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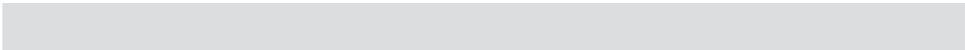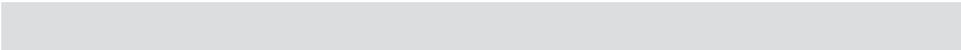
A Participatory Review of ISPWDK

**Indo-Swiss Participative Watershed
Development Project – Karnataka**

SERIES 3 2006

PEOPLE CENTRED, PEOPLE INITIATED, PEOPLE CONTROLLED:
A Participatory Review of ISPWDK

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Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking SDC for suggesting this review process. It proved to be truly wonderful, bringing real meaning and strengthening to the participatory approach that has been consistently used in ISPWDK – and providing not only an opportunity for 'looking back', but also a forward-looking perspective for the communities in the project area. I would also like to thank all the PSC members for their support in endorsing the review process.

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Thank you again, one and all.

J Jangal   June 2006
Senior Programme Coordinator.

Acronyms

AME	Agriculture Man Ecology
CBO	Community Based Organisation
COOF	SDC Coordination Office
CPR	Common Property Resources
DLH	Dry Land Horticulture
FFS	Farmer Field School
GB	General Body
GC	Governing Council
GIS	Geographical Information System
GoK	Government of Karnataka
GGK	Grama Gyana Kendra
GMASS	Grameena Mahila Arthik Seva Samithi
ha	Hectare
HID	Human and Institutional Development
IC	Intercooperation
ISPWDK	Indo Swiss Participative Watershed Development Project – Karnataka
JPR	Joint Progress Review
KAS	Kanakanala Abhivrudhi Samsthe
MVSSN	Munjavu Mahila Vividhodesha Sahakari Sangha Niyamita
MIS	Management Information System
MYRADA	Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRM	Natural Resource Management

PIDOW	Participatory Integrated Development of Watershed
PIRC	Project Implementation and Review Committee
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
PSMU	Programme Support and Management Unit
PTRG	People's Technical Resource Group
SAG	Self Affinity Group
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TOT	Training of Trainers
UG	User Group
VDS	Village Development Society
WOTR	Watershed Organisation Trust
WMC	Watershed Management Committee

Executive summary

This report is the product of a participatory review of the Indo-Swiss Participative Watershed Development project-Karnataka, ISPWDK, which took place in the field over the period May–July 2005 (subsequent collation of all the information gathered took longer). It is structured according to the aspects of particular interest to the funding agency, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC. Conducted by a team of all project stakeholders, the review was exceptional that the community members formed the majority within the team. The team comprised, in addition to one external facilitator, one man and one woman from each of the three project watersheds (thus six community members), one NGO partner representative from each of the three partners (thus three), and one representative of the ISPWDK coordination office, PSMU. The emphasis throughout the review process was on participation. Thus the review team visited each of the watersheds in turn, taking five days in each to hold numerous discussions and participatory appraisal exercises with community members and specific stakeholder groups. In a final meeting at the end of this process, the findings were summarised and agreed upon. This report also draws from project reports and databases to supplement the team findings. Further, in a separate chapter, it outlines the reflections of the facilitating organizations (the NGO partners and PSMU) on project functioning.

'People centred, people initiated, people controlled' has been the guiding philosophy behind the project. The review team found numerous ways in which this was integrated into project design and not only implemented, but sometimes further modified in the field in a people-centred manner. All the people's institutions supported through the project were found to be performing well, albeit with some variation that is to be expected. The core institution for the project, the Village Development Society, VDS, is now well established in the 14 project villages. The VDS have demonstrated an ability to manage a large volume of project funds in a transparent and accountable manner; over a period of three years (July 2002–June 2005) each has handled on average some Rs35 lakhs (the smallest VDS had a total financial flow of Rs10 lakhs; the largest volume of funds handled by one VDS is over Rs55 lakhs). The SHGs supported through the project have proven to be a sound base for village development activities. They are now organised into umbrella institutions in each of the watersheds, and are a vehicle for womens' empowerment, with clear plans for attaining sustainability.

Capacity building has been an essential aspect of the project. The review team noted the intensive and varied nature of capacity building – in subject matter (technical watershed, agriculture, livestock, institutional aspects, social awareness, etc) as well as form (training events and courses, exposure visits, field-based demonstration, and simply 'learning by doing' – in the field, participating in meetings, etc). Significant outcomes include the effective functioning of the VDSs; the pool of over 500 specifically trained resource persons in the project area; and the self-confidence and community spirit demonstrated by women and men in the villages.

Social discrimination in the project villages was rife at the time of project commencement. The project has sought as far as possible to maximise opportunities for the poor and landless, and empower women and those belonging to marginalised castes. The review found many successes in this. For the poor and landless, the policy of banning machinery and promoting fair wage labour has had a positive impact; on average, a labourer working in the project has earned between Rs7,500 to Rs10,000 in a year. More than this, the poor and marginalised have experienced a degree of empowerment through the project, in various

complementary ways. These include the opportunities for training and learning new skills; the forum provided in the VDS to express opinions on an equal footing with the dominant castes (for example, negotiating wage rates); and their systematic inclusion in all decision-making bodies. The livelihood support activities have also helped create capital assets for the poor and marginalised. Gender relations in all project villages are now more balanced, though there remains scope for further improvement; particularly important features in the empowerment of women have included the policy of equal wages for equal work; the learning of new skills (many previously associated with men) and social recognition for their expertise; and the access to finance and confidence brought about through SHG membership.

The project provides many interesting lessons with regard to decentralisation processes. These include the way in which full representation of the village community – women and men – has been brought about through voluntary VDS membership; the representation of all social groups in the village and women in decision-making bodies; the truly village-based decision-making in VDS *gram sabhas*; the delegation of work to different sub-committees; the rotation of responsibilities amongst different individuals; and mechanisms such as public displays of maps and figures to ensure transparency and accountability. An important point is that in all financial disbursements and decision-making, there is no accumulation of power; it is all decentralised, even within the village level institution. These practices have huge potential for influencing and complementing the functioning of the larger Gram Panchayats. There are generally good relations between the VDS and GPs in the project area, the former serving as a 'grooming ground' for individuals who have gone on to higher office in the GPs (in the 2004 elections, a total 23 persons active in the VDSs were elected to GP office), but, more importantly, creating a general community expectation and insistence on democratic processes.

The review team identified strong potential for replication in many areas of the programme. A core feature is the whole concept of the VDS as village-based institutions that can support and strengthen democratic processes within GPs. Aspects not already mentioned in this summary include the approach to community contribution (paid by villagers not as a sharing of implementation costs, but as an additional fund for maintenance and village development); the use of indigenous technologies wherever possible; and the system of MIS which is 'bottom up' rather than 'top down'.

Whilst the overall findings of the review were positive, a number of concerns were raised by community members, which are detailed in a final chapter. According to them, watershed works under ISPWDK phase I was not fully completed by the DLDB according to the agreed plan. As this has created tensions in the community, they requested that these areas be treated. Under phase II, a problematic area has been the treatment of CPRs – notably lands owned by the Forest Department. Whilst works have gone ahead, and local understanding with FD staff exists, future management responsibilities and access rights require greater clarification. Other aspects of community concern relate to the continuation of, and building on, the achievements to date. Thus it was clearly expressed that (a lower level of) support and capacity building be extended to the VDS to ensure their sustainability; that advice and support be given, particularly in the management of VDS funds (amassed from community contributions); and that mechanisms be developed for continuing support to the poor and marginalised, and gender balanced development.

Context of the review

People centred, people initiated and people controlled is the key approach under the ISPWDK phase II, which operates in three separate watersheds in the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga, and Koppal in Northern Karnataka. Financially supported by SDC and managed by Intercooperation, the project is based on a concept of 'watershed plus' – encompassing sustainable agriculture, livelihood activities, capacity building including the promotion of gender and equity – as well as physical watershed works. ISPWDK started its second phase in April 2000 and runs until June 2006, coordinated through the Bangalore-based PSMU, Programme Support and Management Unit. Under it, legally registered village level institutions (Village Development Societies) own and manage watershed development activities, with facilitation from NGO partners. A total 14 such VDS have been established to manage activities on some 10,000 ha across the three watersheds during this phase; the combined local population involved is some 30,000 (4,700 households). In each watershed, a different NGO is responsible for facilitation: MYRADA in Maramuri watershed, Gulbarga district and SAMUHA in Kanakanala watershed, Koppal district, PRAWARDA in Upper Mullamari watershed, Bidar district. The current mode of working was preceded by a rather different institutional arrangement in the first phase (1995–2000), when a bilateral agreement was in place, and implementation was largely through government line agencies – with NGO partners providing capacity building. The VDS, as people controlled institutions, arose out of the learning gained in phase I. They are expected to complement the larger local government administrative unit of the Gram Panchayat, in terms of promoting democratic principles and strengthening local competencies.*

Although field implementation of phase II of ISPWDK was delayed for over 2 years (due to prolonged discussions with the Government of Karnataka on the mode of its operation), this time could at least be used for capacity building among the stakeholders. After Mid Course Corrections (MCC, in 2002) that acknowledged the VDS and the NGO as the main partners, full field operations could begin.

The future of ISPWDK beyond Phase II was raised formally at the Fifth PSC (Programme Steering Committee)[1] meeting of ISPWDK on 26 October 2004. At this meeting, SDC reiterated its commitment to the communities in the Phase II areas beyond December 2005. This, however, was subject to promising first results in the following three pronounced areas (aspects):

- Capacity building 'versus' [vis-à-vis] empowerment at community level
- Potential of the approach developed for further replication
- 'People initiated, People centred, People managed' being effective.

To work further on this and produce a brief proposal, a three-member committee comprising one member each from the communities, the NGOs and PSMU was formed. Based on the interactions with communities, NGO partners and PSMU, this committee finalised a draft proposal for the review. This proposal was submitted to the Sixth PSC held on 22–23 March 2005, for approval.

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1. The PSC is the programme-level decision-making body in ISPWDK. Please refer to subsequent text for elaboration.

It was decided at the Sixth PSC that a review team representing all the project stakeholders be constituted to visit each of the three watersheds in turn, and interact with the communities and project staff *in situ*. The team should comprise

- Two community members from each watershed (one male, one female)

- One representative of each partner NGO

- One representative of PSMU

- An external facilitator (consultant).

It was further agreed that the review should be a mix of both field and desk review – with the team referring to pertinent project and partner documents to supplement findings in the field.

Other key points as decided at the PSC were that:

- Additional dimensions indicated by SDC in its feedback on the Proposal for Review of ISPWDK Phase II would be integrated in the review

- The review would be conducted in May/June 2005, in accordance with community wishes (this being the time of year when people would have most time to spare)

- At least one week's interval would be kept between each watershed visit, as requested by the community representatives.

The whole review process should emphasise participation.

Lighting the lamp at the 6th PSC

Process of the review

The review team was constituted in accordance with the resolution of the Sixth PSC. The names of the review team members appear in *Annex I*. An external resource person/facilitator was identified by PSMU, in consultation with the Intercooperation Delegation, Hyderabad.

A self-reflection for the partner NGO staff and PSMU, focusing on communication and relationships, was also included as part of the review exercise.

2.1. Pre-Review Orientation

In a Bangalore meeting of members of the PSMU team, Dr Jane Carter (Senior Advisor, DIC), Mr Kiran Mandanna (MYRADA) and Dr Ravi Kumar (SAMUHA – and previously a Phase-I evaluation team member), and the external resource person were introduced to the project, the task expected, and key aspects of the Phase-I review. A broad outline for the review methodology was discussed – with the intention of elaboration and refinement with all the review team members.

A team orientation meeting was held on 30 April 2005 in PIDOW Kamalapur, with the aim of a reaching a collective understanding about the task in hand. Discussions covered the methods and tools to be used, as well as the schedule and type of meetings to be held. This was the first time the 11 persons (4 women and 7 men) came together as a team. The working language was Kannada, with translations where necessary for non-Kannada speakers (especially for written records, which were in a mixture of Kannada and English). Together, the team evolved norms for optimal teamwork. One of the principles agreed was that the leader of the review team be elected on a rotation basis for each watershed – the collective decision being that a different NGO representative should take responsibility each time. The leader was entrusted with the responsibility of coordination among the team members, organising meetings, resolving any problems, etc.

Methodological and thematic inputs at this first meeting, and during the first day in the field were provided by the DIC representatives, Ms Rupa Mukerji and Dr Jane Carter.

2.2. Field activities

In each watershed, the review covered a period of five days. On the first day, after the introductions and a sharing on the purpose of the review, the community representatives from the different VDS and NGO staff made presentations on different aspects of the project. Based on what emerged from these presentations, the team prepared a list of matters to be explored in depth in each village. The schedule for the field visits was then drawn up, with the NGO staff and the VDS representatives of the particular watershed taking care of logistical arrangements. The second, third and part of the fourth day of the review were devoted to participatory exercises conducted with the community-based institutions and other key informants in the field. Part of the fourth day was also devoted for the preparation of the outputs. Apart from interactions with community members, the review team also had interactions with members of the Gram Panchayat, local government officials, bank officials, and the apex body of SHGs (CMRC, GMASS or MMVSSN, depending

on the watershed). In Maramuri and Kanakanala watersheds, the team also attended a *gram sabha*. On the final day, there were presentations by the partner NGO staff on the outcomes of their self-reflection exercises, as well as feedback by the review team members on their findings under the different review headings.

For the field visits, the review team split into two or more groups depending on the number of villages to be covered on that particular day. Every morning, the review team met to share the responsibilities among each member and to finalise the strategy, and the participatory tool(s) to be used. In the evening, after the field exercises, they met again to synthesise the output, to reflect on the process and look at possible improvements for future exercises.

The use of a variety of PRA tools was foreseen for the review. Prominent amongst these were:

- Focus group discussions
- Matrix voting (ranking)
- Time-lines
- Transect walks
- Resource mapping.

In all three places, documentation support was provided by the partner NGO staff to record the information presented or outputs generated during the review in an electronic or written form. A photographer filmed the full review exercise.

An interesting feature of the review was the transition made by the members of the team during the process. The review team consisted of people from varied backgrounds, with different skills and experiences:

- **Community representatives**: highly knowledgeable in community dynamics, watershed implementation at village level, and the functioning of ISPWDK (all having participated in the different decision-making fora); no experience in formal review processes (other than JPRs[2]) or in conducting PRA tools
- **Partner NGO representatives**: well aware of partner dynamics and the structure and functioning of ISPWDK, extensive experience of watershed implementation; some experience in formal project review processes
- **PSMU team member**: extensive experience in process and participatory aspects of watershed development, and long historical overview of Swiss-supported watershed projects
- **External facilitator**: wide experience in conducting reviews for a variety of foreign funded projects, specialising in participatory tools and methodologies, but no previous knowledge of ISPWDK (a deliberate choice, in order to bring in objectivity).

During the first few field exercises, the community members were hesitant to participate openly and the external facilitator did the bulk of the interactions. However, after some discussions and encouragement, the community members started to participate more actively in the process. Apart from giving recommendations, they also took a lead in the deliberations and in the field

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exercises. In this they brought in their field-based insights, and enriched the process. By the end of the review, every team member was still present (despite sicknesses and other problems at various points along the way), and all agreed that they had found it – both personally and collectively – a rich and intensive learning process.

Discussing the review process at the 6th PSC

A family in the ISPWDK project area

3

Major findings

3.1. People centered, people initiated, people controlled

"The project adopts an approach that is participatory in nature with the following main characteristics:

Process Oriented: As the watersheds represent different socio-economic as well as agro-ecological environments, there is the necessity to identify local, site-specific interventions. The project therefore enables the project partners to adopt different methodologies and systems within the overall strategy and approach of the project. A participatory situation analysis and planning process involving the communities, forms the basis for the identification of project activities and budget allocations. The process approach demands a built in flexibility to adequately respond to opportunities and needs at the village level within the project framework.

People centered, people initiated and people controlled: The rural poor and their institutions are the focus of the project. The outsiders are basically facilitators and providers of services and support.

All development activities will be channeled through and implemented by community based institutions in the watershed. Building the capacities of village level institutions (VDS) with the aim to empower the people to take control of the development of their village is one of the main thrust areas of the project."

3.1. People centred, people initiated, people controlled

"People centred, people initiated, people controlled" has been the guiding philosophy behind the project. A remark commonly made by local people to the review team was that they feel tremendous ownership of the project, as they are involved in all processes of planning, designing, implementing, operation and maintenance, financial management, administration and record keeping, etc. An example given was of the unit cost for watershed implementation being worked out with the involvement of the agricultural labourers.

*"It is a community project – **'patradararu nave, sutradararu nave'** (We are both the directors and the actors). All management Institutions are community based. Project design itself is like that."*

A people-centered approach requires that the communities are organised into institutions at different levels, and supported with appropriate, focused capacity building (a matter covered in a separate section). The main institutions in the project, and the manner of their functioning, are outlined below.

3.1.1. Important peoples' institutions in ISPWDK

Village Development Society (VDS)

The VDS is the most important institution in the project. The review team noted the intensive effort that has been focused on establishing and strengthening the VDS in all respects – conceptual grounding, developing human and institutional capabilities, providing office related-infrastructure support, legal compliance and financial support, systems and procedures, management aspects, etc., all with a view to attaining sustainability. For organising the VDS, different partners adopted different strategies. In Maramuri and Upper Mullamari watersheds, the women SHGs were organised first and after some time the VDS was promoted. In doing so, the experiences and best practices of the SHGs were integrated into the norms, decision-making and functioning of the VDS. In Kanakanala, the VDS was organised after the "Woni" or street groups had been formed. A Woni group consists of members residing in the same street in a village.

The review team found that whilst the functioning of the VDS varies between villages and watersheds, all 14 are meeting regularly and operating effectively. These aspects are covered further in section 3.4. Of late, village level meetings are reported as normally taking place without the presence of NGO functionaries. With the community being encouraged to take decisions, the role of the partner NGO staff has shifted from a strong supporting presence at the beginning to a more background support as the project proceeded. Nevertheless, the NGOs are still called whenever necessary, and community members expressed a clear wish that such support 'on demand' should be available for some time into the future.

Project context

People will contribute to the development activities with their own means so that they will take more responsibility for the identification of appropriate activities. This will positively contribute to the overall quality of the implementation of the works and to the overall sustainability of the development:

Equity focus … [see appropriate section]

ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002: 10)

"For the realisation of the above-mentioned approaches, the following ***guiding principles*** will be maintained. More operational details will have to be worked out together with the partner organisations.

- The local people and their institutions are the main actors in any watershed development intervention. The outside actors are basically the facilitators who provide services and support.

- The pace of planning and implementation of the watershed development activities depends upon the absorption capacity of the people in the watershed areas.

- There will be a concerted effort to develop, in cooperation with the local communities, appropriate low cost, easy to maintain conservation measures based on a good blend of indigenous and eco friendly modern practices favouring vegetative elements to a maximum extent possible.

- All project activities are on the basis of cost sharing, i.e. local contribution of 25% for the development of private property and 10% for the development of common property resources.

- The support provided by the project should lead to developments and changes that can be sustained after the withdrawal of the project. "

ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002: 11)

Self Help Groups (SHGs)

In all three watersheds, women SHGs were promoted (in Upper Mullamari, men's SHGs were also promoted, although with less success). As far as possible, women from poor households in the villages (as identified at the beginning of the Phase II project) were organised into SHGs to build a critical mass of womens' groups. These small, primary groups, served as building blocks for the VDS and the federated institutions in each of the watersheds (CMRC, GMASS and MMVSSN). There are now more than 150 women SHGs in the villages covering Phase-II, with a membership of nearly 2900. Most were formed in the first year of Phase II of the project and are now more than three years old.

All the SHGs together have a financial capital of over Rs25 lakhs (this includes their savings, interest earned and the resources mobilised from other sources). This money has been used for lending to members for supporting their food, health and livelihood needs. The SHGs have enabled the disadvantaged sections to have better access to credit through their own savings, financial support from the project as grant and the loan from banks. Training has increased their capacities to undertake economic activities. The funds allocated for livelihood promotion focus area were routed through the SHGs to ensure better implementation and subsequent recovery from members. The self-help groups were also involved in creating awareness among village communities through *jatha* (awareness campaigns) about natural resource conservation and management.

Overall, the SHGs were found to be functioning well at the time of the review. Apart from the customary indicators like regularity in meeting, attendance of members, regular savings, rotation of leaders, regular book keeping and auditing, bank linkages, etc., many women who met in the review process were highly articulate, self confident and proud of their achievements. Apart from ensuring the availability of credit at relatively cheaper rates, the SHGs have also tried to address social issues pertinent locally like alcoholism, literacy, etc.

Federated Structures of SHGs

In all three watersheds, efforts have been made to ensure that the needs of the SHGs are taken care of beyond the project period. To this effect, the SHGs are being brought under an umbrella institution – the form, nature and philosophy of which varies from watershed to watershed. The review team noted the diversity brought from the influence of the respective NGO partners; the fact that the project has the flexibility to accommodate the different institutions with different financial models may be seen as a strength. All three have evolved strategies towards long-term sustainability. What follows is a brief description based on the presentations made to the review team by the respective institutions.

Community Managed Resource Centre (CMRC)

In Maramuri watershed all SHGs in the ISPWDK Phase II villages – the ISPWDK-promoted SAGs, as well as SHGs promoted by other projects such as Sthree Sakthi and Swasakthi, are being linked under an informal institution, the Community Managed Resource Center (CMRC). Promoted by MYRADA (with ISPWDK support), the resource centre is being positioned as an organisation that offers need-based services to the SHGs in accounts and book keeping, in contacting banks, getting books audited, obtaining insurance cover and legal services, vocational skills training, legal awareness and AIDS awareness programmes, etc. The CMRC is expected to cover its costs by charging a fee for the services provided. It will maintain a minimal staff and keep overheads low. The CMRC has a set of governing body members drawn from the SHGs under its umbrella.

Village Development Societies

The concept of the VDS arose out of experiences in ISPWDK Phase I. Findings on institutional arrangements arising from the ISPWDK Phase I self-evaluation exercise are:

- Local people's institutions can be effective only when proper representation is given to all interest groups in the community, if they are apolitical and function democratically – with decision-making based on consensus and participative leadership.

- Effective and relevant information flow to the people's institutions is essential in order to bring transparency and accountability to the communities

- Vibrant informal groups are important in enabling the Gram Panchayat institutions to function effectively and responsibly in a sustained manner.

- SHGs have enabled the disadvantaged sections to have better access to credit through their own savings, matching grants from projects and in some cases with bank linkages. However, it was recognised that they had to further diversify into sustainable income generating activities and linkages with the watershed development.

- When communities are directly responsible for implementation, activities can be carried out effectively and efficiently, both in terms of quality and quantity.

- Genuine people's contribution is a very potent weapon to address the issues of community ownership, appropriateness, quality, transparency and effectiveness of project interventions.

- Linking local people's institutions with banks, government departments and agencies (Primary Health Centre, Animal Husbandry, Taluk panchayats, Women & Child Development Centres, etc.) can enable the community to utilise the respective services and schemes effectively.

Source: ISPWDK Self Evaluation and N R Jagannath (pers.comm.)

Although the possibility of working directly with PRIs was considered, it was felt that greater potential lay with a village-based institution.

"Local people's institutions can be effective only when proper representation is given to all the interest groups in the community, if they are apolitical and function democratically with consensus decision making and participative leadership. Hence, the idea thus evolved of a registered village based institution called Village Development Society (VDS) was organized."

ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002)

Grameena Mahila Vividodhesha Souhardha Sahakari Niyamitha (GMASS)
Established in Upper Mullamari watershed, the membership of GMASS covers the SHGs promoted under both ISPWDK phase I and II. The objectives of GMASS are:

- Develop leadership among women beyond the project and SHG activities

- Retain the economic resources of the village within the village

- Take up health care and education activities for women

- Capacity building for new SHGs

- Monitor SHGs

- Facilitate loans to SHGs and individuals.

GMASS functioned as an informal institution before obtaining legal registration as a mutually aided cooperative society (under the Karnataka Souharda Act) in 2004. It has a board that is independent of PRAWARDA. GMASS has been supported by the project in the form of working capital grant, which was revolved to the SHGs for meeting the different needs of members. Most of the project livelihood promotion activities were routed through GMASS and its network of SHGs to ultimately be implemented by the members. The GMASS has also established a computerised SHG MIS that, apart from helping in the automation of SHG accounts, also helps the GMASS office bearers to access timely information about the groups in different villages. GMASS has established good linkages with banks in the area, but itself functions as a 'bank' for the SHGs. It is trying to attain financial sustainability by meeting costs with the interest accrued from the credit advances provided to the groups.

Munjavu Mahila Vividodeseha Sahakara Sangha Niyamita (MMVSSN)
In the Kanakanala watershed, the SHG members sought a support structure to address sustainability, and after much discussion came up with the idea of a 'Mahila Bank'. The MVSSN is an apex body of all women SHGs promoted in the area. It has a board, constituting members drawn from the SHGs. Apart from the regular savings and credit needs, the MMVSSN was also the channel for the implementation of the ISPWDK-supported livelihood activities. The bank also experimented with enterprises on quite a large scale – the two major activities being home shopping and dairying. Smaller scale activities include kitchen gardening and a seed bank. Some activities such as *shramadhana*, promoting the pulse polio programme, and maintaining community hygiene in the village were taken up for motivational purposes. Not all the MMVSSN ventures have been highly successful, but one clear success story is a gold/jewellery loan scheme, devised as an alternative for poor women to pawn their gold ornaments to moneylenders. MMVSSN was supported by the project both in terms of working capital and infrastructure requirements. In future, the MMVSSN seeks to earn income from interest on advances to SHGs, as well as profits from other entrepreneurial activities. The MMVSSN intends to share the disposal income available after meeting its costs to its shareholding members, as dividend.

Salient features of a VDS are as follows:

- **Village-based**: Represents one revenue village (which may include associated hamlets) within the watershed – a relatively cohesive social unit, to which people feel a sense of belonging.

- **Full representation**: One male and one female head of each household in the village form the VDS, which is thus fully representational of the village in terms of caste, class and gender. Decisions can only be taken when the members meet in a *gram sabha* (village meeting).

- **Elected Committee**: of 8–15 persons represents the VDS in higher level for a governing council or management committee of VDS.

- **Focus on village development activities**: the VDS was always envisaged as an institution that would not only be concerned with watershed development, but all village development activities.

- **Permanent**: Envisaged as a body that will continue functioning after project completion; legally registered under Society Registration Act (1960).

- **Financially Empowered**: The VDS is a decision-making body that plans, implements and controls the funds for local watershed activities; the finances are in their hands. The VDS

furthermore collects a community contribution that is deposited in the bank account of the VDS as a fund for future village development and the maintenance of assets created by having an agenda of developing capacities to leverage resources for their self-reliance.

The characteristics of VDS have been summarised as:

Transparent: All efforts are made to provide proper information to all members to ensure transparency in all policy and management decisions.

Democratic: All the powers and responsibilities are decentralised. The general body consisting of a male and female member of all households is empowered.

Gender Sensitive: Joint and separate spaces and platforms are created for both men and women.

review findings

Reasons for establishing the Mahila Bank

- *Move to the next step after SHG towards self-reliance*

- *Ensure that women in Phase II villages, who were denied loans from local banks, get the benefits of bank loans and in its absence loans from other sources*

- *See that the women were in charge of money management*

- *Meet the demand of women (in response to their felt need) for creating a facility catering to their exclusive needs*

- *Motivate women to involve in general development issues like profitable business propositions for women, village development, temple maintenance, community development works, etc., and for collective action.*

- *Develop leadership in women, unity among women, co-operation, equity, etc.*

- *Make rural women become part of the national development processes.*

- *Create awareness about trade and commerce, share holding, savings and deposits, movable and immovable assets.*

> *– as told to the ISPWDK Review Team at Kanakanala watershed by Members of MMVSSN*

3.1.2. People-centred practices
The review identified many people-centred practices. Many such practices formed a part of project design, but there has also been the flexibility to incorporate others – or adapt as appropriate those already planned – at the time of implementation. Points identified by the review team to be particularly important follow; the reader is referred to other parts of the document where appropriate.

Watershed implementation by the people
The community themselves implemented the works, through the VDS. The project funds handled by the different VDS (for watershed works, livelihood activities and sustainable agriculture) over the three years July 2002–June 2005 ranges from Rs10 lakhs to over Rs55 lakhs (depending on the village size, area treated, etc.). Many VDS have handled at least Rs3.5 lakhs. This is an impressive volume of funds to have been managed in a transparent and accountable manner. Specific aspects of watershed implementation that may be highlighted are as follows.

Ban on machinery and encouragement of manual labour
Discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.5.

Focus on indigenous technology
This enabled the farmers to use technology that they are comfortable to work with, the structures created were mostly in their own fields. Having been done in a familiar technology, the subsequent repair and maintenance are easier. See section 3.5.

Capacity building to develop a pool of local resource persons
There are close to 500 resource persons in phase II project villages, covering different specialisations pertaining to technical, financial, agricultural, animal husbandry and other aspects. These resource persons have demonstrated their capacities by not only providing services to the project but also being recognised locally as experts in their field. Over 100 people are trained resource persons in leadership, management and book writing skills of SHGs. See section 3.2.

How the WMC and the VDS works: Outcome from focused group discussions in Seri-B Tanda
The WMC is functioning as part of the VDS, undertaking many activities related to watershed treatments. The technical persons in MYRADA provide orientation to the WMC/community resource persons on various aspects of watershed treatment such as technical, cost and estimates, etc. (this was more early on and less now). The implementation process is as follows.

- *Farmers give their application to the VDS/WMC to undertake works.*

- *A collective decision is taken to approve the individual farmer's and the CPR plans in the meeting.*

- *WMC supervises, on a rotation basis (6 members per week) the quality of works and the weekly payment. By doing this many of the community members – both female and male – have acquired skills in measurement, wage payment, book-keeping and other necessary documentation.*

- *A regular schedule has been worked out, e.g., Tuesday is work measurement day, Wednesday is WMC meeting to discuss the work completed and payment details, Thursday is VDS governing council meeting to decide on the payment and withdrawal of the amount from the bank. Saturday is wage payment day, which will coincide with the weekly market day for purchases by the labourers.*

- *WMC acts as a watchdog and refuses payment if the work is not up to standard. The women had the courage to speak out about poor practices by men while supervising the works; other members supported the women's viewpoints and arguments.*

- *In drawing the huge amount from the bank for wage payment, MYRADA staff support the VDS/WMC with transport for security reasons. The community resource person, who has been trained in various aspects related to record/bookkeeping, explains the details to those women/men members of WMC who are illiterate. Based on this she/he signs on the records for authentication. They also confirm the details of works/ payments based on their own field verification.*

- *MYRADA staff supports the VDS/WMC in accounting and technical and managerial requirements on the basis of demand.*

- *According to the WMC members, once the watershed treatment work is over, they envisage a role in repairing and maintaining the watershed structures. However, they said that this will have to be further discussed and decided in the VDS.*

Participatory decision-making
The review found this to be demonstrated in various ways:

Membership in different institutions
The majority of the households in the project villages are members of the SHGs. Although total saturation has not yet occurred, the non-participating households are relatively few. The concept

of SHGs is based on a pooling of resources, and hence a stake and sense of ownership from the beginning. The review team felt that this has had a strong bearing on the spirit of the VDS.

In all the14 VDS formed under the ISPWDK Phase II, the membership coverage is more than 90% of the village households. The approach of voluntary subscription has helped the community to understand the project better, and has given them the choice to become active stakeholders. Although this took some time, especially early on, the approach has clearly promoted a sense of peoples' ownership.

The review also found that membership of the federated structures of the SHGs is also good. Membership fees are paid, and participation in meetings and other events appear active.

VDS *grama sabha* as the decision-making body
All major decisions regarding the project implementation are taken to the VDS gram sabhas – issues such as wage fixation, the collection of local contribution, other conflicts, beneficiary selection, addressing technical quality of works, etc, have all been discussed in detail. See section 3.4.

Participatory planning
In concept and to a large extent in practice, the planning of watershed works was truly people-centred. The resource persons along with the farmers, VDS member and NGO staff carried out field surveys and did plot-wise micro-planning. These plans were discussed and approved at the VDS *gram sabhas*. Any significant changes in the micro-plans are also first discussed and decided at the VDS level.

Community representation in all decision-making fora
In all decision-making fora and most learning events (PIRC, PSC, Exchange Forums, etc), community representatives were present both as resource persons and as participants, learning together with other stakeholders. This is discussed further in section 3.2.

People-centred learning platforms at all levels
Apart from providing the SHGs services for institutional and household development, the federated structures (CMRC, GMASS and MMVSSN) have also provided a learning platform for the members, and a forum for sharing problems/issues in the home and at the village level. This existence of exclusive women's fora has provided women the collective strength, solidarity and comfort to generate their own solutions.

Participatory selection of leaders
The VDS governing council represents people from different categories in the village, and selection is transparent. See section 3.4.

Rotation of members
In order to involve more members of the community, the policy of rotating one-third of the members in governing councils in all institutions, specifically the VDS was followed strictly. See section 3.4.

Decentralised mode of working – delegation of functions
This matter is discussed in section 3.4.

Community enabling monitoring systems
Joint Progress Review
The six monthly JPR was designed as a participatory procedure. Nevertheless, informants observed that at the beginning, JPRs were largely directed and controlled by the external facilitators, with

the community representatives contributing when asked. As a result of exposure and increased confidence, community members are now participating as equals. Their field based insights and recommendations provide greater depth to the process.

Incorporating local systems

The community has also evolved its own systems of implementing and monitoring. Thus, for example, in Adavibhavi and Garjnala '*Daivada katte*', an indigenous platform for decision-making processes has been used to discuss and manage conflicts arising during project implementation.

Collective strength

The womens' federated structures have also followed their own means of addressing loan monitoring and bad debt recovery. In Kanakanala, the Mahila Bank members decided to do a *dharna* in front of the house of a member who was a long-term defaulter on a Rs4,000 payment. This decision was taken after all other measures of persuasion and warning had failed, but when communicated to the defaulting member, the loan was repaid in full a day before the *dharna* was to take place.

3.1.3. Displays of community solidarity

The review team was told of various demonstrations of community spirit in the project villages – most notably the voluntary contribution of labour and working on common property resources. Households participated in *shramadan* in the construction of VDS offices, footpaths, bio-mass management and other community development activities.

In Upper Mullamari, the community has decided to conduct maintenance and protection of the facilities provided through the project, e.g., management of cattle troughs, maintenance of Common Property Resources, etc., without drawing on project resources.

In Maramuri watershed, where a slightly different arrangement for the collection of local contribution was agreed by the community (30% on private lands, compared with the project guideline of 25%; this was in order to also cover CPRs), the community pointed out that willingness to pay LC itself is a sign of ownership.

'Contribution means ownership' ***'vanthike andare swanthike'***.

Again in Maramuri, the CMRC members shared a case of their successful negotiation of an out of court settlement for providing maintenance to a woman who was deserted and had been forced to spent nights in the village streets prior to the negotiation.

In Maramuri, the CMRC expressed solidarity with the households that had not been covered in phase I (it was felt the DLDB had failed to complete the works) and even volunteered to take charge of incomplete watershed works in those villages on a loan basis (see section 5).

<div style="float:left">Project context</div>

3.2. Capacity building vis-à-vis empowerment

"SDC, India's key approach to reducing poverty is empowerment: the creation of a different power balance in favour of the poor."

SDC India Country Programme 2003–2010 (2003: 22)

"Building the capacities of village level institutions (VDS) with the aim to empower the people to take control of the development of their village is one of the main thrust areas of the project …"

> *Capacity Building*: The project will concentrate on building sustainable community institutions, providing them with the necessary competences and skills to initiate, pilot and sustain the natural resource development process. This includes awareness building, mobilisation of communities, facilitating establishment of community based organisations, village level groups and their skill development.
>
> During the first two years of phase II, several capacity building events were organised for NGO staff, who in turn built the capacity of the communities. For the period 2002–2005, emphasis will be given to on-field training and skill-oriented learning events focussing on building capacities of village institutions and local resource persons (promoters, para-professionals) on technical, managerial and social issues."
>
> ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002: 9)

3.2. Capacity building vis-à-vis empowerment

This chapter provides a broad overview of the review findings with regard to capacity building in the three watersheds; the reader also is referred to other pertinent parts of this report.

" SHG is like our family now, we cannot cut off ties from it till our death."

Kamala Bai, member of an SHG, speaking to a review team member.

".....the presence of SHGs has dipped the profits of four finance companies [money-lenders], a few of them even going bankrupt. ......In one of the Myrada villages, four finance companies have closed down. (Kodli)."

An extract of a study by HID–Forum in ISPWDK phase-II.

3.2.1. Capacity building as an integral part of the process

Capacity building is an integral part of any process-oriented project like ISPWDK, especially concerning aspects related to attitudinal and behavioural change. Such changes happen gradually over time and are not uniform for all individuals. Hence, different capacity building events reiterating the theme in different ways are required:

Demonstration effect

NGO staff and key individuals in the community tend to serve as role models. It is important that trainers 'practice what they preach'. The review team found that, by and large, this has occurred - appropriate training for such persons were extended early on in the project. 'Training of trainer' events were appreciated by the NGO staff.

Variety of capacity building events

The review team confirmed that capacity building was conducted in numerous ways and at different levels – exposures and exchange visits, learning events, inputs from support agencies, field based inputs, as well as classroom trainings. Topics covered ranged from technical aspects (such as the design of watershed structures) to financial management, institution building, and behavioural aspects such as gender and sensitivity towards poor. Sometimes it was necessary for some people to attend several different events, structured in different ways, to become fully at ease with new concepts, etc.

Learning together

Some capacity building events addressed a particular stakeholder group exclusively (e.g., NGO staff members, or community technical resource persons). Other training events brought partner

staff and selected community representatives together for joint learning with other stakeholders. Joint exposure of select NGO staff and community representatives from all three watersheds to other NGOs like Basix, WOTR, BAIF, PHCC, ANTHRA, etc., were undertaken during the course of the project, and were clearly appreciated by those who participated in them. NGO staff also mentioned certain exclusive exposure visits, such as that undertaken by NGO staff of PRAWARDA to Kothagiri, Tamil Nadu (visiting the SDC/IC partner NGO Keystone).

Targeted training

'ToT' for NGO staff has already been mentioned. Within the communities, the review team was informed of a wide variety of different trainings for target groups. These included

● General community: sensitisation on roles and responsibilities in attending and participating actively in *grama sabhas*.

● VDS governing council members: (apart from training in project principles) training on leadership, governance, legal issues, management aspects, monitoring and review, financial aspects, presentation aspects, communication, and building linkages with the local government departments.

● Community resource persons: training on technical works in watershed rehabilitation, paravet trainers, aspects of agriculture production, etc.

● Members of SHGs and their federated structures: training on governance and finance management issues, including cost coverage.

Mix of internal and external input

The review team noted that there was generally a healthy mix of internal and external input in trainings. Furthermore, synergies between the two were promoted; for example, community input in aspects such as indigenous know-how in watershed works and agriculture practices, and institutional norms and practices, were said to have been particularly useful in defining some training programmes. External resource persons were called upon when there was a need to bring in new or updated ideas.

Capacity building during reviews and meetings

Apart from the regular training events, capacity building took place through participation in regular meetings like the PIRC, VDS meeting, SHG meetings, etc. – as well as in higher level meetings such as the JPR, Exchange Forums, and PSC.

In the JPRs, a team comprising representatives of all stakeholders plus external facilitators review the physical, financial and process related progress in the watershed. Community members mentioned that these intensive five-day events served as a good learning ground. They learned to appreciate as well as to evaluate the work done by others; their presentation and review skills were enhanced; and they gained the opportunity to learn from other practitioners. Recently, when the NGO Partner staff took over the role of the social facilitator in the JPR team, they also mentioned cross learning as an important outcome of the process.

The Exchange Forum Meetings, held six-monthly around a specific theme, bring together representatives of all stakeholders for a sharing of views and practical experience. Participating community representatives spoke highly of these events as an opportunity for exposure and enhancement of presentation skills, self-confidence, etc.

3.2.2. Impact of trainings

While details may be found in the respective chapters, the broad trends emerging from the impact of the training, especially viewed in the perspective of empowerment, are briefly outlined:

Building local resource persons

Many local people became resource persons as a result of training, and formed the pillars on which the project evolved. They are now respected members of their villages, accepted as experts in the field. This is particularly noteworthy given that many are women, and/or belonging to lower castes. Some resource persons are also using their new skills/ knowledge to offer services at a cost – thus they have gained a means of long-term income-generation. Both the respect and income-generation opportunities gained are clearly empowering.

In Kanakanala, there was resistance to the women being trained as para-vets as this role was seen as the domain of men. After two years, not only are these women accepted as resource persons, the concept itself is being appreciated by the local animal husbandry department as a best practice. These women are also charging for their services – at least to cover costs.

Criteria for selecting community resource persons in MYRADA

- *Equal opportunity to be provided for men and women*

- *Person need not necessarily be literate*

- Person should have knowledge of local skills,

- *People working with farmers, particularly women farmers, will be considered*

Improving governance and participation

The practices of transparency and accountability in the VDS, and the key role of the *gram sabha*, have only come about through intensive capacity building. The result is more broad-based village decision-making – empowerment of the previously marginalised.

Grooming ground for panchayats

As noted in section 3.4, the capacities built in Governing Council members of VDSs, SHG members, etc., have served as a grooming for elected office within the GPs. This is a positive indicator for future sustainability, and in some cases is true empowerment of previously marginalised individuals who now have the opportunity to represent their social group in higher office.

Linkages for sustainability

Capacity building has served to enhance linkages to other organisations – again, enhancing potential sustainability.

Increased sensitivity towards gender and equity

The review team is of the opinion that capacity building through training and 'learning by doing' for both women and men has been a strong force in the empowerment of women. Women's capacities are now recognised both by themselves and by men.

Sense of ownership and belonging

In most villages, there is better community organisation, and people express solidarity with one another, irrespective of caste. This is also a direct result of capacity building – particularly in social aspects. It may be argued that this has actually been empowering for all concerned – but certainly for those who were previously ostracised.

Confidence to face the world
Capacity building has immensely enhanced the confidence and self esteem of community members. They can now negotiate with other stakeholders in development.

Organising labour for treating CPRs: early MYRADA experiences
"We were not aware of how to use skills of local people. One strategy was to gather people for work at 5 a.m. in the morning. With only one woman in the staff in MYRADA, it was difficult to emphasise women's participation; hence, we just left it to the community to choose women labourers for watershed works. The community evolved criteria amongst themselves to identify the poor among the community for wage labour opportunities (single woman, woman headed households, more children, landless, SHG members). On an experimental basis, when we started work, we again left it to the people. They said let us start from the top of the hillocks. Some people started the trenchwork, some took measurements, some people started identifying the land ownership, etc. When people started taking up that work, we did not know what exactly needed to be done. After a certain stage the people got stuck and did not know how to do the pitting work. MYRADA then organised a training programme on this matter"

– Experience shared by MYRADA staff during the last day of the review.

<div style="writing-mode: vertical-lr">Project context</div>

3.3. Addressing discrimination

"Poor, disadvantaged people face an **oppressive environment** in India that induces exclusion and exploitation. Their access to resources and public goods, as well as to their rights as citizens, is curbed by those in power, often through violent means...."

"Although India has developed a coherent set of norms prohibiting **discrimination**, effects in reality have remained limited...."

SDC India Country Programme 2003–2010 (2003: 23)

"Addressing the profound causes of poverty unavoidably means to deal with the distribution of power in the Indian context, and taking up the **issue of discrimination.** Combating discrimination is a concrete expression of SDC, India's aim at promoting empowerment processes through means that induce value-based change."

SDC India Country Programme 2003–2010 (2003: 24)

"Equity focus: The project enables marginal and oppressed sections of the village community (landless, small and marginal farmers, women) to gain maximum benefit from the project. Existing power relations based on caste, class and gender differences are addressed in order to offer improved livelihood opportunities to poor households in the watersheds. The project will offer these households opportunities for income generation through employment, preferential access to common property resources and non land-based activities. It aims at empowerment of women, enhancing their capacities and offering them access to resources and decision-making forums."

ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002: 11)

<div style="text-align: right">review findings</div>

3.3. Addressing discrimination
3.3.1. Before the project
An assessment of the way in which ISPWDK has attempted to address discrimination needs to be grounded in the pre-project realities. A few comments from villagers help to make this point.

"Women were scared of everything, even to say that we were sick. Even when we were sick we never went to hospital, but suffered, if men did not take us. We did not send our daughters to school. If a girl spoke to any man we would suspect that her character was not good. When Samuha girls came we would laugh, saying "Why can't you stay at home and get married?!" We would shout at them and let dogs chase them. We suspected them. Then Samuha staff became [like] our family members, and it took six months for them to form one group. Then slowly the number of groups increased, we learned from each other."

– Women members of MMVSSN as shared to the Review team

"If anybody with trousers came to our village we used to be scared. Even in 2000 we did not have a school. Samuha would not only come wearing trousers but also on two wheelers."

– Villagers in Umli Rampur

In the village of Kanchanal, the villagers stated in a self-reflection on the pre-project situation that the '*gowdas*' and '*kulkarnis*' were ruling over the villagers. People were drinking water from open ponds, families as units would migrate to Mumbai in search of labour and they would borrow money at heavy interest rates from moneylenders, pledging land and valuables. This situation was true in most villages in the project area.

Against this backdrop, the project attempted to address discrimination by building the capacities of individuals and institutions, leading to their empowerment.

3.3.2. Addressing discrimination through watershed works
No use of machinery
Although mentioned elsewhere in this report, the review team feels it necessary to also note here that the deliberate creation of wage labour opportunities was a strategy that helped to fight discrimination against the poor and marginalised. This was achieved through reduced distress migration, the paying off of debts (itself an act of empowerment), and the building of assets for the future. Typically, poor households invested in small ruminants, housing, gold (i.e., savings), children's schooling, and sometimes land. The review team was informed of cases of families returning to their villages after many years, eager to bring their uncultivated land into productivity through the watershed works, and to take up life in the village again.

On an average, a labourer working in the project has earned between Rs7,500 to Rs10,000/- in a year.

On a note of caution, however, the review team also found that not every migrating family in the project villages has benefited from the wage labour opportunities, for various reasons mainly connected with long-term patron–client relationships outside the villages.

Work on a volumetric basis
The concept of work on a volumetric basis is also favourable to wage labourers, giving the opportunity to earn far more than the local daily wage (on average, Rs10–30 for men, and Rs5–20 for women per day). Rates followed were as per DSR, so that two labourers (usually a man and a woman) digging a trench of a specified size for nearly two hours could earn up to Rs46; when they worked hard, they earned far more, as they were paid by volume, and not by day.

Local Contribution: avoiding deductions from wage labour
Many watershed projects operate on a cost-sharing basis; for example, the project may pay 75% of the cost, leaving 25% as the community contribution (often contributed through labour). Under ISPWDK, however, 100% of the watershed treatment costs are paid, whilst the farmer on

whose land the work is being executed pays a 25% local contribution to the VDS fund. Although the contribution paid by the farmer is similar to that stipulated in watershed projects where cost sharing is followed, in this case the 25% contribution becomes a community fund for the maintenance of the assets created, and for other village development activities.

Field experience in projects in which farmers pay a share of the works indicates that farmers often deduct this from the labourers' wages. In the case of ISPWDK, the labourers get their wages on a volumetric basis, and it is the farmer who owns the land, irrespective of whether she/he is a part of the workforce working on the plot, who pays the local contribution. This principle of equity assumes particular significance when it is considered that most treatments are on private property, and most of the work is earthwork involving wage labour.

In Sastapur village, Uppper Mullamari Watershed, the WMC members shared with the review team that the local contribution will be collected from the rich before the work begins but concession are made for the poor farmers and collections are made after the work is over.

Preference to the marginalised
The review team was encouraged that VDS members themselves identified the particularly poor and vulnerable (landless, widows, SC or ST families) amongst their midst, and then gave these households preference when allocating wage labour opportunities. Even the (sometimes) meagre amount earned through wage labour by widows and other single women, has apparently made a big difference to them. In Upper Mullamari, it was found that preference was also given to the poorest in the identification and allocation of work in CPR watershed activities. The MIS report generated from Kanchanal (Maramuri watershed) inserted here, provides evidence that investment in land development through the project has benefited small and marginalised farmers.

Resource mapping of Kanchanal village as conducted by members of review team
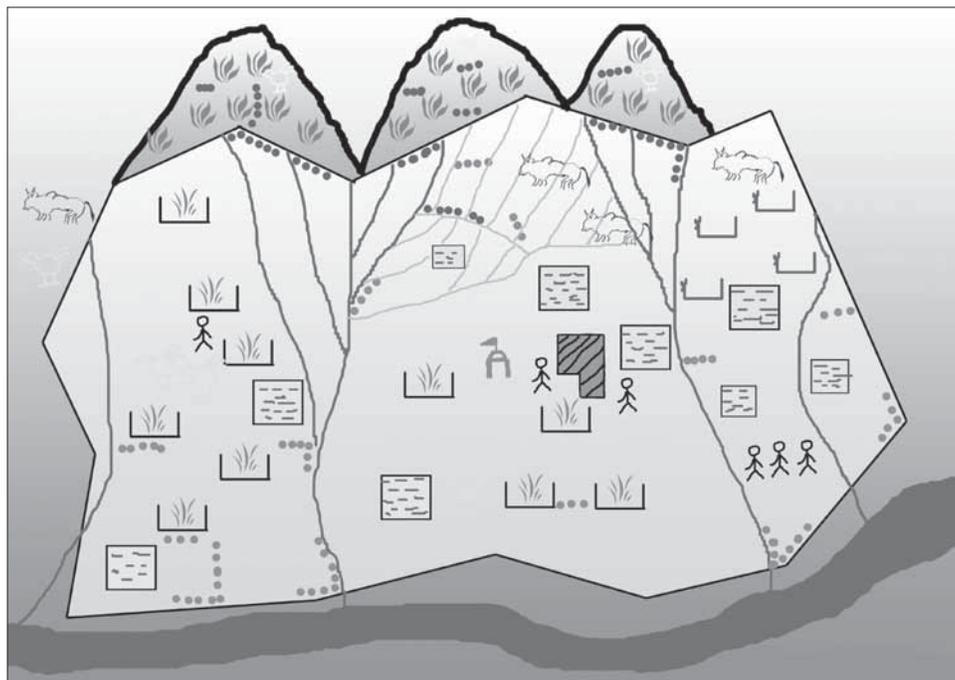
Farmer Caste & Category-wise Total Investment in WSD

For Period From: 18-Jan-02 to 17-Jun-05

Village: Kanchanal

Family Category	Caste Category	Number of Farmers Benefitted	Total Investment Rs.
Very Small (<=2.5 ac.)	BC	13	82,484.84
	OC	2	1,735.06
	SC	19	207,448.16
Small (2.5–5 ac.)	BC	7	42,539.89
	SC	16	157,119.85
Low medium (5–10 ac.)	BC	6	101,804.86
	OC	2	11,419.50
	SC	1	3,330.00
Medium (10–25 ac.)	BC	4	45,329.81
	OC	1	10,759.12
	SC	2	16,049.18
Big (>25 ac.)	BC	2	126,428.91
	OC	1	1,751.98
Sub total		**76**	**808,201.16**
Community Land			**369,686.08**
Grand total			**1,177,887.24**

Family Category-wise Total Investment other than the CPR

Big	(<25 ac.)	15.9%
Low medium	(5.10 ac.)	14.4%
Medium	(10.25 ac.)	8.9%
Small	(2.5–5 ac.)	24.7%
Very Small	(<=2.5 ac.)	36.1%
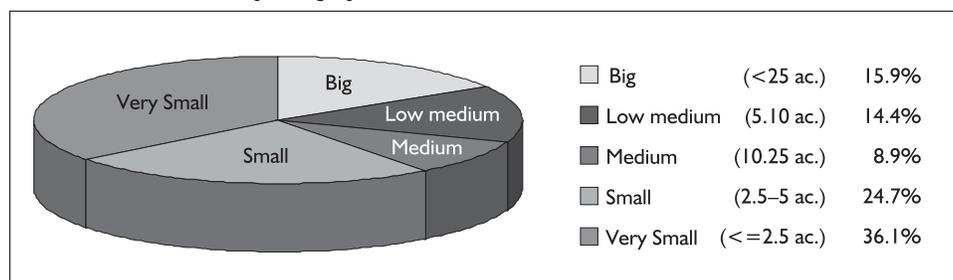
Graphic Showing the Investment on Private Property Resources under Watershed Development in Kanchanal Village in Maramuri Watershed – Farmer Caste and Category-wise Investment Breakup

Problem tree analysis in Nirgudi village
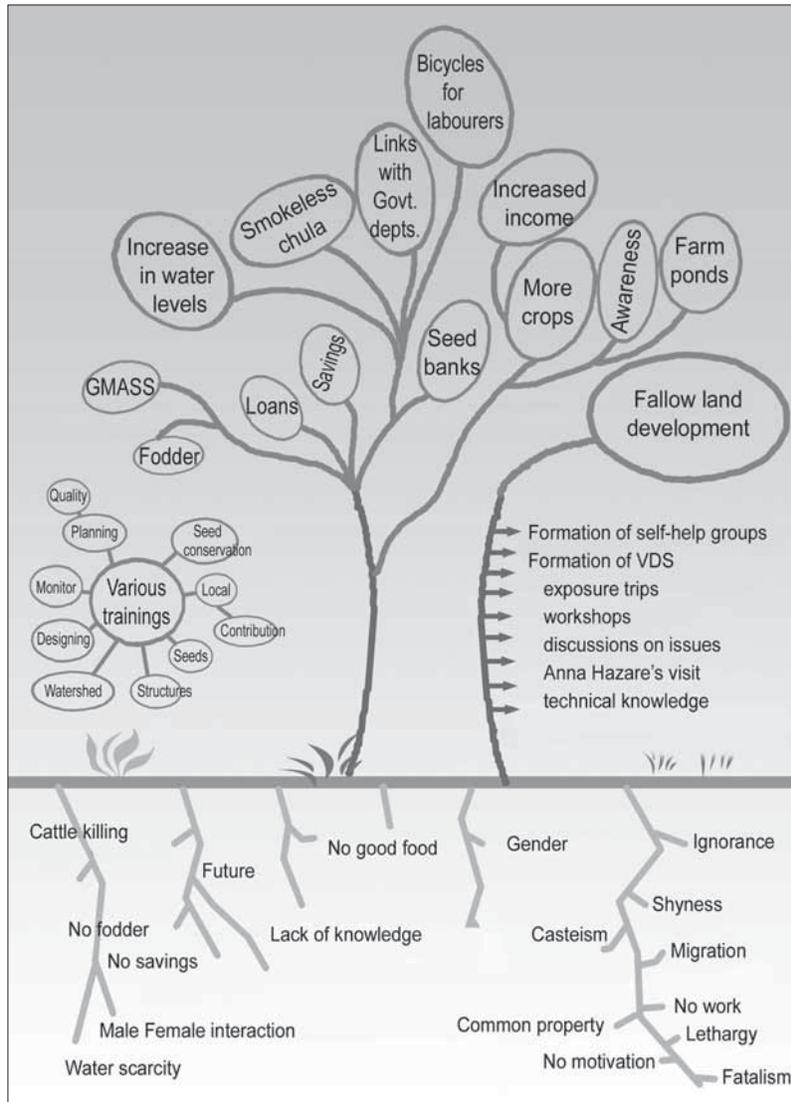
Dealing fairly with excess labour

In Kanakanala, where most of the farmers are small and marginal, there was a huge availability of labourers during the lean season, exacerbated by the drought at the time. To ensure that everyone had an equal opportunity to earn, the work was divided and the labourers allotted work on given days.

3.3.3. Addressing discrimination through livelihood activities

Inevitably in projects based on land development, it is the landed who benefit the most. To reduce this bias, the livelihood promotion aspect of the project is meant exclusively for the poor – the landless and women. In all three projects, a major portion of this money was channeled through SHGs as loans. Landless artisans were supported in Maramuri and Kanakanala watershed through providing equipments that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their work.

Women in all three watersheds took loans ranging from (on average) Rs5,000 to Rs20,000 for backyard poultry (mainly in Maramuri), milch animals (both cows and buffalos), goats, sheep rearing, working capital enhancement in small enterprises such as petty shops and hotels etc, (in Upper Mullamari and Kanakanala). Apart from these enterprises, agriculture/horticulture based activities such as vermi-composting (Maramuri and Upper Mullamari), vasundhara (Upper Mullamari), dry land horticulture (Kanakanala and Upper Mullamari), etc. have also had an impact in improving the livelihoods of the marginalised.

Veerabhadrappa, a carpenter, has no lands and is not a native to the village, having arrived and settled 18 years ago. There were in all three carpenters in the village, out of which the other two had land. As Veerabhadrappa has no land, the VDS chose to support him through the livelihood programme. He received Rs5,000 seven months back and with it bought equipment. He has enough work on his hands now, as the villagers have money and because cultivation activities have increased. He has earned Rs5,000 so far, apart from grains the farmers give him for small jobs. He has a wife who is disabled, and two daughters.

Hanumanthappa, a barber, received Rs5,000/- from the project. He bought materials for his business (mirrors, furniture etc.). He claims that he is doing well now, and charges Rs15/- per haircut as against Rs10/- earlier. Hanumanthappa owns 5 acres land, on which he has conducted watershed works and now grows sesame. He has 4 daughters and one son to support. He earns Rs300 to Rs500 a week.

Sharanappa, a blacksmith, also received Rs5,000/- for livelihood activities. He is the brother of Veerabhadrappa, the carpenter. He earns about Rs400/- a week and claims that the work has increased now. He is also paid grains for small jobs. If a farmer gives him 40 'sers' of grain he has to sharpen all his agricultural equipment without any further charges for the whole year. He charges Rs5/- to sharpen a crowbar or 'guddali'.

Nine widows from the village have been identified by the VDS for livelihood support. The review team met with three of them in an SHG meeting (although two of them are not SHG members). Susheela, aged 55 years, has lost her husband. Her three sons are all grown up, married and employed in Mumbai. She lives alone in the village and used to work as an agricultural labourer. She has 3 acres of land, which is in her late husband's name. This was lying uncultivated; the VDS supported her to develop it. She contributed Rs1,000 and Rs4,000 was provided through the project. She now grows Toor (red gram), sesame, etc., and in one crop she has made Rs2,000 profit (excluding her own consumption). She is not a member of SHG as in the beginning she did not have any money to save and now she cannot join any SHG in the middle.

3.3.4. Changes in gender relations
Equal wages for men and women
The review found that the insistence on equal wages for women and men for equal work was a very important aspect in women's empowerment. There was initially resistance from the community in accepting equal wage rates for men and women, as it was considered that women were unable to do much of the heavy labour demanded by the watershed activities. The NGO partners played an important role in negotiating with the community and being firm on this issue. The strategy that resulted in all three watersheds was of labourers working in couples. Typically, a man and woman from the same household worked together as a pair, but when a man or woman had no available partner, arrangements between households were made, and the earnings still shared equally. The policy of equal wages strongly influenced a change in perception of male and female roles – not only of men about women, but also the perception of women themselves as equal contributors to the household earnings.

SHG activities

The process of womens' financial empowerment through SHGs has been strengthened through their organisation into centres/federations. Although these are structured differently in each watershed, in all, the building of bank and other linkages has increased the flow of funds into the system. The review also found that schemes helping to preserve the creation of assets, such as the gold/jewellery pawning system promoted by MVSSN in Kanakanala, are beneficial. More than this, however, it is clear that the SHGs and their federations have brought women together to discuss many social issues, and gain strength from each other.

"This is the first time somebody is looking at widows, labourers and poor."

– Pratap Rao, village Nirgudi, Upper Mullamari watershed

Purpose of first time loans from SHGs in Kanchanal as told to the review team:

- *Bribe for job (in this specific case, for son-in-law)*

- *Naming ceremony and other celebrations*

- *Health (mostly of other family members and not themselves)*

- *Education (school and college fees)*

- *To buy food-grains*

- *To pay local contribution for the watershed activities (4 out of 14 group members)*

- The second round of loans were taken towards income generating activities.

Results of the project: Exercise with SHGs conducted in Upper Mullamari Watershed, Village Sastapur

The group expressed pleasure that there are now horticultural farms, mango orchards, vermi-compost units, and vasundara application, in the village. There is increase in water table and moisture in the earth.

Similarly, they stated that they have fewer daily worries due to the reduction in migration, an increase by Rs10 in the local wage, the opportunity to learn new technologies, and the ability to pay off debts.

They were excited about having money now for festivals, buying TVs, renovating houses, etc.
*Alternative livelihood activities such as sheep rearing and buying milch cows gave some additional income.*

The review learned of various social impacts that have been brought about through SHGs in the village. In Kanakanala and Upper Mullamari, the women were able to get an arrack shop closed; in Maramuri, there was reduction in alcohol consumption. In Upper Mullamari, the agitation of SHG women from Bandenawazwadi against insurance payment being deducted from their bank account without prior notification was instrumental in the Bank Manager being transferred. Nevertheless, they were unable to get their money returned, a matter on which the review found strong feelings remain. Women are also taking initiatives on their own to support village development activities.

With the growing strength of SHGs, the role of the women in the household has undergone a change. Most loans are now taken through SHGs, meaning that the man of the house has to request the woman to take the loan on his behalf. The review found that women were clearly well informed on financial matters, and knew the full details of the liabilities and assets of their household – details on which they had often been ill informed in the past. Such knowledge gives power.

It should be noted that the review team also found that not all women are members of SHGs. Sometimes this is for reasons of personal choice and not inability to join, but in some cases the

Village map of Bandenawazwadi
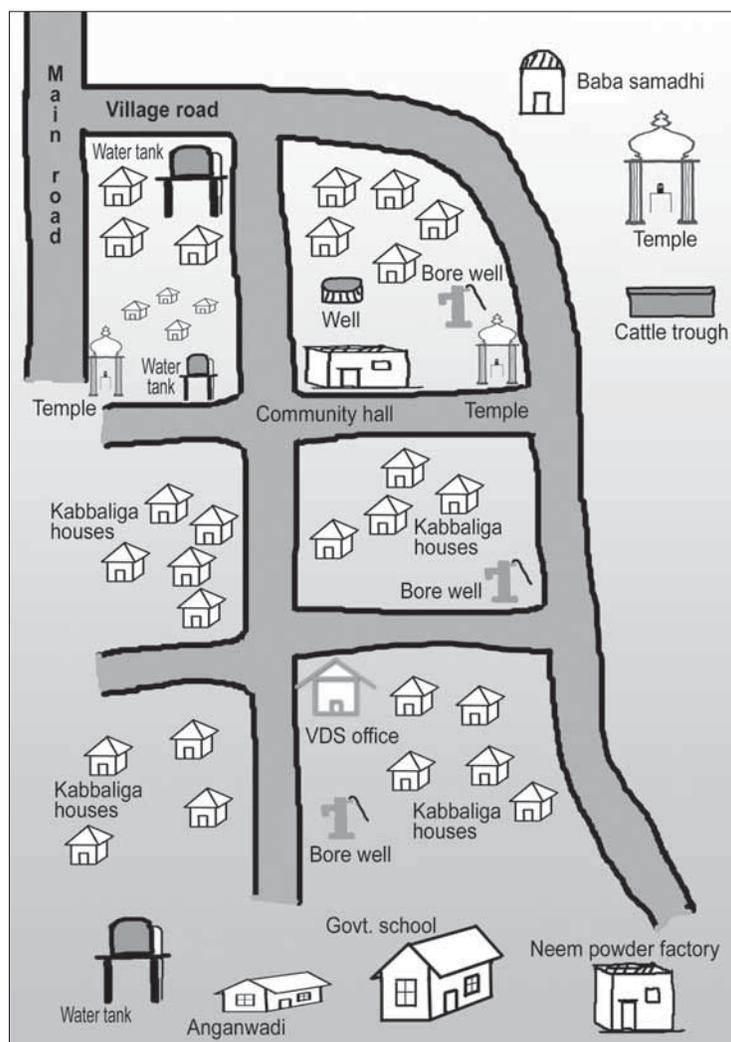
poorest women cannot afford even the small weekly savings, or are seasonally absent due to migration and thus cannot participate regularly. Despite the progress made, it remains a challenge to involve all women who wish to join SHGs.

In Kanchanal village, two women who were not SHG members, intervened towards the end of the discussions, saying that they were excluded from the benefits of the project. On enquiring further it was found that these women are migrant labourers. They were not in the village when the project started, and came after the SHGs were formed. Seven of them could not form a group by themselves, and also could not join any existing group. Discussions are taking place in the VDS and CMRC to find a way to include these women as SHG members or to form a separate group. Similarly, single women who have returned to their parent's house after being widowed or deserted are in need of livelihood support. These women have no decision-making powers even regarding their own children as they are dependent on their brothers and/or parents. This issue is presently being discussed at the VDS level if there could be some exclusive programme for them.

Discussions with SHG members in village Kanchanal, Maramuri Watershed.

Equal representation for men and women in all committees

Equal representation of male and female members in the VDS and its different committees is but the first step in empowerment – it creates space to interact. For healthy interaction to take place, the women members have to be confident and articulate. The review team found that the degree of confidence varies in different VDSs, with corresponding varying degrees in their true empowerment. However, there is growing awareness on the importance of womens' opinions; for the composition of the ISPWDK review team, the community representatives themselves suggested that there should be one male member and one female member from each watershed.

It was observed that the VDS decision to implement livelihood programmes through SHGs also contributed to changes in the dynamics of gender relationships in decision-making processes. Similarly, ensuring the involvement of women in all planning, monitoring financial and technical activities, at all levels and sectors, contributed to empowering women in decision-making processes at both the village and household level.

"Earlier when we talked about land or crops our husbands would say, 'keep quiet, you won't understand', but now we explain to them and they listen."

– A woman SHG member, Nirgudi, Upper Mullamari Watershed

Gender comparisons in discharging duties

The women members have grown in confidence and their viewpoints bring a different perspective to the discussions. The review team heard comments (from men) that women are more punctual and regular in attending meetings than men. Apart from this, women have proved to be very effective resource persons, and are recognised as such. There are a number of women resource persons who are equally if not more competent than men in all aspects – leadership in institutions, technical works, sustainable agriculture, monitoring and review, financial management, book keeping, etc. Thus for e.g., the woman Secretary of Hanumanthawadi VDS participates in the measurement of watershed works and payment to labourers. In Upper Mullamari watershed, all WMC presidents are women.

Women consistently expressed to the review team that earlier they did not come out of the house. Husbands and in-laws did not allow them to participate in SHGs, village development activities and now the women have reached a stage where they voice their opinions freely both at meetings and home.

"Before the project we did not come out of the house and now we ask our husbands to keep quiet."

– Woman SHG member

Women are now aware and articulate; attending training programmes, workshops, speaking in public forums with men are all part of their daily life. They claim that their husbands now listen to them on matters such as crops, land, children, etc. Furthermore, awareness on health issues had also increased.

"We never dreamt that after marriage our life was going to change, we thought of the mother-in-law, house work, field work, bearing children and that is all life is about. At the most we might attend markets and festivals. Now it is like our girlhood has returned, we now know that the world is so large."

– Chandramma, Maramuri Watershed

Building on the strengths of SHGs

Many good practices followed by women SHGs were incorporated in the functioning of the VDS in two of the three watersheds. The SHGs were also used as a strategy to enhance participation of women in watershed activities and leverage the project implementation of the livelihood programmes and collection of community contribution.

A new trend regarding SHGs is being observed in the Maramuri project villages. Seeing the progress made by women after getting organised in SHGs, the men in the project areas are coming forward to form groups. While the review team was at CMRC office at Ratkal, a group of men requested MYRADA team to facilitate SHGs among men. This is an interesting change as men, generally, are hesitant to accept openly – the wisdom, knowledge and experience of women and learn from it. In this case, however, the learning is explicitly acknowledged by a desire to follow the same practices.

3.3.5. Addressing caste and class-based discrimination

Possibly the greatest impact made by the project in fighting caste and class-based discrimination is with regard to attitudinal change amongst all villagers. It was remarked often in the course of the review that people now sit easily together, share tea and food; such things would not have been possible five years ago.

Participatory decision-making

The project has focused considerable energies on promoting the involvement of the poor and marginalised in village decision-making. The review found that this has resulted in tangible changes, with most important decisions now being taken in the gram sabhas, involving all community groups, in a transparent manner. However, as mentioned in the section of this report on 'concerns of the communities', this process is not yet fully institutionalised.

Capacity building opportunities

In identifying members for training, exposures, workshops, etc., equal representation was ensured of women, and members from marginalised groups. This provided a platform for knowledge building and sharing of experiences both within and between the different social groups in the village.

Representation of all sections of people in committees

In the VDS, WMC and other sub-committees, there is representation from all sections of the village – those who would once have feared to look in the eye of a member of the rich and influential classes now sit with them, state their views, discuss and arrive at a decision/ consensus. Over a period of time, the confidence of those from marginalised groups has increased so that they now do not hesitate to argue if they disagree, and offer suggestions. The fact that those of higher castes listen to the arguments and take the points seriously is an indication of the change undergone by the community. A more powerful indicator is that all members eat food together from the same kitchen – **be it the** project office or in the house of a member, irrespective of the member's caste. In this regard, staff members of the partner NGOs have served as role models.**

"When MYRADA people who are educated and knowledgeable, and come from various places in Karnataka can live like brothers, why can't we?"

– VDS member, Maramuri watershed

"Now we live like a community as a whole, like a big joint family, without any discrimination of high and low caste and men and women, bad or good we are all together."

– Male VDS member, Kanchanal village, Maramuri watershed

3.4. Approach to decentralisation

Understanding Governance

"As of today, there is no international consensus on the definition of governance. The SDC Governance Division hence subscribes to the following definition, inspired by UNDP.

- Governance addresses the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of either the world or an individual country's affairs at all levels.

- Governance is a concept encompassing the complex mechanisms, resources, processes and institutions by which citizens, legal entities, gender and social groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and duties.

- Governance transcends the State to include as well the private sector, civil society and international organisations in overall development process at global, national, regional and local levels.

Different sections of community benefiting from project activities

Sub-projects programmes 5	Men				Women				Landless	
	L	M	S	marginal	L	M	S	marginal	male	female
Cattle										
Welding machine				24						
Oxen		12								
Cobbler									2+1	
Poultry		34		01						
Sewing machine		01					25	25		
Pump set	50	50								1
Dustbin	50	50								
Ponds		25	20	15						
Compost			4	5						
Vermi compost	4 A K H				4 A K H					
Grain bin	←			FFS				→		
Oil extractor		30		30						
Labour										
Dunds		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seeds	25%	25%	25%	25%						
Polio vac	25%	25%	25%	25%						
Bullockcart	2		5						2+1	

L-large farmers   M-medium earmer   S-small farmer

3.4. Approach to decentralisation

The underlying principle of **subsidiarity** was a clear aspect of ISPWDK Phase II design, and the review found that it has been put into practice fairly uniformly across all villages. The focus has been on the involvement of all sections, at all levels, in decision-making bodies. This has required:

- Deliberate emphasis on the participation of the poorest and socially marginalised

- Regular support and facilitation in strengthening the lowest units of participatory democracy, in this case, the VDS and the SHGs at the village level.

There are other institutions at the project level which are federated from smaller institutional units at the village or hamlet level but whose functioning is also decentralised.

Decentralisation has been promoted through functional participative democracy – supporting structures to strengthen and empower grassroots level organisations and institutions. As the key structure at the village level, important aspects of the VDS in this context are:

- **All households** in the village are represented, through **one male and one female** adult member. They form the general body of the VDS, which is required to meet at least twice a year

- The **general body**, or *gram sabha*, is the supreme decision-making body at the village level

- The **governing council** of the VDS is representative of all sections of the village, including the women, landless, socially marginalised and ST communities. The governing council is elected by, and is accountable to, the general body.

3.4.1. Full representation

It was a concern early in the project that it would be difficult to gain full representation of households in the VDS. Although membership is not 100%, the review found that it is very high, and appears to be over 90% in all villages.

3.4.2. Subsidiarity in decision-making

The review team found that all major decisions regarding the project are indeed taken in the VDS *gram sabha*. Meetings take place at a frequency of three to six months depending on the watershed; thus either as often as formally required, or more frequently. An examination of meeting minutes combined with discussions with villagers indicated that the following decisions are consistently taken at the *gram sabhas:*

- Approval of village level plans

- Identification of beneficiaries for livelihood programmes

- Reporting and discussion of expenditure vis-a-vis the plan for the period

- Decisions on fund re-allocation use of local contribution, etc.

It was further found that the VDS office-bearers have evolved systems to take care of the accounting and physical implementation needs of the project.

In the related policies, promoting Governance aims at creating an enabling environment to ensure the full respect of the rule of law, human rights protection, gender equality, a shared and accountable use of power, and macro-economic stability, all geared towards human development and according to the principle of *subsidiarity*."

Some of the principles of governance:

- *Democratic participation*: this concerns all citizens, literate or not, however near or far they are from the capital of their country.

- *'Empowerment' of all population groups,* especially women's groups, which are often the most dynamic and most dependable.

- *It is important to formulate inclusive, not exclusive, policies in the context of SDC intervention*."

SDC Media and Governance: A Guide (2004:3) SDC, Bern. [Emphasis added]

Different sections of community benefiting from project activities

Activities	Men				Women				Landless	
	L	M	S	marginal	L	M	S	marginal	male	female
Nutrition from dead animals				1						
Support to the sick				✔						
Sunken ponds	construction on common property									
RFCD	pond of goddess									
Gully bunds	common property									
Plantations		15%	15%	common property 70%						
Stream water collection	common property Mallapa ajja									
Watering of their crop										
Drinking water facility	common property									
Children's education	for all									
Sheep									1	1
Water shed training		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Exposure visits		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Self help Groups										
Vermi compost	10% Men				90% Women					

L-large farmers   M-medium earmer   S-small farmer

The review team also had an opportunity to witness two *gram sabhas,* organised in the Maramuri and Kanakanala watersheds respectively, during the course of the five day review. This was a first hand experience of how the proceedings actually take place; it was observed that people from all backgrounds in the village took an active part. Beyond the expected decision-making aspects covered in *gram sabhas*, many crucial practical issues relating directly to equity and empowerment,

have been (and are) discussed. Thus the meetings have become a truly democratic forum for different groups in the village to express their views, and for agreement to be reached.

Examples of such (often reportedly heated) discussions include:

- Fixing of wages (including the issue of parity for men and women)
- Fixing of local contribution for treatments on private property and CPRs
- Conflict resolution
- (In Maramuri watershed) the negotiation of local contribution with farmers
- (In Upper Mullamari) utilisation of local contribution, site conflicts, etc.
- (In Kanakanala) negotiating the quality of the earthen bunds.

3.4.3. Transparency

In all ISPWDK villages, the planned watershed treatments for the village are displayed on a cadastal level plot map on the wall in a common/central place in the village. The plan and expenditure in different focus areas are also on display. This information is updated every three to six months (in addition to being shared in the *gram sabha*).

3.4.4. Implementation – different committees for different works

The VDS is responsible for implementing the plan finalised in the *gram sabha*. This is organised in different ways in the three watersheds, but in all cases there are sub-committees responsible for different functions. These are as follows:

- **Monitoring of watershed works** is conducted by a Watershed Management Committee (WMC) – constituted with representation of different castes and classes with assured representation of the landless and women.

- **Technical aspects** in each watershed are overseen by technical resource persons, grouped as People's Technical Resource Groups (PTRG) in Kanakanala and as a technical team in Maramuri. In Maramuri, women who are part of the group are now recognised locally as watershed resource persons.

Under MYRADA, there are different sub committees for measurement and payment. The community members in the former are responsible for taking measurements, ensuring the quality and certifying that the payments can be made as per claims. The payment committee draws the money from the bank on payment day and make the payments to the labourers as recommended by the measurement committee. The members in the committees are rotated.

Thus there is no accumulation of power – both for financial disbursements and decision- making. It is all decentralised, even within the village level institution.

Decentralisation in India

"SDC-India considers the **decentralisation process** a tremendous opportunity to empower rural disadvantaged groups. The 73rd and 74th Amendments have initiated a crucial phase in India's history, during which the local government either will be recaptured by those so far in power, or will be a vital vehicle towards an equitable and sustainable development in India.

In view of the cynicism and the corruption prevailing within the political class at the State and national level, decentralisation bears in itself the potential of nurturing another kind of political actors, who would gain experience at the local level, and then carry on with renovating the representative system towards democracy and people-friendly politics.

SDC's intention, beyond and above its support to Panchayat Raj Institutions, is *to promote all formal and informal systems – or, put differently, groups pursuing the interests of the community as a whole – that ensure the fair and equitable representation of poor people at the local level*." [Emphasis added]

SDC India Country Programme 2003–2010 (2003:25) SDC, Delhi.

"The paradigm has to shift from centralised natural resource management and provision systems to decentralised people oriented solutions. This is essentially a guiding principle; the role of the community is central. This essentially perceives the community in form of strong and decentralised CBP for securing powers to decide and govern their resource base and that they are empowered to take decisions. It is also expected that empowered community bodies and panchayats could act as engines for change in this whole process."

Dr N R Jagannath, Programme Officer, SDC

review findings

Transparent way of conducting VDS *gram sabha* in Maramuri Watershed
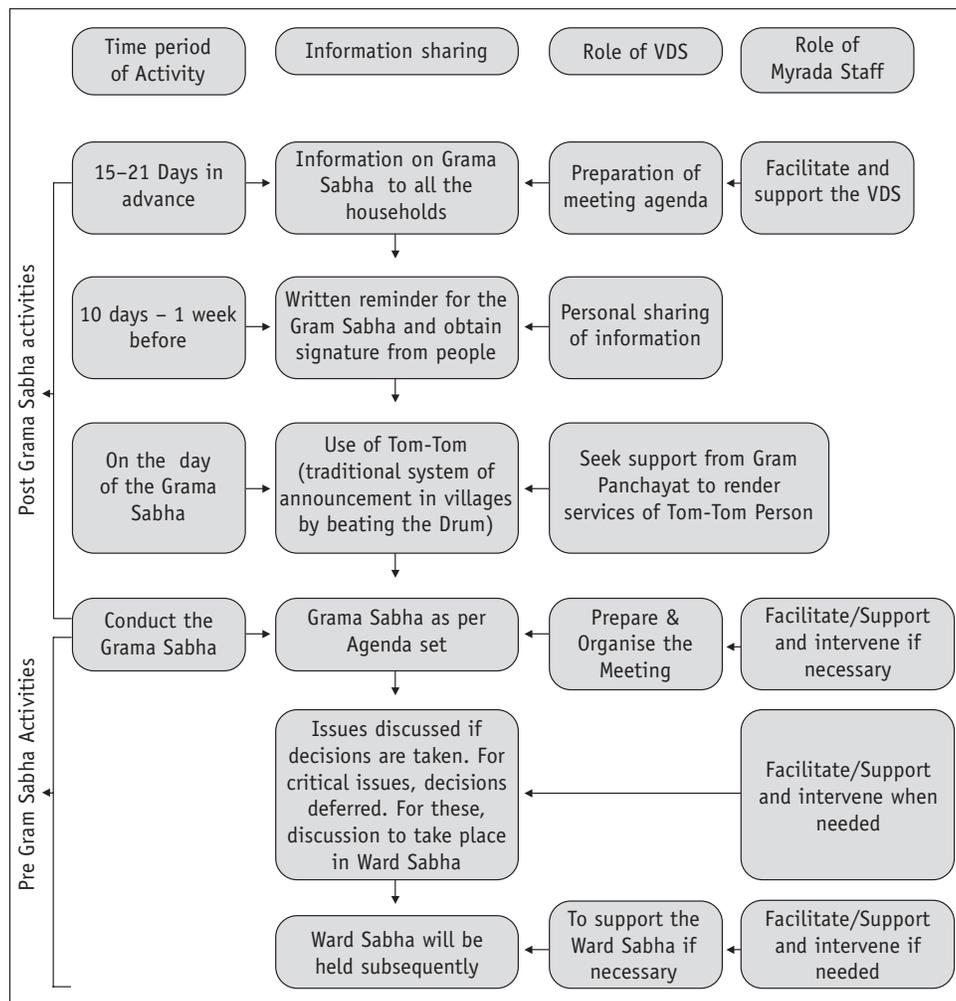
3.4.5. Rotation of leaders, people in influential positions

At all levels there is a deliberate change of persons in the different committees. One third of the VDS Governing Council members are rotated every year. The WMC members undergo changes every year, while the members of the payment committee are rotated after every payment.

3.4.6. Evolution in style and motivation of office bearers

Village discussions revealed that the VDSs have passed through many phases of leadership changes. The initial round of leaders in most villages tended to be influential persons, and/or those attracted by motives of power and money-making. However, the levels of transparency and accountability that were put into practice led to the natural replacement of these first generation leaders by people with service objectives in mind. The example of Illal VDS is particularly striking in this regard.

Illal VDS: Bringing Office bearers to account
The VDS in Illal village was established in 2000. Most people in the village are SC or ST, and the 15 members of the VDC Committee represented this composition. Problems started when the VDS Committee took up construction of a sunken pond under ISPWDK drought relief measures. The pond was poorly constructed, and conflicts arose as a result. Allegations of financial mis-management were made against the Chairperson and the Secretary, who then failed to attend the next Committee meeting or the gram sabha. As a result of social pressure, the defaulters attended the second gram sabha, and they agreed to repay. Responsibility for ensuring this was given to the village head, thus demonstrating overall village trust in traditional leadership. All activities came to a standstill for six months and a re-election of the Committee members (before they had completed their term) took place, in line with the decision of the gram sabha, and the recommendation of the PIRC. Thus the VDS committee was completely changed, with the new members having full credibility and the trust of the village members overall.

Source: *ISPWDK draft publication on VDS experiences*

3.4.7. Addressing multiple aspects of village development

The VDS is conceived as a permanent institution (continuing beyond the project life-time), for the overall development of the village. The activities implemented through it are varied in nature, crossing into activities beyond strict watershed works to include agriculture, livelihoods, health and education. The review team observed that this has given the VDSs a broad base in development activities, and helped them to develop wider resource experience and skills, and establish linkages with different outside agencies.

In one case (Kodli), the VDS is recognised by the Zila panchayat as a registered local organisation with experience and skills, and has been entrusted with implementing the Saksatra programme for more than one panchayat.

3.4.8. Strong women's participation

Apart from the VDS and the different committees, the womens' SHGs supported under the project have added to village social development by taking various bold initiatives (largely covered under the section on addressing discrimination). Experience of

promoting good governance in SHGs – aspects such as rotation of leaders, regularity of meetings, setting quality standards, high financial standards and auditing, etc. – were said to have strongly influenced the way in which the VDSs were established.

3.4.9. VDS as a complementary institution to the Gram Panchayats (GPs)

Within ISPWDK, there is an opinion that rather than serving as parallel or competitive institutions to GPs, village-based, democratic decision-making bodies such as VDSs can ultimately support GPs in being strong, locally accountable institutions. The two institutions operate at different

levels, the VDS being at the revenue village level while the GP is a body for a cluster of revenue villages. The review team found a variety of evidence to uphold the view that VDSs can complement the democratic functioning of GPs, although the former are still young institutions, and time is required to develop strong links with local government. A number of examples serve to illustrate the development of relations to date.

In Maramuri watershed, there is a high level of consciousness about the importance of linking with the Gram Panchayat; thus a GP member is an institutional member in the VDS Governing Council. Good relations were observed between the VDS and the GP. In Sugur village, the VDS has use of the GP building, and has been able to mobilise a computer from GP funds.

"GP and VDS will work like two hands of the village after the project closes down."

– GP President, Sugur

In Upper Mullamari watershed, there is also a GP member on the Governing Council of most VDSs. All VDSs have been able to obtain land from the GP for the construction of the VDS office building. The GP was instrumental in supporting the VDS during conflict resolution. In Illal village, the GP took pains to resolve the issue of land allocation to the VDS, a process that got prolonged due to internal village politics.

In Kanakanala watershed, links between the VDS and GPs are good. It was reported in local level discussions that the VDS can play a particular role in implementing activities for which there is an expressed need by the community, but which other government agencies and the GP are unable to fund. SAMUHA had also conducted training for GP members on leadership.

Local people regularly made comparisons in the style of functioning, values, implementation strategies, etc., between the VDS and GP. The VDS is seen to put moral and social pressure on the GPs to function more transparently and be more accountable. GP members (present and former) themselves noted that after VDS establishment, they faced numerous inquiries from community members, with expectations of the same levels of transparency and accountability as maintained by the VDS. It is reported that attendance in VDS *gram sabhas* is much higher than for GPs.

The idea that membership of the GC of VDS would serve as a 'grooming' for leadership at the GP level was not envisaged as part of the intended project results. It is thus an additional, positive impact.

In the GP elections held in 2004, a high number of current and past VDS Governing Council members, or others who have been very active within the VDS, were elected to the GP. If spouses of those holding office are included, the total number is 23 persons (7 in Upper Mullamari, 10 in Kanakanala, and 6 in Maramuri). This provides a good indication of the trust that these individuals have gained. In village discussions, the review team found that the election of these people also carried an expectation that the values practised in the project will become mirrored in the functioning of the GP.

 "We see the VDS as a watch dog for the Gram Panchayat!"

– Kiran Mandanna, MYRADA

"*Earlier the ISPWDK gram sabhas would take place in front of the GP offices, which resulted in attendance of GP members and also the place is good. The relationship with the GP is improving because of this process. The*

tom-tom is used for ISPWDK grama sabhas [to call the people]. This is an indicator of the relationship as it can only be used by the GP. The GP is feeling pressurised now as people have started questioning them."

— MYRADA field staff member

Project context

3.5. Replication potential

"The project aims at developing successful models of poverty alleviation through holistic watershed development for replication and policy influencing."

ISPWDK Phase II MCC Document (2002: 9)

Social map of Allapur village as presented to the review team by WMC members

review findings

3.5. Replication potential

Focussing on the innovative, the 'new generation ideas', and what had proven successful in practice, the review team identified the following replicable practices in the three watersheds.

3.5.1. Watershed implementation

Under watershed rehabilitation, the best practices emerging in ISPWDK are:

- **The norm that no machinery should be used for any watershed works, including activities in private land.** This strategy created highly significant employment opportunities for wage labour in the project area. Apart from significantly reducing distress migration, it also reduced vulnerability amongst poorer households through wage earnings, enabling them to build assets for the future. Although vested interests will always push for the use of machinery, the ISPWDK experience proves that watershed works can be implemented effectively (if not always rapidly) through manual labour.

- **Equal wages for men and women.** Apart from strongly reiterating the focus on equity, this was a crucial negotiating point within the community. The review team considers equal wages to be an essential policy for promoting gender awareness and equity.

- **Priority given to indigenous technical knowledge.** The review team endorses the priority given to the indigenous technical know-how of the farmers, this being more practical and sustainable. The focus on activities such as pitting, creation of wats, earthen bunds, boulder bunds, kheni system (Kaudiyal village in Upper Mullamari), stone work masonry (Advibhavi in Kanakanala watershed), mostly on private lands, is readily replicable. Although there may sometimes be a need for heavier investment in structures involving external technical expertise and material (check dams, etc., made of concrete), the approach taken of doing this sparingly, and only on common lands along the drainage lines, is recommended. The cases of traditional watershed treatment systems being adopted and improvised in the project (e.g., waste weir in Kanakanala, boulder bunds in Seri and Advibhavi, drawing up the boundary as shiwar in Upper Mullamari, chain sunken ponds/earthern nala bunds, etc.) are particularly interesting for replication.

- **Loan based watershed programme.** The loan based watershed programme being implemented as part of this project in Allapur (Maramuri Watershed) is endorsed as an innovative concept. Under this approach, the project money is given to the community based organisation (in this case the WMC) as a grant. The community carries out watershed works as per the agreed plans. However, unlike the case in the rest of ISPWDK, in which the farmer contributes only a fraction of the total cost (placed in a fund for future maintenance), in Allapur, the farmer has to repay the entire investment on his/her land back to the CBO over a fixed period of time. This is a model for future replication that can be perfected through further experimentation. The concept has huge potential; with further experimentation, credit-based systems for watershed development may emerge from this model. It could do to the natural resource management sector what SHGs have done to the rural credit sector.

- **Flexibility.** Comparing with other watershed programmes such as NABARD, partner NGO staff felt that the flexibility provided by the project allowed for adjustments needed due to the dynamics of field realities. An example given was the mid course corrections; the blue print approach of NABARD which does not allow for any deviations from the approved action plan can give local people many difficulties.

3.5.2. Local contribution
- **Project paying 100% costs.** This has two important consequences
    - Labourers receive their full wages
    - A fund is created for the maintenance of assets created under the project, and for other development activities.

The review team found that this arrangement was highly appreciated by villagers. Instead of the local contribution going outside the village, it was kept within, for future development activities.

- **Flexibility in LC collection.** The review team found that the flexibility of ISPWDK in allowing each watershed project to evolve different strategies in LC collection contributed to a high level of payment overall, as well as being responsive to the constraints experienced by small and marginal farmers. On the down side of this approach, the review also indicated that there were a few examples (from the initial stages of the implementation) of women taking loans from SHGs to pay the LC.

3.5.3. Watershed plus activities

Under the watershed plus activities, a variety of practices were found to have potential for replication.

Agriculture production

The project has promoted numerous practices under sustainable agriculture. These have generated a good response amongst the local community, and small experiments are already being scaled up by the respective NGO partners. They include:

- The manufacture and application of *vasundara* (a manure made from farm and agro industrial wastes) in Upper Mullamari Watershed;

- Vermi-composting in all three watersheds;

- Grain banks developed through the collection of grains as VDS membership fees in Kanakanala (all VDSs);

- Dryland farming practices/horticulture in one VDS both Kanakanala (one VDS) and Upper Mullamari

- Floriculture for small farmers in Upper Mullamari.

During the review it was stated that the government is already copying the promotion of vermi-compost in its programmes. Some people in the project villages are now actually earning a livelihood – or at least important additional income – through activities such as vermi-composting.

Need-based activities

The provision for need based activities gives the NGO staff and community representatives an opportunity to address the felt needs of the community that may not be directly addressed by the planned project activities. This is an important entry point activity and is highly appreciated; the review team felt that it has strong potential for replication on grounds of community motivation and the promotion of equity.

Livelihood activities

Activities under the livelihood promotion programme are meant mainly for the poorest of the poor. Many experiments were conducted in this regard by the partner NGOs, and most support was channeled through SHGs – it being essentially credit based. The role of the SHGs in this regard has, in itself, strong potential for replication.

Diagram drawn in a participatory exercise in Kanakanala during the review process

Relationship between Govt. agencies and Samuha Kanakanala

Research centre

KVK

Agriculture department

Bank SBH/TGB Urban

Tele communication

Forest department

Samuha Kanakanala

Transport

Animal husbandry

Education

Horticulture

Small industries

Revenue department

Health centre

Women & child welfare department

Relationship between ISPWDK partners and PSMU

ISPWDK SDCIC/PSMU

PRAWARDA

MYRADA

SAMUHA

3.5.4. Decentralisation

Many ISPWDK practices follow the principle of subsidiarity, with people at the lowest level being empowered. Notable practices with potential for replication are:

- Implementation **managed by CBOs**

- Constitution of **different sub-committees** within the WMC for discharging different functions – these include the Measurement Committee, Payment Committee, Supervisor Committee, etc., in Maramuri watershed; the technical team in Maramuri and PTRG in Kanakanala.

- **Rotation of office bearers** at all levels – this is necessary for attaining good governance.

- **Frequent, regular meetings** for different committees, especially when the watershed works are at a peak season – in ISPWDK, such meetings are weekly.

3.5.5. Institutional linkages

The review team found that support for both VDSs and SHGs created synergetic linkages. Beyond this, the encouragement of linkages between the VDS and other local government agencies provides scope for greater permanence and sustainability. Promoting linkages between CBOs and other agencies, particularly government, is a replicable strategy.

Transparency in works conducted....maps and figures displayed on the walls of the GP building (used also by the VDS) in Sugur, Maramuri watershed

3.5.6. Gender

The importance of **equal wages** in supporting gender awareness has already been noted. The general emphasis on women's participation – through SHGs, through mandatory representation in all committees; participation in capacity building, etc., are also highly replicable practices (although not particularly new).

CMRC, Mahila Bank and GMASS were cited as SHG models for replication by each of the partners promoting them. Each is rooted in a different philosophy, and the review team felt that each has potential for replication in a given context. However, all are very young organisations and still have some distance to go to be both financially viable as well as institutionally sustainable. Thus it is difficult to reach a clear conclusion.

3.5.7. Mechanisms promoting transparency and accountability

- **Same finance management practices at project and village level:** The review team found that in MYRADA and PRAWARDA, similar levels of rigour are applied to the financial practices at both the VDS and project level. This is recommended as replicable good practice.

- **Open discussions on gender and equity:** The regular encouragement of open discussions on issues of gender and equity in all forums, including *gram sabhas*, created both awareness and an opportunity for reaching a negotiated consensus. This is a replicable strategy for strengthening any similar social issues.

- **Gramasabha as a decision-making body:** This practice both ensures that the community is informed of all information needed to reach decisions, and participates in the decisions themselves. Effective and regular *gram sabhas* are highly recommended as a replicable strategy, whilst recognising that much capacity building and facilitation is required to fully institutionalise transparent practices (the VDSs are not yet fully fledged in this respect).

- **Display Boards as a strategy for transparency:** The display boards installed in all project villages showing the annual plans on plot maps and in financial terms and the updated progress vis-à-vis the plans, is a good practice that can be readily replicated in other projects.

- **Ward sabhas:** The sequence of ward sabhas culminating into a grama sabha to ensure maximim participation is also replicable.

- **Accountability:** People themselves being accountable for the money instead of the NGO brings in greater stakes, greater ownership as well as confidence among the community. This strategy was successful, and should be replicated.

- **Responsibility for the co-signatory being given to the community:** Linking with the above point, this is an important step in promoting local responsibility. With systemic checks and social pressure, there is greater ownership and identification of the community with the project.

3.5.8. Capacity Building

The review team highlighted the following good practices:

- Technical training to local community members so that they become recognised as technical resource persons, creating of a pool of locally available resource persons in agriculture, watershed, etc., is highly replicable.

- Need-based training (as imparted by PSMU and MYRADA). Trainings that address a genuine requirement are likely to be particularly appreciated.

Relation between different institutions in Upper Mullamari Watershed
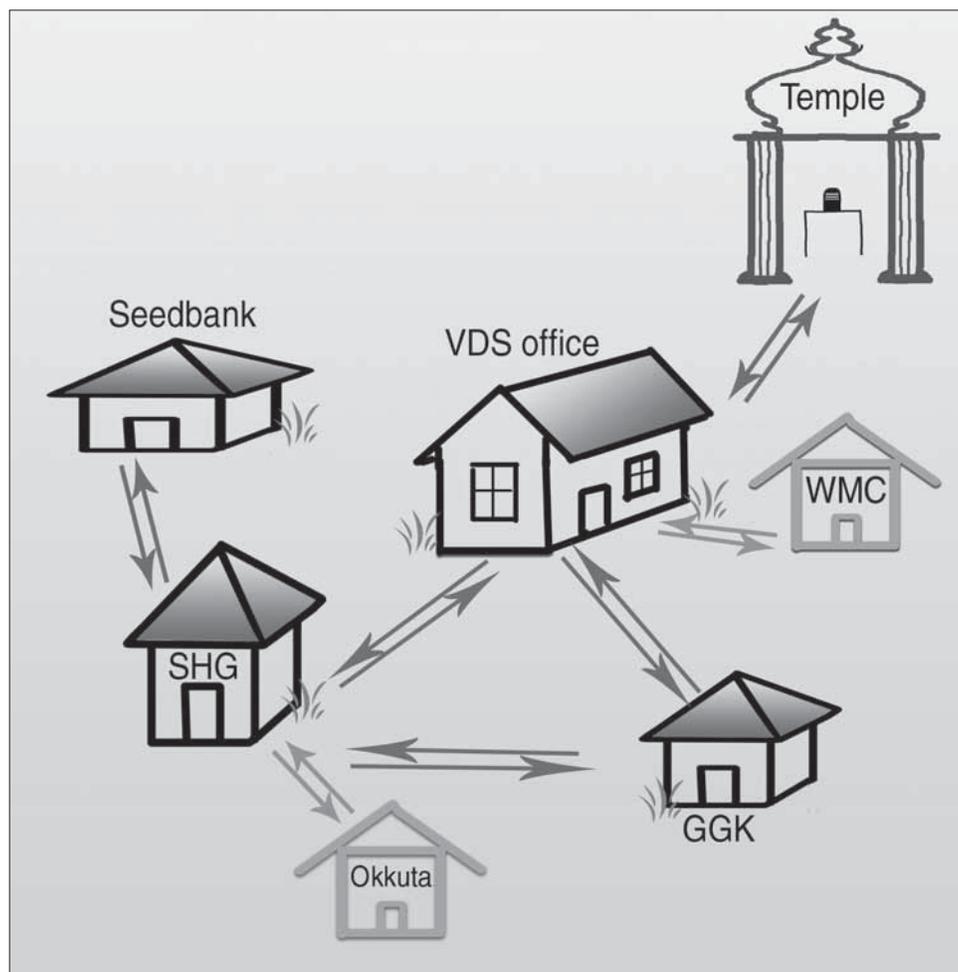
- Special care taken to include women, widows, and the landless, to the General Body was seen to have had a significant impact on the empowerment of women and their active participation in the project

- Broad-based involvement: the inclusion of women and small farmers in campaigns can help promote community cohesion.

3.5.9. MIS and documentation

The project is exceptional in having placed emphasis in its MIS at the village level – it is 'bottom up' rather than 'top down'. It is apparent that a huge amount of work has gone into creating and testing the necessary formats, which have only become operational towards the end of the phase. The systems developed and being used by villagers are highly replicable.

- MYRADA has placed particular emphasis on the computerisation of records at VDS level. Despite all reservations with regard to the functioning of computers in a village environment (power cuts, poor maintenance facilities, etc.) and local capacities to operate them (the need to find and train interested people who will remain in the village), this is fully operational. All VDS records are now maintained in the VDS computer.

- SAMUHA has developed training material regarding watershed treatments from the experience in Kanakanala 'prathi jalanayanadalli 100ha prathyakshathe-janaru, sibbandhigala madhyadalli'. This elaborates on the pilot watershed concept in 100hac plots. The production of such material may be emulated by all working organisations.

- In SAMUHA, the management of data through the MIS at the VDS level (e.g., U Rampur) was considered a practice that could be replicated in future projects. Similarly in PRAWARDA, the MIS system used by SHGs was identified as a replicable best practice.

It must be noted, however, that the full use of the computerised MIS has suffered from the fact that it was only initiated mid-way through the project. Had work on the system commenced earlier, it would likely be at a more advanced stage now.

A VDS committee meeting in progress at Kanchanal village – Maramuri watershed

Watershed works in progress: Technical resource persons measure a trench

4.1. Background

The purpose of the self-reflection exercise was to consider to what degree the NGO and PSMU staff members were actually practising themselves the values and principles being promoted amongst the communities. This was not seen in a critical manner, but as an opportunity to reflect in a spirit of self-learning. The exercise essentially entailed mapping the communication and relationships between the different units in ISPWDK- between PSMU and the partner NGOs, between the three NGOs, and within the different units of the same organisation (head office and project office). The different stages of the project, and the changing context of operation, were kept in mind.

During the course of the review, a further aspect was added to the review – the feedback from the NGO staff on the services offered by support organisations contracted directly by PSMU. The services offered by these agencies were mostly in the form of technical inputs – software development, exploratory baseline studies, agricultural innovations, gender mainstreaming, etc. The support had resulted in varying degrees of capacity building of the NGO staff. These support organisations were recognised resource agencies in India in their subject area, and in most cases they are/were also partners of SDC. A simple framework was devised for ranking the services of the support organisations, and used by all three partners in their reflection to ensure cross-comparison, consolidation and uniformity.

4.2. Process in self-reflection

Whilst the use of a PRA tool was originally foreseen for the self-reflection exercise, in the end staff finally felt more comfortable in a simple discussion amongst themselves, following a few key questions:

- How was the communication and relationship between:
    - ISPWDK NGO staff and other units of the same organisation (central office, other field offices)
    - NGO staff and PSMU
    - NGO staff and community at different stages of the project?

- What were the capacity building strategies undertaken by partner NGO for ISPWDK staff? What were the capacity building events attended by the ISPWDK NGO staff?

- Provide a qualitative feedback for the services offered by the support organisations to the project staff/community.

The NGO staff members were asked to be creative, and use pictorial depictions to map relationships creatively.

Based on the discussions, the NGO staff spent time together to collectively reflect on the said aspects. One or more of the NGO staff members presented the outcome of the reflection on the final day of the review.

4.3. Outcomes of the NGO self reflections

4.3.1. Capacity building undertaken as part of the project

NGO staff in all three watersheds listed many capacity building activities under the project, in a variety of forms. These included:

- **Participation** in awareness campaigns (often facilitated by the NGO – but nevertheless a learning opportunity for staff)

- **Exposure** visits to other areas; exchange visits between villages; to projects implemented by funding from other agencies like NABARD, Plan, etc.

- **Training for trainers** (ToTs)

- **Training** from the **resource agencies** who provided support in thematic areas. This aspect is covered in more details in a separate section.

4.3.2. Communication within the organisation

All three partners stated that communication within their organization is very good. Staff members were also supported in the project implementation by the other units of the same organisation – central units and other field offices. The MYRADA team especially mentioned lessons learned from exposure visits to other projects run by different units of their organisation (e.g., at Kadiri, HD Kote and Kamasamudram). The SAMUHA team had regular interactions with their central office and other thematic institutions promoted by SAMUHA. The services of these organisations were used for different aspects in the project like planning using GIS, technical aspects, monitoring, accounting and auditing support, etc. The communication and relationship among staff in PRAWARDA was also stated to be very good.

### 4.3.3. Communication at watershed project level

The communication and relationship at the project level was discussed at two levels. At one level, the NGO partner has its own space and creates linkages for facilitating project implementation and for further strengthening the CBOs promoted under the project. All three partners have a significant presence in the areas that they work in. They are well recognised by the local government departments for health, education, forest, agriculture, rural development and panchayati raj, etc.; by local banks, and by other agencies functioning in the area. The NGOs pointed out that they seek linkages not to leverage Government schemes for the benefit of the community,[1] but also to seek synergies and complementary resources in their areas of focus – sustainable agriculture, joint forest management, renewable energy, etc. Thus, for example, the good relations between SAMUHA and local Forest Department staff has led to complementary operations between the VFC and the VFC in the village of Myadatokki. MYRADA's good relations with the Department of Education helped make the link with the Saksarata programme (the education programme); whilst all the NGOs have facilitated linkages between SHGs and banks.

The partner NGOs have played a key role in initiating a variety of formal and informal local linkages currently enjoyed by the VDSs. Some of these linkages are but natural extensions of those already existing between the NGO and the different government

departments. They include linkages with the SDMC (the School Betterment Committee), the local health officials, the KVKs, the local SHGs and project level federated structures of SHGs, and most importantly with GPs. The VDSs are still in the process of establishing such linkages, which are certainly essential for long-term sustainability.

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3. These include polio vaccination campaigns, distribution of malaria prevention medicines, etc.

Relationship between institutions in Kanakanala
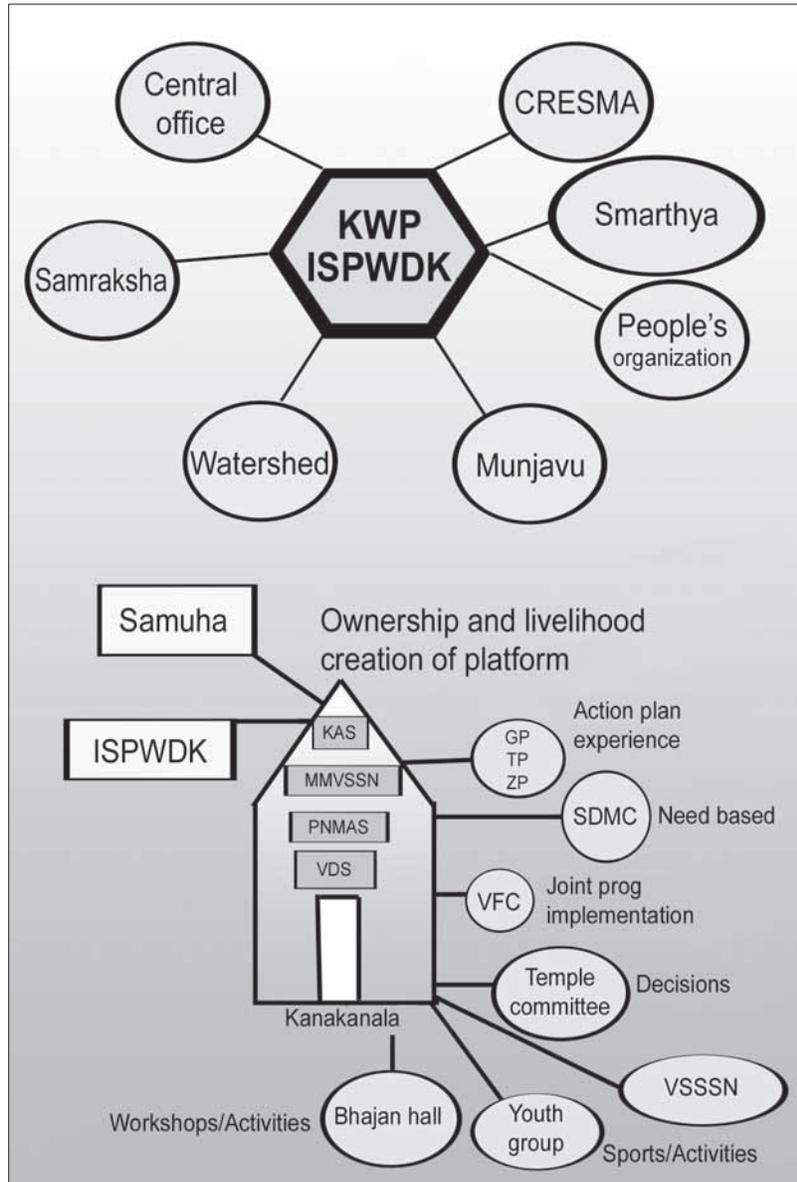
4.3.4. Communication between ISPWDK Partners

In all three projects, the communication and relationship with other ISPWDK partners was stated to be good. The partners communicated with each other in joint meetings. They learnt from the experiences of other partners in thematic sharing events and exposure visits to other ISPWDK watershed projects. Select participants from each watershed went on training events together. One of the partner staff being a member of the JPR team as a social/institutional facilitator, was seen as a cross learning opportunity. An example of expressing solidarity with another partner was stated as the Samuha team volunteered to do the micro-planning exercise for the Allahpur village in Maramuri watershed.

4.3.5. Communication between Partners and PSMU

The partner NGOs said that the relationship with PSMU has been good. PSMU is seen to:

- Play the role of a link between partner NGOs

- Provide support for capacity building to NGO staff and community

- Encourage cross learning – the Exchange Forums being quoted as a good example

- Through organising the support organisations, add value to existing themes and orientations (to varying degrees).

PSMU's role in fund sanctioning and disbursal was seen as a very critical one.

4.4. Self-reflection exercise in PSMU

A self-reflection exercise for PSMU facilitated by an external facilitator, Mr Ram Bhat, was held over July 1–2, with follow-up on 11 July 2005. All PSMU staff, plus the Senior Advisor, DIC, were part of the event. Held in the backdrop of the PSMU closure in December 2005, one of the objectives of the exercise was to revitalise the staff motivation for staying together as an effective team in the remaining period. The other objectives were to reflect on the communication and relationship between partners, DIC and COOF and within PSMU. There was open sharing by individual members about their concerns and fears. After this, the commitment to complete the process of closure was reiterated by staff, acknowledging the fact that office closure meant a substantial increase in work. The team also identified the support required from PSMU Management Team and DIC in finishing pending works and supporting them for their future careers.

The communication exercise revealed that the relationship among the team within PSMU was very positive. The fact that the team was small, and did not work in a hierarchical manner contributed greatly to the openness of the communication.

In the case of SDC/COOF/DIC, team members felt that the communication process was frequent, direct, open and complete when the SDC office was in Bangalore. Later, when SDC shifted to Delhi, the communication was more on e-mail and although the communication and feedback were frequent and prompt, the team members did not feel the same closeness. When DIC was established, the channel became a little more indirect, and communication with COOF reduced substantially. There was still a fair amount of communication with SDC and feedback was also prompt. Generally it was felt that the communication was regular and fairly open. Especially on programme related issues, PSMU team was considered an equal partner. However, on administrative issues, the process tended to be much more directive in the later stages.

In the case of communication with partners, it was seen that the communication was more often with the field and project levels than with the head/central office. Communication to the field and the project office levels was again direct, open and highly satisfying. It was felt that there was a high level of comfort and understanding, and opportunities for learning from both sides. However, at the head/central office level there had been difficulties with some partners from time to time, especially with one partner. It was agreed that communication on administrative issues was more directive from PSMU. Here there was a parallel in the communication between PSMU and SDC – while the programme related communication was more participatory, with provision for learning, on administrative issues PSMU itself needed to be very directive.

4.5. Assessment of resource agencies by NGO partners

Partner field staff provided their subjective assessment of the different resource agencies hired by PSMU to provide services. In this, the most appreciated were Green Foundation (seed provision),

Resource organisations support to Kanakanala watershed project
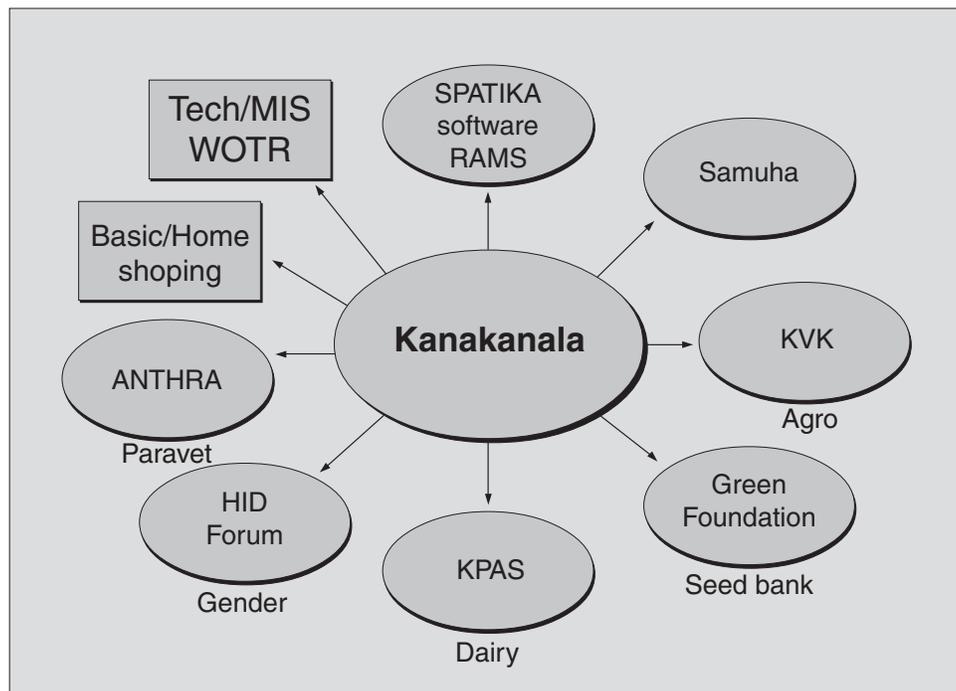
Anthra (support for small ruminants and poultry) and Safal Solution (for the SHG MIS; the services of this organisation were identified by the partner themselves, but contracted through PSMU). Clearly when the partners identify a need themselves, they have a greater stake in the services provided, and a potentially greater sense of satisfaction with the results.

Those agencies for which partners gave a middle level of appreciation were WOTR (for MIS services), AME Foundation (sustainable agriculture – two partners only) and TERI (in PRAWARDA). In the case of WOTR, the assessment of services varied greatly between partners.

The organisations least appreciated by the partners (if averages are taken) were BASIX, HID Forum and WOTR (for technical services). However, this is perhaps misleading. The input of HID Forum was very highly appreciated in MYRADA, where the review team found the greatest gender awareness. It was least appreciated by SAMUHA, where, similarly, the review team expressed certain concerns about gender integration. The input of BASIX for livelihood promotion was appreciated more by PRAWARDA and SAMUHA, who used the support to refine implementation of the activities concerned (the neem unit and home shopping, respectively). However, MYRADA found BASIX's input to be of very limited use. The input of WOTR for the technical aspects during the JPR was recognised to have been a useful input in defining the technical quality of the structures; thus the relatively low scores for WOTR in this respect were surprising. The nature of support offered was during the JPRs and the purpose was to build the capacity so that the communities can internalise the skills and manage on their own before the project period ends.

The scoring pattern by MYRADA and SAMUHA staff was highly varied, with some organisations being highly appreciated and others hardly at all. In case of PRAWARDA, there was less variation in appreciation of the services provided.

5

Concerns raised by the communities

The review found that although there are many achievements from which the communities in ISPWDK Project villages take pride, they also expressed many concerns such as:

5.1. Pending areas requiring treatments as per agreed plan

In all three watersheds there are villages with areas where the watershed treatments are pending as per the committed plan. Although the watershed works are being implemented at a pace, and the time period of the project has been extended till March 2006, the community still expressed apprehension about completing the work in time. However, the review team also notes that in the 6th PSC, the community representatives gave a commitment that all the agreed areas would be treated by March 2006.

A separate issue related to treatments that community members brought to the attention of the review team concerns land in the project villages that lies beyond the watershed area. Although the community is fully familiar with the concept of a watershed boundary, these arguments are apparently raised more out of a sense of hope and of equity – the feeling being that all villagers should share the benefits of watershed treatment.

Another issue that is raised repeatedly is the issue of land that was not treated under the first phase. Though time has passed, this issue fails to fade away. During interactions with the review team in Upper Mullamari, the CMRC even offered to take charge of completing the untreated areas. They explained this to be important, due to simmering discontent among the community. In their opinion, the DLDB failed to complete the works.

During interactions with the Review team in Nirgudi village, Upper Mullamari Watershed, there was a request from the WMC to extend the project period beyond 2006. The reasons given were as follows:

- *40% of the planned work is yet to be completed*

- *More than 20% of the villagers have not benefited from watershed activities and the community feels bad about this (Nirgudi is a big village and the target area in the project under phase II was only 3,500 hectares, therefore nearly 20% of the area was left out)*

- *The community felt it needed training, exposure and workshop to strengthen the VDS*

- *Trainings were requested for water conservation practices in fallow land (banjaru bhoomi)*

- *Trainings are needed in constitutional issues of VDS, forming proper rules and regulations, amendments, etc.*

- *The remaining time of the project period was not enough to complete the planned activities and to sustain the VDS.*

The community also expressed dissatisfaction about one instance when there was delay in transfer of funds.

5.2. Work on Forest Department lands

Due to the bilateral agreement with the GoK (Government of Karnataka) not having been reached, there were problems in working on lands under Forest Department jurisdiction. Working constructively together was limited to where there was a personal rapport between the forest officials and the NGO staff. Thus for example the experience in Kanakanala was positive, and land in Mydardokki was developed. However, this village is an isolated example with the partnership in other villages not developed well. In future projects, this aspect requires far greater attention.

"In spite of all the interventions we have not been able to resolve the common property resource management issue specifically with the forest department and panchayat. This should have been looked into during / at the beginning of the project."

– Kiran Mandanna, MYRADA

5.3. Further capacity building and linkages for attaining sustainability

This review has shown that in all three watersheds, the community members now have considerable capacity to handle many operational issues in watershed rehabilitation and other focus areas in a manner following project principles. The communities have made huge achievements with the facilitating support of the NGOs. Nevertheless, in all areas community members repeatedly expressed the need for more handholding support to ensure the sustainability of what has been achieved to date. The communities recognise that the NGOs cannot support them forever, and there will come a time when they have to part ways. Nevertheless, they were unanimous that they still need support to equip themselves for the time when they are truly on their own.

In Sugur, the community members expressed the wish that the partner NGO Myrada should continue to monitor their activities for another year at least, and thereafter 'visit the village like parents visit the daughter's house to see if everything is well'. Similarly, in Allapur, requests were made for training on lobbying activities, drinking water, and general facilitation from Myrada for at least another year. To quote 'how long can outsiders stay here, but if they keep coming for one more year we will stand on our feet fully and ask them to leave us to help other villages.'

"Samuha is taking our love. They have given their book to us and they are taking our book and going to other places," a woman's reaction to the review team on the question of post-project period in Kanakanala.

In different watersheds, the various CBOs (VDS and federated structures of SHGs) pointed to different aspects on which further inputs were needed. In Maramuri Watershed, the VDS said that they require further support to acquire skills related to linkages, management, and establish linkages with Government Departments, leadership and legal awareness, etc.

In Kanchanal, Maramuri watershed, discussion on the post-project roles of the VDS, provoked the following ideas:

- *Providing support to neighbouring villages in watershed activities*

- *Focusing on unresolved issues like grazing land*

- *Mustering support for the landless*

- *Sustainable Livelihood support for single women.*

To carry out the above tasks the members requested support from the project for training on Leadership, lobbying for village development funds, constitutional rights, etc.,

The SHG women in Kanchanal village expressed a need for awareness on legal issues. On probing, they explained that they would like to know their rights in claiming benefits from the government, what are the steps to take when government programmes do not reach them or the quality of work is bad, and also regarding basic human rights, specifically women's rights.

The nurses from sub-centres mentioned that women are benefited most and many college students are able to continue education because they earned money through wages and can thus now pay their fees. The college students shared this with the nurses.

However, they felt that the awareness that is there now is only an indication that these people can change. At least another two years of consistent inputs should be given to women in the villages regarding health, education to girls, hygiene, and economic independence for change to be sustainable and women fully integrated into decision-making processes.

– Interactions with Government officials in Kanakanala watershed

In other villages across all three watersheds, SHG members also said that they needed more training on availing government schemes, benefits from other sources, legal issues, etc. They nevertheless said that the SHGs would continue, whether any outside support is there or not.

In all three watersheds, group/federated structures of the SHGs (the CMRC in Maramuri watershed, GMASS in Upper Mullamari and MVSSN in Kanakanala) have been promoted with an objective of functioning as an institution much beyond the stated project period. Each has evolved models through which they anticipate attaining financial sustainability and establishing an institutional identity. However, they are still young, and until now, had significant support through project grants and focused and timely inputs from the NGO partners. The grants were on loan to groups to cover some of the institutional costs; this has also led to a significant improvement in their confidence. Some have initiated activities that have failed miserably due to differing levels of commitment amongst the members, and a lack of sufficient commercial awareness. However, the availability of project support has meant that these institutions have been able to overcome such difficulties. The scenario would be different once project support ceases, and the members expressed the need for more capacity building support before this happens. They specifically mentioned training on issues surrounding financial and institutional sustainability, including the building of linkages. The review team feels that this is a valid request; the future of these institutions is crucial, micro-finance being a very important tool in improving the lives of the poor.

With regard to the VDSs, it has already been noted that the review team found they are not all at the same level of development. The communities themselves made the same observation; some VDS require considerably more facilitation to become self-sustaining. Furthermore, the communities pointed out that due to the project time pressure, activities have focused mainly on implementing watershed activities. There has been little scope for implementing other activities in other sectors, such as health and education, etc. Some VDSs have made small initiatives on these aspects (as mentioned in different parts of this report), but these are at a very tentative stage. In Kanakanala, an institution promoted by the project for federating the institutions promoted in phase I and phase II, the Kanakanala Development Society (KDS), was felt to require further inputs to carry out its role post project successfully.

5.4. Use of local contribution

The community noted that mechanisms for the collection of contribution are in place and widely accepted; however, the more important matter of utilisation of the funds amassed still has to be

discussed further, and experience gained in implementation. Various dangers and threats may be foreseen (the box on Adavibhavi gives one example). In all three watersheds, communities expressed concerns about transparent handling of the large amounts of money collected as LC if the project should withdraw immediately.

Local contribution funds to be managed by the temple committee?
In the village of Adavibhavi (Kanakanala), there was a plan to lend the money to the temple committee. The temple committee has been active for over 20 years, and has significant, successful experience of revolving funds. The VDS planned to give the local contribution money to the temple committee so that the money is loaned, recovered and grows locally. This is in some ways logical considering the fact that the people on both the VDS and the temple committee hail from the same community. There is equal (but not proportional) representation in the temple committee from all groups in the village and the money is also distributed equally among communities. However, by handing over responsibility for fund management to the Temple committee, the VDS as an institution could be 'nipped in the bud' and all the hard work done over the years may somehow be lost. The women members of the review team, in particular, expressed strong reservation about the involvement of the temple committee, feeling it to be a gender biased (male controlled) organisation.

5.5. Ability of VDS to loan funds

In a few cases, community decisions have not met with agreement by other stakeholders. In Upper Mullamari, there were discussions during the review on the shortage of funds at the GMASS level to meet the demand for loans from women for livelihood programmes. To solve the problem, the VDS had offered a loan to GMASS on interest, which has been rotated among groups and subsequently returned to VDS as per the agreed terms and conditions. However, this arrangement was pointed out as a malpractice in the subsequent audit as it was not legally correct. The review team found it a matter of regret that even today there is no clarity at the VDS level on whether the VDS has the legal right to lend money to another organisation.

5.6. Targeting the poor more strategically

Community members are very conscious that watershed projects, being land-based, are biased in favour of people with land. Despite the many labour-friendly provisions outlined in this review, the bias remains (if to a lesser extent). Although the landless labourers have gained, the landed have gained proportionately more. In all the different villages, the perception of the landless remains that they have not benefited as much from the project as have people who have land. They argued that they have had to work hard to earn their money whilst the landed have received a 100% grant for land improvement. Furthermore, the money availed under livelihood promotion activities was provided on a loan basis. Thus it was said that there should be greater focus on the needs and livelihoods of the poor in any future interventions.

It was also noted that within the project villages there are people who, for a variety of reasons, have hardly been touched by the project. These include people amongst the poorest groups. In future, project strategies should ensure that geographic coverage is done in a pro-poor manner.

5.7. Gender disparities

Although there have been significant and unparalleled successes in the project in integrating gender, there are still instances of certain practices, comments, and behavioral patterns that indicate that gender discrimination has not been eradicated, particularly amongst the more influential groups in the villages. Women community members acknowledge that the perceptions of men need to change still further if there is to be true gender equity in the villages.

In one of the watersheds, the review team was given the following response from a GP member when questioning the silence of women,

"We are farmers so we understand, but these are oxen and oxen need to be controlled."

[The comment is also interesting in that women are referred to as male animals!]

The review team in action in the field in Kanakanala watershed

"Gender discrimination has not been eradicated"

ISPWDK Phase II Review Team Members

1.	Mr Pramod Kumar	–	Prawarda
2.	Mr Yellappa	–	VDS Kanchanal
3.	Mr Narsingh	–	VDS Illal
4.	Smt Renu Mukunda	–	External Facilitator
5.	Mr Ranganagouda	–	VDS Juelkunti
6.	Smt Siddamma Ratkal	–	VDS Kodli
7.	Mr J Jangal	–	PSMU
8.	Mr Ravikumar	–	Samuha – Tavaragera
9.	Smt Shantabai	–	WMC Sastapur
10.	Mrs Susheelamma	–	Kanakanala Abhivruddhi Samsthe
11.	Kalyanashetti	–	Myrada – Kodli
12.	Mr Devanshu Chakravarti	–	Observer

Schedule for ISPWDK Phase II Participatory Review

Sl. No.	Date/s	Particulars of Event
1.	01.05.2005	Orientation on ISPWDK Review
2.	02.05.2005 to 06.05.2005	Review at Maramuri Watershed, Gulbarga
3.	16.05.2005 to 20.05.2005	Review at Upper Mullamari Watershed, Bidar
4.	30.05.2005 to 04.06.2005	Review at Kanakanala Watershed, Koppal