity beneficiaries and about Three-Fourth of the other activity beneficiaries remained present and took active participation by raising issues and providing some suggestions during PRA. Based on common interest and primary necessities of locales, most of their suggestions were conceded during the PRA for further consideration. Planning process might be incomplete without proper participation of women in PRA. To get rid of this lacuna, women were imparted equal weightage to remain presence in PRA process. Majority of the respondents (88.57 per cent of core activity beneficiaries and 98.84 per cent of other activity beneficiaries) accepted the issues and suggestions of women were considerate for planning.

It is necessary to arrange Gram Sabha after the process of PRA, to assess, segregate and compile the suggested work according to norms of the watershed guidelines and larger interest of the beneficiaries. It was asked whether such arrangement in study villages were made or not, 90.00 per cent of the core activity beneficiaries and 88.00 per cent of other activity beneficiaries agreed of having arranged meeting of Gram Sabha. It was also observed that about Ninety per cent of the respondents from both the categories were informed about the approval of Detail Project Report (DPR) through Gram Sabha.

Conclusion:

The involvement of all type of farmers, agricultural labours, village artisans, socio-economic backward classes and women in the Gram Sabha for the planning process of watershed is necessary in consortium approach. To know about it, the watershed beneficiaries were asked about the participation of all kind of rural people in Gram Sabha. Nearly Eighty per cent (78.67 per cent) of the beneficiaries from both the categories were reacted that, the then Gram Sabha had involved all type of the rural people for effective Planning Process, Training and Participatory Rural Appraisal of watershed treatment in their village.

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