

II.B.2. Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Development Mission in Madhya Pradesh - Emerging Issues for Environment and Sustainable Development

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The Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Development Mission (RGWSM) programme is being implemented in 813 Mini Watersheds and 5714 Micro Watersheds covering 8198 villages with joint effort of Government of Madhya Pradesh, NGOs and local people. At present (Dec. 1998), these projects are at different stages of implementation levels. The Department of Panchayat & Rural Development of state government has linked its Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS) and Waste Land Development Programme (WLDP) to RGWSM.

The project area is selected on the basis of following criteria. Non availability of drinking water, Low agricultural productivity, Problem of land erosion and waste land to a great extent, Dependency of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population on natural resources and Prevalent wage rates less than minimum standard wage rates.

Area selected for treatment was 34.86 lakh hec. for watershed programmes. The total area covered under forestation was 37.507 thousand hec. and that under fodder development 12.982 thousand hec. User groups were 24882 and self-help groups were 10415. The number of women thrift & credit groups were 6215 and savings of these WTCGs amounted Rs. 442.63 lakh.

In terms of achievements, the initial track record of RGWSM presents impressive picture of the joint efforts of government and non-government agencies. Significant investments made and a set of new agronomic practices introduced have led to substantial economic returns.

The main factors that may be instrumental in changing the perceptions of the people towards environment and achieving the objectives of sustainable agricultural, forest, livestock development are (a) literacy, (b) market forces, (c) technologies and (d) institutional changes in terms of agrarian, forestland and wasteland reforms. Proper arrangement for monitoring and evaluation in order to elicit basic data and information on socio economic change and acceptability of the water harvesting technical packages can go a long way in improving the technicalities and building up the confidence of the beneficiaries.