

# Patterns of Social Exclusion in Watershed Development in India



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By

Eshwer B. Kale

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I dedicate this book to my parents, Anna and Bai. In my childhood in a tiny village, Anna, a small farmer, and Bai, my illiterate mother, had a dream to make their son the highest- qualified person in the village and together did everything possible to achieve this.

It is generally recognized that poverty has both material and nonmaterial dimensions. Because of their obvious tangibility, many development practitioners find it easier to understand and address the material dimensions of poverty. The exclusion of the poor from participation in and access to opportunities and activities is a major nonmaterial dimension of poverty that also needs to be recognized and addressed.

—**Kazi F. Jalal**

Chief of the Office of Environment and Social Development,  
the Asian Development Bank

Quotation from *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny* by Amartya Sen

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables, Figures, Graphs and Maps .....	xi
Foreword .....	xiv
Preface .....	xviii
Acknowledgements .....	xxi
List of Abbreviations .....	xxiii
Chapter 1 .....	1
Watershed Benefits and Social Exclusion	
1.1 The Relevance of the Social Exclusion Approach .....	1
1.1.1 Social Exclusion and Poverty .....	2
1.2 Why Does Watershed Development Matter?.....	2
1.2.1 Watershed Development and Poverty .....	3
1.3 Different Important Dimensions of Water .....	4
1.3.1 Water as an Economic Good .....	4
1.3.2 Groundwater Recharge: Convergence of Public Good and Private Good .....	5
Chapter 2 .....	6
Social Exclusion and Watershed Development	
2.1 The Concept of Social Exclusion.....	6
2.2 Different Dimensions of Social Exclusion.....	7
2.2.1 Amartya Sen’s Deprivation and Capability Approach .....	8
2.2.2 Forms of Social Exclusion .....	8
2.2.3 Non-Materialistic Aspects of Poverty .....	9
2.2.4 Governance and Social Exclusion .....	10
2.3 Social Exclusion in the Indian Context.....	11
2.3.1 Social Exclusion and the Caste System in India.....	11
2.3.2 Poverty as a Social Phenomenon in India .....	12
2.3.3 Forms of Exclusion and Discrimination in India.....	13
2.4 The Approach and Scale of Watershed Development.....	14
2.5 Bio-physical Treatments in the Watershed Approach.....	15

2.6 Social Aspects and Institutional Issues in the Watershed	
Approach .....	16
2.6.1 Genesis of Normative Concerns in Watershed	
Development.....	16
2.7 Institutional Issues in Watershed Development.....	17
2.8 Key Variables and Framework for Analysis.....	19
Chapter 3 .....	22
The Process of Inquiry	
3.1 Overview of Methodological Issues.....	22
3.1.1 Conceptualizing the Problem .....	22
3.1.2 Rationale: The Relevance of the Research Concern.....	23
3.1.3 Objectives and Key Research Questions of the Inquiry .....	24
3.1.4 The Research Approach Followed for the Inquiry .....	24
3.2 Respondents for the Inquiry: Sampling Details .....	25
3.2.1 Rationale for Selecting the IGWDP Programme.....	25
3.2.2 Rationale for Selecting the Gadiwat Watershed Project.....	26
3.2.3 Details of Respondents.....	26
3.3 Methods of Data Collection Followed During the Inquiry .....	27
3.4 Data Analysis Process Followed.....	27
Chapter 4 .....	29
IGWDP: Mode of Implementation and Institutional Issues	
4.1 Overview of the IGWDP .....	29
4.2 Goals of the IGWDP.....	29
4.3 Technical Issues of the Watershed.....	30
4.4 Key Principles of the IGWDP.....	30
4.4.1 Ridge to Valley Conservation .....	31
4.4.2 Community Initiatives and Ownership.....	31
4.4.3 Land-Use-Based Land Capability .....	31
4.4.4 Carrying Capacity of the Watershed .....	31
4.5 The Major Initiatives for Community Mobilisation.....	32
4.5.1 <i>Shramdaan</i> .....	32
4.5.2 Exposure Visit.....	32
4.6 Phases of the Programme.....	33
4.6.1 CBP (Capacity Building Phase) .....	33
4.6.2 Full Implementation Phase (FIP).....	34
4.7 Institutions and Stakeholders in the Programme.....	34
4.7.1 Institutions and Stakeholders at Watershed Level.....	34
4.7.2 Institutions and Stakeholders at Project Level .....	36
4.7.3 Institutions and Stakeholders at Programme Level .....	36



Chapter 5 .....	39
Details of the Watershed Village	
5.1 Watershed Profile.....	39
5.1.1 Project Area, Location, and Accessibility .....	39
5.1.2 The Topography and Drainage System of the Watershed ....	40
5.1.3 The Socio-economic Profile of the Village .....	40
5.2 Process of Watershed Development in <i>Gadiwat</i> .....	41
5.2.1 The Capacity Building-Phase and Institution Formation .....	41
5.2.2 The Full Implementation Phase and Treatments Done.....	41
5.3 Profile of the Sample .....	42
5.3.1 Sex and Age profile of the Sample.....	42
5.3.2 Educational Profile of the Sample.....	42
5.3.3 Caste and Landownership Status of the Respondents .....	43
5.3.4 Institutional Membership Profile of the Sample.....	44
Chapter 6 .....	46
The Nature and Scope of Social Exclusion	
6.1 The Nature of Institutional Exclusion in the Watershed .....	46
6.1.1 The Watershed Community or the <i>Gramsabha</i> .....	46
6.1.2 Village Watershed Committee (VWC).....	52
6.1.3 Self-Help Groups.....	57
6.1.4 Participation in SMS ( <i>Samyukt Mahila Samitee</i> ) .....	63
6.2 Exclusion from Activities Strengthening Community Participation.....	64
6.2.1 Exposure Visits .....	64
6.2.2 <i>Shramdaan</i> .....	68
6.3 Economic/Benefit-level Exclusion.....	69
6.3.1 Soil and Water Conservation–related Benefits.....	69
6.3.2 Change in Availability of Drinking Water, Fuel, and Fodder .....	75
6.3.3 Credit- and Asset-Level Benefits .....	79
6.3.4 Income-Level Benefits .....	81
Chapter 7 .....	88
Social Exclusion: Factors and Processes	
7.1 Institutional Exclusion: Factors and Processes .....	88
7.1.1 Economic Factors and Processes.....	88
7.1.2 Social Factors and Processes .....	90
7.1.3 Political Factors and Processes.....	93
7.1.4 Project-Related Factors and Processes .....	97
7.2 Economic Exclusion: Factors and Processes .....	97

7.2.1 Economic Factors and Processes .....	97
7.2.2 Social Factors and Processes .....	98
7.2.3 Political Factors and Processes.....	99
7.2.4 Project-Related Factors and Processes .....	99
Chapter 8 .....	101
Conclusions, Suggestions, and Recommendations	
8.1 Summary and Conclusion .....	101
8.1.1 Summary and Conclusions about Economic Exclusion .....	101
8.1.2 Conclusions about Institutional Exclusion .....	104
8.2 Suggestions and Methods for Inclusion .....	107
8.2.1 Suggestions for Economic Inclusion .....	107
8.2.3 Suggestions for Institutional Inclusion.....	109
8.4 Recommendations.....	110
8.4.1 The Need to Reconsider the Watershed Approach.....	110
8.4.2 The Need to Redesign Local Institutional Strategies in the Watershed .....	111
8.4.3 The Need to Reconsider Social Fencing in the Watershed...	111
Appendix A .....	112
Table Used for Gini Coefficient Calculations before the projec2	
Appendix B.....	113
Table Used for Gini Coefficient Calculations after the project	
References .....	114

## LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES, GRAPHS AND MAPS

### Tables

Table 3.1	Sample details	26
Table 5.1	Age and sex distribution of respondents	42
Table 5.2	Sex and education status of respondents	43
Table 5.3	Caste and landholding distribution of respondents	44
Table 5.4	Respondent's membership of watershed and village institutions	44
Table 6.1	Education status and attendance of the <i>Gramsabhas</i>	47
Table 6.2	Caste and attendance of respondents at the <i>Gramsabhas</i>	49
Table 6.3	Total number of <i>Gramsabhas</i> attended	51
Table 6.4	Respondent's initiative in raising issues at <i>Gramsabhas</i>	51
Table 6.5	Detailed analysis of the VWC with Bina Agrawal's typology of participation	55
Table 6.6	Women's reasons for not joining SHGs by caste	61
Table 6.7	Respondent's sex-based participation in exposure visits	65
Table 6.8	Reasons for not attending the exposure visit	68
Table 6.9	Sex-based participation of respondents in <i>Shramdaan</i>	69
Table 6.10	Irrigation sources and benefits of watershed treatments	71
Table 6.11	Irrigation facilities and benefits of soil and water conservation	74
Table 6.12	Landownership status and changes in firewood availability	77
Table 6.13	Changes in livestock before and after the watershed programme	79
Table 6.14	Changes in ownership of assets before and after the watershed programme	81
Table 6.15	Perceived contribution of project interventions to income	83

Table 7.1	Change in the community's willingness to come together for village development in relation to caste	92
Table 8.1	Conclusions about economic exclusion	102
Table 8.2	Conclusions about institutional exclusion	104
<b>Figures</b>		
Figure 2.1	Framework of data analysis	21
Figure 6.1	Landholding status and attendance of the <i>Gramsabhas</i>	48
Figure 6.2	Attendance of the <i>Gramsabhas</i> in different phases	50
Figure 6.3	Decision-taking patterns at the <i>Gramsabhas</i>	52
Figure 6.4	Sex-based attendance of VWC meetings	54
Figure 6.5	Level of participation of VWC members in meetings	55
Figure 6.6	Women's membership in SHGs by caste	58
Figure 6.7	Landholding status and women's membership in SHGs	59
Figure 6.8	SHG women's relationship with village institutions	60
Figure 6.9	Non-SHG women's relationship with village institutions	60
Figure 6.10	Reasons for not joining SHGs given by landholder women	62
Figure 6.11	Reasons for not joining SHGs given by landless women	63
Figure 6.12	Exposure visits and education status	65
Figure 6.13	Reasons for the non-participation of landless people in the exposure visit	66
Figure 6.14	Caste-based participation in the exposure visit	67
Figure 6.15	Caste-based distribution of benefits of watershed treatments	72
Figure 6.16	Membership in village institutions and treatment benefits	73
Figure 6.17	Sex-based changes in drinking water availability	76
Figure 6.18	Caste-based changes in fodder availability	78
Figure 6.19	Caste-based changes in dependency on money lenders	80
Figure 7.1	Respondents overall satisfaction with the project	89
Figure 7.2	The network of key village leaders in the VWC	95

**Graphs**

Graph 6.1	Landholding-based changes in income	84
Graph 6.2	Lorenz curve before the project	85
Graph 6.3	Lorenz curve after the project	86

**Maps - See colour centrefold**

Map 5.1	State and district map showing the project location
Map 5.2	Gadiwat watershed map showing the village settlements

## FOREWORD

I was quite overwhelmed when Eshwer approached me to write the foreword to his first book. I think this has been mainly out of his affection for me as he was my younger colleague a few years ago. I also agreed to write this primarily because of that relationship. Of course, watershed development, the theme that this book deals with, has been dear to me in my rather long journey of more than 30 years as an activist-researcher in the water arena.

Eshwer spent his formative years as a water sector professional with us in the Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM) as a researcher in the project “Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Locational Watershed Research Study and Policy Dialogue.” This study was taken up on behalf of the research consortium ForWaRD (Forum for Watershed Research and Policy Dialogue)—a collaborative initiative of SOPPECOM, the Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), and the erstwhile Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environment and Development (CISED). As his former colleague, it gives me immense happiness and satisfaction to see Eshwer carrying the insights and the passion that he acquired through this project and our association into his subsequent work, both as a researcher and as a practitioner. I take this book, *Patterns of Social Exclusion in Watershed Development in India*, to be a natural progression of this journey that he began with us way back in 2006.

Since the 1990s the concept of integrated and participatory watershed development and management emerged as the cornerstone of rural development in the dry and semi-arid regions of India. It also tried to integrate and anchor various rural development efforts in the country. Various success stories demonstrated that watershed-based development can offer a way out of the stagnation and degradation for all those areas that development has seemingly bypassed. Examples such as Ralegaon Siddhi, Hivare Bazar, and many Indo-German watershed development projects showed that watershed development and management can be a good drought-proofing strategy. The two decades between 1990 and 2010 saw the actual flowering of the programme as there were increased financial allocations by the government and other funding agencies. Almost all civil society organisations (CSOs) working in rural areas took up implementation of watershed development projects as one of their main areas of

intervention. Watershed development also became one of the important arenas of critical studies and engagement in academia giving rise to a mushrooming body of literature around it, especially highlighting it as a good example of collective action. It also became an important topic for workshops and conferences. Popular media across the country also covered watershed development efforts on a daily basis. In short, the rural development discourse was dominated by watershed-development-related issues.

There has also been a shift in the goals of watershed development: a programme that started with soil conservation in the catchment areas of dams to protect reservoirs from silting gradually evolved into a livelihood programme. In this gradual evolution, it also introduced issues of sustainability, participation, equity, gender, and quality of life as part of the programme's concerns. However, studies and also experience on the ground show that except in the case of a few "successful" cases, by and large the watershed projects could not deliver on many of these issues, especially those related to equity and social inclusion, which is the core theme that this book deals with. So, first of all, I would like to congratulate Eshwer for picking an important but less engaged-with theme such as equity and social inclusion in watershed development for his M. Phil (Master of Philosophy) work and now converting that into a book so that the insights from this work can be shared with a larger number of people.

The book essentially tries to look at the issue of social exclusion among resource-poor people in watershed development projects. Though various studies have brought out the fact that watershed development projects do tend to exacerbate existing inequities and social exclusions in rural society, Eshwer has tried to empirically engage with these issues at a micro level—that is, in a village where watershed development has been implemented. This has helped him to understand the fine details of exclusion from very close quarters. I would say this is one of the important strengths of this book. There are probably few such studies that capture the micro details of the processes of exclusion and the micro politics of exclusion. Eshwer has tried to engage with the issue of social exclusion/inclusion both conceptually and empirically.

The book clearly brings out that in resource ownership, land, caste, and gender in particular are the major determining factors for institutional inclusion in the village in which the study has been conducted. The resource-poor groups are often denied institutional representation. Thus they have no institutional space to articulate their concerns and aspirations that in turn also exclude them from getting a fair share of the increased resources, like water, for example, as a result of watershed development

efforts. The book also suggests ways to strengthen social inclusion and participatory processes and to bring about the better sharing of benefits. For example, a simple thing like having proper communication with all sections of the community in relation to meetings of the *Gramsabha* (village assembly) can foster better participation. Also, making the decision-making process more democratic can ensure better participation of socially disadvantaged sections of society. Very often landless people or shepherds are not included in the village watershed committee (VWC), which is the most important institution in the planning and implementation of watershed development projects. Since watershed development interventions and the various conditions it sets—for example, a ban on grazing—do have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of these sections of society, they need to be included in the VWC. The book argues for a separate organisation of these social sections and that they should have the right to decide who among them is included in the VWC. Similarly, the book argues for privileging water for domestic use over agricultural water use. It also suggests that sharing the increased water as a result of watershed-development efforts needs to be part of institutional arrangements. One can find many such suggestions in the book that can help in strengthening social inclusion and also in the better sharing of the benefits of watershed development initiatives.

In a review of watershed development in the country that Suhas Paranjape and I did way back in 2004–5, we concluded the review with words of both caution and hope. I think it is worth reproducing that here.

What makes watershed development issues in India of crucial importance is the historical conjuncture that we find ourselves in. In the process of globalisation and privatisation that started sweeping the country now, the local natural resources, synonymous with watershed ecosystem resources, represent the last frontier; they are the last of the productive resources that the rural poor have access to. Watershed development represents a dual possibility in this respect. It may, with the right policies and political will, provide an opportunity to bring more and more of the ecosystem resources under social control, provide preferential access and ensure expanding sustainable livelihood opportunities for the rural poor . . . carrying them beyond subsistence. On the other hand it may result in the augmentation of [the] ecosystem resource potential only to put it to unsustainable use, benefit the already better off, leave the impoverished no better off than they were earlier, and in the process also undermin[e] both sustainability and equity. Actualising the former potential requires concerted action by all stakeholders in watershed development—Panchayati Raj institutions, community based organisations, government agencies, non-government development agencies, academic community, and donors. They need to



come together and discuss and evolve a course of action that comprises a set of focused options in respect of further changes in approach, research, and policy.

This book, in a way, engages with this caution and hope.

Unfortunately, watershed development is no longer the cornerstone of rural development in the country. Since 2010 there seems to have been a gradual decline in its importance both in the government's own approach as well as the work of CSOs. As a result, there is no dedicated funding for the watershed development programme. Everybody seems to be after quick-fix solutions without giving much thought to the long-term effects of such programmes. The Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyaan (JSA) in Maharashtra is a good example of this. The four to five years of experience in implementing JSA has shown that this cannot drought-proof Maharashtra, though that was the promise given when the programme was initiated. Instead, it is having a detrimental impact on our streams, rivers, and aquifers. Even the short-term gains have been cornered by the resource privileged in the villages. It is high time that we reject such quick-fix solutions and once again seriously engage with a watershed-based developmental approach, improved by what we have learned from the previous phases. While doing so, we also need to redesign the programme taking into account the type of changes—especially land use changes, demographic shifts, changing livelihoods, and rural aspirations—sweeping the countryside. Climate change is another important issue that needs to be factored in. While the book's scope does not permit covering the wide gamut of issues mentioned, I am confident that the insights it brings out relating to equity and social inclusion will go a long way in reimagining watershed-based development as the mainstay of rural development in the country.

—K. J. Joy  
Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management,  
Pune, February 2020

## PREFACE

This book is part of my ongoing inquiry that seeks to understand and analyse various dimensions of water-resource governance, quality of participation, and equity issues in natural resource management (NRM) programmes. My earlier engagement with SOPPECOM,<sup>1</sup> chiefly a research-based NGO working on NRM issues, provided me with a wider opportunity to investigate and understand the various aspects of the watershed approach, and created a platform for further explorations in this area. I had an opportunity to work on the “Multi-Location and Multi-Disciplinary Research on Watershed Development Projects in India” programme, initiated by the Forum for Watershed Research and Policy Dialogue (FoRWaRD) with the involvement of three organisations representing different states and project locations (SOPPECOM from Maharashtra, CISED<sup>2</sup> from Karnataka, and GIDR<sup>3</sup> from Gujarat). This opportunity provided me the conceptual background and opened new areas for further detailed inquiry for the present book.

During the extensive fieldwork for the above project, I was part of the research team, which investigated more than 400 watershed villages covering various types of projects and regions in Maharashtra. During this study, we spent almost a full day in each village to interact with the village community and verify various watershed treatments. Also during the part of the project with extensive fieldwork, I was a member of a team that studied six watershed villages in detail from the Ahmednagar district of western Maharashtra. The experiences and study reports of the project show that although watershed development projects have by and large succeeded in bringing water and land-based benefits to farming communities, these projects lag behind in terms of institutional participation and equitable distribution of the project benefits to the various resource groups. It also indicates that the benefits of watershed projects and community participation

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<sup>1</sup> The Society for Promoting Participative Eco-System Management is based in Pune; it mainly researches NRM-related issues.

<sup>2</sup> The Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environment and Development is a Bangalore-based NGO.

<sup>3</sup> The Gujarat Institute of Development Research is an Ahmedabad-based research institute.

drastically differ from programme to programme and the mode of the project implementation.

These experiences and analysis led to my further microscopic inquiry for my MPhil course at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, to understand deeply the issues, factors, and micro-level processes involved in the exclusion of resource-poor<sup>4</sup> groups from the institutional and economic aspects of watershed development. Moreover, it also compelled me to explore possible ways and mechanisms for meaningful inclusion of these groups in watershed institutions and especially in newly generated watershed benefits, in the larger context of equity. During watershed research at SOPPECOM, we found that the Indo-German Watershed Development Program (IGWDP) was best in terms of quality of work and land- and water-based benefits to communities when compared with other programmes. Purposely, I selected IGWDP for this inquiry to assess where comparatively successful watershed programmes—rather than less- or averagely successful watershed programmes—stand in addressing social exclusion and inequity issues. The present book is the result of this quest where a watershed development project in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra has been studied in terms of its social, economic, and political realities. Along with disclosing the different patterns of social exclusion in economic benefits and participation, the book presents the possible ways and means to address these challenges.

The book consists of eight chapters, the first two chapters present the key issues and concerns related to watershed development and social exclusion and how I arrived at this research subject and the book. The first chapter focuses on the relevance of studying social exclusion and watershed development-related issues in today's context, and discusses various perspectives and dimensions of water as a resource. The second chapter covers theoretical discussions on a few key concepts of social exclusion and watershed development. Moreover, it throws light on the genesis of various normative concerns in watershed programmes such as participation, gender, and equity, and discusses various social exclusion and poverty-related theories and their application in the Indian context. On the basis of these discussions, the chapter concludes with the framework adopted for analysis in the book. As watershed development has been taken as a case for discussing social exclusion issues, chapter three explains the methodological issues of the inquiry, giving details of sampling, the data collection methods, and the research tools used. As the IGWDP programme

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<sup>4</sup> In this inquiry, the term “resource poor” is confined to landless persons, women, and people from SC/ST and OBC communities.

was purposely selected for the study, chapter four gives an overview of key principles, details of the processes, and key stakeholders involved at various levels in the IGWDP programme. Next, chapter five provides the socio-economic profile and other details of the selected watershed project and the profile of the sample of the study.

Chapter six analyses and discusses the nature and scope of people's inclusion and participation in various watershed institutions, major activities, and benefits. Chapter seven discusses in detail the various factors and processes involved in the institutional and economic exclusion of the excluded groups from the project. Finally, chapter eight summaries the analysis discussion and arrives at concrete conclusions. Towards the end, the suggestions and views shared by the excluded groups are discussed and concrete recommendations are made for their meaningful inclusion, specifically in relation to watershed development programmes and broadly in relation to natural resource governance.

—Dr. Eshwer B. Kale

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The main idea of this book emerged during my extensive fieldwork as part of a rapid assessment-study of more than 400 watershed projects, covering various types of watershed programmes and regions of Maharashtra. This exposure through the programme “Multi-Location and Multi-Disciplinary Research on Watershed Development Projects in India,” initiated by the Forum for Watershed Research and Policy Dialogue (ForWaRD), provided me with the necessary conceptual background and opened new areas for further detailed inquiry. I acknowledge the ForWaRD and SOPPECOM teams for providing me with this opportunity.

I have been able to complete this book due to the cooperation and support extended by a number of persons and institutions. My first and deepest expression of gratitude goes to my MPhil and PhD guide Prof. Subodh Wagle, who constantly motivated me and provided valuable insights. I also extend my gratitude to K. J. Joy and Abraham Samual for giving me the conceptual foundation for this inquiry, and for being friends and philosophers on this journey. I reserve my special thanks for Nandita Kapadia-Kundu, Anjali Maydeo, Nagmani Rao, Ujwalla Masadekar, and Anand Pawar, whose positive energy has been precious in the development of my research perspective. Several discussions with Crispino Lobo and Marcella D’Souza during my engagement with the WOTR were important in developing my perspective on watershed-based development and regenerating ecosystems.

I give my special thanks to Mr. Machhindranath Pandit from *Jigyasa* and Mr. Rohidas Navthar from *Prayog*, Aurangabad, for their extensive help during my fieldwork. Shri. Anna Borade and Pandit Vasare from MSSM and Sandip Jadhav from WOTR Aurangabad also spent their valuable time with me during the study. I sincerely thank all of them. I also thank Dr. Sai Thakur, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Studies in Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies, for several important discussions on the theme of social exclusion.

Neela, my wife, deserves special thanks for her continuous encouragement, support, and input in drafting the book. I reserve my special thoughts for my family and friends, Appada, Raju Adagle, Ravi Pomane, Pravin Raut, and Dada Dadas for their valuable support in the journey of publishing this book. Finally, yet importantly, I am grateful to Adam

Rummens from Cambridge Scholars Publishing for all his good-hearted support and motivation in publishing this book and Edward Crooks for detailed proofreading of the manuscript.

Here, I should also state that the views and analysis presented in the book are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions and organisations with whom I am involved.

—Dr. Eshwer B. Kale

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBP	Capacity Building Phase
CO	Community Organizer
FIP	Full Implementation Phase
GS	<i>Gramsabha</i>
GoI	Government of India
HH	House Hold
IGWDP	Indo-German Watershed Development Programme
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NT	Nomadic Tribe
OBC	Other Backward Class
PIA	Project Implementing Agency
RRC	Regional Resource Centre
SC	Scheduled Caste
SHG	Self-Help Groups
SMS	<i>Samyukt Mahila Samitee</i>
ST	Scheduled Tribe
VWC	Village Watershed Committee
WA	Watershed Association
WDF	Watershed Development Fund
WOTR	Watershed Organisation Trust





# CHAPTER 1

## WATERSHED BENEFITS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

This introductory chapter discusses the relevance of studying social exclusion perspectives in the context of watershed development in India. By discussing different dimensions of water resources, this chapter sets the context for the book by exploring the materialistic and non-materialistic angles of poverty in relation to water-resource management, especially the watershed-based development process.

### **1.1 THE RELEVANCE OF THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION APPROACH**

The adaptation of the social exclusion paradigm as a new field of inquiry has already been covered because the issues taken up in this new paradigm are already discussed extensively in the social science domain. This book examines these issues through new perspectives to produce a new set of findings or inferences. As the concept of social exclusion as discussed by C. J. Sonwal (2008) is relative to certain contexts and there is no uniform paradigm of exclusion across the world, my focus is to make use of this highly relevant paradigm by looking at and analysing exclusion in the Indian context. Therefore, here I explore excluded community groups from the perspective of people's equal opportunities, tracing out the factors for their inability to interact with local institutions, denial of their inclusion in the domain of livelihood opportunities, and resource governance.

The developmental literature in recent years has seen the emergence of social exclusion as one of the most relevant concepts, which focuses attention on the relational aspects of deprivation. Social exclusion may be regarded as intrinsic to deprivation or deprivation in itself (Amartya Sen 2008). It may also be viewed as instrumental in leading to other aspects of deprivation and to relative deprivation, as reflected in socio-economic disparities in development indicators. The studies on social-exclusion-related issues became extremely important because they, in their multiple dimensions, provide a useful framework of analysis to understand the processes underlying group-level inequalities, discrimination, and poverty

in Indian society. As Tony Addison (2007) discusses, the holistic meaning of these issues can be achieved only through studying and analysing social exclusion aspects by applying a mixed-method approach. This research on understanding these issues and processes requires a methodology combining macro- and microscopic inquiry, primary and secondary data, qualitative and quantitative methods, and a cross-disciplinary approach, cutting across different social science disciplines.

### **1.1.1 Social Exclusion and Poverty**

People need the opportunity to participate fully in the community if they are to flourish and realise their full potential. Nevertheless, certain groups in society are systematically excluded from opportunities that are open to others, because they are discriminated upon on the basis of their race, religion, gender, caste, age, disability, or other social identity. As discussed in a DFID policy paper (2005), people who are excluded in such a way are not only “just like” the rest of the poor but also disadvantaged by who they are (their identity) or where they live; as a result, they are locked out of the benefits of development. Social exclusion denies people the choices and opportunities with which to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights; thus, it is claimed that it is often a cause of poverty, conflict, and insecurity. Socially excluded people are often denied the opportunities available to others to increase their income and escape from poverty by their own efforts. Therefore, even though the economy may grow and general income levels may rise, excluded people are likely to be left behind, and make up an increasing proportion of those who remain in poverty. Poverty reduction policies often fail to reach them unless they are specifically designed to do so.

## **1.2 WHY WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT MATTERS?**

Integrated and participatory watershed development and management has emerged as the cornerstone of rural development in the dry and semi-arid regions of India. These programmes, which were initially launched to arrest soil erosion in catchments of large and medium reservoirs, have since grown in scope. Watershed development today is one of the largest interventions in the country in terms of the scale, resource allocation, and agencies involved (Abraham et al., 2009). Other than the Ministries of Rural Development (MoRD, specifically, the Department of Land Resources) and Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is involved in the watershed development programme. As mentioned by Joshi et al., (2004), the Government of India through different ministries invested more than US\$2 billion, up to 1999–2000, for watershed development under

various programmes, and, as discussed by John Kerr (2007), the annual budget for watershed development in India exceeds US\$500 million from all sources. There is a fair amount of literature available, which highlights the effects of watershed programmes and the role of people's participation in its success. The overall literature has mixed conclusions on the performance of watershed programmes in achieving the expected economic and environmental outcomes and provides useful insights into the performance of numerous watersheds. However, most of the available literature is focused only on the increased biophysical effects of the watershed projects. As watershed development is one of the largest rural development programmes at this scale in terms of budget and the human resources involved, the social and institutional aspects and the different dimensions of these programmes from the perspectives of the resource-poor are discussed inadequately.

### **1.2.1 Watershed Development and Poverty**

Until the 1990s, as rightly mentioned by Johnson et al., (2009), watershed development and management was viewed as an engineering problem, and a technical solution for controlling erosion, reducing runoff and flooding, and enhancing groundwater recharge. In this period, watershed treatments and activities were often designed and implemented with little regard to their effects on the livelihoods of people, and social equity. As a result, many programmes were unsuccessful, and farmers often abandoned technologies and practices. Reviews of watershed experiences in the 1970s and 1980s identified the lack of attention given to farmers' objectives and knowledge as important reasons for these failures. In contrast, where user participation was incorporated, the performance of the watershed projects was improved (Kerr 2002).

As a result of these lessons, many participatory watershed development interventions were designed and implemented with an explicit involvement of multiple users and sought to address their livelihood concerns as well as environmental conservation issues. Building on these lessons from a community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approach, later many watershed project guidelines focused on the needs of local resource-dependent communities as their starting point. These guidelines paid particular attention to the social and institutional issues that are fundamental to building a collective capacity to manage resources and empowering communities to set the agenda and take a lead role in its implementation. Therefore, as rightly noted by several authors, as focusing watershed interventions more directly on the needs of local communities is likely to make their outcomes more pro-poor, the local needs-based approach should be considered in watershed planning (Tyler 2006). While

natural resources continue to be important livelihood assets for the resource-poor, the continuous modifications to watershed guidelines at central and state levels mainly from 1994 onward encourage supporting all stakeholder groups including the resource-poor to address a range of issues including but not limited to natural resource management.

However, despite all these ideal provisions in guidelines, as rightly discussed by German et al. (2007), where local institutions and power structures are inequitable, the problem of the elite capture of benefits still exists. As the Indian rural community is heterogeneous in nature, with high levels of inherent political and socio-economic inequality, the influence of existing power structures should not be underestimated in watershed processes.

### **1.3 DIFFERENT IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF WATER**

Water is perceived in many different ways by various institutions and stakeholder groups, for example, it is seen as a human and fundamental right (rights-based approach), a scarce natural resource, a common-pool resource, a sacred resource, a market commodity, and an economic good, and in terms of public trust. The conflicting issues around these various perceptions is the debatable shift from the “rights-based perspective” to water as an “economic good” (a “market-based perspective”). Here, in a little more detail, let us understand this market-oriented approach and the issues related to groundwater issues in watersheds and the resource-poor’s stake in it.

#### **1.3.1 Water as an Economic Good**

The major principle behind the market-based perspective, which is guiding current water reform processes, as discussed by Philip Cullet (2007), is that all uses of water should be seen from the perspective of economic value, because many planners believe that the absence of an economic perspective in the past has resulted in the existing unsustainable use of water. So there is also a growing demand for initiatives to use bulk-water to foster the productive capacity of the economy, by shifting water from drinking, irrigation, and the needs of the eco-system to water for hydropower and economic purposes. The Indian National Water Policy 2002 explains its concern that an insufficient percentage of water is currently harnessed for economic development and even calls for “non-conventional” methods of water utilisation such as inter-basin water transfers and seawater desalination as large-scale and high-technology solutions to improve overall water availability. Thus, beyond the relatively old characterisation of water as a natural resource, the underlying proposition for water-sector reforms is that water is to be seen as an economic good. This implies an important shift

to ensure the right of local people and resource-poor groups to have access to and control over water. In fact, this leads to a complete policy reversal in which water is advocated in terms of public trust and water rights instead of in terms of the trade of water entitlements and treating it as a mere economic resource.

Here, it is interesting to note that as an economic good, water shares certain noteworthy features such as “all water services must be based on the principle of cost-recovery” (World Bank 1998). Where the provision of drinking and domestic water as well as irrigation water is substantially subsidised, this implies a significant policy reversal. At the national level, the policy is now to make water users pay at least operation and maintenance charges linked to the provision of water. This strategy is already being implemented in the context of irrigation water where farmers are made to pay operation and maintenance costs.

### **1.3.2 Groundwater Recharge: Converting Public Good into Private Good**

In India due to a lack of clarity on various water-related laws, the ownership of land carries with it ownership of the groundwater under it. It has been said that groundwater is attached, like a chattel, to land property; furthermore, as Iyer discusses (2003), there is no limitation on how much groundwater a particular landowner may draw. Despite this, surface water is seen and broadly accepted at a community level as a common resource; generally, most of the people irrespective of caste, class, and gender, with few exceptions, have access to surface water. Thus, mostly, surface water is commonly agreed as a public good in its limited sense. This situation is fully reversed for groundwater because the individual who owns a given piece of land has the full right to use and exploit groundwater under his/her land as well as neighbouring land. In the watershed framework, the community conserves the rainwater and recharges the groundwater using check-dams and other recharge facilities; however, this recharged water is a “free offer” only for landowners and provides “nothing” to rain-fed farmers and landless groups. Thus, in the absence of appropriate regulatory mechanisms and institutional arrangements for distribution of benefits across households, including the landless, private landowners capture the irrigation benefits from the increased availability of groundwater.

Due to this unjust rule about linking water rights to land-rights, the landless and resource-poor are denied the benefits of groundwater, and our traditional approach to water conservation in watershed development becomes questionable in terms of the equity and sustainability of watershed benefits.

## CHAPTER 2

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

This chapter discusses the concept and various dimensions of social exclusion and further elaborates on social-exclusion-related issues in the Indian context. Here, I also focus on discussing the concepts and the key components of the watershed approach. At the end of the chapter, having discussed these issues, I present the key variables analysed with explanations, and discuss how I began to study these key variables.

### **2.1 THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

In social science literature, as discussed by Marya Buvinic (2005), there is a general agreement on the core features of social exclusion, its principle indicators, and the way it relates to poverty and inequality. Generally, social exclusion is defined as the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others that leads to an inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic, and social functioning of society. Two defining characteristics of exclusion are particularly relevant: first, the deprivation caused through exclusion (or denial of equal opportunity) in multiple spheres, which shows its multidimensionality; second, it is embedded in social relations and institutions. As social exclusion is a process-oriented concept, Thorat (2007) defines it as a “process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.” Through these processes, a group of people or individuals become isolated from major social mechanisms, which produce or distribute social resources: in other words, social exclusion is about the inability of society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what is expected as a society to realise their full potential.

Social exclusion has two major dimensions, economic and social. In the economic aspects, individuals are excluded from economic opportunities, resulting in poverty and benefits of development; whereas on the social front they are kept from inclusive opportunities, which result in