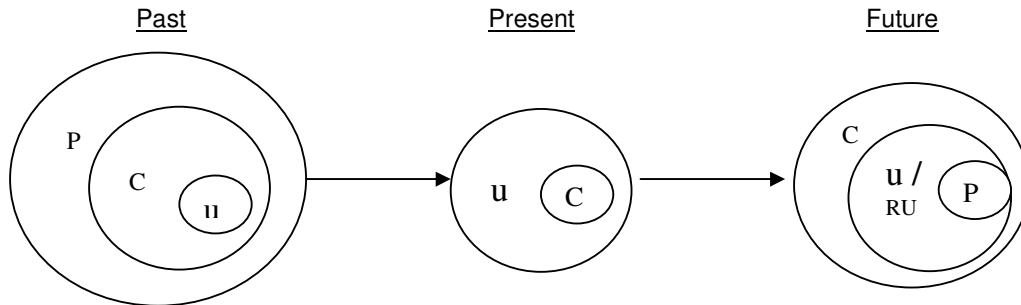


Theme Paper on Revisiting Village Tanks: Policy Suggestions

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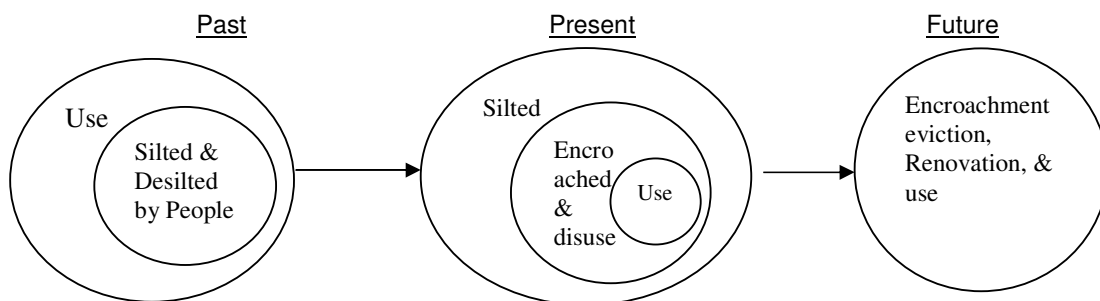
1.0 Preservation, Conservation and Development Perspective:



P – Preservation; C – Conservation; U – Use; RU – Re use

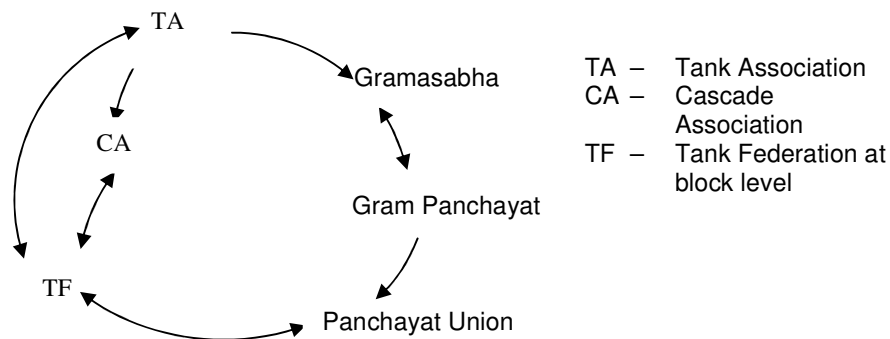
- 1.1 Enactment of Water Resources Preservation Act as that of Forest Protection Bill should be done immediately. Immediate ordinance to ban on diversion of water resources for other development purposes (Buildings, roads, bus stand etc) including Government use should be brought in.
- 1.2 Encroachment of waterways and water resources is a Criminal Act and sin. Hence it should be dealt accordingly.
- 1.3 Promotion of water harvesting structures should be done massively to store substantial amount of rainfall not only to address water scarcity and water conflicts but also to recharge ground water and foster local management. Conservation and Re-use of water require immediate attention of people.
- 1.4 Tank based water shed development should be encouraged Guidelines could be revised to include all water bodies renovation and creation within the watershed.
- 1.5 Pollution of water should be treated seriously as that of encroachment as criminal act.
- 1.6 Ground water recharge is possible only through preservation and conservation of small-scale water resources. Otherwise a 'silent disaster' would happen in many places because of race for ground water mining. Sand mining of water ways and riverbeds should be banned and preserved.
- 1.7 Water literacy campaigns should be promoted intensively.
- 1.8 Water harvesting structure promotion could be opened-up with local regulation and negotiation. State should provide enabling condition.

2.0 Renovation or Revival of Village Tanks and Ponds



- 2.1 Renovation should not be attempted as a piecemeal, isolated and one off measure. Revival should be on a 'scale' based on cascade system and basin approach. Then only the impact would be concrete, viable and sustainable. Hence a large scale renovation should be attempted.
- 2.2 Renovation of water ways should be given top priority and they should be 'interconnected' or linked for effective storage. It also should be revived on a large scale (sub basin and river basin level).
- 2.3 Intra and sub basin transfer could be studied and negotiations between local communities facilitated for efficient utilization of water resources.
- 2.4 Redefinition of Government department's role as facilitator, not implementor, should be endured. Community should take planning, implementation and continuous up keep. NGOs could play the role of nurturing.

3.0 Local Management



- 3.1 Promotion of nested institutions, nor hierarchical, should be encouraged for local management. NGOs should be required to promote these institutions and build their capacity. Further institutions building process would be continued for long time to provide sustainability. Promotion and capacity building cost should be provided as a part of renovation programme.
- 3.2 Panchayat system should provide legitimate and adequate institutional space for Tank Association, Cascade Association and Tank Federation. Tank associations would be encouraged to manage the water resources with adequate rights. Usufruct rights should be shared between Tank Associations and Gram Panchayat.
- 3.3 People organisations should also be promoted at supra level (sub basin and river basin) for water sharing and resolving water conflicts.
- 3.4 Customary rights should be documented and it should be revisited by the local communities to revise it if needed.
- 3.5 Tank Associations should be allowed to collect water and land tax and share it with revenue and panchayat system for the upkeep and management.
- 3.6 Conservation movements have to be promoted in different parts of India to preserve and conserve surface water storage structures (Tanks, ponds etc)

4.0 Resource Mobilisation, allocation and channelising

An Indicative suggestion

Resources	Contribution	Allocation	Alternate Channels
1. Government	40%	Tanks }	NGOs/CBOs : 60%
2. People	10%	Ponds } 85%	like watershed

Resources	Contribution	Allocation	Alternate Channels
3. Private Corporate philanthropy	10%	Waterways }	DRDAS : 20%
4. Bilateral & external funds	25%	Farm ponds }	Sectoral: 20%
5. Bank (loans)	15%	Springs }	department

- 4.1 Like SHG movement, Tank Associations would also be considered under SGSY as SHG and they would be registered. Promotion of Tank Associations and Supra structure warrant key attention and about 25 percent of funds should be for social mobilisation and capacity building so the people organizations would be created for continued upkeep and maintenance.
- 4.2 Matching support for endowment at Tank Associations cascade and federations, about 10 percent of total outlay, should be allocated that too through NGO facilitation.
- 4.3 Reputed NGOs, about 100 to 200, should be encouraged to go for bilateral funds for their upscaling (large scale expansion) through Government facilitation.
- 4.4 Corporate houses should be encouraged to contribute for renovation by offering tax concessions to go for large scale expansion. An enabling provision could be issued from Finance Ministry with the facilitation of Rural Development and Water Resources Ministries.
- 4.5 Bank loans should be given for viable components of rehabilitation. Some of the villages are coming forward to take loans for supply channel desilting, drinking water pond desilting and farm ponds. NABARD is already coming forward with RIDF funds for tank renovation.
- 4.6 Small scale water resources should be given top priority because of its high relevance for livelihood of poor. Farm ponds could be encouraged under this programme.
- 4.7 Large scale efforts are required to create additional surface storage to address water scarcity in rural, semi urban and urban areas. We could aim for doubling or tripling of surface storage structures by desilting of existing structures, series of check dams, percolation ponds and farm ponds. Hence large scale allocation of funds are required.
- 4.8 Alternate channels should be developed to channelise development funds. Besides government and sectoral departments, reputed NGOs could be encouraged to get funds directly from Central or State Government or from NABARD for large scale expansion.
- 4.9 Atleast 10 percent should be allocated for Data Base creation and R and D activities on the theme of Tanks and Ponds.

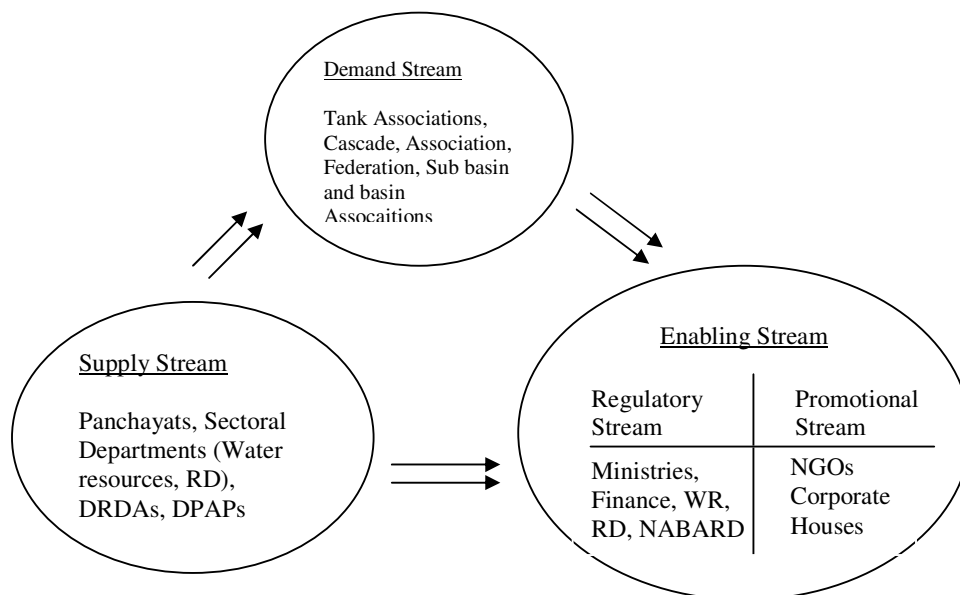
5.0 Tanks, Ponds and drinking water perspective

- 5.1 Recognising the relevance of surface water storages for sustainability of drinking water in rural and urban areas, tanks and ponds should be regenerated primarily to recharge drinking water sources. There should be a drastic shift towards surface water storage from heavy reliance on deep borewells.
- 5.2 Wherever ground water is saline and scarce, the only alternative is drinking water ponds. Many other attempts including 'desalination plants' are not cost effective and relevant to our context. Hence large scale investment including bank loans for this infrastructure should be encouraged to regenerate or create ponds.
- 5.3 Though the recent attention on Rain water harvesting in houses and offices is a desirable movement, it should not be little the importance of small and medium scale storage structure like Tanks and ponds which contribute significantly for recharge. Hence primacy should be given to surface water harvesting structures.

6.0 Tanks and Poverty Reduction perspective

- 6.1 Tanks and ponds provide a great wage employment opportunity to millions of wage labourers. It should be treated as a direct poverty reduction intervention. It is more effective with the combination of earth moving machines. In fact JCBs help in desilting in a massive way with cost effectiveness. It requires wage labourer to work with the machines to load and unload and to spread the silt on the field. Further sectioning and shaping the structures demand wage labourer.
- 6.2 Tank fed agriculture contribute substantially in stabilising the agriculture production of marginal and small farmers in rainfed zones. It is one of the efficient system of water utilization. But R and D on Tankfed agriculture is inadequate and it should be encouraged on a scale for different context.
- 6.3 Tank Associations should also be considered as SHG and it could also be taken under SGSY for tankfed agriculture loan and SGSY infrastructure agriculture could be used for renovation the common property.
- 6.4 An exclusive programme could be developed for small scale water resources including tanks, ponds and check dams like 'watershed programme' under Rural Development Ministry, so the Employment Guarantee scheme (EGS) would be strengthened further. Care should be taken not to spread the investment too thin because of popular measures.
- 6.5 Landless agricultural labours and women should be given usufruct sharing right for inland fisheries, tree growing with Tank Association and Panchayat. These activities should also be considered under SGSY. Programme. Foreshore and waterways plantations and bund planting could be encouraged and the usufruct right could begin to ladies women.

7.0 Policy Intervention Perspective:



- 7.1 'Three streams' perspective should be the guiding philosophy of the policy formulation, advocacy, and implementation. Demand stream revolves around poverty reduction focus and local management and it requires an exclusive set of policy measures for promotional and endowment support and rights to collect tax for self management. Self-Regulation would be promoted in Demand Stream. Similarly supply stream requires financial and technical intermediation role. Accordingly existing rules, GOs and law have to be reviewed and revised as we suggested earlier. Enabling stream is to provide supportive regulatory policies for social action and management and to encourage NGOs as promotional stream.

- 7.2 Policy interaction forum should be established at MORD and MOWR for reviewing the policies periodically and ensure the translation of policy recommendation into revised rules and G.Os.
- 7.3 Net working should be promoted to build a 'critical mass' to enable policy advocacy and intervention. Networks should take the role of policy advocacy and follow-up.

8.0 Key questions for policy recommendation:

- 8.1 Five key areas for policy action should be identified and it should be put into action with tregorous follow-up. What are those five key areas?
- 8.2 Setting up a Working Group or Steering Committee within planning commission or Ministries on Tanks to periodically review and revise the procedures and policies.
- 8.3 Leads for future Research, action-research and large scale implementation
- Social, technical and economic research should be nurtured to guide field and policy action.
 - Series of pilot projects should be initiated at different agro-climatic environment.
 - Financial support for large scale expansion could be facilitated.