

Guidelines for Grounding Watershed Development Projects

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1. Key Principles To be Borne in Mind

- i) Success in planning and implementation of a watershed project depends crucially on the interest shown by the watershed community and the NGO Staff.
- ii) Since no watershed development project can be successfully implemented unless it is “owned” by the villagers/villages, it is absolutely necessary that each farmer / villager / agrees to the project activity. Once a farmer has agreed to the project, he will be more interested and his participation in the project will also increase.
- iii) This is **not a programme for construction of check dams** for irrigating farmer’s fields. It is programme of soil and water conservation natural resources regeneration and management, and overall socio-economic development of the participating community.
- iv) Scrupulous adherence to “ridge to valley” principle is vital for the success of the programme. Treatment of land should start from a higher elevation and gradually lands of lower elevations would be taken up. Construction of check dams should be taken up at the end. This will not only reduce the need for constructing expensive check dams in the lower portions of drainage lines but also prevent unnecessary silting of them.
- v) Soil and water conservation measures should be accompanied by transfer of technology for **stabilizing agricultural yields** on farmers fields and **livestock management**.
- vi) The project involves a lot of plantation work on forestlands, private lands as well as on bunds in cultivated fields. Most projects face a shortage of good planting material. It is better and more economical to start your own nursery well in advance and stock it with enough seedlings to use during the project.
- vii) The relatively poorer families depend more on village commons, forestlands and on flocks of sheep and goat. Some of the measures of the project such as ban on free grazing and felling of trees affect poorer families. Such families should be provided with alternative or compensatory means of livelihood right from the beginning. Attempts may be made for introduction of rotational grazing as a regular practice by the village.
- viii) Suitable social and institutional / organizational setup should be created for following and maintenance of various treatments given after withdrawing the support.

2. Criteria for Selection of Watersheds (villages)

2.1 Physical Characteristics

- (i) Dry and drought prone villages where the proportion of irrigated area is not more than 30% of the cultivated area.
- (ii) Average rainfall should be less than 1000 mm.
- (iii) Villages with noticeable erosion, land degradation, resource depletion or water scarcity problems.
- (iv) Villages in the upper reaches of catchment area.
- (v) Well defined watersheds with the village boundaries coinciding to the greatest extent possible with the watershed boundary.
- (vi) Any land to be treated with structural measures shall normally have at least 3% slope or more.
- (vii) Larger land holdings of size more than 74 ha. should constitute not more than 20% of private land in the watershed.
- (viii) Forest land not more than 30%.
- (ix) The size of a watershed project should be around 500 - 1000 ha. covering one or two villages.

2.2. Socio-economic Characters

- (i) Predominantly poor villagers
- (ii) Preponderance of SCs/ STs and backward classes; and small and marginal farmers.
- (iii) More than 50% of the total income of the village(s) coming from agriculture.
- (iv) There should not be much difference in the size of the land holding (optional)
- (v) Villages that are willing to commit themselves to the following conditionalities.
 - (a) To ban felling of tress
 - (b) To ban free grazing and to under take social fencing for protecting vegetation.
 - (c) To reduce the live stock population if in excess and maintain the same with in the carrying capacity of the watershed (i.e. number which can be supported by the watershed).
 - (d) To ban the cultivation of water intensive crops like sugarcane and banana or at least not to increase the area under such crops from the present position.
 - (e) To contribute by way of “*Shramdaan*” or other wise a minimum of 16% of the unskilled labour costs of the project and also to collect such contribution equitably (impartially and in a just manner) from the village community. The landless and poor single parent households can be excluded from such a contribution.
 - (f) To take all such steps as are necessary for achieving and maintaining a sustainable production system.

3. Criteria for Selection of NGOs

3.1. Selection of NGOs for implementing WDPs

- (a) The NGOs are selected for participation in the Programme on the basis of the following factors amongst others:
 - i) Perspective on watershed development.
 - ii) Technical and managerial capability.
 - iii) Nature of projects handled in the past
 - iv) Method of operation and rapport with people and local government agencies.
 - v) Reputation and financial history
 - (b) The NGO should have been active in the area for a significant period before proposing watershed project for the area.
 - (c) If the NGO and the village community do not have enough previous experience of watershed or its component disciplines, they should be willing to demonstrate their commitment and ability, among others, by
 - i) Visits to other watershed projects (exposure visits)
 - ii) Appointing selected village youth and key persons and sending them for specific training programmes.
 - iii) By first preparing and implementing a demonstration project for a small area of about 100 - 150 ha. At least.
 - (d) NGOs and watershed communities with potential and willingness to implement a watershed project but having no previous experience would if selected, have to go through a Capacity Building Programme and meet the qualifying criteria before they undertake a large scale project.
 - (e) The NGOs should realize that this is not a programme for construction of check dams for irrigating farmers' fields, but a programme for overall socio-economic development of the watershed and its community.
3. The NGO should also strive for transfer of suitable technology for agricultural development and livestock management in the watershed areas.

4 Organizational and Institutional Details

4.1.Overview

The WDF assisted WDP consists of two phases. The first phase is called the “Capacity Building Phase” (CBP) and the second phase is called “Full Implementation phase” (FIP). The duration of the entire project is 4 years. Both CBP and FIP shall be implemented and completed normally over a period of 4 years from the date of release of the first installment of the grant.

4.1.1 Phase 1: The capacity Building Phase

The aim of the CBP is to equip the NGOs and Watershed Community who would like to undertake a Watershed Project but do not currently have the capabilities of doing so.

4.1.2 Phase 2. Full Implementation Phase

1. Only NGOs who have provided their capability to carryout watershed development are selected.
2. These NGOs then prepare a project proposal / project feasibility report (PFR) for FIP together with the VWC and the assisting Technical support organization (TSO) if any.
3. The PFR should contain physicals & financial requirements on Survey no. wise in government, private and forest lands

4.2Organizations Involved.

The following institutions/organisations will be involved in the execution of the WDF assisted watershed development project.

4.2.1.At the project level

4.2.1.1. The village watershed committee (VWC)

- (i) The Village Watershed Committee (VWC) a body representing the entire watershed community, jointly with the NGO will be responsible for project preparation and also for subsequent execution if and when the project is sanctioned.
- (ii) VWC will be nominated or democratically elected by *Gram Sabha* and will have at least 9 members which would include a Chairman, a Vice Chairman, a Treasurer a Secretary as Office bearers and other members. The members shall be nominated from the watershed area.

- (iii) VWC is expected to be formally registered.
- (iv) There will be adequate representation of different social groups, interest groups and geographical areas within the watershed.
- (v) There will be at least two members each selected from among the women and land less persons in the watershed area.
- (vi) A representative of the NGO may also function as the Secretary of the VWC if necessary for one or two years initially. However, attempt should be made to train and develop members of the VWC for serving as the Secretary of the committee.
- (viii) VWC shall meet at least once a month preferably from the start of the project preparation work and mandatory once the project execution begins.
- (ix) VWC and NGO will be jointly responsible for receiving the funds for project execution, the use of funds and proper project implementation in accordance with the terms and conditions of sanction

4.2.1.2. Non Government Organization (NGO)

- (i) The NGO is responsible for motivating and involving the village community in preparation and implementation the watershed project.
- (ii) The NGO and the VWC are jointly responsible for project preparation and implementation, to receive funds and be accountable for the same.
- (iii) The NGOs is also expected to link up with local Government departments/support institutions in order to avail of existing facilities and resources.

4.2.2.2. Technical Support

Technical Support organization (TSO) is an NGO or other organization, which has the competence to undertake necessary technical investigations and prepare comprehensive watershed projects. Their help may be sought by NGO-VWC in preparing watershed projects and in formulating project proposals as per the terms of reference (ToR).

5. Work Execution

- (i) The VWC and the NGO shall be jointly responsible for satisfactory work execution.
- (ii) The work shall be executed in accordance with the terms of reference and other conditions stipulated by NABARD from time to time.
- (iii) The NGO shall maintain competent technical staff (Agronomist and site engineer) that resides near the project location (within 10 - 15 km).
- (iv) The VWC will obtain in writing the concurrence and agreement of all parties on whose lands the treatments or any conservation measures are to be under taken according to the work plan.
- (v) The watershed community shall agree to contribute towards a minimum of 16% of labour cost of the project.
- (vi) The VWC review the progress of work once in every month in a formal meeting convened for the purpose.
- (vii) The implementation of the project should be with the principle of "from Ridge to Valley" and the key principles mentioned under item 2 are to be kept in mind during execution of the project.

6. Financial Arrangements:

Funds are available for the following purpose:

- (i) Promotion and training costs which will include awareness campaigns in villages, specific training of voluntary agency personnel and watershed community leaders, excursions to other projects and research stations.
- (ii) Cost of project preparation including necessary investigations, cost of hiring technical experts or agencies wherever applicable.
- (iii) Project measures namely, afforestation, pasture development, dry land horticulture and soil & water conservation structures.
- (iv) Personnel, equipment, transportation and other overhead costs of the voluntary agencies involved in project preparation and implementation.
- (v) Limited contribution to a maintenance fund for ensuring proper upkeep of works.

In general the financial arrangements for implementation of the project will be as follows:

- (i) **Funding agency** shall release the money for actual project execution directly either to NGO or to the joint account of NGO and Village Watershed Committee (VWC).
- (ii) For CBP, money goes directly to NGO concerned.

- (iii) For project planning and proposal (PFR) formulation for FIP, grants are provided by **Funding agency** directly to NGO concerned. 50% of the grant is provided as advance and the rest in suitable installments in accordance with the progress of project preparation work.
- (iv) Once the project proposal for FIP is sanctioned management costs go directly to the NGO whereas project costs go to a joint bank account of the NGO and the Village Watershed Committee (VWC).
- (v) The money sanctioned for CBP shall finally be adjusted towards the total money sanctioned for FIP.
- (vi) 50% cost of CBP is released as advance after meeting 16% of labour cost through '*Shramdaan*' or otherwise and due verification by **Funding agency**. The balance amount will be released after 60% of the total physical and financial coverage meant for CBP.
- (viii) The installment shall normally cover the requirement of funds covering a period of six months.
- (ix) Except for the first installment released, the release of subsequent installments will be contingent upon satisfactory completion of the work indicated for the half year for which the installment was drawn.
- (x) In order to maintain continuity of work execution, the VWC and NGO can apply in advance for release of the next installment after 60% of the physical and financial coverage of the previous half-year has been achieved.
- (xi) Application for release of advance installment (except the first one) shall be accompanied by the following certificates.
 - (a) A certificate from the Technical Support Organization (TSO) that engineering works if any, have been carried out according to the sanctioned work plan as well as according to technical specifications required for the purpose. (As TSO has not been engaged at present, the NGO concerned has to give this certificate).
 - (b) A certificate each from the VWC and NGO concerned that the work for the preceding half year has been executed to the extent of 60% of the physical and financial programme indicated in the sanctioned project document for which the previous installment was drawn.
- (xiii) The amount released as advance for programme implementation, if not utilized for the purpose during the period for which it was released, will be paid back to **Funding agency** by the NGO and the VWC.

7. Work Inspection and Certification.

Technical supervisors from the NGO or the TSO engaged by the NGO should certify every month or at the completion of a particular unit of work that the work has been carried out according to the technical norms prescribed in the Terms of Reference and the Project sanctioning documents. If there are any deviations from the norms, this should be clearly indicated and reasons cited there for. The certificate for land treatments and production system on arable lands shall be given by the Agronomist. The certificate for all construction activities will be given by the Site Engineer. The Agronomist and the Site Engineer will be the technical personnel employed by the NGO for supervising project implementation.

The VWC shall maintain on its record a monthly work completion report. A copy of the monthly work completion report shall be submitted to NABARD within fifteen days after the close of the month.

8. Maintenance of Records.

The VWC and the NGO shall be jointly responsible for maintenance of all records relating to the watershed development project. The records to be maintained shall include among others:

- (a) Daily Muster Rolls of labour attendance
- (b) Material consumption Register
- (c) Work Completion Register
- (d) Cash book for daily cash transactions.
- (e) Appropriate journals and ledgers with double entry system of accounting.
- (f) Maps that show the treatments completed survey number wise and which are update on a monthly basis.
- (g) Appropriate bills and vouchers.
- (h) Proceedings of the VWC meetings.

9. Maintenance of Works and Watershed Treatments.

The responsibility for maintaining the treatments and other works taken under the project shall rest with the VWC - works on private lands through the individual landholder and all works of community nature, even if located on individual lands by group action - from the beginning of the project as well as after the completion of the project. The VWC shall constitute a **“Repairs and Maintenance Fund”** and arrange for appropriate contributions towards the fund from the watershed community for common property management. Care should be taken to ensure that the contributions are in general commensurate with the benefits actually derived or likely to be derived by the individual family from the watershed development.

Commencing from the third year of project implementation NGO and the VWC through due discussion with the watershed community will establish a “**Village Maintenance Fund**”. While the minimum contribution per land holding farmer shall be Rs.100 per year, higher levels of contribution shall be prescribed according to the income of the individual farmers. In exceptional cases concerning extremely poor farmers, the watershed community may decide on the appropriate level of contribution.