

# The Changing Paradigm - Gender Dimensions of Watershed Management in Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, India

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**Abstract:** *Poverty in rural area is overwhelming and disparity between rural and urban area is increasing. The watershed approach, therefore, needs to give way to inclusive development involving the primary stakeholders (women, landless labourers, marginal farmers etc.). In the past, watershed activities were translated into benefits only for landed population and looked primarily at land based activities with minimal community participation (Vijayalakshmi and Vyasulu, 2002). In the new paradigm, the watershed programmes need to be designed with equity, gender sensitivity and stakeholder participation as a necessary ingredient for poverty alleviation. Based on our field study of three villages in Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, India, the paper enables us to see how members of different social classes and castes engage with one another in everyday context and this suggests that through this sometimes they may gain a more rounded appreciation of one others attitude. By emphasising the needs of viewing social capital as a resource, the community developed and reproduced new forms of capital. These actions led to increased social capital of shared values, beliefs, trust, feelings and perceptions of support and consequently participation.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Social inclusion, Social Capital, Gender Dimensions and Women Empowerment.

## 1. Introduction

The literature on Watershed Management in recent years has grown enormously, finding stimulus in increased concern with watershed management as a means to rural development and socio-economic transformation. Insights from watershed management are of relevance to the rural areas as a large segment of population living in rural areas depends on agriculture for their livelihood. There have been a large number of studies in this field given the growing importance of watershed management and a number of scholars have made important contributions to this stream of thought.

Poverty in rural area is overwhelming and disparity between rural and urban area is increasing. The watershed approach, therefore, needs to give way to inclusive development involving the primary stakeholders (women, landless labourers, marginal farmers etc.). In the past, watershed activities were translated into benefits only for landed population and looked primarily at land based activities with minimal community participation (Vijayalakshmi and Vyasulu, 2002). In the new paradigm, the watershed programmes need to be designed with equity, gender sensitivity and stakeholder participation as a necessary ingredient for poverty alleviation. Watershed programmes also promote non-farm activities which could lead to occupational diversification. The major aim of watershed development is to empower people especially women and to improve the livelihood of marginalized in watershed areas ensuring justice and social equity. Social inclusion of women is an essential prerequisite for community participation given the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of Indian rural society. Recent studies on poverty has changed to such an extent that a new term social exclusion is used to denote it (Paugam, 1996 and Jordan, 1996).

Participation of Women is of paramount importance as they play a key role in watershed management. C.H.Hanumantha Rao (1994) studied certain regions where the overall impact of watershed project was positive on rural society. Water has become more easily accessible, land under cultivation has increased, employment has been generated, and cattle rearing has increased due to more fodder availability, Dairy production has also increased leading to diversification of occupation; Migration of labour from rural to urban areas has declined. Despite this positive impact a number of questions can be raised about the impact of the watershed programmes. Kolavalli and Kerr (2002) in a study of thirty six villages concluded that the concept of participation is ambiguous. Often it is viewed as a community approach on necessary decisions to be taken. There is a need for reorientation of bureaucracy for which unlearning must happen. Often Indian bureaucracy has had a top-down approach. There is a need for government bureaucracies to work with communities and civil society (Satya Murthy.D, 2001).

## 2. Studies on Gender dimensions of Watershed Management

The objectives of the watershed programme are to ensure social equity and include gender concerns. Watershed development has transformed women's status in many ways by empowering them. Sreedevi and Wani (2010) have highlighted the gender dimensions of Watershed Management in three villages in Andhra Pradesh (Powerguda, Kothapally and Jananpet). Increased access to water resources would help in development and achieving the millennium development goal. The sources of water have become closer (Leveraging Institutions, ICRISAT, Andhra Pradesh, India, 2010). It has reduced time, health and care giving burdens and given time to women for improved productive work. It has increased the welfare and

well-being of women. Women are less susceptible to sexual harassment as the sources of water are close.

KAWAD project has addressed gender equity especially for socially disadvantaged women in a holistic manner (Basker, 2005). There has been a remarkable improvement in the livelihood of the marginalized which includes mostly women and particularly those belonging to the SCs/STs/OBCs, minorities, widows and the socially and economically excluded. The study theorizes gender and discusses the KAWAD experiences in the field.

Enhanced organizational ability among women's self-help groups and increased participation in Public institutions has paved the way for greater gender equality. The report by Antrix Corporation brings out efforts of a successful attempt to federate the Self Help Group of Sujala Project in Kanavisdidegeri sub watershed of Haveri District. Spoorthy, the Field NGO (FNGO) under the leadership of a woman endowed with immense leadership capability, is responsible for bringing all the Ninety Nine Self Help Groups together. It is focused on empowering women economically and socially, giving them voice and choice and provides them with an opportunity to become effective players. Case studies illustrating the achievements, impact and transformation are briefly outlined in the report by Antrix Corporation on the federation of Self Help Groups (Initiatives towards Women Empowerment Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, Antrix Corporation, ISRO, Bangalore-May 2007).

Women have power to change their status from marginalization to empowerment is the theme of a document "Voices from the field" developed by the Government of Karnataka. It deals with the stories of successful women who have become self-reliant. Voices from the field-A few case studies, Watershed Development Department, Government of Karnataka, June 2005 describes the stories of Successful women who have become self-reliant.

### 3. Eco-Feminism-Experience from Women

Smita Gate (2001) in an interesting case study discussed the participation of women in watershed development. The watershed committee comprised only of women. Community participation in watershed management particularly by women through Self-help group is an example of social inclusion. Despite resistance from a section of the feudal society, the women could overcome problems at all levels. They were able to participate in decision making and are able to understand the organization and the structure within which they have to function. SHG groups comprised women from all groups belonging to different strata. Income generating activities include making of polythene bags, nursery beds prepared around village homes and in farms. Nursery and grassland development gave people especially women access to income-generating opportunities. There has been development in infrastructural facility. Most of the women have mobile phones today and there is greater awareness among women regarding sanitation, literacy, savings, etc. When the positive results started to be visible, the women became more outspoken and confident, reaching out to criticism or appreciation.

The invisible role of women in this programme needs to be taken into account. Women have multi-dimensional roles of managing the household, village, enhancing land productivity, improved nutritional status of women and children. The notion of male breadwinner often does not hold good for a large number of families in rural India. Women cope with the economic crisis and bear the burden of family responsibilities particularly for bettering the nutritional and health status of the family. Several studies on women's employment and empowerment have shown that income generating activities taken by the farm women related to watershed are vegetable growing, basket making, tailoring, goat rearing and small enterprises.

The contribution of women particularly in bettering their economic, social status and family have revealed that transformation can be linked to certain income generating activities which are far-reaching on a sustainable platform. Watershed development has local, regional and national implications. The very objective of the Watershed development is increased land productivity, the participation of people especially women in the project and also in the decision making bodies that would enhance productivity and would also rehabilitate many women and families that would seek participation for greater opportunities and critical decisions. Therefore, community participation should become a realistic strategy and also seek to change the capabilities and incentives of the government by creating situations in the best interest to help communities.

### 4. Required a Changing Paradigm

Women need to be made an integral part of Watershed Process. Swarn Lata Arya's (2007) experiences of Hirve Bazar are replicable. Often watershed policies fail to take an account of the heterogeneity of women. The study made by Seeley, Batra and Sarin (2000) has emphasized the fact that women play an important role in agriculture and are managers of natural resources. Yet they are denied the opportunity of participating in natural resource management as the programmes are biased towards men. Therefore there is a need for paradigm shift in favour of women.

The studies conducted in Mahendragarh district has revealed that within the villages women's activities involve dairy production, tailoring, soap making and knitting. It was also found that the animal husbandry was the most preferred activity among the villages Veena, *et.al.* (1967). Women engage in various activities like poultry rearing, selling of eggs, basket weaving and fish breeding. Self-help groups were formed and the incomes generated from these groups were used for better sanitation programmes and livelihood. In 1998 a study conducted in Dharwad district, revealed that most of the activities that were taken by women in the form of group activities and most of these activities were dairy, forest products, sericulture, horticulture, tailoring, preparing homemade products etc., (Prita, 2001). These studies debunk the myth that only men are involved in coping with economic crisis.

## 5. Human Development Model

Women been excluded traditionally from the process of development but need to be incorporated in development programmes to overcome poverty and vulnerability. As Amartya Sen's (1998) capability model explains that poverty is a deprivation of basic capabilities UNDP refers to as creating an enabling environment-collective quality of life, substantial degree of control and access to resources.

Watershed programme need to be equitable with community involvement. We need to evolve a framework of socioeconomic transformation through community participation in watershed which needs to include women.

Therefore, past traditional and current development approaches in Watershed Management require a changing Paradigm.

Development elements	Traditional approach	Current Approach
Purpose needed assessment and planning strategy	Single (soil conservation) central level government staff	Multiple (Social, economic and environmental) community help to identify the gap and select the priorities.
Approach	Increase production and conservation Centralised, top-down planning with little input from community	Emphasis on livelihoods, poverty and sustainability
Institution	Government and donor agencies Large watershed	Participatory, community based focus to the women and poor communities.
Working size output	Target based quantities	NGO, community based organization (CBO) and private and government institutions, small watershed, sub-watershed Qualitative, sustainability.

### Participation

Over the last decades, an understanding of participation has become prominent in development discourse. We therefore need to locate the discourse of participatory development the centre of our analysis. Cohen and Uphoff, (1977), Midgley, *et al.* (1986), Oakley, (1991), Oakley and Marsden, (1984) have interpreted community participation. Their varied definitions give a wide range of interpretations of participation in different ways. Academicians, Governments including United Nation Agencies, NGOs have all promoted and supported the participatory concept of development. There has been much written and spoken about participation. Despite rhetoric, however authentic participation is hardly taking place especially among women.

Problematic of community and understanding of social linkages is important in community participation. Social capital in village community is essential for development and cohesion (Putnam R. D., (1993) and Mohapatra, B.N., (2001). Bauman, Z., (2001) Village Community in India is based on Power and authority, Power is a relational concept, Water resources are a major sources of inequity. Discourse on participation and ability of members to participate as a community to have a collective voice assumes crucial significance. The important role of social capital is building trust, networking in the community.

Within the last decade social capital has increasingly become a focus for policy, practice and research within community planning and development literature. Yet, it is a relatively new concept in the field of Watershed Management studies. The notion of social capital has gained popularity during the last decade within community development literature (Grant, 2001; Lin, 2001; Krishna, 2002; Perkins *et al.* 2002; Flores and Rello, 2003; Pretty, 2003; Rohe, 2004; Vidal, 2004; Iyer, *et al.* 2005; Bridger and Alter, 2006; Hanna, *et al.* 2009; Vermaak, 2009).

Our evidence drawn from Hosadurga Taluk community studies enable us to see how members of different social classes and castes engage with one another in everyday

context and this suggests that through this sometimes they may gain a more rounded appreciation of one others attitude. By emphasising the needs of viewing social capital as a resource the community developed and reproduced new forms of capital. These actions led to increased social capital of shared values, beliefs, trust, feelings and perceptions of support and consequently participation.

Despite the active global policies there has been a very little documentation of state NGO relationship. Academic studies, Field reports and data are scarce. This is necessary in view of the fact that today the ideas of NGO are being promoted by AID Agencies, World Bank and Government. The overarching question we will try to address is that whether and to what extent NGO state relationships are feasible and pragmatic in furthering social development and empowering the marginalized. How has the relationship been translated in the field of development in general and watershed participation in Karnataka? The participatory approach advocates partnership of communities, NGOs and includes the role of state institutions. Major problem today is creating access and equity for the marginalized.

### Field Experience

Our field study has been conducted in Hosadurga Taluk which has the highest drought prone area in the state. Reasons for selecting Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga as our field of study include

- It has the largest farmer suicide rate in Karnataka,
- The high concentration of SC/ST population,
- High female illiteracy,
- Semi-aridity,
- Large population of agricultural labourers and small farmers,

Our study includes three villages

#### **Metikurke Village, Hiriur Taluk – Emerging Scenario**

Metikurke is one of the villages in Hiriur Taluk in Chitradurga District in Karnataka State. Metikurke is located 6.5 km distance from the Taluk Main Town Hiriur. Metikurke is 32 km far from its District Main city

Chitradurga. It is an area where IWMP project is completed. Several visits were made to the village and NGO leaders were interviewed along with the government officials.

Among the activities in which households are engaged agricultural activities are the most important source of income. Income from livestock, forest product and fishing contribute a small amount to the whole household income.

### **The Communities in Metikurke**

The village community is heterogeneous and includes SC, ST, Yadava community, Kuruvas, Gowdas, Reddy's and Lingayats. All caste groups worked together towards a common goal. Social capital has resulted in positive results in networking among the communities. Watershed project has brought many changes in the village. The main cultivation in the village today is maize, sunflower, green bean, cotton, onion etc. The watershed project has brought about socio-economic transformation in the village life. An increase in productivity of the major crops has brought about phenomenal increase in income. Villagers have learnt about the scientific method of cultivation. There is wide scale participation by women in SHGs, in the planning, implementation of the programme in income generation activity. The NGOs plays an important role as a linkage between the community and the project. The partner NGO has sensitised the women and made them aware about the importance of the project and formed Community Based Organizations like SHGs.

### **Awareness about the project**

The awareness level of watershed project among the people is high. This is mainly because of the grass root level work of the NGO and the Department of Watershed. Also people are benefitting from the project and are actually aware that if they participate in the programme, it will help them in many ways. Most of them are aware of the technological part of the programme. Change is also witnessed in the education level of the community. Most of the parents aspire today to educate their children. Due to participation in SHGs, women have inculcated the habit of saving. Participation of women in soil and moisture conservation measures include assisting in the construction of Contour bunds, assisting in the construction of Nala bunds, assisting in the construction of check dams, decision making in contour bunding, assisting in the construction of farm ponds, decision making in crop rotation.

Chambers (1997) has argued that poor people in particular normally have to diversify sources of livelihood in order to survive in a risk prone and uncertain world. Feminization of poverty has led to a precarious situation where women often bear the brunt of poverty. To cope with the economic crisis women participate in income generating activities and this has brought about a change in their economic status. They are engaged in tailoring, embroidery, papad or pickle making, Soap powder making, phenol making, areca nut plate making, toys making, masala powders making, plastic baskets making, dairy, poultry, piggery, sheep/ goat rearing, preparation of vermi-compost, etc.

Women participate in community based organizations and they have membership in Self-Help Groups, Attending

meetings of Self-Help Groups, saving of money, decision making in providing loans, decision making in selection of training programmes for women, timely repayment of loan, recording the proceedings of meeting, maintaining contact with Gram Panchayat, Banks and other groups are a part of their activities, tour visits arranged by SHGs/ watershed department and NGO form a part of accepting the responsibility of presiding over the meetings. Whenever the situation warrants, visiting neighbourhood to mobilize and enrol new members for the group. Solving the conflicts arising in the group has become pervasive.

### **Chikkagondanahally Village – Chitradurga Taluk**

Chikkagondanahally is a village of Chitradurga Taluk in Chitradurga District in Karnataka State. Chikkagondanahally is situated 19.8 km away from Chitradurga town.

Social Capital has resulted in Mutual Trust between villagers and helped in rebuilding community. Decision making in the watershed committee is widely accepted. Some sort of equity has evolved in the village. Improved access to Common Property Resource is witnessed and there has been significant improvement in food security. Regeneration of resources has occurred. Equity and distributional impact is witnessed, benefits have accrued to all groups. Diversification of employment has occurred to some extent and there is emerging livelihood security of stake holders in the village. Social capital i.e., bridging building and members linking has led to group formation and have yielded positive result.

### **Field work**

SHG's have formed through social networking - A case study from Chikkagondanahally.

Name of the Society: Gouri Sahaya Sangha

No. of members in the group : 21

Name of the committee members : 1. Gowramma, 2. Muniyamma, 3. Susheelamma, 4. Saadia, 5. Vijayamma

Out of Twenty One members in SHG, Seven members received income generating assistance of first round in the year 2005. In the present round members received assistance of Rs.2000/- each. For the first round beneficiaries interest was not charged by the SHG. Type of IG activity selected were sheep rearing, cow rearing, petty trading, agriculture, Improvement in the standard of living. Some of the group members did not generate income from their income generating activity due to the fact they had used the loan for purposes like construction of house, medical expenses, children education and invested in the chit funds however, some of them benefitted by selling milk to dairies. They also made profit in petty trading. The standard of their living increased considerably and income levels have gone up from IG activity. The group was heterogeneous and it comprised various communities. But the women had strong networking and emotional bonding. The name of the watershed in the area is Sanganahalli Nala Sub Watershed under IWPM.

Watershed has improved the life style of the villagers and development has taken place. Medical treatment is available, presence of good Doctors and Nurses in the Hospitals, College facilities are available, Income Generative Activities

- tailoring is a major activity, but the returns are meagre as there is no marketing facility. Status of women has not improved despite economic empowerment, sheep & poultry rearing, mobility of children is seen and aspiration of parents are on the rise, regular animal health check-up conducted during the project implementation period in the watersheds.

#### **Naigere Village – Hosadurga Taluk**

Naigere is a small Village/hamlet in Hosadurga Taluk in Chitradurga District of Karnataka State, India. It comes under Hydersabpalya Panchayath. It belongs to Bangalore Division. It is located 57 KM towards South from District headquarters Chitradurga, 197 KM from State capital Bangalore.

**NISARGA** – An NGO has been able to bring about widespread changes under the leadership of Sr. Levenis D'souza. The interface between the NGO and government has been instrumental in bringing about socio-economic transformation in the village.

The characteristics of Naigere village, Hosadurga Taluk before the intervention of NGO are as follows :

- Naigere lacked the basic infrastructural facilities like Health, Hygiene, Sanitation, Child labour, and Migration was prevalent
- The community was extremely patriarchal, High level of illiteracy prevailed among women, School dropout rate was high.
- Gender discrimination - During the interview women recalled their lost childhood in terms of days spent helping their mothers collecting water, looking after siblings, unlike their brothers. The Watershed Project has made a visible impact on the life of the women.
- Women now have space, but their participation in public life. Earlier they were constrained by social norms of mobility and appropriate social behavior. Women of all groups own mobiles and T.V. Aspiration of mothers to send their daughters to school have increased. Gender ratio is favourable in the village and a girl child is prized today.
- Today they have fewer restrictions in the public domain. They are making time to attend S.H.G Meetings and are able to negotiate with men leaders. Women like men are not a homogeneous category.
- Identities intersect with other forms of Social stratification such as class, caste, identity gender. Women's are selling milk to private dairy and earning income on their own. All women's life style reflects change.

In Naigere village, Hosadurga Taluk social capital is proportionately high and well entrenched. Consequently, the villagers have the required self confidence in engaging in community collaboration. They also believe that other members will follow suit (Pretty, 2003). When a community is characterized by distrust or conflict, cooperative activities are unlikely to emerge. To increase trust reciprocity is needed, which refers to simultaneously exchanged goods and knowledge. Reciprocity develops sustainable obligations between people which lead to mutually agreed upon drivers of behaviour, i.e. norms and rules of society. As can be seen, four interconnected features of social capital are listed as essential; relations of trust, reciprocity and exchanges,

common rules and norms, and connectedness in networks and groups (Pretty, 2003). Different forms of social capital have played different roles in Naigere. Bonding ties with neighbours have acted as safety nets and have leads to the emergence of Self Help Groups in Naigere. Women have found strength in their groups, in doing things collectively. Collective mobilization for building of collective wellbeing is witnessed. Concept of SHG and book writing are organized regularly. Bridging with people from different network provides linkages with Institutions and Banks to promote economic empowerment. It has enabled them to undertake various entrepreneurship Development Programmes, Income Generating Activities. Vocational training is given for tailoring, doll making, food products preparation, leaf plate making, surf, phenol and soap making, value addition and nutrition preparation and broom polishing. For these programmes linkages have been established with NABARD. Youth Self Help Groups and Children Club have also been formed in the village.

In order to improve the livelihoods and monetary independence of men and women, entrepreneurial endeavours are being increasingly accepted as an imperative. It also acts as an important source of value addition in the creation of jobs. NISARGA has targeted the unemployed and have come up with various strategies to address them. A number of policy interventions have been formulated and variously implemented.

A comprehensive study that can be used at a grassroots level for design, implementation and evaluation of development interventions. While there is much debate at the theoretical level as to what empowerment comprises and how it best can be achieved, there has been little primary research at the grassroots level to contribute to an understanding of what empowerment means in everyday terms and how NGO Government interventions takes place. Thus, it appears that there is not enough research done in assessing the impact of development projects and NGO State collaboration on the process of empowerment of target individuals or groups. The aim of this paper is to outline how social capital is defined and distributed among the communities in three villages Metikurke, Chikkagondanahally, Naigere and how a focus on relationships can relate to capacity building through community participation. Using examples from three villages in Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, India we would see how social relations are perceived and how they lead to trust between individuals and communities.

Collective action is possible when individuals join together to deal with problems they face in common and achieve positive outcomes. Social capital, may therefore be a resource for collective action. For example, networks of trusting and reciprocal relationships develop among community members leading to positive relationships. This paper therefore explores the role of social capital in community development by focusing on Hosadurga Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka, India. Social capital as a useful resource, facilitates social interaction, promotes mutual support, cooperation and thus improves participant's livelihood through income generation, better community governance and capacity building. An important observation

is that social capital yields superior outcome if it is used in line with the local conditions of a given society. The findings suggest lessons for policy planners, donor agencies, development practitioners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society to use social capital as a resource in order to achieve sustainable community development.

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