

APPROACHES, EXPERIENCES & CHALLENGES IN CAPACITY BUILDING IN ISPWDK

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About us

The history of ***Indo-Swiss Participative Watershed Development Project-Karnataka (ISPWDK)*** goes back to the PIDOW (Participative Development of Watersheds) project, which was implemented by Govt. of Karnataka & MYRADA NGO during mid 1980s. Several innovations, such as community participation, indigenous technologies, Self Help Groups (SHG) and multi-partner collaboration were introduced in PIDOW, major elements of which have now come to be accepted as standard components of the national policy on watershed development.

Building on the lessons learnt from PIDOW, the ISPWDK started during 1995. It was implemented as a bilateral project in collaboration with the then Dry Land Development Board (DLDB) of the Government of Karnataka and NGOs working in 5 northern districts of Karnataka. The project has completed its Phase I in 1999 and entered into Phase II in 2000. The area proposed to be covered in Phase II is about 10,000 hectares covering 21 villages, keeping the approaches & principles in mind. At present the project is implemented in existing districts, with the support of NGOs (MYRADA, SAMUHA and PRAWARDA) and community based institutions.

Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The aim of development cooperation is to reduce poverty by helping people in partner countries to help themselves. Development activities focus on promoting sustainability, autonomy and good governance, improving production conditions, helping to solve environmental problems and providing better access to education and basic health care for the most disadvantaged groups in society. SDC concentrates its activities in a limited number of countries, of which India is one.

Intercooperation (IC), is a professional, non-profit making organisation rooted in Switzerland and engaged in development and international cooperation. IC specialises in natural resource management, rural economy, local governance and civil society, working with partners in developing and transitional countries. In India, IC works closely with SDC and is implementing agency for number of SDC supported projects, including ISPWDK.

Programme Support and Management Unit (PSMU), a support unit of SDC/IC based at Bangalore, helps to facilitate, support the project partners in achieving the project objectives, through commonly agreed concepts and approaches.

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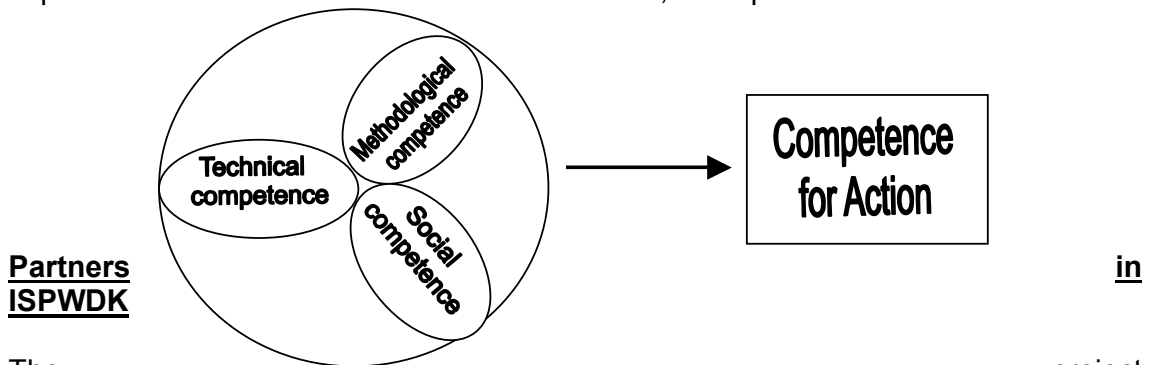
Objectives related to Capacity Building in ISPWDK

One of the main objectives of ISPWDK Phase II is “ **To build the capacities of village communities and their institutions for improving their livelihood through sustainable natural resource management.** “

The three main features of project design / approaches are:

1. **Process oriented:** The project enables the 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.
2. **People centered:** The rural poor and their institutions are the focus of the project. The outside actors are basically facilitators and providers of services and support. Building the capacities of village level institutions with the aim to empower the people to under take the development of their village is one of the main thrusts of the project.
3. **Equity focused:** The project enables marginal and oppressed sections of the village community (landless, small and marginal farmers, women) to gain maximum benefit from the project. It offers opportunities to poor households in watersheds for income generation through employment, preferential access to common property resources and non-land based activities. It aims at empowerment of marginalized, enhancing their capacities and offering them access to resources and decision making forums

SDC believes that the goal and objectives of the programme can only be achieved through changes in attitudes and behaviour that are value based. Thus **Human & Institutional Development (HID)** forms the core of all SDC interventions. HID is developing the capacities and competencies in individuals and their institutions to effectively tackle challenges in a changing environment. The basic philosophy of HID is to complement the technical competence (qualifications on technical training concept) with the methodological (qualifications for acquiring new knowledge independently & method of problem solving) and social competence (values and qualifications needed for co-operation and participation), in order to strengthen capacities of action of individuals and institutions, as depicted below:



The project provides capacity building and skills development of project partners at different levels:

1. The purpose of capacity building at **village level** is to develop knowledge, attitude and skills base for sustainability and empowerment. There are two kinds of partners at village level namely,
 - Village level institutions: These include each of the household in the village, who are members of Village Development Societies (VDS) responsible for overall planning & monitoring, Watershed Management Committees (WMC) for watershed development, SHGs & Federations for livelihood promotion and other user groups for sustainable agriculture, CPR management etc. The VDS was formed in order to address the long-term development needs of the village besides overall project implementation. It is a registered body under Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960.
 - Village level resource persons: They are the identified resourceful farmers/villagers, who provide support & guidance to the institutions on various aspects. For example: Animators / Village Executive (support in book keeping, meeting, supervision etc), People Technical Resource Group and Para-technicians (for technical know-how on project focus interventions).
2. The **project level** partners include staff of NGOs, GOs , PRIs. The purpose of capacity building at this level is to promote sustainable & equitable value-based development rooted in self-respect, self-responsibility, solidarity and compassion.
3. The **programme level** partners are SDC/IC, PSMU who support, guide the above partners to achieve project objectives, taking into consideration the approaches, principles and values in mind. The purpose of capacity building is to promote synergies, cross linkages and influence policies based on experiences gained from field.

Areas of Capacity Building

We believe that capacity building is a means and not an end in itself. Hence, capacity building in ISPWDK is a continuous process which flows through different stages of project cycle and across the focus areas / project interventions. The very nature of process orientation of project enables partners to adopt different methodologies and systems, thereby providing maximum learning. Nevertheless, the key areas around which capacity building is concentrated are:

1. **Stages of project cycle:** This includes participatory micro planning, process of registration of VDS & its renewal by community, conduct of general body & management committee meetings, prepare plan & budget, linkages with banks, government, panchayats etc., accounts & bookkeeping, joint monitoring & reviews, MIS, reporting etc.

After a workshop on micro planning held at MANAGE during 2001, it was decided to take up micro planning and implementation in a pilot watershed in three watershed areas. The objective behind this was:

- *Partners are given the chance to bring their new ideas / creativity and to try approaches which are technically, socially feasible*
- *Document technological options (indigenous & exogenous)*
- *Provide learning ground to NGOs and community, by trial & error*
- *Plan site-specific interventions & local cost norms*
- *Document process, learning and challenges and share*

In July 2002, the process, approaches and learning of three pilot watershed was shared in MANAGE. Various resource persons were invited to provide input / comment on the process & approaches.

2. Project Focus Areas / Interventions namely –
 - **Watershed Development:** It includes technical aspects of soil and water conservation measures, vegetative measures, fodder development, validation of indigenous technologies etc.
 - **Agriculture Production:** It includes action research, farmer field school (FFS) and participatory technology development (PTD) for sustainable agriculture, vermi-compost, integrated nutrient and pest management (INM/ IPM), biodiversity conservation, establishment of seed banks, support of dry land horticulture etc
 - **Livelihood Promotion:** This focuses on strengthening gender & equity integration, identification of opportunities, micro credit institutions, support land / non land based micro enterprises, livestock promotion & services, medicinal plants promotion, etc.
 - **Documentation:** This includes preparation of case studies, newsletter, training modules, articles, extension materials etc. *Eg:* Based on the need assessment, training on documentation skills was conducted in local language for field staff of NGOs. They have in turn trained the local resource persons also. Staffs are using the skills to write case studies, newsletter, articles, approach papers etc,
3. Organizational Development which includes –

- Computerized MIS
- Team building
- Innovative approaches / ideas
- Advanced financial management
- Facilitation skills
- Personality development

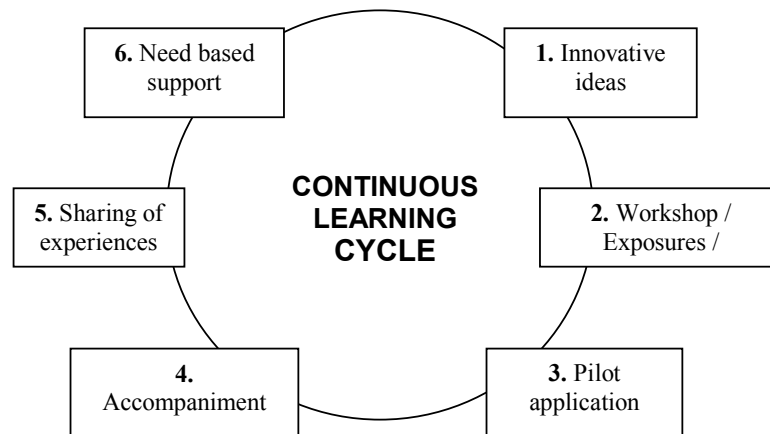
NGO staff & animators are trained on system of accounting & bookkeeping. The VDS members themselves make payments for completed activities; settle the advances with proper accounts & reports. They organize for renewal of registration of VDS, mobilize funds & services from other agencies, mobilize & account local contribution.

Approaches / Tools in Capacity Building

- The interest groups / individuals associated with each project interventions are identified and the learning needs to actualize the project objectives are devised jointly with them.

The development of participatory M&E systems and computerized MIS is also one of the niche capacity building areas in the project. Staff and local resource persons were involved in developing systems and later provided hands on training on fundamentals of computers and MIS software.

- Learning events are organized in such a way that they are tailor made, learner centered and performance oriented (experiential learning). Follow up and application of newly learned skills is considered as integral part of any capacity building.
- The project partners undergo a series of capacity building events, which is a blend of conventional and participatory extension methodologies (See *diagram below*). This also resembles the current SDC/IC's philosophy of partnership (IMDK) i.e. **I**nitiating, **M**aintaining, **D**eparting and **K**ee in Touch.



- To translate new learning into field level realities in short project period, an accompaniment support is provided to partners by resource organizations. The following are the constituent elements of accompaniment support:
 1. Analyzing experiences
 2. Finding answers collectively
 3. Promoting process orientation
 4. Building relationships & team spirit
 5. Conceptualizing from experiences

6. Capacity building
7. Organizational development
8. Planning next steps
9. Handholding
10. Process documentation

➤ Each capacity building event, especially training is designed with an ultimate aim to develop community trainers / resource persons. This is to ensure that the ownership & knowledge lies with community to help them to maintain & develop the project interventions in future.

➤ In the entire project related committees and forums, it is made mandatory to have proper representation from interest groups, community based institutions, partner NGOs and PSMU with at least 30-50% gender representation. This enables to provide platform for learning and gain confidence in community members especially women & oppressed sections of community.

The project implementation is regularly monitored & reviewed through tiered structure of meetings & committees. Eg: VDS meetings at village level; Project Implementation & Review Committee (PIRC) at project level; Joint Progress Review (JPR) and Programme Steering Committee (PSC) at programme level. The project has developed and adopted half yearly Joint Progress Review (JPR) for monitoring & learning. The members from PIRC and NGO themselves jointly review the physical & financial progress, process adopted, make observations & suggestions, provide compliance to earlier recommendations, with the facilitation of external experts on social, technical and financial aspects.

➤ Linkages are developed with resource organizations for handholding support for implementation of innovative ideas / values and have symbiotic relationships. For instance, Agriculture Man Ecology (AME) Foundation, Bangalore is engaged to support the partner NGOs and community in the sustainable agriculture interventions and bring new concepts / ideas. BASIX, Hyderabad provides technical and managerial support to address livelihood promotion in a systematic manner. Similarly, MANAGE, Hyderabad provides guidance & new perspectives in watershed development and CPR management, while WOTR, Ahmednagar supports the project in technical aspects of watershed treatment and developing computerized MIS.

➤ Equity and Gender gets a focused attention in all our project interventions including capacity building. In all capacity building events, 30-50% gender participation is ensured. Partner NGO staff have been trained on gender integration in context of watershed development. Due to regular training and interactions with women & marginalized sections, project could succeed in organizing men & women SHGs into micro financial institutions to undertake livelihood and enterprise promotion. There have been cases of shift in roles of women, mobilizing the resources and services from govt. agencies.

➤ The project frame also provides a platform called Exchange Forum at project & programme level, to enable sharing of experiences, challenges and best practices contributing to learning and capacity building of all the actors.

Challenges / Concerns

In this journey of capacity building of partners to achieve the objectives of empowerment, ownership and sustainability, there are a few challenges / concerns encountered by the project. This should be brought to attention of interveners in the field of watershed development & NRM. They are:

- There has been a serious concern on the drain of organizational capacities, once the staff or community resource person leaves. In the difficult field conditions, capacity building is often perceived as the “spring board” to move to better opportunities. This has implications on efforts in re-building capacities especially in a people centered & process oriented approaches.
- The project is investing on developing local resource persons, but the question arises on sustainability of their skills and scope for its utilization after the project period is over.
- Since our partner NGOs are working in remote and harsh conditions, they find difficult to get and retain qualified female staff. They are attempting to bring change in their roles of ‘softer’ tasks of documentation, livelihood promotion to watershed, agriculture etc, which are more ‘technical’, prominent and rewarding.
- The project feels that real empowerment / ownership of community takes place by allowing them to manage the funds and made accountable for it. Although VDS were formed for this cause, NGOs are the custodian of project funds and they transfer it to VDS / WMC as advance due to legal and Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA) compliances.
- The other apprehension for not transferring funds to VDS is fear of going wrong due to lack of capacities & confidence in accounting and legal aspects at the community level. NGOs are more financially accountable as they enter into MOU with donors.
- The task of empowering the community and fighting discrimination, given the strong traditional value & cultural systems in rural villages is also a big challenge!
- Mentoring the attitudes of bureaucrats and local politicians towards partnership, empowerment philosophies etc. are found to be a challenge. However, with the persistent interaction and facilitation, there were few positive examples too.
- Different approaches / guidelines adopted for capacity building by various

In one of the village in Koppal district, the NGO had to withdraw due to the conflict of interest by local political groups. Similarly, the project lost two years in attempting to get the bilateral agreement signed, which otherwise could have been utilized for watershed & other allied activities, to reach benefits to poor. However, due to frequent interaction with NGOs & community & participation in project events by local politicians & bureaucrats, there has been change in their attitudes & cooperation in Gulbarga district.

donors / schemes create difficulties to community and local NGOs to cope with the requirements.

***** Thank You *****

We acknowledge with many thanks to the rural communities, both women & men in our project areas, the staff of partner NGOs, Government officials, resource organizations and individuals, who are supporting us in our initiatives to bring value based changes in semi arid deccan plateau of India and whose hard work and experiences have enabled us to share in this international workshop.

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