

Agro-socioeconomic appraisal for development in Eastern Ghats of Orissa, India

ANCHAL DASS*, S. SUDHISHRI AND B.R.M RAO¹

Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute, Research Centre,
Sunabeda, KORAPUT (ORISSA) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Eastern Ghats region of Orissa is plagued with a multitude of problems. To have a clear-cut picture of the situation for developing need based development plan, an agro-socioeconomic appraisal study was conducted in five blocks of representative Koraput district, constituting the catchment (area 1632 sq. km) of "Upper Kolab" hydroelectric dam during 2000-01. All of the study blocks are socio-economically very backward with 46-90 per cent families below poverty line. Overall literacy is awfully low (10-16 per cent). About 98 per cent people survive on rain fed agriculture. Frequent droughts, land degradation due to erosion and sub-optimal input use result into poor crop yields. Lack of organized markets to dispose off agricultural produce is another important cause of poverty. Infrastructural facilities are far below the desired minimum. Common property resources -hillocks and marginal lands have been overstrained, overexploited and severely degraded with barren and uncultivable land constituting 11 to 32 per cent of geographical area. Area under forests and pasture and grazing lands each is below 2 per cent in most of the blocks. A convergent participatory watershed approach involving short term and long-term measures appropriately timed and spaced would help improve the present ominous scenario. Joint ventures by non-government organizations and government departments will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the both.

Key words : Agricultural scenario, Natural resources, Social features, Strategies, Upper Kolab.

INTRODUCTION

Human population in the world is multiplying exponentially. It took 120 years for world's population to increase from 1 billion to 2 billion, the last increase of one billion, from 5 billion to 6 billion, occurred in just 11 years (Kapoor, 2000). Similarly in India, population has increased tremendously during the last decade. This has put enormous pressure on natural resources leading to their fast depletion and degradation. Consequently, decline in productivity of natural resources has imperiled food security. Eastern Ghats region of Orissa with preponderance of tribals is confronted with a multitude of resource degradation problems. Due to steep and rugged terrain and non-availability of water, less land is available for cultivation. Hence, the farmers extend cultivation to steep hill slopes too increasing their vulnerability to erosion. Less intensive and least remunerative cropping systems further weaken the

economy of chronically poor tribals. Starvation, malnutrition, under nutrition, and hence poor health are very common in this region. The horizontal increase in the production is possible through converting culturable wastelands into green lands (Awasthi and Upadhyay, 2000). However, the trends of socio-economic and ecological development attempted under various schemes in the past have not been sustainable for want of participatory and situation specific approach.

Adoption of integrated watershed approach is a right step towards sustainable and holistic development of the rural areas in the entire country. Though realistic watershed planning is dictated largely by the existing resource endowments and agro-socioeconomic needs of the region/ area, seemingly, omnipotent programme formulators are often not conversant with the local ground realities and formulate policies and programmes that are not acceptable to the people (Dewan, 2000). Hence, thorough knowledge and understanding of existing natural resources and man's dependability on them, and socio-economic situations are very vital.

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to

* Author for correspondence.

¹ National Research Station for Agricultural, Balanagan, HYDERABAD, (A.P.) INDIA