

**Evaluation Report on Western Ghats
Development Programme - 1982**

1. The Study

The Western Ghats Development Programme (WGDP), initiated during 1974-75 as a centrally sponsored programme with full assistance from the Centre, aimed at the accelerated development of the Western Ghats region comprising the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu as well as the union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu with a view to bring them at par with the adjoining developed areas. The High Level Committee, consisting of the Chief Ministers of the concerned States and chaired by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, emphasised programmes in the key sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, dairy development, minor irrigation, soil conservation and roads. Various Schemes were taken up in these sectors with a view to improve the economic well-being of the local people and to exploit the resources of the region with due regard to conservation of ecology. A Committee of Secretaries of the five states was formed in 1974 under the Chairmanship of the Member, Planning Commission, for overseeing the programme. 9 districts each in Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra, 6 in Tamil Nadu and one in the UT of Goa, Daman and Diu were, then, included in the programme. The population to be covered by the WGDP as per the 1971 census was 86.77 lakhs in Maharashtra, 80.64 lakhs in Tamil Nadu, 68.81 lakhs in Kerala, 33.56 lakhs in Karnataka and 1.07 lakhs in Goa.

On the recommendations of the Secretaries Committee, the Programme Evaluation Organisation carried out during January-August, 1981 an evaluation study of the schemes on minor irrigation, soil conservation, roads and forestry in the States of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Goa. The study report was published in March, 1982.

2. Objectives

- i) To study how the WGDP in general and the schemes of soil conservation, forestry, minor irrigation and roads in particular were planned and implemented;
- ii) To study the operational problems with regard to co-ordination and implementation in the context of the inter-sectoral dependence of the programme;
- iii) To study as to how far the various plan schemes for the four sectors were effective;
- iv) To identify the areas of success and failure of different schemes and the reasons thereof;
- v) To assess the impact on the beneficiaries covered under the various schemes; and

vi) To assess the impact of infrastructural facilities and assets created on the accelerated growth of the region with due regard to ecological balance.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

The study was conducted at three levels, viz. Taluka, Project/worksites and beneficiaries. 10 districts where comparatively larger number of Schemes had been in operation were selected for the study. 2 talukas were selected from each chosen district on the basis of the maximum number of schemes in operation. Within the selected talukas, lists of the work sites/projects were prepared separately for each selected sectoral scheme in descending order of the expenditure incurred on each work site/project. Those projects accounting for the highest expenditure to their credit were selected from each of the schemes. A sample of 10 beneficiaries was selected from each project by employing simple random method. Thus, the final sample consisted of 537 beneficiaries, 56 projects/work sites, 24 schemes and 19 talukas in 10 districts of 4 states and one Union Territory.

4. Reference Period

The field investigation was initiated in January 1981 and completed in August, 1981. The data related to the period between 1974-75 and 1979-80.

5. Main Findings

1. During 1974-80, an expenditure of Rs. 2542.68 lakhs was incurred on the WGDP against an allocation of Rs. 2782.57 lakhs. Statewise break-up of the expenditure showed that Rs. 547.32 lakhs was incurred in Karnataka, Rs. 598.49 lakhs in Kerala, Rs. 871.14 lakhs in Maharashtra, Rs. 389.24 lakhs in Tamil Nadu and Rs. 136.51 lakhs in the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu.

2. In Karnataka, the maximum expenditure under the programme was incurred on Schemes under forestry (27.61%) followed by agriculture (25.73%), industry (22.46) and minor irrigation (8.10%). In Kerala, schemes pertaining to agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry together accounted for 86.16% of the total expenditure under the WGDP. In Maharashtra, minor irrigation sector accounted for the maximum expenditure (37.20 per cent). In Tamil Nadu, about 71% of the total funds under the WGDP was allocated to forestry schemes alone. In the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu, minor irrigation accounted for about 38% of the expenditure under the programme, followed by agriculture (24.57%), communication (16.85), forestry (11.44%) and animal husbandry (9.71%).

3. In Karnataka, the WGDP, initiated in January 1975, was spread over 40 talukas of 9 districts. In Kerala, the programme was introduced in 1974-75 covering 21 talukas of 9 districts. In Maharashtra, the programme was initiated in 1974-75 covering 53 talukas spread over 9 districts. The WGDP, initiated in 1975-76, covered 28 talukas of six districts in Tamil Nadu. In the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu the programme was taken up in 1975-76 to cover 3 talukas.

4. The minor irrigation (M.I.) works taken up in Karnataka (in Somwarpet taluka of Coorg district) included construction of 5 new irrigation tanks and restoration of two old tanks. Of these, those works relating to the restoration of old tanks were only completed at the time of the field study. The time over-run in completion was attributed to the reluctance of contractors to take up works in interior areas, non-availability of labour at wages which were considerably lower than those received by the plantation workers and work interruptions due to rainfall and hilly terrain. Even in the case of completed works, irrigation channels were not completed. The beneficiaries had, however, reported an increase in the yield of Paddy from 14.8 quintals to 26.59 quintals per hectare during 1980-81 due to increased irrigation facilities.

5. In the three selected districts of Maharashtra, 7 Minor Irrigation (MI) tanks and 3 Kolhapur Type (KT) Weirs were taken up for construction under the WGDP. Out of this, 3 MI tanks and one KT Weir were completed at the time of the field study. However, due to non-availability of skilled labour, the canal works in all cases could not be completed. Only less than 10% of the created irrigation potential was utilised. Underutilisation was imputed to incomplete canal works, neglect of 'on-farm development' activities, indifferent attitude of the farmers due to poor extension work, ignorance about water management practices, etc. The small and marginal farmers constituted 47.5% and 12.5% respectively of the beneficiaries of the MI Schemes. The employment generated per hectare in case of all the selected works was 174 mandays during 1979-80 compared to 162 mandays in the pre-project period.

6. In the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu, the MI programme did not make any impact on the wage employment of the local population. Out of the 4 selected talukas, benefits were flowing only from a lift irrigation scheme and that too to an affluent farmer who neither paid the water cess nor followed the recommended cropping pattern. Deficiencies in the quality of works, monitoring and supervision and maintenance of pump-house were also reported.

7. The types of soil conservation measures taken up in the selected districts of Coorg and Uttara Kannada in Karnataka included farm ponds, amalgamation of paddy fields and bench terracing. The construction of farm ponds in Coorg was more useful as an irrigation work than as a soil conservation measure. Whereas amalgamation of paddy fields helped efficient cultivation, bench terracing, which was employment intensive, enabled cultivation of wasteland, besides conservation of top soil. The yield per hectare of important crops increased perceptibly and the value of the land covered by the conservation Programme got appreciated. However, deficiencies like cost over-run due to high wages, shortage of funds, incompleteness of farm ponds construction and, above all, the flow of the bulk of the benefits of the conservation works to the big cultivators were reported.

As part of soil conservation measures, land terracing (in Kolhapur and Ratnagiri districts) and land-cum-horticulture development (in Nashik and Ratnagiri districts) were taken up in Maharashtra. The selected 12 projects covered an area of 388.83 hectares under soil conservation measures and generated an employment of 96340 mandays. Out of the 103 selected beneficiaries, 43 (41.7%) were small farmers, 35 (33.9%) were marginal farmers and the rest were from the 'others' category. 78 (75.7%) of them received financial assistance. 22 (21.4%) of the selected beneficiaries received employment on works relating to land terracing to the extent of 913 mandays.

9. In the Union Territory , the soil conservation works taken up under the WGDP were limited to the reclamation of cultivable waste lands owned by individual farmers. Wall-fencing was also taken up in 1978-79. The selected beneficiaries reported that the measures had resulted in an increase in the cropped area to the extent of 68 per cent, higher yield per hectare of paddy and a 55% increase in employment. However, the Schemes were not employment-oriented as the levelling work was done by bulldozers and tractors.

10. The road works taken up under the WGDP in Maharashtra included improvements in Ratangiri-Kolhapur road (State Highway No:49) in both the selected districts i.e. Kolhapur and Ratangiri. This was included under the WGDP mainly because of the paucity of funds under the normal state plan. Though 3.48 lakh mandays of employment had been generated by the work till March, 1980, it did not benefit the local community much , as majority of the labour employed was from outside the state. 35% of the selected beneficiaries belonged to scheduled Castes. Nearly 55% of the selected beneficiaries were marginal farmers.

11. In Tamil Nadu, of the 4 road works included under the WGDP in the selected districts of Madurai, only one was taken up and completed, that too with time and cost over-run. Delay in construction was due to delay in obtaining tenders, shortage of raw materials and unexpected rains. The completed work i.e. making improvements in Sirumalai Ghat Road in Dindigul taluka, generated 36000 mandays of employment. The work was poor in quality; so was its maintenance. Out of 10 workers selected, 6 belonged to scheduled castes and the rest to backward castes. All of them were landless labourers. The work improved the communication facility in the hilly region. However, giving wage employment to the local population was not kept as a basic objective of the scheme.

12. The forestry schemes taken up under the WGDP in Karnataka included cashew plantation in minor forest areas, plywood and matchwood plantations and bamboo plantation. The bamboo plantation projects in Virajpet taluka of Coorg district and 2 cashew plantation projects in each of the talukas, i.e. Kumta and Honavar in Uttara Kannada district were studied in depth. Work was carried out as per the schedule. The selected projects were production oriented. In the selected beneficiary households, 53% of the adult members were employed in the selected forestry project. Marginal farmers constituted 64% of the selected beneficiaries while 16% were agricultural labourers and 20% forest labourers. There was considerable increase in the average annual income of the selected households.

13. Numerous forestry projects were initiated under the WGDP in the selected districts, i.e. Ratangiri, Nashik and Kolhapur of Maharashtra with a view to reduce soil erosion and ecological imbalance in the area, to produce raw-materials for forest-based small scale industries and to provide employment to local population. The progress of the implementation of the selected projects was according to the schedule. These were production-oriented as well. 98.5% of the selected beneficiaries were small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. Wages offered were attractive. However, extension services to induce private forest owners to raise fuel wood, timber and fodder crops were conspicuously lacking. Again, the target of 8 kms. of road construction in the interior forest of Nashik district could not be achieved. No infrastructure was developed in the other two districts.

14. Forest schemes were in operation in both the selected districts of Madurai and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. Cloves plantation, one among the earliest schemes, generated 2.15 lakh mandays of employment upto 1979-80. Pulpwood cultivation, primarily undertaken to fulfil an agreement reached between the Government of Tamil Nadu and some industrial units, generated 1.89 mandays of employment during 1976-77 to 1979-80. However, the local population was not benefited by the employment created therefrom. The selected rubber plantation projects provided employment of 59,894 mandays to the local population during the period. Of the sample of 60 beneficiaries drawn from pulpwood, cloves, rubber and geranium plantations, 92% were agricultural labourers and the rest, small and marginal farmers. It was revealed that about 27 per cent of the beneficiaries were SCs/STs. Nearly 80% of the total work force of the selected households received employment from the selected work units.

15. Two schemes, i.e. "soil and water conservation" which included terracing and construction of the trenches in plantation areas and "communications in forest area" which provided for road construction in forest areas, were taken up under the forestry sector in the Union Territory. The study of 33 selected beneficiaries revealed that the benefits from the selected forestry projects had gone to the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers belonging to the economically weaker section of the society. The average income from all sources of the selected respondents increased by 58% compared to that in the year which preceded the initiation of the programme.

16. The Co-operative Farming Society at Attappady in Palghat district and Sugandhagiri Cardamom Project in South Wynaad were taken up in Kerala as part of the WGDP. Integrated area development approach was followed in the case of these forestry projects. These projects together helped in the economic upliftment of nearly 1000 tribal families, even while taking care to maintain the ecological balance of the area. Another important project taken up was the development of Tribal collective Farm at Pookot Lake area.

Attappady Co-operative Farming Society (ACFS) was registered in 1975 with a view to settle initially 420 landless tribal families and to bring about their economic and social development. The two main components of the project were (a) creation of required infrastructural works and (b) raising of plantations. The infrastructural works, which accounted for an expenditure of Rs. 157 lakhs during 1974-75 to 1980-81, included provision for irrigational facilities like sprinklers, weirs, water tanks and check dams, construction of 90 kms of link roads, bunding, terracing and fencing, extension of power lines and provision for welfare facilities like safe drinking water, nursery school, creches, consumer stores, hospitals, quarters for 420 tribal families, etc. Cardamom and coffee were the two major plantation crops in the farm. The plantation targets

were achieved except for cardamom. The State Government had assigned 1040 hectares of vested forest land for raising plantations. Agricultural operations generated 10,08,374 mandays of employment, while infrastructural works created 5,74,239 mandays. All the selected beneficiaries received regular employment. Their income from all sources increased by 60.68% as compared to the pre-project period.

18. Sugandhagiri cardamom project, too, had two components, i.e. creation of required infrastructural works and raising of plantations. The project started earning revenue right since 1977-78 through the sale of cardamom seedlings. The contractors who carried out the infrastructural works employed labour from outside. However, plantation works generated 6,47,528 mandays of employment upto 1980-81, the chunk of which was enjoyed by the tribals. Absenteeism from work was noticed to the extent of 40%. All the 40 selected beneficiaries received regular employment throughout the year. Additional benefits like sickness allowance, maternity leave, earned leave, free uniform, etc. were also provided. The project resulted in a noticeable improvement in the life of the local tribal population. However, the project failed to secure the required financial assistance from the ARDC for plantation works.

19. No attempt had, thus far, been made to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire Western Ghats Region based on the resource inventory or base line data; nor was there any effective machinery at the State level or the Planning Commission level to scrutinise in a professional manner the various schemes implemented under the WGDP. Although some of the states had constituted Special Cells under the WGDP, no detailed research studies were made to assess policy alternatives or to ascertain the feasibility of projects.

20. The schemes included in the programme could not attract investment from institutional agencies except in the case of Kerala. Emphasis was laid on individual beneficiary-oriented schemes in all the constituent states except Kerala.

6. Major Suggestions

1. The Town and Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) of the union Ministry of Works and Housing should take active steps for the preparation of proto-type Taluka level plans for individual States. Simultaneously, the State Town Planning Departments will have to be energised to prepare detailed Taluka level plans under the guidance of the TCPO.

2. The Special Cells at the State level must draw up long-term perspective plans in line with the work being done by the Perspective Planning and the Project Appraisal Divisions of the Planning Commission.

3. Construction works should normally be taken up departmentally on the pattern of the works implemented under the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra.

4. All the constituent states should evolve such schemes as those taken up in Kerala (with financial assistance from institutional agencies like the

Agricultural Refinance Development Corporation, the State Harijan Welfare Department and the Integrated Tribal Development project) to enable them to have a large regional plan and thereby to accommodate sufficient number of priority schemes for the development of the area.

5. The States should adopt integrated area development approach for the accelerated development of the region.

6. There is a need for adequate provision for maintenance of various assets created under the programme.

7. In the case of minor irrigation works, there is a need to synchronise construction of field canals, land levelling and other on-farm development works. Extension agencies must educate farmers in the adoption of soil and water management practices.

8. Afforestation and plantation works should be taken up in conjunction with the soil conservation works. Social forestry works may be encouraged to generate additional employment in considerable number.