

EVALUATION REPORT ON WESTERN GHATS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN TAMIL NADU (A JOINT STUDY)

1. The Study

The Centrally Sponsored Programme for the Integrated Development of Western Ghat Region called "Western Ghats Development Programme (WGDP)" was launched in 1974-75. The main objective of the scheme was the economic well-being of the local population residing in the area so that this hilly region may be brought at par with comparatively more developed adjoining areas. The scheme covered the area spreading over 1600 km. of the western coast of India from the mouth of river Tapti in Dhule of District of Maharashtra to the southern most tip of India at Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu.

To find out whether the modalities of the approach and implementation of Western Ghat Development Programme conform to the guidelines provided by the Government of India, at the instance of Planning Commission, the Programme Evaluation Organisation, and the Evaluation and Applied Research Department, Government of Tamil Nadu undertook a joint study of Western Ghat Programme in Tamil Nadu.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were the following:

- i) to find out how far the WGDP funds have been used as an additionality to the State Plan Schemes in the Region,
- ii) to examine whether physical targets have been realistically set with reference to financial allocations,
- iii) to analyse, how far the various sectoral programmes have been dovetailed and integrated with State Plan Programme,
- iv) to find out, to what extent the people's participation has been mobilised,
- v) to assess, to what extent the programme has helped the people in meeting their requirements of fuel, fodder and food, without upsetting the eco- balance,

- vi) to assess, how effective are the arrangements for coordination of work relating to formulation, implementation and monitoring of the programme at Taluk/District /State level, and
- vii) to suggest suitable measures for improvement in regard to formulation, implementation, monitoring and coordination of various schemes.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Sample Selection

The study was divided into two parts: (i) Macro level study, and (ii) Micro level study. 30 taluks and 5 taluks on the basis of secondary data were selected for macro level study and micro level study, respectively. Besides this about 500 beneficiaries, 100 non-beneficiaries and about 250 sample works were selected for the micro level study.

4. Reference Period

The field work was conducted from August, 1992 to October 1992. The data collected for the macro-level study related to the Sixth Five Year Plan, the Seventh Five Year Plan and Annual Plans for 1990-91 and 1991-92 while the micro level data related to the Seventh Five Year Plan Period only.

5. Main Findings

1. During the last decade, the growth of population in the WGD area at 12.3% was less than that of the State (15.4%).
2. The net area sown at the state level had increased by 4% over the last decade while it had decreased by 5% in the WGD region.
3. WGD funds constituted 60% of the total expenditure under Soil Conservation, Horticulture, Dairy Development, Poultry Development and Tribal Development whereas in other sectors viz. Forestry, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Khadi and Village Industries, Minor Irrigation, Roads and Water supply State plan funds exceeded 50%..
4. It was found that no pre-arranged weightage given to different sectoral programme though importance was given to forestry work and construction of roads, etc.
5. The implementing authorities of the various sectoral programme had no coordination with other Departments or Agencies for executing the work jointly.

Due to this reason, Manjalar watershed in KodaiKanal taluk had to be stopped. Major problem with regard to watershed approach was lacking coordination and preparing of a complete watershed plan well ahead of implementation.

6. About 50% of the beneficiaries reported that they had noticed degradation in the forest area during the last decade due to illegal cutting of trees for timber purpose by people with local influence.
7. Rainfall data showed an increasing trend in 11 taluks, while a decreasing trend as noticed in the remaining taluks. Moreover, the highest ground water levels had shown improvement in 6 taluks, while it had remained constant in one taluk. There was deterioration in some of the taluks also.
8. 172 check dams were constructed which gave some marginal benefits in arresting soil erosion.
9. The average amount of subsidy for supply of saplings worked out to Rs. 600 per hectare. The survival rate worked out at 63%. Saplings were supplied outside the planting season. Sapling of butted orange were in short supply in Kadaikanal taluka.
10. Out of the total expenditure of Rs. 80 lakhs nearly 67% was on afforestation. Mostly miscellaneous spices (87%) like Velvel, Parambai, Odai, tamarind, etc. had been raised.
11. Out of the 6 works, only one work viz. widening of Ghat road from Batlagundu to Kodaikanal was completed so far.
12. Mulberry was cultivated in 45 hectares, of which 46% of the area had been uprooted and switched over to other crops such as sugarcane, banana, etc.
13. The mobile veterinary unit at Kodaikanal and the veterinary dispensary at poolathur had been closed down.
14. 25 hand pumps and one ground level storage tank were provided. Of the servicable hand pumps, each served to about 400 people, besides 200 cattles.
15. Three percolation ponds were constructed to benefit 97 wells covering an additional area of 60 hectares.
16. Fishery Department had failed in popularising fish production in the irrigation tanks in Dindigul taluk.

17. All the schemes implemented by the Tamil Nadu had failed except for the bee keeping activities.
18. The overall undiscounted return on investment in respect of the schemes implemented under WGD in the 5 sample taluks during the Seventh Five Year Plan period worked out to 15%.
19. For sectors like Soil Conservation, Forestry, Horticulture and Roads, there were separate functionaries for the implementation of the programme. However, for the other sectors like water supply, animal husbandry, Sericulture, etc. there was no separate staff for implementing the WGD.
20. On the whole, planning and monitoring aspects of the WGD need some improvements.

6. Major Suggestions

1. In view of the importance given to irrigation facilities for agricultural production, the scope for increased outlay in minor irrigation sector should be widened
2. Since mulberry cultivation offers great scope for increasing the income of the farmers, due importance may be given to sericulture activities.
3. In order to bring economic benefits on a much wider scale, the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers should be encouraged to take poultry farming
4. More emphasis under Khadi and Village Industries needs to be given to bee-keeping, processing of fruits and various other hill products such as pepper, cardamom, cloves, etc. for domestic market.
5. The area under pasture should be increased so that inroads into forest lands for grazing purposes could be avoided.
6. Since the highest ground water levels in Coimbatore taluka have shown a declining trend at the rate of 1.23 feet per annum. Immediate steps may be taken for arresting such a steep fall.
7. There should be further improvements in reporting the progress made on the physical and financial achievements. Monitoring at the level of Heads of Departments and Secretariat needs strengthening.

8. Village/Block/Taluk level Committees providing for people's participation in Planning and implementation of WGDP performance would enhance the utility of the programme.
9. There is need for constituting district level committees with the collector and other sectoral officers for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme.
10. Watershed planning should be entrusted to a group of experts drawn from various sectoral departments. The Expert Committee can function under the direct control of Department of Planning and Development.
11. The scope for enthusing farmers to grow nutritious grass varieties suitable for the area needs exploring as they can get more income from other dry crops.
12. Immediate steps should be taken for provision of roads as the people are facing lot of trouble in extension work. The Highways Department should move Government of India to get clearance to complete the Perumalmalai-Periyakulam road where a lot of expenditure had already been incurred.