Evolving Partnerships in Changing Context: A Note on Evolution of AFPRO
Expressing solidarity in national rural development efforts…
Evolution of AFPRO

• AFPRO (Action for Food Production) was formed at a period in time (history) when certain regions of India were facing food shortage and crises like drought and famine in some of the heavily populated, backward and poverty stricken states of the country. The phrase commonly used was “From Ship to Mouth” i.e. unless the imported and gifted food arrived in Indian ports and immediately reached to most needy areas/regions, the poor people would starve. For the situational requirement, relief was primary need of the hour. Apart from feeding the hungry, the wide-spread consecutive drought was posing the major challenge for the Government and Charitable institutions. The idea of formation of AFPRO has influence of the call given by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations for starting Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC), leading towards long-term approach for food security.

• AFPRO was perhaps the first expression of the two most prominent groups of Churches namely Roman Catholic Church (in response to the II Vatican Council) and World Council of Churches (WCC), Geneva, with regard to common thinking and conception of ecumenical effort for development. On the Catholic side the three agencies namely: Indo German Social Service Society (IGSSS), Indian Social Institute (ISI) and Catholic Charities – India (CCI), now known as CARITAS – India, were established to undertake training, coordinating, appraising project proposals, funding, monitoring and formulating projects. They also had to handle import clearance for gift articles and equipments, their storage and distribution. The National Christian Council of India (NCCI) of the Protestant Churches established a Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies (CORAGS) to coordinate activities at national level.

• As lead social action group they – CORAGS, IGSSS, ISI and CARITAS India soon realized the need for technical support and guidance mainly in the areas of food production and health. The process of formation of AFPRO indicates that it was not set up hurriedly to meet any emergency. Perhaps, it was the Divine will that AFPRO was established in March 1966. The voluntary agencies operating in Bihar during the next six months to meet the challenges of the worst drought of the century experienced AFPRO as an effective coordinating body and technical support agency.

• This desire to promote common action in the field of Agricultural and Rural Development by the two denominations in the church, considering the need of numerous project holders in the country and realization for concentrated action by national social agencies of the churches, led to convening of a conference named “Delhi Food Consultation” was held at India International Centre, New Delhi from 15 – 17 March, 1966. This was jointly sponsored by the two groups of Indian Churches – The Protestant group represented by CORAGS (Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies Social Action) of NCCI and Catholic group represented by Indian Social Institute (ISI). The OXFAM, a leading secular agency having no church affiliation also joined this consultation, which lead to the formation of AFPRO. These groups became the founder members of AFPRO. The nature and purpose of AFPRO was agreed upon when the Action
Committee setup in the final session of Delhi Food Consultation conceived AFPRO as “Joint Service Organization’ in India for coordination, support and technical guidance of food production projects of church related and voluntary agencies.

- The situation was demanded a response from AFPRO to take up the role of importing, coordinating and providing technical support and drilling of well (tube wells and hand pumps) for drinking and irrigation purposes to drought proof the most vulnerable areas/regions in India. From this beginning, AFPRO has grown into a socio-technical development organization with secular credentials for providing technical support towards development and rehabilitation work. Keeping the rural poor in focus — without gender, caste or creed discrimination — it helps them increase their knowledge and skills in areas that directly affect the standard and quality of life. AFPRO has constantly changed its focus and adapted new strategies to tailor its services to focus and respond to changing ground realities and developmental needs.

- AFPRO has evolved/transformed and grown with time by remaining sensitive to the changing developmental scenario by constantly endeavoring to face the new and emerging challenges of rural India. The historical growth of AFPRO over 44 years (i.e 1966 to 2010) is briefly described, below in phases highlighting the inspirational and pathfinder role of AFPRO as dynamic support organization.
Promoting water resource management...
Phase - I (1966 - 1972) : Welfare Orientation

• In the formative years, although AFPRO addressed itself to the development of the weaker sections of the rural community, AFPRO’s vision as far as the identification of the target groups was concerned had not been clearly enunciated. Moreover, there was no defined technical strategy for AFPRO’s intervention. Consequently the nature of projects evaluated and supported was diverse and was lacking in any specific focus. To some extent the role of AFPRO at the time of its formation can be termed as relief oriented due to the emergency situation existing in the country at that point of time which necessitated it to act as an intermediate technical support service organization. AFPRO promoted “Drilling Voluntary Organizations” at various vulnerable locations of the country. However, almost right from the beginning, AFPRO, instead of getting involved in relief supplies and services, as a deliberate policy, laid stress on groundwater development through wells of every kind; tube wells, open wells, deep wells, well blasting and shallow wells. AFPRO also imported rigs and other equipments and supplied them to a large number of Voluntary Organizations for groundwater development activities. The Government of India and several state governments recognized the contribution made by AFPRO and its related agencies and utilized their services for providing water for drinking and irrigation.

• The role of AFPRO as perceived by grassroots agencies and many of the overseas donors was that of an intermediate support organization which was called upon to provide technical services, prepare viable project proposals and conduct techno-economic feasibility studies for funding support. During this period AFPRO, was also involved in import of drilling rigs, fertilizers, seeds and livestock from different countries as well as coordinating their distribution, utilization, management and maintenance. During the first phase AFPRO’s professional services were very much linked, and to a great extent restricted, to the group of grassroots Voluntary Organisations whose projects were supported by the common overseas donors.

• Besides coordination and tech-managerial support AFPRO also promoted setting up state level network associations and coordination bodies to bring isolated grassroots voluntary organizations together on a common platform for collective action and sharing of experiences. The efforts of AFPRO in creation of state and regional level network resulted in formation of agencies like Bihar Water Development Society, Evangelical Water Development Society, Betul, and Action for Farm Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM) etc. By 1968 there were 23 such networks (associations) covering the most vulnerable areas. They proved very effective in AFPRO’s system for delivery of services.

• In this phase AFPRO was essentially involved in the development of rural peasants having small and marginal land holdings as the need of that time was “Grow more food” to feed millions of hungry. The work done by AFPRO was recognized and highly appreciated by the Union Government. Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India wrote a personal letter of appreciation to the then Executive Director.
Developing options for groundwater recharge…
Phase - II (1973 – 1978) : Growing Environmental Consciousness

• In the second phase of the evolutionary history of AFPRO, realizing the enormous task of increasing food production, a critical need was felt to build the technical expertise of grassroots level NGOs in agriculture and other related disciplines. The isolated and to some extent disjointed efforts to provide training to the staff of grassroot level NGOs, initiated in the late 60s, had become organized and was a reflection of the strategy adopted at this stage to ensure adoption and assimilation of the technologies promoted by AFPRO at the field level.

• During this phase apart from playing the role of coordinator and manager for technical projects (and to some extent fund channelizer till 1976) facilitated by it and supported by overseas donors, AFPRO started acting as an independent technical support organization. These become possible due to the flexibility provided by the overseas donors. During this phase, AFPRO started developing and supporting grassroots NGVOs, subscribing to the vision, and objectives of AFPRO, if they were not funded or supported by AFPRO's traditional funding partners. The essential thrust was training of functionaries of grassroots NGVOs for knowledge transfer, essentially for effective use of modern high yielding technologies just coming out of research and development institutions. Thus, during this phase AFPRO was enabling and equipping grassroots NGVOs to implement projects themselves, with technical backup support from AFPRO.

• During this phase, concerns related to environmental degradation taken the central place in the development sector. The technology promoted for land and water resource management started giving early results related to depletion of groundwater due to overuse of water in some pockets. Based on the flexibility provided by the donor agencies, the experiments related to appropriate technological options on conservation of resources were carried out on artificial recharge measures. During the same time, need of integrated planning was realized and in the follow up of it basin wide approach was adopted to carry out systematic study of river basin and develop a plan for management of water resources. The outcome of one of such study report published by AFPRO is Geohydrological Investigations in Noyil River Basin, Tamil Nadu, which is still relevant in the context of present requirement.
Improving food security & livelihoods...

• In the mid and late 1970s the result of over exploitation of ground water and negative impact of intensive agriculture were becoming increasingly visible. Thus, while continuing with the capacity building of NGVOs and providing technical support and advice, based on the lessons learnt from experience in the field of development and feedback received from grassroots NGVOs, AFPRO actively began promoting technological (Combination of more than one technology) packages based on conservation oriented integrated land and water resource development programmes, which is now recognized as the watershed approach to development. In addition, AFPRO also started developing package programmes, each consisting of 12-15 projects (One project per NGVO in a given package programme) promoting, strengthening, facilitating and managing as an apex body, networks of a number of grass-roots NGVOs for systematically promoting appropriate technologies e.g., rural household Biogas plants. These packages and network programmes became important instruments for providing basket of multi-disciplinary package services by AFPRO specialist related to different disciplines (technical, financial, managerial, to some extent social aspect etc.) available with it. In the package programmes AFPRO helped for developing individual projects of grassroots NGVOs and combined them together to prepare a package proposal for overseas funding support was substantial. Each package was treated as one project with AFPRO acting as an apex body and providing management and coordination support apart from technical assistance for effective implementation.

• The basic change in AFPRO’s new approach, however, was the concept of partnership between a technical support organization and a number of social development grassroots NGVOs. During this phase AFPRO, through service-cum-joint partnership with project implementing agencies, was involved in project/programme development and implementation by promoting long term involvement/partnership with such grass-roots NGVOs. In addition, during this phase AFPRO was actively involved in systematic Technology Promotion (this include transfer of technology, action research for appropriate technologies through blending as well as their field evaluation and demonstration as well as disseminating them on a large scale through skills and know-how transfer to rural artisan) as well as systematically extending them through network of grass roots NGVOs. Due to this strategy AFPRO’s involvement at the grassroots level (field level) increased substantially.

• Achievements of this phase are like watershed development project in Adgaon, Maharashtra, development of Deenbandhu Biogas model, contribution in developing Hand pump technology, introduction of treadle pump etc. During this phase AFPRO also promoted networks in collaboration with like minded organization with the purpose to disseminate technological options and create a platform for experience sharing.

• Traditional donors used to support core cost. The action research work and project support was available from various agencies including some of the traditional donors for the specific project. During this time, support was also mobilized from government agencies for expansion of Biogas program and training support from CAPART.
Fostering resource use efficiency ...

• The lessons learnt from the last three phases of historical developments and recommendations based on six regional consultations held in 1986 and of two national conferences, one held in 1987 and another on Integrated Micro-Watershed Development, held in 1989; were studied by a committee to draft the future policy of AFPRO based on new realities. Based on the recommendation of the committee, the Governing Body approved the new policy statement towards the end of 1989 enlarging the vision of AFPRO, which for the first time also included development of landless and farm women as specific target groups of AFPRO, in addition to serving small, marginal and sub-marginal farmers.

• As a result of the enlarged vision, in the fourth phase AFPRO has been operating as a Technical Development Organization (TDO). As a TDO, its endeavour has been to move a few steps closer to the rural communities by enabling them to involve themselves in their own development through participatory processes, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participating Appraisal and Learning Methods (PALM) in partnership with grassroots NGVOs right from the project/programme planning to execution stage; as well as through promotion and management of region based, thematic, issue based or single technology based package programmes.

• Consolidation of achievements was the thrust during this phase. The technological models developed by AFPRO were documented and shared within the sector for replication. Regional and national level consultations were organized, and perspective plan for next decade was prepared as an outcome of these consultations. Donor agencies were approached to form a consortium and support AFPRO’s core expenditure based on the perspective plan. By the end of this phase, the Donor Consortium approach came into existence for fund support to AFPRO. At the same time, bilateral package programs were also being supported by agencies like EED, SDC and Christian Aid.
Building community capacities, knowledge & skills ...

• This was a very challenging phase for AFPRO, encapsulating expression by Donor Consortium partners of withdrawal of funding support, as well many initiatives for organizational strengthening and development. Internalization of the role of sociol-technical support provider, one of the primary tasks during the initial years of this phase, took a long time. Staff members were finding it a challenge to integrate cross-cutting issues like gender, equity and participatory approaches in program planning, execution and management.

• Efforts were made to sensitize the staff through human-resource development strategies. During this time, the need of community participation in development intervention was increasingly being realized. Accordingly, AFPRO organized trainings on participatory rural appraisal and gender development for its staff to bring them on par with contemporary development paradigm. This was substantiated by including the role of “Rural Sociologist” as a discipline at field level, and efforts were made to fill up these posts with women staff.

• However, these efforts aimed at integration of cross-cutting social issues into AFPRO’s technically oriented program approach did not satisfy traditional donor agencies. In the Donor Consortium meeting held in 1995, Consortium partners indicated a gradual phasing out of their funding support, putting on AFPRO the burden to raise its own resources.

• AFPROs services used to be available free of charge for many organizations due to the funding support extended by consortium partners under Core Support Program, these funds were provided against mutually agreed objectives for effective implementation of rural development programs. Due to very nature of service delivery system, AFPRO had not considered exploring avenues for generating its own resources.

• Differences in understanding regarding the AFPRO’s Core and Bilateral programs were a marked point of discussion during Consortium Meetings. Bilateral programs supported by SDC, EED, and CA-LWR created space and opportunities for AFPRO to operate on integrated interventions requiring inter-disciplinary approaches, an option not accessible to it under the Core Program approach.

• During this time, many professional staff left the organization. One of the reasons for this was the uncertainties regarding fund resource mobilization that arose within the organization.

• Association with programs of the Government of India was another organizational development strategy adopted to tap new and relevant horizons for AFPRO’s interventions. Around this time, the external environment was changing very fast. In addition to economic reforms, the Government of India was adopting new approaches in rural development initiatives as well. Among these was a new thrust on implementation of Watershed development
programs as a strategy for poverty alleviation through conservation and management of natural resources in the semi-arid areas. Many organizations that had gained experience working on Natural Resources Management programs opted to participate in these national level efforts as Project Implementing Agencies. AFPRO recognized that there was unique potential to support the implementation processes of these programs through value-addition in socio-technical areas oriented to AFPRO’s mission, knowledge and expertise. This was primarily addressed through capacity building events for NGO staff and facilitation of network formation for addressing issues of common concern.

• One of the traditional donor agencies viz. SDC expressed confidence in AFPRO’s work and proposed an organizational development process which was initially taken up in two field units (Ahmednagar and Hyderabad), and subsequently replicated across the organization. As a result, AFPRO was able to develop clarity on its program development approach, relationship with stakeholders, key issues of different regions and potential partners available in each area. A system of joint monitoring and review of projects was also introduced, which involved all stakeholders including community members, in assessing and learning from projects.

• Bilateral Programs, implemented in two modes in AFPRO, have strengthened it’s program support system as well as helped draw key institutional knowledge and learning from processes. The first mode was the Program approach, involving long-term, well-designed, holistic interventions based on regional requirements. The second mode was Innovation, specially promoted under Disposition Fund projects, which aimed at promoting innovations to respond to emerging thematic or issue-based needs from various regions. Thus these helped develop AFPRO’s program approach to its present form as well as give ‘innovation’ a key role in AFPRO’s planning methodology, process orientation and technology promotion. A Programme Monitoring Evaluation Information System (PMEIS) too has been introduced at AFPRO for enabling effective project management and manpower planning.

• In order to make an assessment of AFPRO’s institutional processes and program effectiveness, an organizational evaluation of AFPRO was conducted during 2000-01. The evaluation report indicated the need for greater strategisation by AFPRO with regard to its pro-poor focus, long-term perspectives, choice of partners and geographical focus. The evaluators recommended a shift in perspective from food production to food security. They further emphasized that AFPRO focus on tapping its potential to contribute to the development sector through capacity building of other NGOs, participation in networking and policy advocacy, thus multiplying the impact of its work. The report also highlighted the possibility and necessity for AFPRO to charge for its services and gradually increase its capacity to earn from them. Around this time, at the end of 2003, Christian Aid withdrew from the Donor Consortium.
The final component of this phase was the Strategic Orientation and Planning Process carried out by AFPRO in 2003-04. Recommended by the Consortium, this was an organizational exercise involving staff across all levels through workshops and consultations. The objective was to arrive at a common organizational understanding by consolidating AFPRO’s institutional knowledge, experiences, and practices. SOPP resulted in the identification of organizational core competencies, focal areas, cross-cutting issues and values.

Two very important decisions resulted out of SOPP. One was to streamline AFPRO’s Program approach according to the identified focal areas, i.e. Water & Sanitation, Watershed (an approach of community based NRM) and Food Security & Livelihoods. A fourth focal area, Rural (Renewable) Energy was to be developed based on its scope within development sector. Second was to adopt a new mode for proactively working towards self-reliance. The primary target set was to reach fifty percent self-reliance by 2015.
Phase - VI (2004 onward) : Exploring New Frontiers

• As follow-up of SOPP recommendations, AFPRO started proactively seeking collaborations in rural development within its organizational orientation with all agencies showing interest, irrespective of the sector they represented. A new trend had also emerged with central and state governments, as well as corporate sector agencies seeking partnerships with NGOs for the implementation of rural development initiatives.

• Government of India (GoI) had also earlier announced at international levels its intention to focus on mobilizing resources within the country for development activities among marginalized groups, and proactively cease dependence on international multilateral or bilateral aid. However, many NGOs while appreciating the government’s intent have reiterated that the country was not ready for such a step and expressed the need for international fund support for focused development activities in remote areas, among marginalized groups, as well as on emerging themes.

• AFPRO started taking active part in competitive bidding for the projects announced by the state and central governments for work related to the core competencies of AFPRO. As a result, AFPRO succeeded in taking up important assignments such as Sector Reform in Water Supply and Sanitation with the Government of Maharashtra, Monitoring of Programs being implemented by Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).

• During this phase, a new thrust emerged from the central government for strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through capacity building and creating an enabling environment for their involvement in the planning process, and a special focus on development of backward regions. In this backdrop, Planning Commission initiated decentralized district level planning in 250 backward districts. Based on AFPRO’s bid, GoI identified AFPRO as a Technical Support Institutions for facilitating this decentralized planning exercise in 15 district spread across nine states. There are many difficulties when relating to the district, block and gram panchayat levels in the government system. Envisaged processes may not fructify as desired due to various reasons, but still, efforts made in this direction have brought new learning within the organization on comprehensive approaches for programme planning and management.

• AFPRO also continued its association with development agencies of GoI, particularly NABARD, ICAR and CAPART. Most important among these interventions are the impact studies of the prestigious Indo-German Watershed Development Programme in Maharashtra conducted for NABARD and a new long term project, National Agricultural Innovation Project, underway under the aegis of ICAR. Interventions with CAPART have primarily been time-to-time in nature.
• Very importantly, AFPRO initiated development of linkages with corporate agencies for project based interventions falling under the focal areas of AFPRO. Subsequently, the project base with the corporate sector has grown during this phase. Initial projects with ITC Ltd. and IKEA have resulted in further extension of the activities by the agencies. Long-term projects are now being implemented with ITC Ltd. on watershed management, with IKEA on Better Managed Cotton, with Bharat Forge Ltd. on soil & water conservation, and Sir Dorabji Tata Trust on diversion based irrigation systems, Sterlite Tech on road side tree plantation with community participation. Projects have also been undertaken with Coca-Cola and Swiss Re for Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation.

• At the same time, AFPRO has continued its active association with the development sector and developed linkages with funding agencies other than Consortium partners. These include projects with Lutheran World Relief, World Vision India, and United Way. Besides that, AFPRO also receives short duration assignments and request for technical services under its Time-to-time service component. Bilateral projects with Consortium partners, EED, ICCO and SDC also came to an end during the present phase.

• Due to these new directions adopted by AFPRO for resource mobilization towards self-reliance, considerable numbers of bilateral projects have been generated by AFPRO. As a consequence, AFPRO’s program and financial management processes have been suitably adapted to include the requirements of various resource support agencies.

• AFPRO’s Consortium partners recognized a significant strengthening within AFPRO as envisaged by them over the years. However, they were not satisfied with the speed of organizational development. Unfortunately, the issue of relevance and space for Core program due to (increasing growth of) Bilateral programs, though natural, was a dichotomy that could not be mutually resolved to justify continued funding support to AFPRO’s Core Program. At the same time national policy towards international fund support had changed. Due to complexities arising from these issues, Consortium partners decided to conclude support to AFPRO’s Core Program, and withdrew by the end of 2007.

• Some AFPRO’s Key success stories relevant for replication in the current external environment are briefly enumerated below:
  - **Climate Change Adaptation** Project has been a significant pilot initiative in semi-arid conditions like Rajasthan & Andhra Pradesh for engaging communities facing (un)predictable changes in climate through adaptation measures like enhancing the water productivity potential within the given conditions.
  - **Cadre Building** has been an attempt at creating trained human resources to undertake and spread the approaches developed by AFPRO through placement at other like-minded organisations. 55 youth trained in 6 batches have made a perfect beginning.
- Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Project gave AFPRO the opportunity to lead a consortium for capacity building of different stakeholders in three districts in Maharashtra. As a result community level systems have been demonstrated to enable panchayats to manage the infrastructure.

- Live with the Flood concept, initially promoted during the 1980s, has been revived and efforts are being made to implement a prestigious project under the National Agricultural Innovation Project of ICAR in the flood-affected district of Dhemaji in Assam.

- Diversion Based Irrigation System is the project designed based on the site-specific conditions in assured rainfall areas of Orissa, Jharkhand, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya to tap the perennial source of water on the elevated location and divert it to the agriculture fields through gravity flow for irrigation purpose.

- Better Management Practices in Cotton, a project under implementation in district Yawatmal, Maharashtra, aims to reduce the cost of production and control the environmental damages due to excessive application of pesticide, fertilizer, and irrigation. This project also provides opportunity for developing farmers’ market linkages in order to ensure improved returns.

- Food Security through Homestead Cultivation is an ongoing effort in three states for demonstration of the potential of homestead cultivation in supplementing nutritional requirements at household levels in rural areas.

- BRGF - District level planning process is facilitated by AFPRO in 15 districts spread across 9 States under the Backward Region Grand Fund (BRGF). Planning Commission has identified AFPRO as Technical Support Institution to facilitate the District level planning exercise for developing the perspective plan of districts under BRGF and also to extend support for developing the annual plan of identified districts. This has provided opportunity for the staff of AFPRO to interact with the officials at Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Governments, district authorities and the Panchayati Raj Institutions at district and below.

• For AFPRO some of these could indeed be testing times to capitalize on the gains of the partnership to take the necessary next steps. Some of the past initiatives are to be brought back to create new space and fresh scope like the case of Live with the Flood. The strength of organization lies in technology promotion with social sensitivity, a combination that has immense relevance and potential in the present context. Today, depletion of groundwater, resources, environmental degradation and climate change are major concerns which will have severe impact on livelihoods and quality of life of poor and marginalized in rural areas. These concerns reestablish the fact that management of natural resources requires a more balanced approach for sustainable development. AFPRO’s core competencies, focal area and cross-cutting framework, all continue to hold equal, if not greater relevance, today, when compared to the time when AFPRO was set up. This has to be supplemented with synergy in development efforts by aligning with like-minded organizations and developing partnerships for addressing common issues.
Ensuring sustainable development at the grassroots ...
AFPRO’s Contextual Position: Then and Now

Since the inception of AFPRO the development sector has undergone a metamorphosis. However, the challenges are not much different in terms of basic form. Rather, these are now present in a much more complex form.

AFPRO’s work demanded partnership with various grassroots implementation NGOs as well as funding agencies. Over the years, these partnerships have evolved as well as knowledge within the development sector. AFPRO was transformed along with the entire development sector. In different phases, partners expanded to find solutions through various technological options.

Take for instance the issues of food and water shortage, then and now. In the 1960s and 70s, not many options were available to resolve these issues. Hence introduction of high yielding varieties together with adequate fertilizers and pesticides was the primary solution for improving food availability. Similarly, accessing the huge, significantly untapped groundwater resources was seen as an apt solution for water scarcity in rural areas.

Gradually with time, ecological impacts of these exploitative models started knocking on doors, and the age of environmentally sustainable approaches dawned. This need for ecological sensitivity needed to be sustained through involvement and ownership by local communities, eventually leading to the adoption of participatory approaches. Further supplements were needed from the government in terms of favourable policy frameworks and resource support. This door too was opened gradually through sustained advocacy and impact of work done by NGOs all over the country.

Yet inspite of all these achievements, as well as technological development and growth in knowledge development, basic development issues — shortage of food, water and basic amenities - remain unchanged. However, there are no simple solutions to these issues today. Food shortage today needs to be addressed from the perspective of food security, productivity challenges and sustainable farming. Similarly, shortage of water is a prime issue today also, especially that of drinking water. However the severity of this shortage can be gauged from the fact that the entire resource base has now shrunk on account of over-exploitation, increasing demands due to population growth as well as different sectors of a fast-growing economy.

Thus, today there is a need for focused attention in improving production systems and adopting community centric approaches. This is especially to be undertaken in a targeted manner, so as to ensure that marginalized groups are not alienated from their resource base.