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# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES – AN ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract:** Effective management of natural resources through watershed management programmes delivers sustainable ecological benefits and drives community development. This includes increasing crop production, recharging groundwater levels, rejuvenating dried-up rivers and ponds, Improving livelihoods, reversing the process of migration, protecting the environment, boosting women's empowerment and ensuring food, fodder and fuel security. Infact, all political power in democracy stems from people involving the local people actively in managing water resources of their locality could help them out of the syndrome of dependency on Government for anything and everything. Involvement confer the people some community responsibility and personal dignity. This paper analysis the importance of public participation and methods and approaches developed in watershed programmes in Indian context.

**Keywords:** Bottom-Up Approach, Conservation, Participatory Approach, PRI's, WSD.

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**Introduction:** Rain-Fed agriculture contributes 58 percent to world's food basket, from 80 percent agriculture lands (Raju, et.al.2008), As a consequence of global population increase, water for food production is becoming an increasingly scare resource, and the situation is further aggravated by climate change (Molden, 2007), The rainfed areas are the hotspots of poverty, malnutrition food insecurity, prone to severe land degradation, water scarcity and poor social and institutional infrastructure (Rockstom.et.al 2007). In this juncture watershed Development programmes are considered as an effective tool for addressing many of these problems. Initially many rural development programmes including Drought prone area programme (DPAP), which is failed to overcome drought in the country mainly lack of involvement of public (C.H. Hanumanth Rao Committee Report 1994) same time the committee recommended for more public involved, Participatory, NGO based- equitable and pro-people watershed programmes.

**Objectives:**

- a) To study the focus of watershed programmes in changed global ecological conditions (climate change).
- b) To understand the importance of Public participation in watershed programmes.
- c) To know the methods of public participation
- d) To understand different approaches in watershed programmes.

**Literature Review:** In watershed programmes few studies made on formal institutions (Reddy 2000, Ker 98, Rajshekar 2003). There are few studies (Pari Baurmanm,Ramakrishna 2001, Hooja 2004) explained the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in the light of status and power of PRI's after the passing of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment.

**Methodology:** The present study is based on historical, analytical, comparative approaches. The study is based on secondary sources like books, magazines, journals, news papers and website.

Over the past forty plus years, watershed Management programmes have produced three major changes in India. The first Generation of WS projects was introduced in the 1970's and the second generation by the mid of 1980's and the third by the early 1990's.

**Journey of Watershed Programmes in India – Major Focus:**

<b>I Generation 1970's</b>	<b>II Generation 1980's</b>	<b>III Generation Post 1990's</b>
Agency/organization driven engineered structures, aimed mainly at soil erosion and harvesting rainwater and followed a top-down and supply driven approach	Rural Development and poverty alleviation agenda, emphasizing improvements in the productivity of crops and livelihood generation through W.S. Projects	“People first” emphasis on collective community participation and action , inclusion of community based organization, non-Govt. organizations and PRI's.

In the light of change in focus of WS programmes community based participation gained importance in recent years.

**Participation:** In the words of Oakley and Marsden (1984) participation is concerned with achieving power that is the power to influence the decisions that affects one's livelihood. In other words participation is a process of empowering the community to be able to solve their own problems through equal partnership, transparency power sharing, shared responsibility, co-operation and ownership. There is also a sense of ownership on what is accomplished through participatory monitoring of such in accomplishment.

**Importance of Public Participation in WSD Programmes:**

- Previous empirical research shows that participation in decision making and implementation of a project is essential for sustainability.
- Participation through participatory methods can uncover previously unheard voices.
- This can ensure the involvement of marginalized groups, provided they are able to participate.
- It provides knowledge of and confidence in local people, over riding orthodox importation by elite and outsiders.
- It can lead to shared understanding.
- It can help in conflict resolution, even in rigid and changing situations.
- It can provides people a sense of ownership
- It can result in the commitment of the community in its WSD activities.

**Means and Methods of Public Participation in WSD Programmes:** People in watershed area, the Beneficiaries having major role and they participate in following way in this task.

1. Attending meetings of Gramasabha, Ward sabha, watershed committees and giving opinions, suggestions about designing and planning of WSD programmes.
2. Contributing money, labour, knowledge in project activities
3. Seeking new knowledge and sharing with the community
4. Positive, influencing directly or individually in WSO activities
5. Protection of common property resources after the completion of the project.
6. Abstaining from doing any harm or damage to common property.

**Purposes of WSD Programmes:**

1. Water harvesting, security and conservation
2. Empowerment of women and marginalized groups
3. Livelihood generation and poverty alleviation
4. Agriculture Development and food security
5. Ecological conservation.

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**Approaches in Watershed Programmes:** To achieve above major purposes, WSD adopting the following approaches.

1. Collective participatory approach.
2. Bottom- up approach
3. Integrated approach.

**Collective Participatory Approach:** Involving local communities and people, non Govt. organizations, Government and its various departments, corporate, Research Institutions in WSD programmes.

**Bottom-Up Approach:** This approach helps in watershed activities are planned, designed, implemented and monitored by the Local community.

**Integrated Approach:** This approach supports inclusion of various development departments like Agriculture, Sericulture, Horticulture, Animal husbandry, Fisheries etc., and marginalized groups should be encouraged.

**Conclusion:** WSD programmes has its own importance at present context, to achieve ecological sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability in terms of social equity. People's participation, role of women's participation, representation to marginalized groups, the role of Panchayath Raj Institutions are playing major role in the decentralized democratic set-up. Role of community is crucial, close and real and Right kind of participation is always helpful in the success of watershed programmes.

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