



Ex-post Evaluation 2013 – Brief Report

Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes
Maharashtra, India

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This evaluation report has been established by independent experts. It reflects exclusively their opinion and assessment.

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Service Provider

GFA Consulting Group GmbH

Place and year of publication

Hamburg, 2013

Tabular overview

The evaluation mission

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| Evaluation period | 06.11. – 23.12.2013 |
| Evaluating institute / consulting firm | GFA Consulting Group GmbH |
| Evaluation team | Jan Sass (international) / Sandhya Chatterji (national) |

The development measure

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Title according to the offer | Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes Maharashtra, India |
| Number | 1992.2118.5 1996.2007.1 2001.2067.5 2004.2153.7 |
| Overall term broken down by phases | 16 years, 6 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replication of Self-help Initiatives (3 years, 04/1993 – 03/1996) • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Initiatives, Phase 1 (4 years, 9 months, 04/1996 – 12/2000) • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Initiatives, Phase 2 (4 years, 01/2001 – 12/2004) • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes, Phase 3 (3 years, 01/2005 – 12/2007) • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes, Phase 4 (1 year, 9 months, 01/2008 – 09/2009) |
| Total costs | EUR 8,140,425 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replication of Self-help Initiatives: EUR 613,550 • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Initiatives, Phase 1: EUR 2,928,332 • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Initiatives, Phase 2: EUR 2,840,000 • Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes, Phase 3 & Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes, Phase 4: EUR 1,758,543 Total costs Financial Cooperation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation Project Erosion Control |

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| | <p>Maharashtra I: EUR 6,140,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation Project Erosion Control <p>Maharashtra II: EUR 12,780,000</p> <p>Partner contributions were not documented for the Technical Cooperation module. Partner contributions in the framework Financial Cooperation module comprised mainly labour contributions of the local population (EUR 630,000).</p> |
| Overall objective as per the offer | “Governmental and non-governmental implementation structures and SHO /SHG implement core elements of a sustainable watershed management based on the people's own responsibility.” |
| Lead executing agency | <p><i>Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR)</i></p> <p>Executing agency Financial Cooperation: <i>National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, NABARD)</i></p> |
| Implementing organisations (in the partner country) | <p><i>Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR)</i></p> <p>Implementing organisation Financial Cooperation: <i>National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, NABARD)</i></p> |
| Other participating development organisations | KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW Development Bank) |
| Target groups as per the offer | Rural population in selected watersheds in Maharashtra (drought-affected areas) with a particular focus on the promotion of the self-help potential of women, landless households and members of lower casts. |

The rating

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| <p>Overall rating</p> <p><i>On a scale of 1 (very good, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project/program is useless, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)</i></p> | <p>Good (2) – Good rating, no significant defects</p> |
| Individual rating | <p>Relevance: Good (2); Effectiveness: Satisfactory (3);</p> <p>Impact: Very good (1); Efficiency: Very good (1);</p> <p>Sustainability: Satisfactory (3).</p> |

The project *Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes Maharashtra, India* was implemented as a cooperation project between the German Technical and Financial Cooperation over a total period of 16.5 years (April 1993 – September 2009), thereby covering several phases and project numbers. The project objective was formulated as “Governmental and non-governmental implementation structures and self-help organisations implement core elements of a sustainable watershed management based on the people's own responsibility”.

At the time of project inception, the Indian state of Maharashtra was characterised by a severe degradation of natural resources and by frequent and long-lasting droughts. This development was partly based on climatic changes, but was largely the result of a poverty-induced overuse of natural resources and widespread inappropriate, not sustainable land-use practices. At the same time, governmental programmes aiming at a regeneration of the natural resources were not effective and not sustainable, as they were mostly implemented without a coherent coordinating and participatory concept. Because of the prevailing inflexible, centrally determined implementation guidelines, the insufficient participation of the local population and a strong focus on standardised construction modules, aside from corruption and bureaucratic inflexibility within the administration, these governmental programmes were not suitable to encounter the progressing degradation of natural resources and the related development of poverty (core problem).

Until 1996, a cooperation of the interventions of the German Technical Cooperation (TC) and Financial Cooperation (FC) in the field of a self-help based management of natural resources in Maharashtra was gradually established. The interventions of the TC in the framework of the project *Replication of self-help initiatives* were increasingly harmonised with the project *Management of natural resources through non-governmental organisations in Maharashtra*, which was implemented by the *National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development* (NABARD). In this cooperation, the TC implemented capacity development measures for local organisations responsible for the subsequent implementation of FC interventions. Main aim of this cooperation between TC and FC was to establish a framework for the country-wide dissemination of a self-help based watershed development approach. From 1996 onwards, the project *Promotion of watershed self-help initiatives*, implemented through the German *Agency for Technical Cooperation* (GTZ) was implemented as a component of a TC-FC cooperation project in parallel to the projects *Erosion control Maharashtra Phase I* (BMZ-No. 91 65 606) and *Erosion control Maharashtra Phase II* (BMZ-No. 96 65 399), which were supported through *KfW Entwicklungsbank* (*KfW Development Bank*, the German main implementing agency for Financial Cooperation with developing countries).

The main aim of the cooperation project was the development and implementation of adapted models for a sustainable management of watersheds through governmental and non-governmental implementation organisations, community administrations (*Panchayati Raj Institutions*, PRI) and self-help groups in a common approach. The main foundation of the approach was a strict regulation of the land-use and resource utilisation in the watersheds and a harmonisation of local interests. In view of this, extensive capacity development measures for non-governmental organisations (NGO) as intermediate organisations and implementation facilitators were carried out. Through the capacity development measures these organisations were enabled to support local rural communities in the implementation of pilot interventions aiming at an integrated and sustainable development of the local watersheds. The experiences, lessons learnt and successfully tested approaches and technical modules were then documented and disseminated throughout India.

The implementation of technical interventions related to reforestation, soil and water protection and to water harvesting, as well as the establishment of regulations for the management of the natural resources in a watershed (utilisation of forest areas, grazing on community areas, water extraction from surface reservoirs and from the aquifer) were initially carried out in the framework of a *Capacity Building Phase* (CBP, 12 – 18 months), thereby covering a limited (community) area of the watershed with technical measures. A successful implementation of the CBP qualified the individual watershed for a full support through the FC in the implementation of measures throughout the watershed in the framework of a *Full Implementation Phase* (FIP, 36 – 48 months).

Executing and implementing organisation for the TC-interventions was the local NGO *Watershed Organisation Trust* (WOTR). The financial support of GTZ to WOTR was done through financing agreements. The total costs of the TC-support were EUR 8,140,425.

The TC-module of the cooperation project was subject to an ex-post evaluation through independent experts in November 2013. The evaluation covered the entire implementation period of the project (April 1993 – September 2009).

In the overall rating the result of the *Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed self-help Programmes Maharashtra, India* is assessed as **good** (level 2 - good rating, no significant defects). With this rating the implementation of the project is considered to be successful.

The relevance of the project is rated as **good** (level 2 - good rating, no significant defects). Interventions targeting an integrated and participatory development of watersheds are explicitly identified as a priority in all relevant development strategies and sector policies of India. The project concept corresponds with the strategy of the partner country India, of the

German development cooperation and of the target groups. It is based on a participatory approach and aims at learning and knowledge management. Furthermore, the implementation concept is in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), à priori with MDG 1 (Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger), MDG 3 (Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women) and MDG 7 (Ensuring environmental sustainability). The concept also corresponds with the demand of a stronger consideration of the environmental sustainability in the formulation of the post MDG goals. From today's point of view, the concept is furthermore in line with the objectives formulated in the development strategy of the *German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*.

The project concept considers cross-cutting issues such as "self-help oriented poverty alleviation", "gender", "participatory development and good governance" and "environmental protection". However, neither the development of the project concept nor the actual implementation was based on a differentiating analysis of the target group and gender and poverty aspects. Specific measures to improve the situation of women and to alleviate poverty were not integrated into the project concept.

The effectiveness of the project is rated as **satisfactory** (level 3 - satisfactory rating; positive results predominate). Capacity development measures were implemented in 130 watersheds with a total of 56 intermediate NGOs. Until the end of the intervention in 2009, integrated watershed development measures were carried out in 95 watersheds with FC-support, thereby covering a total area of 104,000 ha. Besides the establishment of *Village Watershed Committees (VWCS)* as a central self-help structure of the rural communities, a total of 1,470 self-help groups in the form of savings and lending groups were formed. While the quantitative results of the project were achieved, the measures to prepare the VWCS for sustaining the agreed upon development and land-use plans were not successful. The self-help capacity of the target groups was not developed to the extent that enables them to sustain the results and impacts of the watershed development measures. Risks related to the resource management in the watersheds are neither addressed by the VWCS, nor by the community administration. A link of the self-help organisations with governmental structures could not be achieved to a sufficient extent, therefore, a stronger synergy between the interventions of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders has not been reached.

The achieved political impacts of the project are significant. The methods and approaches developed and tested in the project were promoted as good practices through the networking activities of the implementation organisation WOTR with stakeholders of the civil society and government. A number of technical modules and experiences originating from the

cooperation project are actually replicated and further refined in Maharashtra and beyond and have been introduced to relevant sector guidelines.

In the light of significant intended and not intended positive effects, the impact of the project is rated as **very good** (level 1 – very good rating). At the level of the watersheds impacts could be measured related to an increase of the vegetation cover (5 – 35%) and the stabilisation of the natural resources, the valorisation of unproductive agricultural areas (increase of the cropping intensity to 125%) and the increase of yield levels (average 11,5%) and household incomes (increase by factor 2.8 – 4.7). These impacts can be directly attributed to the development interventions under the cooperation project.

The local economic development related to the watershed development interventions is significant. All population groups benefit from this economic development. At the same time, the project has a considerable widespread impact through the replication of approaches in the framework of governmental programmes. The opportunity for women and marginalised groups of the local population to participate in the planning processes of the CBP was principally given. The participation in the local economic development could be achieved through the membership in a self-help group. Through the saving and lending activities the foundation for economic activities could be laid. One significant impact of the local economic development was the reduction of seasonal migration by an average 34%.

The efficiency of the project is rated as **very good** (level 1 – very good rating). The project was mainly implemented based on financing agreements and equipment subsidies (approx. 78% of the total cost). The received financial support was utilised by the implementation organisation WOTR to mainly finance staff and training costs and onwards subsidies to the intermediate NGOs entrusted with the implementation of measures at the level of the watersheds (approx. 80% of the financial volume). In view of the high degree of achievement of quantitative and qualitative results, a very good input-output relation is assumed. Based on the number of watershed that have experienced a CBP, the average amount spent per watershed is EUR 62,600. A comparable performance could not have been achieved in a traditional development cooperation approach that includes the assignment of long- and short-term experts. Notwithstanding the observed weaknesses in the coordination of TC- and FC-interventions, the project is characterised by a very good production and allocation efficiency. The chosen implementation concept and the chosen instruments were adequate and without alternative in the light of the comparable small financial volume used. The costs of the CBP based on the model developed in the project were approx. INR 12,500 on average per ha and thus higher than the costs of comparable preparatory phases in

governmental programmes (INR 4,000 – 6,000 per ha in the IWMP and WDF). This higher allocation is justifiable given the model character of the project.

The sustainability of the project is rated as **satisfactory** (level 3 - satisfactory sustainability: the development effectiveness of the project (positive to date) will decrease significantly with a high degree of probability, but remain positive). The prognosis for the persistence of the achieved impacts is not favourable based on the insufficient institutional framework conditions at local level. As the VWCS and the community administration do not assume responsibility for the maintenance of structures and a continued integrated watershed management, a significant risk related to the effectiveness of the physical structures exists. In addition, a risk exists related to the lacking regulation of the resource utilisation in the watersheds as this may result in the repeated degradation. The good institutionalisation of the developed approaches and implementation modules on macro level, and the related replication under consideration of the lessons learnt from the evaluated project have a positive effect.

The opportunity for the development of the individual is principally given based on the results and impacts of the project. The participation of all population groups in VWCS and self-help groups offers the opportunity to obtain information and to articulate individual interests. At the same time, the interests of all population groups are considered in the framework of the local development and land-use plans. In the sense of a social sustainability, the project contributes to equal opportunities and gender equality. The achieved economic impacts are largely dependent on the development of agricultural markets. The determining factor for a continued economic development is the access of local farm households to agricultural extension services and agricultural inputs of high quality. This also includes the consideration of marketing strategies and eventually an increased local value creation. A corresponding link with the private sector and relevant markets is not yet given.

Based on the observations and analysis made in the framework of the ex-post evaluation, the following recommendations are directed to GIZ, the implementation organisation WOTR and for NABARD as executing agency for the FC-interventions:

Recommendations to GIZ:

- The implementation concept of the project has proven to be an effective and efficient alternative to the traditional TC-approach. In principle, similar implementation concepts should be taken into consideration if a measurable civil society engagement in the relevant sector can be assumed. In particular if a widespread impact on target group level has to be achieved in longer, multi-annual processes, a high level of

presence of the staff of a locally well established organisation is beneficial. However, in a comparable set-up an accompanying support to the implementing partner organisation should be assured in the framework of a joint steering of the interventions.

- The experiences gained from the evaluated project show the importance of an interaction of public sector, private sector and civil society in view of sustainably overcoming the prevailing development obstacles in the rural areas of Maharashtra. For similar projects it is recommended to implement the premise of an effective linkage of private sector, public sector and civil society stakeholders in the framework of the capacity development as a basis for a scaling-up. The corresponding capacity should be developed on all stakeholder levels. A stronger linkage of the self-help groups and the intermediate NGOs with external stakeholders would have had a positive effect on the sustainability and the replication of the measures in the evaluated project. It is therefore recommended to consider all three levels of the capacity development (personal development, network development and development of cooperation, systems and institutions) in the capacity development approach for the main stakeholders in a comparable project.
- The cooperation project is rich in learning experiences and good practices originating from the implementation of adapted technologies for a sustainable management of natural resources. The absence of a systematic result-based monitoring and of a systematic knowledge management in the project limits the access to these learning experiences and good practices. The documentation of selected experiences from implementation established jointly by GIZ and WOTR reflects this knowledge mainly in a highly aggregated form. On the level of the individual watershed, however, specific strategies and approaches were developed as a response to local resource management challenges. These specific models could serve as good and very practical examples, and could also indicate points of entry for the *Umbrella Programme for Natural Resource Management (UPNRM)* and other financing instruments. The capturing of this knowledge could be achieved through the assignment of junior staff (junior experts, project assistants). WOTR and the intermediate NGOs do not dispose of the required capacity and experience. Furthermore, an “external view” has proven to be beneficial in comparable projects.
- The development process in the watersheds covered under the project is not terminated with the closure of the project and requires further accompanying support (advisory services) in many cases. Given that accompanying measures targeting the

development of economic alternatives and the establishment of a professional agricultural extension were missing in the project, a linkage of these watersheds to the UPNRM should be supported. The developed local economic potential, the still existing self-help structures and the experience of the local communities in the cooperation with external organisations provide for a good basis for the deployment of the UPNRM-instruments. A larger part of the farm households in the watersheds is aware of the need for further investments in order to sustainably diversify the income opportunities. Questions related to an intensification of the agricultural production and the increase of local value creation are a first priority. The concerned farm households are today in a position and willing to pay for related services. The facilitating intermediate NGOs could assume a supporting role again. This requires the sensibilisation of NGOs in the region (e.g. information campaign, radio messages etc.), as the opportunities and instruments offered by the UPNRM are hardly known in the intervention areas of the project. In addition, there apparently exist reservations on the side of WOTR and the intermediate NGOs against a stronger linkage to the UPNRM.

- The evaluated project is a good example for a coordinated and harmonised intervention of TC and FC on implementation level. The corresponding instruments of the German international cooperation have interacted in a synergetic way, because the respective TC-phases (CBP) and FC-phases (FIP) in each watershed were implemented in succession, and because the entry into the FC-phase was linked to minimum achievements in the capacity development process. The “maturity” of the watersheds was hence not reached prematurely based on an implementation pressure, which can be observed in many other projects. This experience should generally be considered in the harmonisation of TC and FC and corresponding concepts and results should already be formulated in the planning stage of a project.
- Based on the identified risks for the sustainability, the evaluated project is furthermore a good example for the results of a lacking joint concept development and adaptation by TC and FC. Insufficient local capacities and concepts for the operation phase are a frequent occurrence in comparable projects. Despite of the lessons learnt from the implementation and of the articulation of corresponding needs in the project, TC and FC were not successful in formulating a joint approach at an early stage. The consideration of an exit strategy and a sufficient accompanying support to the local communities after the completion of the implementation of physical investments should be a core element of the capacity development strategy for comparable

projects. Aside from a joint concept development and result formulation, this requires also an approach for the joint steering of a project. This includes the execution of joint progress review and evaluation missions.

- A large number of approaches in view of an adaptation to the effects of climate change and local resilience strategies were developed in the evaluated project based on a participatory approach. A real assessment of these approaches with regard to their suitability and effect in view of the effects of climate change has not been done. At the same time, the project did not impart any knowledge related to climate proofing. It is therefore recommended, to integrate climate proofing into the planning methodology developed by the project. Corresponding capacities and knowledge could be developed on the level of intermediate organisations. In addition, the transfer of knowledge related to the risk assessment and risk management for climatic impacts should also be envisaged for local level structures such as VWCS (e.g. groundwater management in periods of scarce rainfall). The watersheds of the evaluated project would be an ideal intervention area for a corresponding pilot intervention.

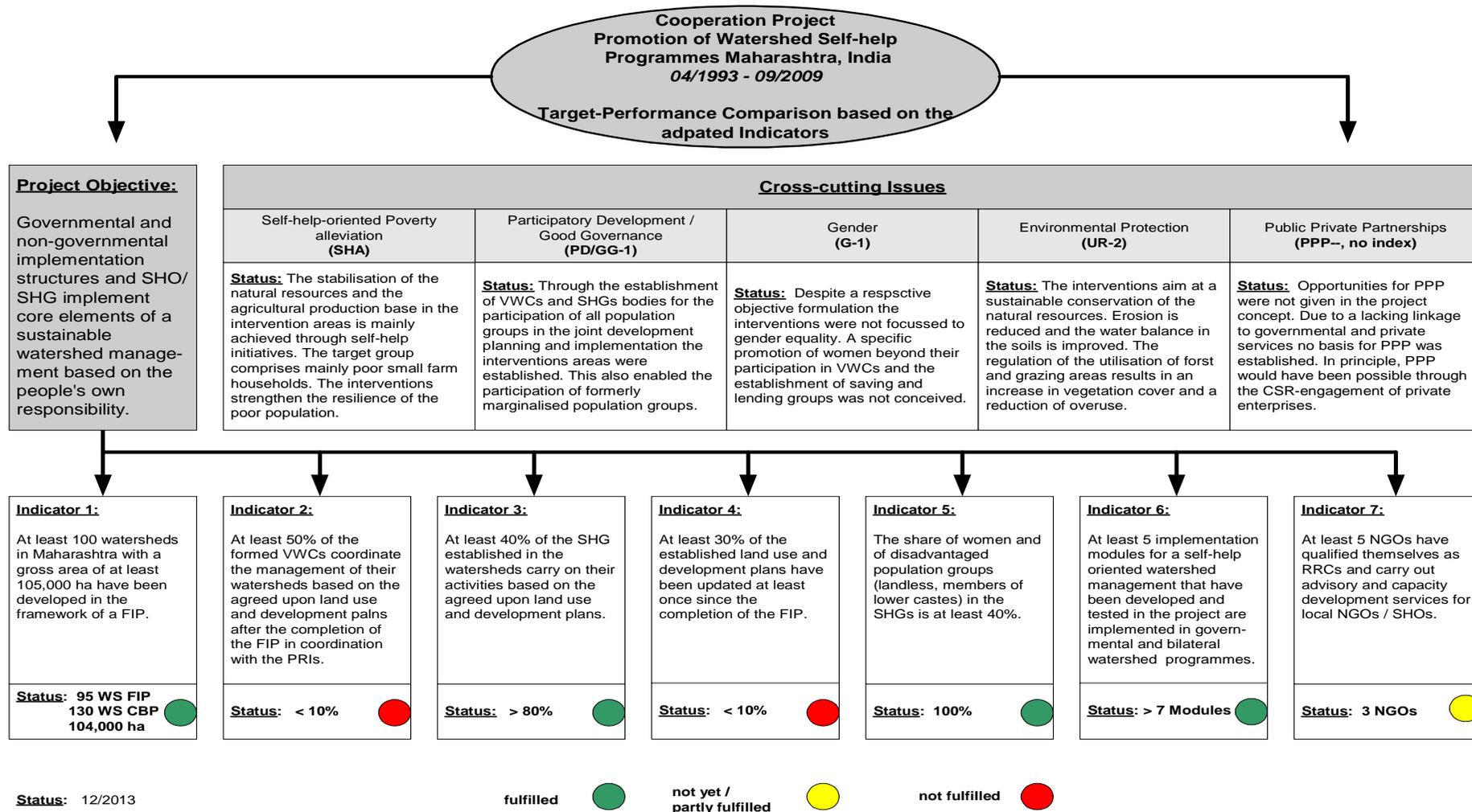
Recommendations to WOTR:

- The local communities in the watersheds covered under the project require further support to institutionalise and further develop their self-help capacities. Such a support and such advisory services can only be achieved through a synergy of available support offers of governmental and non-governmental service providers. WOTR should attempt to develop a corresponding concept jointly with relevant governmental structures. This concept should take into consideration that the recipients of subsidies in the watersheds of the past dispose of a significantly increased economic power today, and should therefore be in a position to mobilise own financial means for support measures.
- The current subsidies of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) for the construction of farm ponds and the related unregulated extraction of groundwater run contrary to the approaches introduced by the evaluated project and other programmes. WOTR should address this problem in the framework of its political work and sensitise stakeholders for the related risks.
- The handling of modern plant protection chemicals and mineral fertilisers by the local farmers in the watersheds is not sound and implies enormous health risks in view of the widespread drinking water supply through open wells. The assessment and the

monitoring of the water quality of these open wells and the education of farmers for a professional handling of agricultural inputs should be taken into consideration and corresponding funding should be acquired.

Recommendations to NABARD:

- The sustainability of the many positive results and impacts of the evaluated project is largely dependent on a revitalisation of the VWS as the main local structure in the development process and a linkage of the self-help structures to the PRI and governmental extension services. The focus of a corresponding follow-up support should be laid onto the preparation and training of the VWCS for the maintenance of the physical structures and for the continued implementation of the land-use and resource management regulations. It is recommended to include intermediate NGOs into this follow-up support. Individual NGOs could be responsible for a larger cluster of watersheds. In principle, all watersheds that received implementation support since 1996 should be included into such a programme, which should be implemented over a period of two years. In the framework of an intermittent, needs-based support the engaged intermediate NGOs should then also link up with governmental and private service providers. For this support and the related advisory services, a financial contribution of the beneficiaries is recommended. The required financial means are available e.g. from the unused maintenance funds in each watershed.
- In view of the opportunities to deploy the instruments of the UPNRM in the intervention area of the evaluated project, it is recommended to analyse the reasons for the apparently existing reservations against the programme on the side of potential intermediate organisations. Main aim should be to implement financing instruments available through the UPNRM and other schemes for sustainable development process in the watersheds of the *Cooperation Project Promotion of Watershed Self-help Programmes Maharashtra* and beyond. This requires informing to a much larger extent on the existence and the opportunities of these financing instruments and, in doing so, benefitting from the structures and networks established through the project.



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