

Policy recommendations based on 2 days workshop regarding “Best Practices under Watershed Management” organized at SIRD/PRTI Mashobra

- **Need for documentation:** Hiring professionals to ensure scientific planning. Watershed approach of development entails integration and amalgamation of developmental efforts to ensure the end-to-end development of a particular area, along with ensuring the conservation of natural resources. For this, professionals from various fields including agriculture, horticulture, geology, livelihood, hydrogeology, forestry etc. must be brought on-board for ensuring effective plan preparation and its implementation.
- **‘Out of the box’ thinking:** Watershed projects are being implemented in the country for a long time but visible results are rare. Thus, the project plan must be prepared keeping in view the needs and demands of the local population and the area of implementation. Focus should be on innovation and use of smart technologies and ideas to enhance the overall income of the farmers of the region.
- **Flexi funds in centrally sponsored schemes:** The scheme guidelines should have a provision of mandatory flexi funds (say @5-10% of the total project cost), which can be used to promote innovation and supplement the gaps which are observed in the field but not supported under the current budgetary arrangements.
- **Packaging, Labelling and Marketing support:** The local SHG and Village organization members should be assisted in marketing and packaging of the products being made and produced by the local population. The training programs should be in the project should be marketed on a common platform at central or state level portal which is visible at national level and to all the public platforms. Standardization of marketing strategies and policies for all the indigenous products being made under Livelihood and Production components of the project.
- **More such trainings at field level:** Trainings of this nature, which include resource persons and keynote speakers from various aspects of the projects, should be organized at the district and block levels regularly, so that local population can be made aware of the new innovations and techniques. These trainings should include sessions of skills development like communication, negotiation, product quality improvement etc. which help in improved branding of the local products.

• **Cross learning:** Inter-departmental schemes must have a common platform of learning at Central Government level, which is accessible to all the major stakeholders at micro-level. This will help in generalizing and policy formulation, along with the possibility of maximizing Convergence of various Central and State schemes.

• **Incentivize better performing Districts/ Blocks:** The State government should encourage efficient and better performance by awarding the best performing blocks in terms of implementation of all the schemes. The award may be judged based on the evaluation of output and outcome indicators already decided by the nodal departments.

The PRIs attending the 2 day conference were interested on the concepts of developing and maintaining the natural water resources and springs, commonly known as Bawris/Chashme/Panihar. All the participants were made aware of the social governing laws and vegetative structures which are helpful in protecting the catchment and recharge zones of the 'Springs'. Interactions at field levels should be organised frequently to highlight the importance of monitoring the water quality and discharge of the natural water sources.

Special consideration must be given to the geographical characteristics of the Project Implementing areas. Most of the areas in the state of Himachal Pradesh are steep sloped and inaccessible, which pose a major hindrance in availability of material and execution of work. Project policies and guidelines should incorporate all these factors while deciding the timelines of the projects.

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12/09/2023
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