

Innovations Wasted or Wastelands Reclaimed?

**An Evaluation of Sida's Support to Human and
Land Resources Development Project
and the National Tree Growers Cooperative
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All these resource persons, whose assistance has made this evaluation possible, are listed in Annex 3 of this report.

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Note:

This report and its content is the responsibility of the Evaluation Team only. Conclusions and views expressed in the report is that of the authors only and not necessarily shared by Sida or relevant Indian organisations.

Acronyms

AOFFPS	Area Oriented Fuel wood and Fodder Projects Scheme
ARAVALI	Association for Rural Development through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement
ASTRP	Association of Scheduled Tribes and Rural Poor in Regeneration of Degraded Forests
BAIF	Bhartiya Agriculture Industry Federation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPR	Common Property Resources
DDP	Desert Development Program
DFID	Department for International Development
DIWDP	Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project
DoWD	Department of Wasteland Development
DoLR	Department of Land Resources
DPAP	Drought Prone Areas Program
ETS	Echotech Services
EU	European Union
FCP	Forestry Cooperation Program
FES	Foundation for Ecological Security
GO	Government Organisation
GoI	Government of India
GoR	Government of Rajasthan
HI	Horizontal Interval
HIRD	Human & Institutional Resources Development
IAEPS	Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme
IIED	International Institute of Environment and Development
IWDP	Integrated Wasteland Development Program
JFM	Joint Forest Management
Lakhs	100 000
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LTA	Long Term Advisor
MLP	Micro Level Plan/Planning
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forest
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development

MTR	Mid Term Review
NAEB	The National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board
NDDB	National Dairy Development Board
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non timber Forest Products
NTGCF	National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation
NWDB	National Wasteland Development Board
NWDPRA	National Watershed Development Program in Rainfed Areas
PAHAL	Participatory Approaches to Human and Land Resources Development
PD	Project Document
PEDO	People's Education and Development Organisation
PESA	Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act (amendment to the Constitution, 73 rd Amendment Act)
PPR	Private Property Resources
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
Rs	Rupees
RSS	Rajasthan Sewa Sangh
RTGC	Regional Tree Growers Cooperative
SC	Steering Committee
SEK	Swedish Krona
SFP	Social Forestry Project
SHT	Spear Head Team
Sida	Swedish international development co-operation agency
STA	Short Term Advisor
SWACH	Sanitation Water and Community Health Project
SVE	Shared Vision Exercise
TA	Technical Assistance
TAD	Tribal Area Development Department
TGCS	Tree Growers Co-operative Society
ToR	Terms of Reference
VI	Village Institution (or Vertical Interval)
VLC	Village Level Committee
VLM	Village Level Motivators
VLO	Village Level Organisation

Executive Summary

Participatory Approaches to Human and Land Resources Development Project (PAHAL) and the support project to the National Tree Growers Co-operative Federation (NTGCF) were launched in the early 1990s. While the PAHAL project was finalised in 1998/99, NTGCF continued for a few more years. The general intention with both projects were the same, namely to address land degradation on what in India is usually referred to as “waste lands”. The waste land issue has been on the agenda in India for 30 years or more and various policies and programs has been tried over the years to address the problem. Land degradation and decreasing productivity also has clear poverty implications and both projects were well in line with Indian policies and strategies at this time. These were also *thematic priorities* for Sida during the 1990s and justified their support for these two projects.

The *entry points* in both projects were *technical* in terms of how these waste lands could be restored and made more productive as well as *institutional* in terms of developing alternative means of addressing the issue of land degradation and poverty. This was another attractive feature of both projects as Sida had clear priorities for “innovative” projects that could be useful beyond the immediate boundaries of the two projects, either in other government funded programmes (as for PAHAL) or that could gain sufficient momentum to expand by itself (as for NTGCF). The purposes of this ex-post evaluation are to present a historical overview, an assessment of different key aspects of both project, assessing impact and the extent to which the projects have accomplished their “innovative” ambitions and finally to provide the main conclusion and lessons for the future.

PAHAL was implemented in Dungapur district in Rajasthan, which is a poor tribal area characterised by a dry climate and often unreliable rainy seasons. It attempted to bring together the strength of both Government and Non Government Organisations, where the former was responsible for overall management and technical issues and the latter for enhancing participation and development of village institutions. The original project document however suffered from deficiencies and was therefore revised after some years. After this progress at the local level both in terms *technical work on the ground to address land degradation* and *institutional development to decentralise planning and implementation* gained considerable momentum. The project has through the work on the ground generated considerable employment for the farmers in the area.

The major weakness throughout the project were the different views of what PAHAL was all about among key actors. While Sida and some actors in Rajasthan viewed PAHAL as an “innovative” project, others and among them the nodal department responsible for the project – the Tribal Affairs Department – saw the project as an additional budget support for something that was essentially a conventional government program. This explains to a considerable degree why the external influence was at best limited. These different views might explain the weaknesses of the original Project Document as well, both of which had negative consequences for monitoring and reporting.

The support to NTGCF was implemented with support from both Sida and CIDA in several states and under a variety of agro-ecological as well as institutional conditions. The tree growers cooperative was initiated as a pilot project inspired by the Anand Pattern dairy and oil seeds co-operatives. The initial experiences were promising and a proposal and request was made to Sida to support part of a “mega pilot” project with the overall purpose of establishing self sustaining cooperative structures in Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. The idea was to restore and grow trees and other plants on wastelands (both private and common) that would generate benefits both for self consumption and to earn income. Value addition through processing and marketing was part of this idea as well. Progress in terms of area of land under development was slow. The result was better for two other targets – number of

local tree growers cooperative societies formed and the membership in those – although it was not reached as projected. This was in view of the mission not that serious as there should have been other more important indicators included to determine progress in relation to the overall purpose of establishing a viable cooperative structure.

In 1996 there were two major exercises – the Shared Vision Exercise and a Mid Term Review – that brought about fundamental changes in the project. The mission has reservations about how the change process was orchestrated, but more important though was that the intentions with the Mega Pilot project got lost in the process. NTGCF as an innovative project derailed, without sufficient attention from several key actors (including Sida). The outcome was a new project built on other premises and objectives, not necessarily bad but very different! The new NTGCF has been more successful than the old project in terms of area covered, number of people involved etc. The new project however included other additional land categories, abandoned the focus on local cooperatives and included a variety of existing village institutions, which basically makes these comparisons irrelevant. An important difference between the old and the new NTGCF was that the former rested on the assumption that the organisation eventually would expand through its own momentum, while the expansion of the latter will depend on grants and an established “Corpus Fund”.

The influence in policies and as a source of inspiration for others has not been significant for any of the projects. In case of PAHAL, the mission believe that Sida (or their consultants) could have done more, particularly during the preparation phase, to enhance a shared understanding of the project with its innovative dimensions. A significant part of the responsibility however rests with GoR, although it has been difficult for the mission to more precisely identify who and why they failed. It is a bit of mystery that while the issue of enhancing cooperation between Government – Non Government organisations was on the agenda in GoR (or part of the government), the existence of PAHAL was not noticed until it was too late. Several sources of information has emphasised the relative anonymity of NTGCF. This appears to have been accepted to some extent possibly because the project and its staff demonstrated such commitments and capabilities in their work. *This might have been strategic mistake though for a project that could or should have challenged existing institutions and even vested interests on those issues that the mega pilot struggled with. With time they might have done that had the old NTGCF continued.* The new NTGCF has been more open for cooperation with others, but many of the critical issues remains unchallenged.

The report include a separate section on how the two projects eventually were terminated. Both projects were planned on the premises that there would be a second phase. PAHAL were unfortunate in that their preparation for a second phase came to a standstill following Government of Sweden’s decision to freeze development cooperation as a result of India’s test of their first nuclear bomb in May 1998. When Sweden decided to resume their development cooperation in 1999, the preparation of second phase continued. Meanwhile new strategic priorities had been decided for development co-operation with India and it was eventually decided in late 1999 or early 2000 not to continue with a second phase of PAHAL. The mission have serious concerns with management routines that do not consider ongoing preparations even if these are not fully in line with new strategic priorities also under preparation. Under the circumstances the Embassy did a reasonable effort to conclude co-operation with PAHAL by approving support for a one year “finalisation project”. This never took off though, as GoR already in late 1999 decided to wind up PAHAL apparently and without clearly communicating their intentions. The main issue regarding a possible second phase of the NTGCF project were the “sustainability” of the overall organisation. Sida eventually raised the critical questions, that in view of the mission should have been on the agenda already in 1996, when the changes in NTGCF were initiated. *The responses and indeed views expressed by NTGCF on sustainability were not convincing according to the Embassy and the mission would tend to agree with this.* A positive appraisal of a second phase did not change the concerns of Sida, which upset the NTGCF and the discussions and negotiations ended.

The report finally bring forward the main conclusions and lessons of this study. This includes the attention for the progress actually made if the “innovative” dimensions are not used as the primary yardstick for assessing progress. This is done as we may forget that the projects also made progress and to recognise the efforts made over the years. The main lessons that are elaborated in this report include

- The need for a shared understanding
- Methods development and Pilot projects and their special management requirements
- The need to understand local context and livelihood systems

1. Introduction

Land degradation and associated poverty has been and still is a major challenge in rural areas of India. These wastelands includes both cultivated and uncultivated land, land under fallow and forest land and amounts to something in the order of 75 Mha or almost 25% of the land area. Various policies and programs has been devised over the years to address the issue. Sida has been involved for quite some time in sectors related to natural resource management. The subjects for this ex-post evaluation, the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development project (DIWDP or more commonly PAHAL) and the National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation project (NTGCF), should be seen in this context of degrading natural resources and the significance for poverty. The ex post evaluation aims at providing an overview and assessment of the two projects implemented for approximately 10 years during 1990s.

The study includes some general information about the policy and development context; a general presentation of the projects including overall progress and the use of funds; assessments of the main aspects and issues normally considered in a study of this nature; some elaboration's on impact and sustainability; the outcome of Technical Assistance and; a review and discussion about how and why the two projects were finalised. Last but not least the study identifies important lessons or lessons forgone. The purpose and related detailed information for the evaluation is provided in the Terms of Reference (see Annex 1)

1.1 Methods

The team was composed of three persons that together covered different disciplines and aspects as required for this evaluation. The team spent two weeks together in December 2003 collecting documents from Sida's archive at the Swedish Embassy and for meetings with key informants both in New Delhi and later in Rajasthan. Rather comprehensive discussions with men, women and children involved in PAHAL was also included during the team's travel to different project sights and villages. The best sights and villages were selected purposely as these had general been involved for some time with PAHAL and therefor could provide more information. This means that there might be a positive bias in our assessment of PAHAL, but we do not believe that this has had any major implication for our assessment of impact and above all the lessons that can be learned from PAHAL.

The evaluation of Sida's support to NTGCF has been far more complicated and difficult. The NTGCF management did not want to or did not have the possibility to meet and discuss with the mission. As a consequence, we haven't had the opportunity to interact with any villagers involved with the project. This obviously is a major deficiency and the mission have made major efforts to compensate for this e.g. by trying to get in touch with people who had previous experience from NTGCF, either

as being part of the organisation or through consultancies in short as well as long term positions. As there was a major change in NTGCF initiated in 1996, that appears to divide opinions among informants into to groups, the danger is obvious that the mission will tend to be biased, if one group of informants has dominated. We have admittedly been interacting more with people that were more in favour of NTGCF before these changes was introduced, but this is because the current management of NTGCF could not meet us or facilitate for the mission to meet local village institutions with whom NTGCF has interacted. In spite of this, the mission has tried not to be too cautious with it's conclusions.

A fair amount of work has also gone into data collection and interactions with resource persons in Sweden and India after the mission split up in December. This has included additional meetings, phone calls and email exchanges and a visit to Sida's Archive in Stockholm as well as a review of information on the internet.

Finally and with all the potential weaknesses in mind, we believe that it is better to provoke reactions and discussions by providing our views and points even when information and interactions with key actors has been insufficient. *In this sense the mission would prefer to see this study as "Ex post reflections" rather than an "Ex post evaluation".*

1.2 To the reader of this report

The report begins with a rather comprehensive "*Background*" chapter that provides an overview of the context in which the two projects were proposed, formulated, and implemented. This basically includes the relevant policy and program context over time in India as well as the policies and priorities for development cooperation in Sida. The chapter continues with two main sections, which describes the two projects in terms of their rationale, organisation, budgets and expenditures as well as the progress in general terms. *This chapter is recommended for those readers who have no or limited experience from the projects and the overall issue of waste land development.* Readers who feel they have sufficient prior knowledge about the projects and the overall context do not necessarily have to read the chapter.

The next chapter on "*Assessments*", provide information and the findings of the mission for a number of key parameters based on our understanding of the ToR plus a few additional aspects that the mission found to be important. The chapter includes both conceptual issues, management aspects, the result, or outputs of the projects and the achievements in relation to Indian policy priorities and Sida's development co-operation priorities. Readers who feel that they have in depth experience and knowledge of the two projects do not have to read the chapter. *Others may find it interesting as food for thought or to provide comments to the authors. For the following chapters, the reading of this chapter helps in understanding the rationale behind some of the conclusions of the mission.*

The chapter on "*Impact and Sustainability*" should be of interest for all readers as this somehow represents the overall conclusions about the projects and what they accomplished in relation both to their objectives and to what the mission believe has been or should have been the expectations among some of the key actors. The chapter is however somewhat incomplete as a result of the constraints under which this mission has worked. The following chapter on "*Technical Assistance*" might not be of interest for all readers. It provides the mission's assessment based on limited sources of information. A more comprehensive evaluation might have assessed this aspect in more depth, considering that the TA often makes up a substantial part of the budget.

Finally and before the mission elaborates on useful lessons, there is a chapter about the finalisation of the two projects or "*The Events leading to the finalisation of the projects*". A common experience in development co-operation is the difficulties associated with the termination of support to a particular project

and PAHAL and NTGCF are no exceptions in this regard. *This should be of interest of most readers who have experiences and views on management of development co-operation.*

The last chapter on “*Lesson learned and lessons forgone*” summarises some of the conclusions from earlier chapters and in particular those, we would suggest as potentially useful lessons. The main focus are on those that development co-operation in general and Sida in particular may capitalise on. The lessons for key actors on the Indian side are perhaps less obvious. This omission is by intention as we are not sure, who these actors are today, 4–5 years after the projects came to a conclusion. *Readers who are interested in development co-operation should read this chapter.*

Finally, there are observations, findings, and conclusions throughout the text. These are indicated in *italics* rather than adding a large number of special sub-sections in the report. This is done in order to avoid repetition and hopefully make the document easier to read.

2. Background

2.1 India

2.1.1 Policies and programmes relevant for degraded lands and poverty

The PAHAL¹ and NTGCF projects had their primary focus on improving rural livelihoods through community management of private and revenue wastelands as well as village commons. This also included the degraded forest lands adjacent to the villages. This section presents some general background information on these land resources and draws a broad canvass of the changes over time in national policies of relevance for wasteland development in India

Out of India's total geographical area of 329 Mha, the records available cover 304 Mha,. Using the land classification system of the Ministry of Agriculture the Cultivated Area amounts to 142 Mha (46%), while the remaining area falls under Forests (23%), Land Not Available For Cultivation (14%), Other Uncultivated Land (9%) and Fallow Land (8%). The Government of India's definition of wastelands is “*Degraded land which can be brought under vegetative cover, with reasonable effort, and which is currently under-utilised and land which is deteriorating for lack of appropriate water and soil management or on account of natural causes*”. A major part of this wasteland includes “other uncultivated land” and “fallow land” amounting to 51 Mha (17 percent). Out of this about 60 percent are village common land and 40 percent are owned by individual households. On a comparable scale, and of slightly higher magnitude, is the area under forests out of which almost 40% or 26 Mha is degraded.

The degradation of the non-forest lands can by and large be attributed to unclear user rights and tenure regime leading to what often is referred to as the “tragedy of commons”. Thus, in order to address the problems of degradation, *the government's policy was to allot them to poor for cultivation*. In 1960–80, more than 6 Mha of such land was privatised. But, it did not serve the purpose, as these lands were too degraded for cultivation and therefor more suitable for trees, shrubs and grasses. But the “privatisation” policy clarified the land use rights to such lands, albeit not solving the problem of turning the land into productive agriculture use. In response to this, *the Government of India initiated an ambitious social forestry programme on revenue wastelands*² in 1976 by transferring such lands to Forest Departments.

¹ The initial and formal name in the Specific Agreement was Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (DIWDP)

² This was land under the formal control of the State Revenue Department.

The program had socio-economic and environment oriented approaches for addressing the twin problems of degradation of communal and public land resource from excessive use primarily wood cutting and over grazing. Overall the performance was dismal as it failed to address issues of tenure and other necessary incentives and the program was terminated in 1990. Later, the responsibility of such lands was partly transferred to the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).

With a view to address problems of land degradation, restore ecological balance and meet the increasing demand of fodder and fuelwood, the National Wastelands Development Board (NWDB) was established in 1985 under Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) with a target of bringing 5 Mha of lands under fuel wood and fodder plantations every year. Later, in 1992, the responsibility of NWDB for wasteland development was divided and transferred to two organisations:

- The Department of Wastelands Development (DoWD) under MoRD with the mandate of developing non-forest wastelands, (DoWD was later changed in 1999 to the Department of Land Resources (DoLR))
- The National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board (NAEB) under the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for promoting afforestation programmes with people's involvement on degraded forest lands.

The programs pertaining to non-forest lands, includes the i/Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP); ii/Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP); and iii/Desert Development Programme (DDP). The details of these programs are given in table 1 below. Another similar program, the National Watershed Development Programme in Rainfed Areas (NWDPA), is being implemented by Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). It combines the features of all the three programmes with the addition of improving arable lands through better crop management technologies.

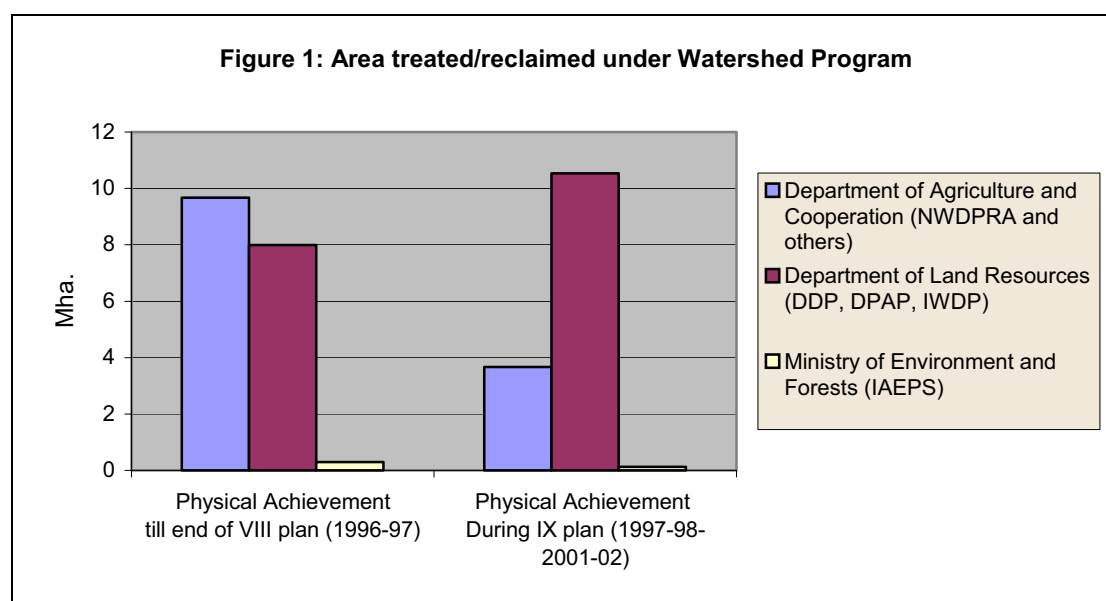
The Technical Committee constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development under the Chairmanship of Prof. Hanumantha Rao, reviewed the performance of DPAP, DDP and also the IWDP programmes all over the country and recommended that a common set of operational guidelines, objectives, strategies and expenditure norms for watershed development projects should be evolved integrating the features of the three programmes under the Ministry of Rural Development. *This led to formulation and adoption of new guidelines on watershed development from April 1995.* Since then, all ongoing non-forest wasteland programs, which are under the purview of DoLR, are being implemented under the common guidelines for Watershed Development

Table 1: Key programmes under DoLR, MoRD

Program	Genesis
Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP)	1989–90, and has come under DoLR with the NWDB in July 1992. From April, 1995, the scheme is being implemented on watershed basis under the common guidelines for Watershed Development. Earlier 100% central funding, but the proposed ratio is 75:25 (central to state funding).
Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP)	1973–74 to tackle the special problems faced by those fragile areas, the programme is being implemented on watershed basis under the common guidelines for Watershed Development. Earlier on 50:50 (Central to state funding), but revised to 75:25 since 1999.
Desert Development Programme (DDP)	On the recommendations of the National Commission on Agriculture in its Interim Report (1974) and the Final Report (1976), the Desert Development Programme (DDP) was started in the year 1977–78. The programme was started both in the hot and cold desert areas. Currently, it is being implemented on watershed basis under the common guidelines for Watershed Development.

NAEB is promoting reafforestation, ecological restoration and eco-development activities, with special attention to the degraded forests and lands adjoining the forest areas, national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas as well as ecologically fragile areas³. NAEB operates through four programmes: Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme (IAEPS); Area Oriented Fuel wood and Fodder Projects Scheme (AOFFPS); Conservation and Development of Non-Timber Forest Produce including Medicinal Plants Scheme (NTFP) and Association of Scheduled Tribes and Rural Poor in Regeneration of Degraded Forests (ASTRP).

Watershed development program got significant boost in the IX plan (1997–98 to 2001–02). The following diagram in Figure 1 details the scale of programmes operated by various departments/ministries under the watershed development programme (note the difference in time scale, when the IX plan is compared with previous efforts).



Watershed development as a poverty alleviation measure has high priority in India, which is evident from the fact that Government of India (GoI) has developed a perspective plan of 20 years (2002–03 to 2021–22) for treating around 88.5 Mha. land in next 20 years with a total investment of INR 727.5 billions. A major impact from this will be the employment generated through various labour intensive schemes for restoring the land.

The '90s was the decade when people's participation had gained sufficient legitimacy and momentum in all programs and schemes of the government. While people's participation was the most dominant development paradigm promoted, there were two significant policy changes that defined the future path for rural development and natural resources management:

- The Government of India, put into force the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act in 1992 with a view to devolve powers to Panchayats. It provided for: elections of panchayats; devolution of financial powers, functionaries and functions to panchayats; constitution of District Planning Committees (DPC); and,

³ E.g. Western Himalayas, Aravallis, Western Ghats, etc

- Extension of the 73rd act to cover scheduled areas through the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996. PESA came into force on 24th December 1996. The Act⁴ extends Panchayats to tribal areas of eight States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan.

This policy has influenced the policies and strategies related to wasteland development in India and led to revisions of a) the watershed guideline of 1995, and b) the Schemes under NAEB. The watershed guidelines have been revised twice since 1995, with the objective of integrating elements of greater participation and decision-making powers to local government structures and the community. The first watershed development programs promoted under the 1995 guidelines were completed in 2000. Based on evaluations, the guidelines were revised in 2001 laying greater emphasis on local government units i.e. the *Panchayats*. The guideline was further revised in 2003 as *Hariyali – Guidelines for Watershed Program* by shifting emphasis from drought proofing, drought mitigation, and dry land agriculture to “all rural areas”, “special areas” & “irrigation”. The civil society has expressed apprehensions that it may lead to reduction in allocations to drought-prone areas where natural resources are more degraded. The schemes under NAEB were also revised. First, it brought all the four⁵ programmes previously mentioned under a single National Afforestation Programme (NAP), and second, promoted a more decentralised participatory approach for planning and implementation by making provision for Forest Development Agencies (FDAs) and Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMC) in implementation.

2.2 Sweden

2.2.1 Policies and strategies for development cooperation

The overall goal of Swedish development co-operation is to raise the standard of living of poor people. The Swedish Parliament has adopted the following six specific objectives to achieve this overall goal:

- Economic growth
- Economic and political independence
- Economic and social equality
- Democratic development in society
- The long-term sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment
- Equality between men and women

These overall goal and objectives are reflected in Sida’s co-operation in natural resources management. Sida’s policy for agriculture as well as forestry illustrates this. For agriculture the policy identifies among other issues “the decreasing soil fertility through over grazing, soil erosion and inappropriate farming methods”. The long term objective for Sida is “to increase food security and the income for small holders” through different support areas and among these means are the development and promotion of “sustainable methods and technologies”⁶. In forestry Sida’s approach is that without people the concept of forestry is meaningless⁷. The consequence of this is “that the use of forests, forest lands and trees shall be productive and contribute to sustainable development to enable poor people to have better living

⁴ It provides for tribal society to assume control of its own destiny to preserve and conserve the traditional rights over natural resources. All States barring Bihar have enacted State Legislation to give effect to the provisions contained in Act 40, 1996 as mandated under the Central Act.

⁵ IAEPS, AOFP, NTFP and ASTRP operational till the end of IX plan.

⁶ Sida, (1999) Sustainable Agriculture – A Summary of Sida’s Experiences and Priorities.

⁷ Sida (1999) Sustainable Forestry – A Summary of Sida’s Experiences and Priorities

conditions”. While these policies or strategic statements were developed after NTGCF and PAHAL was launched, they reflect in more specific terms the guidelines in other relevant documents from the early 90s⁸. Of relevance is also Sida’s emphasis on capacity building (or human resources development) as perhaps the most important mean of intervention. The policy on capacity development from 2001 states that for Sida the “*principle method is capacity and institutional development*”. This policy, although published in 2001 at the time when PAHAL and the support to FES/NTGCS was phased out, has characterised Sida’s development co-operation also during the last decade, when these two projects were implemented.

Sida’s development of strategic approaches during the 90s that eventually were documented in a number of “Action Programmes” in 1998 has been important in shaping development cooperation. The “Action Programme for Equality between Women and Men” and the “Action Programme for Poverty Reduction” appears as particularly relevant for PAHAL and NTGCF.

2.2.2 Strategies and guidelines for development co-operation with India

The guidelines for development co-operation with India during the early 90s⁹ mention as one of five focal areas support for forestry and environmental related activities¹⁰. The most important aim was *to improve the livelihood of villagers through increased employment opportunities and by enhancing their productive resources*. Deforestation and widespread land degradation were identified as major problems. Gender was put forward as a crosscutting and integrated theme in all bilateral co-operation rather than supporting separate women oriented projects. Another salient feature of these guidelines was *the emphasis on innovative and experimental projects*, the argument being that the grants from a relatively small donor are additional and should be used strategically e.g. by developing methods and approaches that can be useful for improving development efforts in general. At the same time the need for transparency and external technical assistance was emphasised for these kind of projects. For forestry a new generation of projects were envisaged with more emphasis on peoples participation and their priorities as well as a broader menu of support activities than forestry in a strict sense only.

Both the support to NTGCF and the PAHAL were seen as representatives of this new generation of projects and both were seen as being experimental. NTGCF was described as a large scale (in terms of geographical coverage) pilot project for rural poor organised in small holders forest co-operatives with the potential of influencing main stream forestry development in the future. PAHAL was viewed as an innovative land management project with its focus on only one district and with ambitions to strengthen co-operation between different local authorities (administrative as well as various relevant line departments at the local level) as well as between these local authorities and local NGOs. There were also important experiences from prior co-operation in the forest sector that influenced these new projects. These were the need

- for analysis of institutional issues,
- to appreciate and to address equity issues in rural areas, and
- to work with other actors than state forestry departments and the Ministry of Forestry and Environment only.

The first Country Development Strategy for India (1996–2001)¹¹ reflects by and large the same focus, priorities and views on development co-operation. *Innovative interventions actually have an even stronger emphasis* in that the prime objective for Sweden is said to be “to contribute to the development and

⁸ See e.g. Sida’s actionplan from 1992 “Sustainable Management of Renewable Natural Resources”.

⁹ See e.g. Direktionspromemoria Indien för 1992/93–1993/94.

¹⁰ The others being water and sanitation, health, primary education and energy

¹¹ This was the first strategy developed for co-operation with India and replaced previous strategic documents for guiding development cooperation.

dissemination of innovations, new approaches and effective institutional solutions with the aim of capacity building”. Moreover an envisaged shift in development co-operation included both closer bilateral co-operation as well as focus on innovation, experiment and dissemination/replication. Forestry has been generally substituted with the broader and more holistic term natural resource management. An interesting general addition with implications also for co-operation in environment and natural resource management was the statement that *“a necessary prerequisite for projects to become successful is a long term continuity of high quality project management and that the Parties have a shared responsibility”* in this regard. At the time of formulating the Country Development Strategy, the progress of the NTGCF at least in Rajasthan was seen as very good. DIWDP or the more commonly used name for the project “PAHAL” was expected to enter into a second phase or perhaps even beyond, although the Strategy is not entirely clear on this point. The exact wording used was that “Sida is in principle agreeable to extend support to Phase III”.

2.3 Programme overview

The common denominator for the support to PAHAL and NTGCS was the wasteland issue that received considerable attention in India, already from the late 1960. It was however within the context of the policies and initiatives during the late 70s and in the 80s that the two projects took shape (see 2.1). Both projects were also conducive with Sida’s policies and priorities for development co-operation with India in the early and mid 90s (see 2.2) and both projects were in a priority sector (forestry/environment). The projects were characterised by innovative and experimental ambitions, while at the same time representing two different approaches.

2.3.1 PAHAL

2.3.1.1 Background and Project Rationale

There were several factors behind the initiation of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (eventually more known under the name PAHAL). Sida had already been involved in supporting SWACH (Sanitation Water and Community Health Project), which was a project organised as a collaborative GO – NGO project in Dungapur district. PEDO – one of the NGOs in PAHAL – had experiences with natural resource management with some support from Sida. The issue of wastelands was high on the political agenda in India and in Rajasthan at this time. Dungapur district was one of the poorest areas in Rajasthan with substantial areas of wastelands (21% of the land area in 1988 according to the first Project Document). Finally and perhaps most significant was that the first initiative was local. The District Collector proposed the idea of a waste land development project to Sida already in 1985/86. All these factors eventually converged into what eventually became DIWDP or PAHAL. The original project document or the Plan of Action 1991/92–996/97” outlined the aims, objectives and strategic issues of the project. These ambitions were many and impressive but suffered from weaknesses as well (see 3.2.1). The Specific Agreement from 1992 mention essentially the same general aims without going into all the objectives. For the purpose of this “overview section”, the mission refers to the general description provided by the Mid Term Evaluation in 1997. They attempted to summarise PAHAL purposes as follows:

- “strengthen sustainable land use management for local economic development”,
- “contribute to socio-economic development in Dungapur district”, and
- “inform operational policy development within rural development in Rajasthan”.

PAHAL initially covered two blocks¹² in the district (Bichiwara and Dungapur) and was later expanded to three new blocks (Aspur, Similwara and Sagwara). The main activities focused on capacity and insti-

¹² Administrative sub-unit of the districts in Indian states.

tutional development as well as physical implementation such as e.g. tree planting, silvi-pastoral development, soil conservation, fodder production, water harvesting etc. In addition to this there were also research intentions included as well as monitoring and evaluation. The project was implemented both by staff from Government Organisations (GO) and from Non Government Organisations (NGO), while it was located with the district administration.

The first phase of PAHAL lasted to 1998 through extension of the Specific Agreement. This was possible since not all the funds had been used by the end of 1997, when the first phase initially was planned to have been completed. *The first phase however went through a few different stages.* An overall and undisputable change was the re-organisation in 1995, when the project went from what sometime is referred to as the “old” PAHAL to the “new” PAHAL. This was a significant change and was clearly visible also in the organisational charts (see Figure 2 and 3). The different stages and how they should be described in detail depend on whom one asks. In the following, paragraphs, this mission makes an attempt to summarise these changes into four distinct stages.

The first stage can be seen as a preparatory period with a focus on human resource development of projects staff at District and Block levels including the so called Village Level Motivators (VLM) appointed from a cluster of villages. As the project had clear participatory ambitions with the intention of preparing local village plans referred to as Micro Level Plan (MPL) quite comprehensive efforts were made regarding capacity development (see 3.3.2.2.). A reflection of these participatory ambitions was the new name adopted in 1993 – the Participatory Approach to Human and Land Resource project (PAHAL). A first selection of villages was also made during this period, while less was done regarding implementation of physical activities.

The second stage was a transition period between the “old” and “new” PAHAL in 1995. This transition period was partly the result of increasing tension between the so called Lead NGO at the district level and the block level NGOs, mainly regarding their role and responsibilities for training and human resource development in general. There were also increasing frustration among government staff as they felt that far too little was accomplished in the field and that too much time was devoted to general human resource development in the villages. The NGOs on their hand felt they did not have sufficient influence on decisions made in the project, which was more in the hands of the government staff. The second stage also resulted in a revised Project Document in 1995. While the new organisation to some extent settled these issues, the “new” PAHAL and the third stage was in general more focussed on physical implementation and specific village institutional development in support of implementation.

In an evaluation made 1997, it was recommended that PAHAL should continue into a second phase although with important recommendations and restrictions attached. As not all the funds had been utilised the first phase was extended a few times into what perhaps can be seen as the last fourth stage, while a new project document was prepared in 1997. This document was appraised in early 1998. The continued preparation for a second phase was abruptly ended when Sweden decided to put development co-operation on hold, as a result of India’s test of a nuclear bomb in May 1998. It was not until late 1999 and early 2000, that the preparation of a revised Project Document continued based on the recommendations of the appraisals made in early 1998. While this final preparation went on, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Sweden decided on a new Development Co-operation Strategy for India and felt that PAHAL did not fit into the priorities of the new strategy. It was therefor decided not to enter into a second phase with PAHAL.

2.3.1.2 Organisational aspects of PAHAL

Compared to other Sida supported projects in natural resource management at the late 80s and early 90s, PAHAL was a more decentralised project. It was based on the assumption that both technical as

well social skills would be required. With its emphasis on participation and involvement from the local level as well as the need for integration of various disciplines, a different approach than implementation through a “technical” government line department¹³ was looked for. The project was therefore based at district level and implemented through the district administration with a GO structure and a NGO structure. Government staff was seconded (or on deputation) from relevant technical line departments. The involvement of NGOs was based on previous experiences with these organisations¹⁴ and their skills regarding interaction with and involvement of people at the local level. The NGOs were originally contracted for this purpose by the project. A “Lead” NGO was appointed at district level, while different NGOs were engaged in the different blocks of the project¹⁵. The project was multi-tiered in that it had its organisation also at block and local community level. The Tribal Area Development Department of the Government of Rajasthan (TAD) was the nodal department of the project. A simplified overview of the initial organisation is presented in Figure 2.

There were also Steering Committees (SC) established at state, zonal and district levels. These committees had representatives from relevant line departments of GoR, NGOs and the Technical Advisors in PAHAL. Sida were only part of the state level SC. The SC at state level was first chaired by the Secretary of the TAD and later by the Chief Secretary of GoR. The zonal SCs were chaired by the Commissioner TAD of the Udaipur Division, while the district SC was chaired by the District Collector. The Project Director of PAHAL was always an IAS officer and this has by most respondents been seen as an advantage as it has facilitated relations and cooperation with the District Authorities, notably the District Collector. The Village Level Motivators were appointed by the Gram Panchayat and were always one female and one male. These were selected from the villages in respective Panchayat.

The experiences of this organisation were not all that satisfactory. The use of a lead NGO at district level was a cause of tension within the NGO community. The Village Level Motivators and their role and status was unclear. A new organisation was therefore put in place in mid 1995 as mentioned in the previous section. This organisation is schematically illustrated in Figure 3. The main differences were that

- The Lead NGO at district level was replaced by an NGO forum
- The Deputy Project Directors were replaced by Additional Project Directors
- The role of the VLM changed and village institutions were given a more prominent role in the project

The organisational aspects at the local level and the experiences are further elaborated and assessed in section 3.3.2.1

¹³ As the case was with the Social Forestry projects supported by Sida and implemented by the Forestry Departments in Bihar, Orissa and Tamil Nadu during the 80s.

¹⁴ E.g. the support provided to SWACH

¹⁵ These were PEDO in Bichhiwara block, RSS in Dungapur and Aspur blocks and later BAIF in Similwada block, while government staff had this function in Sagwada block as there was no NGO available. This was the last block to join PAHAL.

Figure 2: Schematic organisational structure – Old PAHAL

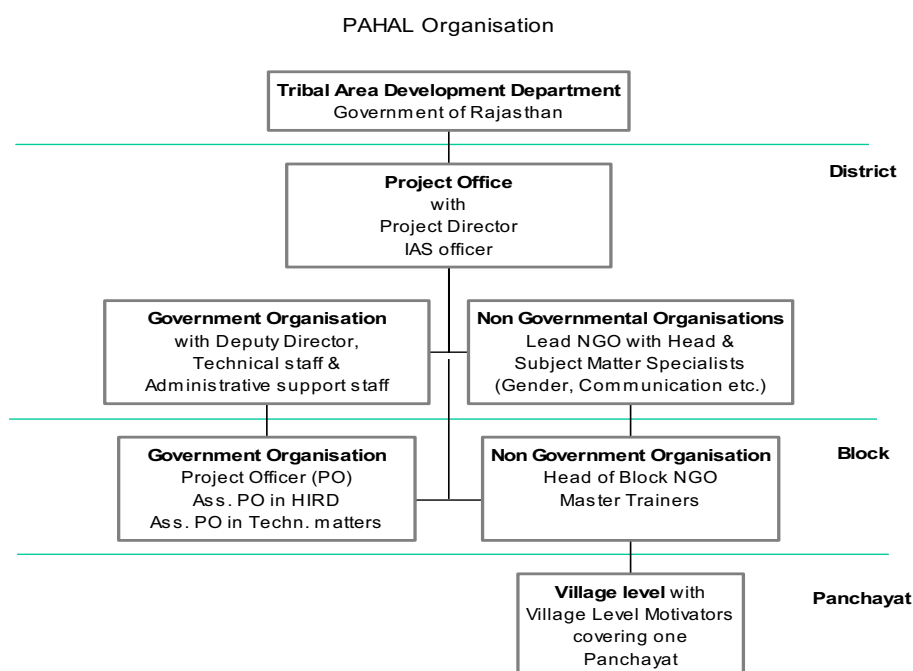
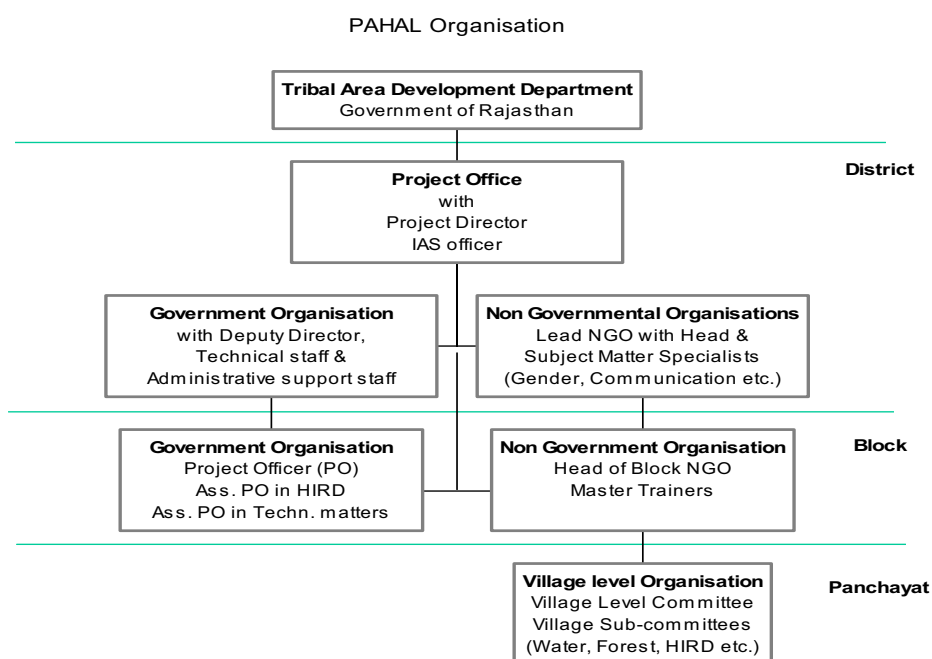


Figure 3: Schematic organisational structure – New PAHAL



2.3.1.3 Budgets and expenditures

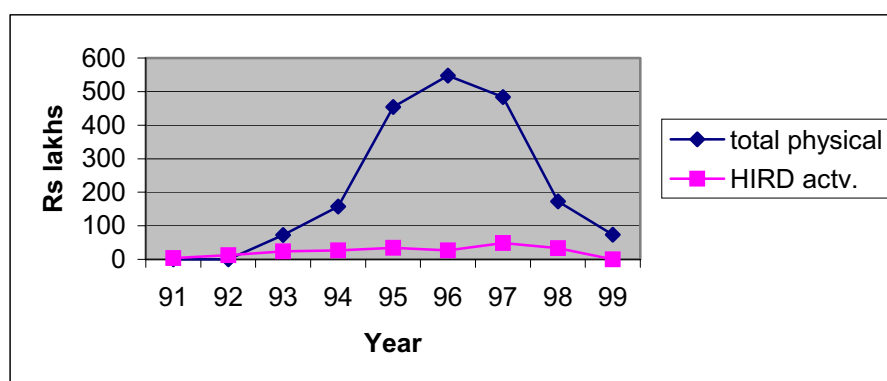
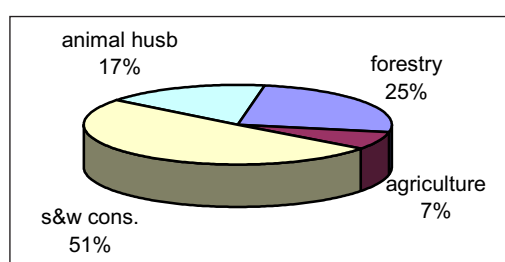
Sida supported 90% of the total cost of PAHAL, with 10% contribution from the GoR. The principle behind this division has been that most of the GoR establishment costs will be taken care by the government itself, for this the GoR made full budget provision in their state plan. The total expenditure on the project till 1999 was Rs 2546.64 lakhs. Sida supported Rs 2294.08 or SEK 50 Million. Table 2 below outlines the year wise expenditure of the project since 1991.

Table 2: Budget and expenditure (in Rs lakhs)

Year	Budget (dispersed)	Expenditure	Sida share
1991–92	3.69	16.84	16.78
1992–93	106.48	35.44	32.36
1993–94	243.53	151.69	136.52
1994–95	374.64	244.34	219.91
1995–96	577.55	556.24	500.62
1996–97	810.33	661.38	595.26
1997–98	466.06	621.55	559.39
1998–99	78.15	259.16	233.24

As per the original budget estimates a sum of Rs 2278.15 lakhs (81%) was allocated for the implementation of physical activities in the field and a sum of Rs 201.20 lakh for Human and Institutional Resources Development (HIRD) activities, and the remaining for supporting activities, establishment and transport costs. Figure 4 below illustrates the ratio of investments in physical and HIRD activities in the project. Physical activities started after the first two years and soared up from 1995 onward to gradually decline after 1997/98, when most of the funds had been used. The expenditures on HIRD was considerably lower, but varied in absolute terms over the years. From 1994–1998 it amounted to Rs 30–50 lakh per year.

The relative distribution of expenditures for PAHAL as a whole for physical activities is presented in figure 5.

Figure 4: Financial expenditure in PAHAL (Physical activities and HIRD)**Figure 5: Relative expenditures for major themes in natural resource management**

2.3.1.4 General Progress in PAHAL

As PAHAL had so many and somewhat ambiguous objectives or targets, we will here briefly review some of the more significant physical achievements in terms of quantities and what the project accomplished in general terms regarding institutional development and capacity building. The mission have not found any figures on what PAHAL should have achieved on the ground regarding development of local institutions, hence assessing the performance is not that easy. While the progress in qualitative terms for both physical and institutional activities will be addressed in other sections of this report, table 3 below provide figures for some selected field activities that has been more significant in terms of volume and expenditures for the “best” performing blocks (Dungapur and Bichiwara).

Parameters for describing overall performance for the development of VI would have been useful. The emphasis on participative planning in the PD and therefor an ambition not to pre-empt planning by imposing quantitative targets in development of local institutions, might be the explanation behind this. However by using a proxy for the number of VI that have reached a defined degree of capability and trust, some degree of performance assessment might have been possible. Unfortunately, there are not sufficient information available for this purpose. What we know is that there were at the end of the project (in 1999) Village Level Committees (VLC) constituted in 41 villages out of 158 in Dungapur Block and in 38 out of 174 villages in Bichiwara Block. This does however not say anything about what the ambitions might have been in those two Blocks. The information from meetings and discussions suggest however that Dungapur and Bichiwara Blocks were the most successful, partly due to the presence of two strong NGOs¹⁶ already when PAHAL was initiated. There were for all five blocks together 137 VLCs at the end of the project in 1998/99. There were other types of local institutional development in PAHAL as well. This is further elaborated later in the report.

Table 3: Selected field activities and quantitative performance for PAHAL¹⁷ in two Blocks.*

Indicators	Targets	Quantitative achievements							Total	Perfor. %
		92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99		
PPR plantations (ha)	3375	80	175	550	780	1360	265	0	3215	95
CPR plantations (ha)	1670	0	120	215	360	265	215	0	1180	71
Crop demonstrations (no)	870	0	45	80	30	260	585	0	1000	115
Vegetable demons. (no)	2380	0	30	35	10	140	180	0	395	12
S&W conservation (ha)	21600	0	1025	1835	6570	7190	3360	185	20165	93
Pasture (ha)	1315							647	647	49

*The most significant activities in terms of volume and expenditures are included in the table. Soil and water conservation is here only represented by interventions to control run off and erosion. Considerable work was also done in various water development schemes as well. Targets and achievements are presented with rounded figures.

¹⁶ People's Education and Development Organisation (PEDO) and Rajasthan Sewa Sangh (RSS)

¹⁷ The figures here are mainly based on a report from 1999 “Sustainable Village Institutions through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience. The report was based on case studies and “lessons learning” workshop. The report include many other activities related to land management and farmers livelihood

One should not forget that there were behind these figures a considerable amount of training and capacity development in the project. The project put the main efforts regarding training on the Village Level Motivators (VLM) initially, but gradually more and more on the VLC as their role changed with increasing responsibilities for planning and implementation. This shift came as part of the transformation of the “old” PAHAL into the “new” PAHAL in 1995/96. The transformation also brought about an increase in “physical achievements” from 1995/96 particularly regarding soil conservation and Private Property Resource plantations (PPR), and to some extent also on “demonstrations”. Capacity at VLC level was developed in subjects related both to management, accounting, technical topics, communication, awareness etc. Training at village level also changed character. Initially the focus was on awareness and motivation, while after restructuring the focus was more on practical “how to do” topics.

2.3.2 The National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation

2.3.2.1 Background and Project Rationale

The initiation of the Tree Growers Cooperative in the late 1980s sprung from a concern regarding the sustainability of the many GO and NGO supported Social Forestry Programmes in India. Inspired by the achievements with Dairy Cooperatives and Oil Seed Cooperatives, the NWDB proposed the idea of trying a pilot project on wastelands to the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), with the aim of establishing models of viable Tree Growers Cooperative Societies (TGCS). An early experience of this pilot project was the need to establish a larger number of Tree Growers Cooperatives. This would provide experiences and lessons regarding the challenges of setting up an entire structure of TGCS at a regional level. The NWDB requested the NDDB in 1988 to approach Sida for an expansion of the initial pilot project into what often was referred to as a Mega-Pilot project in the States of Rajasthan, Orissa and Tamil Nadu¹⁸. Sida with its experiences from supporting Social Forestry in e.g. Orissa and Tamil Nadu was seen as an important partner and financier. The project proposal was appraised in 1989 and a re-appraised project document was finalised in 1991 with the Specific Agreement signed in 1992.

The Re-appraised Project Document (vol I and II) outlines the aim and objectives of the project. The overall objective was essentially to restore productivity on marginal- and waste lands near relevant villages in a “*manner which is economically productive, profitable and ecologically sound, through the active involvement of the rural community with special reference to the weaker section*”. Reference was also made in the overall objective to the Anand pattern of self-sustaining institutional structure of cooperatives, i.e. the experiences of the federated dairy cooperatives. There were also three more specific objectives (see 3.2.1), where two were clearly production oriented both in order to improve rural income and self subsistence and one more related to restrictions and sustainable use of these degraded lands. The Specific Agreement mentions the same objectives. The outputs were described in terms of targets and included (i) the establishment of a three tier cooperative structure, (ii) to engage some 30 000 rural families as members and (iii) to plant woody perennials and fodder grasses on some 10 000 ha. This included both private and common wasteland. A substantial part of the common wasteland was expected to be on long term lease from the state or other large landowners.

There were fundamental changes introduced in the NTGCF organisation in 1996 to the extent that – in view of the evaluation mission – one could see the outcome as a new organisation and a new project as well. First there was an initiative referred to as the Shared Vision Exercise (SVE) and later a Mid

¹⁸ Not long after Sida, the Canadian CIDA also decided to support the NTGCF. After some years NTGCF had activities in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. Out of these Sida provided support to Orissa, Rajasthan and later to Uttar Pradesh as well (Tamil Nadu was on the list, but was cancelled as the state authorities were not interested).

Term Review (MTR), which both eventually led to a revised PD in 1998. The objectives of the “old” NTGCF project were abandoned. The aim was replaced by a “Vision” valid for NTGCF in general, namely the “Restoration of the ecological security of village communities in eco fragile and marginalised zones, and setting in place the processes of collective management and governance”¹⁹. The revised PD for 1998–2002 quote a slightly different vision for the NTGCF in that it added dimensions related to improvement of quality of life as well as the formation democratic and sustainable village institutions. There were also two specific objectives added for the “Sida” supported NTGCF project. These are assessed in section 3.2.1.

Another project document for a two year period (originally proposed for 2001–2002) was again drafted both due to organisational changes of NTGCF and as basis for Sida to decide on additional funding. In this organisational change, the NTGCF Ltd was transformed into a society under the Societies Registration Act 1860 under the new name of the “Foundation for Ecological Security” (FES). An appraisal conducted in late 2001 was essentially positive and recommended Sida to provide financial assistance. Sida decided however not to provide further support to NTGCF/FES referring to some unresolved issues. Among them the sustainability of the organisation surfaced as the most serious. We will come back to this later in the report

2.3.2.2 Organisational aspect of the project and the NTGCF

The initial organisational structure were – due to it’s background – much influenced by the organisation of the dairy cooperatives. It took some time to establish the organisation however and build the capacity required. The principle organisation of the NTGCF was a three-tier organisation with a National level, Regional levels, and Village levels as in figure 6 below. The middle level is however somewhat ambiguous in that it sometime is described as being at the state level (e.g. in the first revised PD from 1991) or at the district level (e.g. in the MTR-report from 1996).

Figure 6: Principle organisation of NTGCF between 1991–1997

(The core of the organisation is indicated with bold frames)



¹⁹ NTGCF Ltd (1997) Annual Report of the National Tree Growers’ Cooperative Federation Limited for 1996/97

A revised project document was drafted in 1998, based on a critical assessment of the experiences after the first three or four years. In this document a modification of the organisational structure was suggested. The original idea with the regional level was to promote and support value addition to wood and other material from the village cooperatives through processing and/or marketing. A combination of

- limited need for processing/marketing (because much of the wood was used locally);
- limited progress (due to unforeseen institutional constraints often with state authorities); and
- that growing trees takes time, particularly on degraded wastelands (so there were no immediate need for processing/marketing)

eventually questioned the role of the regional level. A two tier organisation was therefor introduced in 1997/98 as in figure 7 below.

In both organisations the so called Spear Head Teams (SHT) had a crucial role for the project as they provided inputs, extension support and capacity building including institutional development. The latter was important in order to develop role, responsibilities and the functioning of both the Village Governing Body and the Village Management Committee in the local tree grower co-operative.

Figure 7: Principle Organisation of NTGCF between 1997–2001

(The core of the organisation is indicated with bold frames)

2.3.2.3 Budgets and expenditures



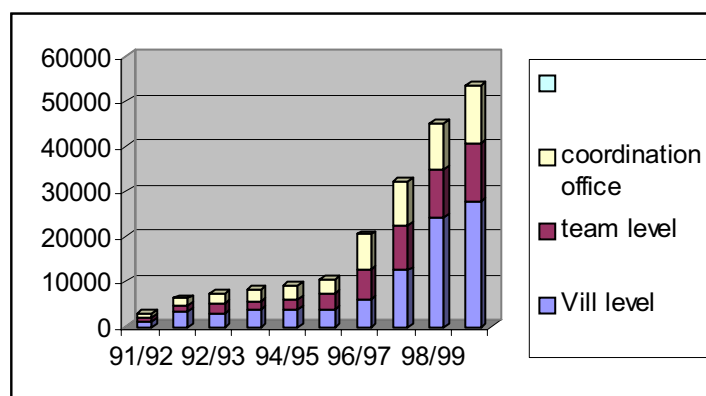
The arrangement with NTGCF was special in that part of the Sida resources was provided as commodity aid (cooking oil), which was monetised by NTGCF. The reason for this was that Sida regulation required the cooperating organisation – in this case NDDB – to provide some counterpart funding, which they did not have. The idea was that the expected profit or part thereof would be considered as the counterpart fund. The profit generated was considerable and more than expected as the total fund available increased considerably from the SEK 50 Million committed by Sida. This eventually amounted RS 272 Million²⁰, as a result of the profits made from trading in cooking oil and interests earned on capital. It also eventually made it possible to extend the project from 1996 (as planned) to 2001. The Sida funds have been used to support NTGCF operations in Rajasthan (Bhilwara, Jaipur, Ajmer,

²⁰ The monetisation of this “commodity aid” was done at two different times.

Udaipur districts), Madhya Pradesh (Rajgarh, Shajapur), Uttaranchal²¹ (Pittoragarh) and Orissa (Angul and Dhenkanal), as well as portion for the HQ in Anand. Figure 8 below shows the annual use of the funds (from 1991 to 2001) at three levels (Village level, Spear head team level and at the HQ or the Coordination office. In total 46% were used at the village level, while 31% at Spear Head Team level and 23% at central level.

Figure 8: Annual utilisation of funds in NTGCF project

2.3.2.4 General progress in TGC



Some figures are compiled in the table 4 below to illustrate progress for some overall parameters in the project. These figures should however be interpreted with care, both because the mission has only had access to a limited set of documents and has not had the opportunity to check them with the management of the project. The figures calculated and summarised are for parameters that are related to the objectives of the project

Table 4: Selected parameters for quantitative performance in NTGCF.

Note some of the figures are indirect estimation by the mission.

Selected parameters	Selected targets in the old PD*	Progress first 5 years	Perform %	Selected targets in the new PD	Progress for the decade	Perform %
	1991	1996		1998	2001	
Area covered	6453 (9680)	2723	42 (28)	13150	22 744	152
TGC formation or facilitate existing village institutions**	200 (300) TGCs only	114	60 (38)	250 (TGC & coop with existing VI)	343	137***
Members in TGC	19300 (29000)	11630	70 (40)			

* For assessing performance the achievements of the two states, where the projects actually had any activities has been deemed as more relevant (Rajasthan and Orissa), while the original targets and achievements were for three states (Tamil Nadu as well). These targets and performance is provided in brackets.

** For the first period the aim was establishing of local TGC only. The second period also emphasised facilitation and cooperations with existing village institutions. The performance for village institutional development in general for the decade are therefore difficult to assess and compare over time.

*** This include TGC, Van Panchyat, JFM, Gaucher land committees etc. Estimations by the mission indicate that the performance rate for TGCs only might have been 81%.

²¹ Initially part of Uttar Pradesh

To follow and assess overall progress in TGC is in a sense both easier and more complicated than for PAHAL. The original PD was more to the point as to what TGC wanted to accomplish. The changes introduced in TGC in 1996 as a result of the SVE and MTR were fundamental to the extent where *it make more sense to talk about a new project instead of a revised (see 3.2.3)*. At the same time the “old” TGC and its intentions and achievements were not abandoned, but somehow incorporated in the “new” TGC. So while there have been significant progress in quantitative terms over the decade, the figures reported over time are sometime difficult to assess and compare due mainly to.

- inconsistencies or ambiguities between figures reported in different documents;
- new objectives and targets as from 1998 and;
- new definitions of targets, when figures are calculated and reported

An example of the type ambiguities resulting from the points above are the figures reported for area covered or under development. These were reported to be over 22 000 ha²² in 2000/2001 for the Sida supported project, while the achievements for the whole of TGC in 1998 were reported to be 9 900 ha only and 3 500 ha for Sida. So either there has been a substantial increase in a period of slightly more than 2 years only (from 1998 to 2000/2001) or other categories of lands and definitions makes these comparisons irrelevant. Another uncertainty is if all these areas are “resource creations” or to what extent “management of old areas” by existing village institutions are included. Care is also required, because the states involved are not the same. The old project was implements in two states Rajasthan and Orissa, while for the new project, four states was involved as Uttar Pradesh (or Uttaranchal) and Madhya Pradesh was added, so one would perhaps expect physical achievements to increase correspondingly.

In any event, if these few key parameters (related to the objectives) are used to get some general sense of overall quantitative progress, the achievements were rather slow during the first period up to the MTR in 1996 or slightly thereafter and more substantial from 1998 till 2000/2001. From table 4, it seems as if the area target has been the most difficult to achieve in the old project (performance rate 42%), while performance in village institutions (including TGC) differs less and perhaps could be explained by the additional state included. (60% compared to 80%). As for PAHAL these overall figures do not reveal anything about the qualitative dimensions of TGC and does not provide information about all the different activities and processes behind these achievements. We will get back to this in some of the following chapters.

3. Assessments

3.1 Ownership

While the importance of ownership rarely is disputed and generally perceived as something desirable, the issue is complex and often treated superficially. It sets the scene and can influence project performance and impact even after the project has been finalised. Ownership is often only distinguishing donors from the country of cooperation (common expression would be “Indian” ownership) or at best the organisation hosting the project. It should go without saying that *as there usually are different stakeholders involved on both sides there are different dimensions of ownership, which needs to be considered. These various dimensions of ownership are related to the i/initiative, ii/preparation, iii/objectives and outputs, iv/processes, v/control of resources,*

²² In project proposal from 1998 (revised PD 1998–2002) and from PD from 2001

and. vi/lessons learned etc. At the same time one needs to be realistic about how far one can go. In this section we will review some of the ownership aspects that we have found to be important observations or conclusions, both in their own right but also for some of the other sections that follows.

If we begin with the initiative, it seems as if the ownership in general terms were Indian. The TGC was initiated by the NWDB and NDDDB. The preparation of the project document was also owned by the NDDDB/TGC, although the appraisal, which essentially was a Sida owned initiative (as this is part of normal routine), led to a appraised/revised Project Document in 1991. The initial design of the project up until the changes introduced after 1996 as a result of SVE and MTR, would at least in theory be conducive with ownership at the local level for those villagers who became members of the TGC. If there were strong ownership in the old TGC is of course impossible for the mission to have any view on. The progress reports and more important the MTR are not that informative.

The fundamental changes brought about by the SVE exercise and the MTR, were presumably strongly owned by those who was in favour of the changes. Again without being able to assess this properly, *the information the mission has had access to suggests that there were very different views during and after the SVE about the TGC*²³. The changes for the organisation as such and for the Sida supported project were fundamental. Those who were favouring the old objectives would probably argue that there were not much ownership, if indeed they stayed on with project, while those who embraced the changes would argue the other way around. It seems however as if there were inadequate consideration for the local village level during these changes²⁴ and that apart from the central level, mainly the SHTs were involved. *What was lost in the process was the original "pilot" intentions of the project, and it appears strange to this mission that this never surfaced as a central issue with the project or within Sida for that matter.*

Also the initiative that eventually became PAHAL was generally owned by the Indian side and more specifically by the district as it originally was proposed by the District Collector in Dungapur already in 1985/86. But as opposed to TGC the ownership of the preparation of the final PD did not rest with the initiators. Formal procedures both on the GoR/GoI side as well as within Sida required time and when a final proposal was presented in 1990, the initiators in Dungapur had left their positions. The proposal was then revised and re-formulated by consultants contracted by Sida. In the process "ownership" got blurred and it is in hindsight difficult to assess whether the preparation was owned by GoR, Sida or Dungapur district authorities or perhaps all or none of them. The missions however appreciate the need for formalities as well as a degree of standardised preparation procedures/contents and would even argue that too many projects suffer from deviations from these formalities. *The issue here is really the timing or how a local initiative can be nurtured, if formalities have to take some time.* The fact that a local initiative with a reasonable idea is put forward is positive in that the commitment and therefor ownership of the project can be expected to be high.

If we only look at the partners (Sida and GoR), it is doubtful if the concept of ownership can be applied at all.

The expectations and views on the project were very different. The GoR and the nodal department TAD, appears to have seen PAHAL as an additional budget support to their development efforts in Dungapur, although made unnecessarily complicated as the issue in their view were mainly to create employment and restore degraded lands. Their contribution to the project budget was only 10% and their priority was mainly to push for disbursement and spending the funds. Sida had other expectations and saw PAHAL as an innovative project for i/development Go- NGO cooperation; ii/development of

²³ It has been interesting to see that these different views also appears to have been there among various consultants involved as well as among officers within Sida.

²⁴ This is not to say that the local village level were not involved, but one is left with the impression that the point of departure for the MTR was to initiate the design of a new project rather than assessing the experiences and see how one could move forward from the original project concept.

local institutions; and iii/to improve land management – with the assumption that these experiences could be replicated elsewhere. The problem is that the PD, the Specific Agreement and to some extent preparation phase allows for both of these views. It should not come as a surprise that the dialogue between the partners therefor suffered.

An interesting observation is the different perceptions of 'ownership' of the project if the different administrative levels are compared. In our meeting with the secretary and deputy director TAD in Jaipur, it came across very clearly that 'they perceived PAHAL as a government run program through the NGOs, for which funds were provided by Sida'. It appears that ownership for GoR level was limited to their normal role of providing financial supervision'. When inquiring about the value and relevance of PAHAL, the response was that it was 'episodic' in nature and was more of an 'add-on'. In the meeting with the commissioner at district level, a very different perception of ownership comes across. He described PAHAL as an innovative and collaborative project with the NGOs. At the NGO level (PEDO and RSS), both partners emphasised a clear demarcation of roles and ownership. NGOs handled the HIRD component and government took care of the physical activities. Therefore they saw some ownership of the HIRD component only. At the village level, PAHAL was perceived as a PEDO/RSS supported 'people's' project. This view unanimously came across in all the village meetings of the mission.

During the mission's discussions with the actors in the project, *the control over financial management was considered as an essential aspect of ownership.* This also seemed to have been an issue of contention between the NGOs and the government officials involved in the project. The views of the NGOs were that they could not completely take charge of the project affairs – essentially the HIRD component – because financial management was in the hands of the government. The VLCs also saw the full or partial control of financial management as being associated with ownership.

3.2 Assessing operational aspects of preparation and implementation

3.2.1 Clarity and consensus regarding program objectives

As has been mentioned in section 2.3.1, the mission believe that *the objectives* in the original project document of PAHAL suffered from different weaknesses²⁵. In this sense the first project document from 1991 of the NTGCF was better. The NTGCF did not contain the same excessive number of objectives as did PAHAL. The formulation of aim and objectives were also more to the point in the NTGCF. The mission believe that *outputs*²⁶ (or any corresponding term), that clearly spells out what the project should deliver were not very clear in any of the original project documents. The closest we come to "outputs" are the quantitative "targets" and the "activities" described to achieve them in the NTGCF PD. The PAHAL had a clearer distinction regarding components (e.g. HIRD, physical activities, research and development as well as monitoring and evaluation) than NTGCF. Otherwise the two projects were similar in the way plans and budgets were presented in that these were essentially a list of different cost items, which were difficult to relate to activities or targets in the PD.

The importance of clarity and consensus was perhaps best illustrated in PAHAL, where the evaluation team in 1997 concluded that "there has never been, and still is not, agreement on precisely what the project was trying to achieve". This conclusion referred to different documents such as the original PD (Plan of Action 1991), the revised PD (Plan of Action 1995), the Specific Agreement and the ToR for their evaluation. This was both because of the numbers of objectives – with seven general aims and

²⁵ An attempt to summarise the main objectives was made by the evaluation team 1997. These provide a shortcut to understand in hindsight what PAHAL was aiming to achieve. See section 2.3.1.1..

²⁶ Using the terminology of LFA.

19 objectives for three themes – and the way these objectives were formulated. Some of them were about the outcome, others about the methods and yet others were more about restrictions or priorities. The target group or beneficiaries were not specifically mentioned in the PAHAL project document, but through some of the objectives the targeting is described in terms of e.g.

- The most severely impoverished areas, due to environmental degradation
- Focus on the rural poor and women

No secondary target group e.g. the local administration, local line departments, NGOs were mentioned as such, which one may have expected from a project with ambitions in policy development.

In NTGCF as a result of the changes through the SVE and the MTR in 1996/97 a “Vision” and so called “End Results” were introduced for the NTGCF as an organisation and these have presumably influenced the project supported by Sida and the revised PD from 1998 (see 3.2.3). There were new objectives formulated with a LFA matrix included. The matrix was an improvement but it also suffered from weaknesses e.g. lack of critical assumptions and proper analysis of risks. *However and more important, the old objectives appears to have influenced NTGCF for some time, since the old ones were not and could not be abandoned immediately.* These changes have not improved the understanding or possibilities to assess progress in NTGCF. The new objectives as these were formulated in the PD from 1998 are compared with the old ones in table 5 below. This table and the comments has been included to exemplify the weaknesses of poorly formulated objectives and do not represent any particular or exclusive critique of NTGCF only. Both projects suffered from this, with the exception to some extent for the old NTGCF.

A first comment on the overall purpose is that these should have been shorter. In the old NTGCF for example, the core of the objective as it is formulated is “to restore life support systems on marginal lands and waste lands”. The rest describes how this will be done with some restrictions and clarifications. Part of this could have been formulated as another additional project objective instead. *The major weaknesses in the new NTGCF are with project objectives.* The first one is far too lengthy and do not add much as compared to the overall objective apart from specifying the numbers/quantities. The second objective is generally ambiguous. Both the use of the term “facilitating”, which is not that clear as to what the project actually attends to do.

A final important deficiency, is in view of this mission, that *none of the projects has been properly designed in order to be particularly useful in terms of developing and monitoring innovations* and how these could have been internalised in mainstream development efforts, regardless of whether we view them as pilot or methods development projects.

Table 5: Comparison of purpose and objectives in the “old” and “new” NTGCF

	Old NTGCF	New NTGCF
Overall purpose	To create self sustaining institutional structures based on the Anand Pattern co-operatives to restore life support systems on marginal lands and waste lands (list of restrictions)active involvement of rural communities with special reference to the weaker sections	Restoration of ecological security of village communities in eco fragile and marginalised zones and setting in place the process of collective management and governance
Project objective 1	To improve rural income through the creation of Anand Pattern co-operatives for the production, processing and marketing of trees and tree produce	Facilitating the formation of democratic and sustainable village institutions, to improve quality of live in eco fragile and marginilised zones, that regenerate natural resources of land and water, in 200 more villages covering 11 000 ha of CPL directly and many more indirectly in Rst, Oris and MP
Project objective 2	To increase the availability of fuel wood, fodder and small timber (by planting trees and fodder on marginal and waste lands) to meet the local needs of energy, animal system and rural artisan activities	Facilitating the NTGCF to reach a stage of sustainability to undertake the above programme
Project objective 3	To encourage stall feeding and reduce uncontrolled grasing and unauthorised felling of trees in the areas surrounding the society village	

3.2.2 Management

3.2.2.1 Systems for planning, monitoring and reporting

For the assessment of management in the two projects the mission has relied extensively on other documents and to a limited extent on what we have observed in the field and in this case only for PAHAL. Both NTGCF and PAHAL had ambitions regarding local participation and both projects had a common denominator at the outset of the project, namely to reverse land degradation and rehabilitate wastelands and thereby increase production. This obviously lead to a menu of activities that one way or the other are linked to land management.

In PAHAL this menu was interdisciplinary and consisted of various options in forestry, soil conservation, agriculture, animal husbandry, water resource development etc. on different types of land coupled with comprehensive efforts in capacity building and institutional development at local level both to enhance participation and a sense of ownership and responsibilities at the local level. A bias for soil conservation and forestry – in terms of priorities – can probably be explained by the employment generated through these activities. Some would perhaps argue²⁷ that PAHAL more than anything else was an employment generating scheme. The planning of activities in the old PAHAL began with village based Micro Level Plans (MLP). The planning were done by VLM and project staff from the Block (primarily from NGOs) in consultation with the villagers. These plans were then aggregated and combined with plans for the Blocks and the District. The implementation of physical work on the ground was done with assistance from GO staff from different line departments together with the villagers.

The evaluation from 1997 however had serious reservations about the Annual Work Plans in terms of structure and presentation and how they could be followed up. The only routine report by the project at this time (early 90s) was essentially the annual progress reports. These reports contained almost exclusively figures against financial and physical targets and did not provide much further information and analysis on where the project was heading. Part of this may be due to the unclear and numerous

²⁷ E.g. some actors within GoR and the Evaluation Mission from 1997. Both saw employment generation the important features of PAHAL.

objectives of the first PD, for which it was difficult to report upon. *This is not satisfactory for a project that emphasised monitoring and evaluation in its PD. This was mainly a concern for Sida with their expectations on innovations and methods development. GoR, who viewed the project as an addition to their “traditional” government schemes for wasteland development and employment generation was less concerned or even satisfied with the reporting.*

This somewhat unsatisfactory situation gradually changed and improved slightly after the restructuring of PAHAL in 1995/96²⁸. One should also remember that even if overall reporting by the project was not satisfactory e.g. regarding qualitative aspects of PAHAL, does not necessarily mean that progress was poor. *The project appears to have made real progress towards the end in those villages that had been involved in the project for a sufficiently long period of time.* In the few villages visited by this Evaluation Team, the impression regarding local management capacity were indeed encouraging where the VLCs took on increasingly more management responsibilities. A major deficiency in monitoring and reporting – that remained throughout the project – was *the lack of information in terms of quantitative achievements regarding the impact in terms of improvements in i/land productivity; ii/livelihood and; iii/in development of local governance in general.*

In the original NTGCF, the menu of physical support activities was limited to forestry (mainly for wood and fodder) on private and common wastelands. The menu was however more comprehensive compared to PAHAL in terms of activities that aimed at adding value to the produce from forestry through processing and marketing. The co-operative approach both for production and processing/marketing was in focus. As in PAHAL the efforts in institutional development at the local level appears to have been significant and this has also influenced planning. In NTGCF project, micro level plans were prepared for each local Tree Grower Cooperative (TGC) with the assistance from the SHT. In this context, it should be remembered that these plans were for the members of the TGC in a village only. In other words they were not village plans in the same sense as in PAHAL. The micro level plans were aggregated into overall plans together with the plans prepared also for the development of the SHT at district/state level and the NTGCF at head quarter. These plans were reasonable well structured and the progress reports in general reported against the targets or activities of the plans. The progress reports analysed achievements or lack of achievement to some extent also against the objectives of the project and were in this sense more informative than in PAHAL.

It is not that easy to understand the planning process and associated progress reports from 1996/97 and thereafter, as a result of the changes in NTGCF project²⁹ although they usually consisted of a comprehensive set of documents. The SVE introduced “Vision” and “End Results” etc. for the NTGCF as such, and these have influenced the revised PD for Sida support from 1998. There were new objectives and even a LFA matrix, but without the lower level of outputs and activities, that would have helped in bringing more clarity to the reporting of the project. The progress reports that followed do only to a limited extent report against the LFA matrix. Moreover, it appears as if the TGC have struggled both with the objectives of the “old” and “new” TGC in their reporting, since the old ones were not and could not be abandoned immediately.

Both projects are difficult to assess in terms of cost effectiveness as the Annual Work Plans and their budgets are on cost items in general and not related to activities, outputs and objectives. While this sometime is easier said than done, a more careful effort to identify a few key indicators on cost effectiveness related to the objectives or rather selected outputs/activities would have made some indicative assessments of cost effectiveness possible and hence the progress report would have been more informative.

In summary the mission is left with an impression that the high ambitions on monitoring, evaluation and reporting in PAHAL were not so successful due to a lack of a reasonable number of clearly formulated objectives. In TGC the initial ambitions in the PD on monitoring and reporting was lower, but here the

²⁸ The Agreed Minutes from 20–23/1 and 24/3 1998 recognised an improvement in the quality of the progress reports

²⁹ As a result of the Shared Vision Exercise and the Mid Term Review in 1996

problem was that the RTGCF were supposed to take on the major responsibility but this level never became functional and was abandoned after the MTR. After this the TGC have worked on the development of a monitoring and reporting system, that generates rather comprehensive progress reports. But these reports need to be analysed with care as they report on a mixture of new and old objectives.

3.2.2.2 Use of funds

The general pattern of spending more funds on training and capacity building (or HIRD) in PAHAL during the initial years – in relative terms – and later allocating funds for physical implementation made general sense. It was however mentioned by some informants that the project towards the end was “fund driven” from the pressure to utilise available resources before the first phase was finalised. *The mission believe this may have led to an exaggerated emphasis physical implementation at the expense of HIRD*, particularly as new villages were added. In the original PD, the phasing of physical and HIRD activities was clear and designed in such a way that physical activities would start after a defined amount of HIRD had been completed. The HIRD component would then move its focus to new villages. This “phasing” was not applied consistently in the later stages of PAHAL.

The mission does not have sufficient information about NTGCF to similarly elaborate on the use of funds in this project. One can generally assume that the costs were high when activities were initiated in new villages as the village institutions were established or existing institutions were involved coupled with cost of physical field activities such as reforestation etc. The costs per unit then gradually decrease over time as the institutions become more capable and reforestation has succeeded.

Any assessment of cost efficiency for both PAHAL and NTGCF are not easy, partly because of limitations in projects design and reporting (see 3.2.2.1) and partly because of the limited time available for the mission to visit a sufficient number villages. The difficulties are more pronounced for NTGCF, which unlike PAHAL operated in a wide range of ecological landscapes and under different institutional environments determined by the differences between states. The difficulties in assessing cost efficiency is perhaps best illustrated through the different conclusion by the mid term evaluation in PAHAL in 1997 and the by the appraisal³⁰ of the NTGCF project proposal for a second phase. The former concluded that the average cost of Rs 6000/ha in PAHAL was high compared to the estimated norm of Rs 3500/ha, while the latter calculated the average cost in NTGCF to be Rs 8225/ha and concluded that “all indicators are that NTGCF/FES has been funding a very cost effective operation to date”. Even if the more costly activities has been different with soil conservation structures and reforestation in PAHAL and reforestation only in NTGCF, the example indicates the difficulties embedded in assessing cost efficiency.

3.2.3 Major changes in the NTGCF

In this section we will look on the changes in the NTGCF brought about by the Shared Vision Exercise (SVE) and the Mid Term Review (MTR) in 1996. There were changes in PAHAL as well, which are described elsewhere in the report (see 3.3.2). They occurred both as a result of experiences and a realisation that the PD had to be modified. *The logic of these changes are clear also for outsiders and were not drastic enough to view the “new” PAHAL as a different project. This was however not the case with Sida’s support to NTGCF.* It is in this context one should remember that the SVE and the MTR dealt with the NTGCF as a whole and not exclusively with Sida’s support. In practice the difference is not that significant though. The changes in NTGCF as an organisation were clearly mirrored in the new PD from 1998.

³⁰ Saxena, N.C., Lundgren B. (2001) Appraisal of the “Revised Project Document” from the National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation .

Our understanding and assessment of the SVE and the MTR is based on the documents made available for the mission. There appears however to have been an additional agenda behind these changes than what emerges from these documents only. It has been suggested that there was an internal struggle in the organisation (including also NDDB) based on two different “philosophies”. These “philosophies” are clearly reflected in e.g. the old and the new project documents from 1991 and 1998 respectively. *Allowing for some simplifications, the mission would describe the old NTGCF as income / benefit oriented*, where the viability of the NTGCF both at the local and other levels depend on the enhanced productivity of the wastelands. *The new NTGCF was/is environmentally oriented* where the ecological restoration of the wastelands was in focus. The viability of local institutions and the NTGCF based on benefits and income from these restored lands is less of a concern.

Before expressing any preferences for the old or the new NTGCF, the mission has some concern about the whole process of change. From an outsider’s perspective, it appears as if the sequence of the two events – the SVE and the MTR – is not logical. *As it were, the SVE was done before the MTR and one can not escape the suspicion that this have influenced the MTR both in terms of how it was done and it’s outcome.* The MTR also seem to have been influenced by the same conceptual approach or philosophy as SVE. Moreover and as part of this concept, the MTR was carried out as a self-evaluation exercise, rather than as a conventional study by independent outsiders. The argument was put forward that the self-evaluation exercise was a better alternative than a more traditional MTR.

While the mission would question this argument and rather suggests that both types of approaches are justified, the core of the issue is the concept/philosophy. The SVE and the MTR seems to have been inspired by what sometime is referred to as the “Creative Process” (CP), which was one of those business management tools in fashion in the corporate world of the late 80s/early 90s. It is in essence a tool for organisational development rather than a tool for developing and assessing projects or programs, although it has also been used for this purpose (admittedly the difference between an organisation and a project is not always that clear). The key features of the process are the “Current Reality” and a “Desired Vision”. This defines the strategy – usually more specified in terms of a “Purpose” and a number of supporting “End Results” – in order to reach the vision. On the surface it is not that different from the Logical Framework Approach³¹ (LFA), although the proponents sometime argue that LFA is too focused on addressing the problems rather than making use of the opportunities to accomplish End Results. The difference between CP and LFA can appear to be illusive (and sometime it is), but there are differences in the process that can be of decisive importance. The CP is useful for internal organisational development with it’s focus on developing common values among it’s staff or members and to define the purpose of the organisation. *In doing this, there is a danger however that the organisation become too pre-occupied with itself and start looking at how it can better justify it’s existence.* The risk is that you may become too opportunistic in search of new activities instead of confronting the issues that the organisation was originally set up for.

This is what we believe have happened in the NTGCF. Instead of confronting the issues and constraints faced by the old NTGCF, in terms of i/access to land; ii/sufficiently long land leases; iii/trade in NTFP; iv/trade in wood; iv/harvesting rights and; v/value addition and marketing, but also v/equity and gender issues etc., the project formulated visions and end results (see 3.2.1) that embraced different kind of land and more important different kind of village institutions. This explain the relative success of the new NTGCF in terms of hectares and number of village institutions, but the challenges faced by the old NTGCF project has not been confronted. This is where this mission believes that the major deficiencies with the SVE and in particular the MTR lies. It appears as if the key

³¹ Commonly used as tool for dialogue, planning and follow up of projects in development cooperation

actors lost sight of the original intention of the Mega Pilot. This is also why an independent MTR would have been useful. We are somewhat surprised that the two donors seemed content with the changes in NTGCF, not because this mission is opposed to changes as long as these are done for the right reasons and are based on relevant information. *The intentions with the Mega Pilot got lost in the process and the NTGCF project as an innovative project derailed, without sufficient attention from some of the key actors, including Sida!*

A clear indication of the fundamental changes was the introduction of a Corpus Fund to which Sida and CIDA was asked to contribute. The rationale for this was the sustainability of NTGCF. The sustainability eventually became a contagious issue in the dialogue between Sida and NTGCF (see section 6). *What emerged was another project – possibly good in many aspects – but not very different from many other environmentally / livelihood oriented projects.* In a sense, NTGCF became more similar to many NGOs that depend on grants mainly from donors, private sector, and/or government. Another difference compared to the old NTGCF is that it is not immediately clear who the owners of the organisation are with the proposed Corpus Fund arrangement. In the old NTGCF the owners were in principle the members of the co-operatives.

3.3 Assessing field implementation

3.3.1 Technologies for improved land management

PAHAL had a broader menu of technologies than TGC at least at the outset of the two projects. TGC on the other hand had more far reaching ambitions to develop the benefits from their interventions in terms of adding value to the produce from the land. The PAHAL has been involved in (1) soil and water conservation (including water harvesting and irrigation), (2) forestry, (3) agriculture, (4) horticulture and (5) animal husbandry, while NTGCF had its main interventions in forestry in a broad sense (plantations, natural regeneration, fodder, NTFP). With the possibilities through economy of scale NTGCF also had ambitions to support and develop marketing and processing.

Previous technical assessments³² in PAHAL have as far as soil conservation work is concerned been a bit mixed. The evaluation from 1997 concluded that the technical norms has been followed to a good standard by technical staff, but raises concern that with *the devolution of responsibilities and massive increase in implementation, the standard and maintenance may suffer.* Indications that this may have been the case are some of the critical points raised in the workshop document from 1999³³. *The impressions of the mission are also very mixed.* The field bunds on arable land tend to be over-designed either by an unnecessarily narrow spacing between bunds or by construction of overly sized bunds. The general lay out the bunds on the contour has not always been as required. At the same time maintenance seem to be done when bunds are damaged because of poor lay out in combination with extreme rainfall. All these aspects are captured in photo 1 below.

³² See e.g. Flint et al (1997) Evaluation Report – PAHAL Project , Rajasthan, India and PEDO (1999) Sustainable Village Institution Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience. Document prepared for a workshop in 1999.

³³ PEDO (1999) Sustainable Village Institutions Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience.

Photo 1: Some contour bunds tend to suffer from design or lay out deficiencies. This can be compensated to some extent by good maintenance.



The bunds decrease the area of available arable land and on gentle slopes not much is gained in terms of arresting erosion and controlling run off with this type of design. Whether this is due to mistakes by those who were responsible for the implementation (in this case technical officers or VLC) or because the technical guidance has been inadequate is difficult to know. A peculiar aspect is that the spacing between bunds appears to be expressed in terms of a fixed horizontal interval (HI), rather than using a fixed vertical interval (VI). In the latter case the spacing between bunds of a standardised size would automatically become narrower on steeper slopes and vice versa on gentle slopes. In other words the spacing would be adjusted to cater for the higher erosion hazard one would expect in steep terrain. This would not automatically be the case with a fixed HI.

Another reason for the tendency of “over design” is that this activity together with forestry (although to a lesser extent) has been the most significant activity in terms of expenditure (see table 3 and figure 5), where most of it was for the labour provided by the villagers. *PAHAL has therefore to a considerable extent been an employment generation scheme* for the time required to establish soil conservation structures and tree plantations. A considerable portion was implemented when Dungapur suffered from a severe drought in 1996–1998 and *the temptation might have been there to build more and bigger soil conservation structures than what would be justified strictly from a land management view.*

The workshop documentation also brings attention to a certain degree of neglect for conservation work (including tree plantings) on steeper areas of common land around the villages. It appears as if the villagers have put priorities on implementation on their private land. *With a more holistic view of cause and effect regarding land degradation and diminishing water resources a watershed approach embraces all kind of lands including the steeper slopes.* These degraded slopes generate serious run off of surface water during rains, that otherwise could infiltrate into the soil and increase water storage – had the land been properly managed. The run off itself can cause serious downstream effects on arable land through either increased erosion and/or unwanted depositions of eroded soils. Moreover conservation work already done in the lower part of the watershed can be damaged. Another danger when most of the efforts in conservation and plantations has gone to privately owned land, is that the pressure on the remaining

common land may increase. This can be the case if the private wastelands were used for seasonal grazing by others than the owner only before it was fenced off and protected as a result of the project.

Besides some similar concerns for forestry as for soil conservation (see previous paragraphs), the project has had various success with the tree plantings schemes. On the more degraded sites, tree plantations have not performed well, mainly as a result of the extended drought. This has been less problematic for indigenous species, particularly when the project has relied on natural regeneration from seeds and in particular shoots from rootstocks. These degraded sites have in some villages – also on common land – been well protected, so even if the planted trees had not done so well, growth of grass has been very satisfactory. *The mission saw examples of common land that were well managed by the villagers through cut and carry systems, where grazing only was allowed for some time before the rainy season.*

Species used for reforestation included *Zyzyphus* (local name), different *Acacia* species, *Azadirachta indica* (Neem), *Prosopis juliflora*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Sirus* (local name), *Su-bubub* (local name) and *Pongamia innta* (Karanj), Bamboo species, and many others. Various fodder and food species have also been planted both on degraded lands as well as on some field bunds on arable land. The impressions from these efforts (both trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs) are also mixed. Trees on the most degraded sites are not doing well, while the grass growth often can be quite impressive as a result of the protection. Trees on the less degraded site survive but the growth rate is poor. This could perhaps have been enhanced with another type of site preparation technique. The standard practise appears to have been to excavate ditches on the contour ("V"ditches) to trap water during the rains and thereby improve the soil moisture regime (see Photo 2). With another type of water harvesting technique, often referred to as half moon or semi circular terraces, that concentrates water to a single tree or group of trees survival, survival and growth can be enhanced. Trees on more favourable sites have done generally well. These include many of the fruit trees planted like Orange, Pomegranate, Bere and Guava.

Photo 2: V-ditches on the contour to enhance soil moisture regime



Other forms of water harvesting and management for irrigation and consumption have also been part of the PAHAL menu. Some resources for this have wisely enough been used for repairs of tanks³⁴ and

³⁴ Dams fully or partly built with concrete.

anicut rather than building new costly structures. Other water management/harvesting activities have included earthen ponds as well as “Pucca” channels, and lift irrigation. *The problem of siltation in some of these structures needs to be addressed if their water storage capacity shouldn't be lost.* The mission also saw an encouraging example of a lift irrigation system initiated by VLC after PAHAL was finalised, which was funded by TAD (see Box 2). The villagers still tended to view this as a PAHAL intervention as development and local capacity building began with PAHAL through the VLC. There has however been concerns raised (e.g. by Sida) that *the project has been biased towards irrigated – at the expense of rainfed agriculture, which by far is the dominating practise in Dungapur.*

Box 2: Community Lift Irrigation

The VLC from Rayni Khabda village in Dungapur block constructed an anicut as part of a lift irrigation scheme in year 2000 (after completion of PAHAL project) with support of Rs. 5.74 lakhs from TAD. For the anicut, around 80 laborers from the village voluntarily contributed 4 days of labor (equivalent to Rs. 12,800 (average wage rate of Rs. 40/- per day). Apart from this necessary labor for laying distribution pipeline system, labor and material for jack well was provided as contribution to create a complete Lift Irrigation system. The water distribution committee (WDC), a sub-unit of VLC, support a pump operator by paying salary of Rs. 1000 p.m. for 4 months of the rabi crop period. To meet this cost, the WDC charge a fixed rate of Rs. 35/- per hour of irrigation support t for each farmer. The WDC meets regularly every 11th day for discussing charges and maintenance issues.

A special structure that have been successfully applied are the checkdams to control gully formations. *Not only have the purpose been achieved, but due to the “desired” siltation behind the checkdams additional agricultural land has been created/reclaimed as in photo 3.* These patches of land tend to be fertile and have favourable soil moisture conditions making it possible to rotate two crops per year (usually cereals and pulses). In favourable years even paddy (wet rice) is grown.

Photo 3: Cultivation on soil trapped behind the checkdam



In agriculture and horticulture the focus has been on demonstrations of selected crop varieties and vegetables. The evaluation in 1997 described this as “a transfer of technology approach” to promote conventional improved varieties, “the appropriateness or superiority of which is not always certain” given the variations in agro-climatic conditions. *In addition to this, a common deficiency with the demonstrations*

established by “outsiders” (in this case the technical staff from different line departments) is that these are introduced with no consideration for the local farming- or livelihood system. They assume resources (capital, labour and/or time) that the local farmers may not have. Hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers has proved to be costly to the extent that the increases in yield rarely make up for these costs in rain fed agriculture. The devolution of responsibilities in the “new” PAHAL to the local village institutions may have changed this had a second phase of the project been approved. *Then innovations in agriculture is likely to have had an initial focus on improving subsistence farming rather than the more risky specialisation that goes together with surplus production for the market.*

Finally PAHAL has also attempted to support development of animal husbandry. The two most significant efforts were the Heifer project and the introduction of new goat varieties. The success of introducing heifers to improve the local breeds for milk production goes hand in hand with availability of sufficiently nutritious fodder and access to some sort of veterinary services, both of which are not always available in Dungapur. In PAHAL loans were provided for selected households for purchase of the heifers. *According to the evaluation of 1997, the loan repayment would absorb all of the income generated from the milk.* If this is the case, the Heifer project is obviously not a viable option. On the other hand, one of the studies prepared for the workshop in 1999³⁵ brought attention to the initiative by the federated VLCs in Bichhiwara to study and organise a viable milk collection and transport route for marketing to the Dungapur dairy. In this study it is specifically mentioned that some farmers had been involved in the Heifer project. *This is perhaps an indication that there are farmers that might have benefited from the Heifer project.* Another significant effort in animal husbandry has been the *introduction of a high yielding goat breed.* *This intervention has been quite successful* at least in the villages visited by the mission. Sharam village in Bichhiwara Block for instance started off with three goats a few years back and today there are approximately 100 goats in this village.

The NTGCF project had as mentioned in the beginning of this section a more narrow menu of support in terms of land based activities. At the outset of the Sida supported project NTGCF envisaged that they would be involved with tree planting mainly and the related forest/land management required. It is also important to remember that the project did not target the commons exclusively but that also other types of land was included such as private land (waste- and other types). They projected the type of technical activities for average types of local tree grower’s co-operatives on these different categories of land as presented in table 6 below for Rajasthan and Orissa respectively. The differences between states in terms of type of intervention and focus on land categories are reflections of different agro-climatic conditions as well as anticipated local demands. The species would also vary accordingly and include horticultural and medicinal species. Nurseries were to be established and managed locally at village levels

From the table one can understand that fuelwood and fodder were perceived as more critical issues in Rajasthan than in Orissa. The heavy emphasis on bamboo in Orissa is a reflection of a more favourable climate but also – on a speculative note – an anticipated need for bamboo as raw-material for pulp and paper industries in Orissa³⁶. In addition to this, NTGCF project has supported activities aiming at reducing pressure and conserving existing resources. This has included the promotion and introduction of improved cooking stoves and bio-gas plants. The former appears to have been fairly successful in NTGCF in terms of quantitative achievements.

³⁵ PEDO (1999) Sustainable Village Institutions Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience.

³⁶ The control of harvesting and trade in bamboo has a complicated and contagious history in Orissa. The Orissa Forest Department and the State government had strong interests in this as an important source of revenue. Eventually they charged too much and these industries began importing all of their needs for raw material from Assam mainly. If and how this might have influenced the TGC in Orissa could be an interesting study in it’s own right

Table 6: Type of interventions projected for different land categories

Type of intervention	Land categories (ha)			Distribution %
	Private land	Common land	Cooperative land*	
Orissa				
Mixed Bamboo	10	10	20	50
Semi-hardwood		10	10	25
Commercial sp.	3		3	7.5
Silvipasture		5	5	12.5
Agroforestry	2		2	5
Total	15	25	40	100
Rajasthan				
Semi harwood		10	10	14.3
Fuelwood		10	10	14.3
Commercial sp.	5	4	9	12.8
Silvipasture	20	16	36	51.5
Agroforestry	5		5	7.1
Total	30	40	70	100

* on lease

This is however as far as we can go in terms of assessing the technical aspects of the NTGCF. The relevance and sustainability of these interventions remains unclear as the mission had no opportunity to meet relevant persons from NTGCF or make field visits to local TGCs. The progress reports – both from the old as well as the new NTGCF – do not provide much information in this regard as they tend to focus on areas covered (in ha) and institutional co-operation at the local level (number of TGCs and involvement with other local institutions). Moreover the MTR, which one would expect to address – among other things – also performance of technical interventions, is silent in this regard. What they do mention is that the potential of natural regeneration had been realised during the course of implementing of the “old” NTGCF project, which on a purely speculative note, may indicate that either some plantations did not perform well and/or that their relevance could be questioned.

In the new NTGCF, it appears as if the menu of land management activities has been broadened to include (i) soil conservation, (ii) land slide hazard control and (iii) some water harvesting etc. In this sense the project gradually became more similar to PAHAL. But as for previous progress reports, the information provided do not go much beyond quantifying the achievements in “areas” and “numbers”. It is therefore impossible to assess in any degree of detail the performance, let alone draw conclusions.

3.3.2 Village level development

PAHAL provides an interesting analogy of how ‘Village level Institutions’ dealing with management of natural resources evolve and further develop over time. The institutional development that took place in NTGCF provides an interesting contrast to PAHAL. While PAHAL illustrates – at least in the more successful villages – the development of increasingly capable “project created” VIs, the NTGCF project began with a specific type of “created” village institutions that evolved to co-operation with

various existing VIs. In the sections below we describe and try to assess how some specific aspects related to local institutional development were addressed³⁷.

3.3.2.1 Creating sustainable village institution

In the old PAHAL period (1992–94), the main approach to facilitate 'participation' was through the VLMs (see 2.3.1.2). The VLM was under contract with the NGO, and were paid through the project budget. These VLMs – selected in consultation with the villagers (one male and one female) –, were given several intensive and short courses on subjects like gender sensitisation, communication skills, NRM etc. The VLMs were perceived as the interface for interaction at the village level. With the help of Master Trainers from the NGOs, the VLMs were to prepare a Micro Level Plan (MLP) with the selected villages. A panchayat level committee formed by the VLM, was the formal (though unregistered) forum of village level participation. Meanwhile several informal village level committees (VLCs) were also established to further strengthen community participation.

The project therefor made genuine attempts of enhancing community participation. *In practice however, the VLMs were found to function more as 'extension agents' of the project rather than as a 'support structure' for the village.* Since the functions of the VLCs were determined by the VLMs and therefor indirectly by the project "community participation" was somewhat lost in the process. Moreover the focus of the HIRD component in the old PAHAL was the capacity of individual VLM members rather than the village level in general. Even the village planning (MLPs) were in reality the responsibility of the VLM.

In 1995 a new approach was initiated, commonly referred to as the "New PAHAL" (1995–1998). The project introduced some radical institutional changes and the entire focus of the project was re-directed to create "robust and sustainable village level institutions (VLI)" for the planning and execution of the physical implementation in the village. The role and mandate of the village institutions was made more comprehensive and included not only planning, but also some financial management and to contract the project for the technical support required for different physical activities. The VLI set up consisted of a Village Level Organisation (VLO) or assembly, who would elect an executive body referred to as the Village Level Committee (VLC) with 7 members of which at least one should be a woman. With time special thematic interest groups were formed in many villages. The VLC was to function as the link between the village and the project. The VLCs were accountable and reported to the VLOs and the gram sabha meetings. The VLIs were now the formal partner in the project and the VLOs were registered under the Societies Registration Act

The role of the VLMs changed to provide support to the VLOs. With time and in practice the role of the VLM decreased though and VLCs interacted directly with the block- and to some extent district level. Concerted efforts were made to further strengthen community participation. For example:

- detailed guidelines for the VLOs with special consideration for adequate representation of the poor,
- the VLCs should be distinct and separate from existing power structures like panchayats, and
- that women should be adequately represented in the VLOs and the VLC.

For planning and implementation of both physical and HIRD activities the block level were providing support. A joint team of GO and the NGO staff would visit and hold an initial meeting with the VLOs as part of the planning process. Then the final amount of physical work would be estimated by the

³⁷ This section is primarily based on the available evaluation studies on PAHAL, the views gathered from meeting and interviews of important players and the village meetings (meeting were held with villagers (and VLC members) from the villages of Sharam and Virpur of Bichhiwara block, and Damri and Rainikhabra of Dungarpur block). For NTGCF our sources of information admittedly are weak as we haven't had any formal discussions with the project or visited any of "their" villages.

VLC. Some concerns were however raised in the 'social and institutional study' done by Lund University (1997) regarding 'real participation' also in the new PAHAL. The report argues that instead of the VLMs, the VLCs were participating mainly mentioned the risk that these would be dominated by the local elite, as has been the experience elsewhere in India. The ex-post evaluation team however believes that this may have been less of a problem as almost all the villages in PAHAL were tribal and homogeneous. Some concerns were also raised regarding the efficacy of the way the MLP exercises were conducted- and how participatory these exercises were. *But overall the mission believe that 'community participation has been better than average' in the PAHAL project.*

The strategies adopted in the new PAHAL appear to have been rather successful, as is also mentioned in the 'institutional study for phase II'³⁸. *This observation was unanimously shared by almost all the stakeholders that this team met during the ex-post evaluation exercise.* During this stage attempts were made to establish lateral linkages by the VLCs with other sectors and institutions. For example, in December 1995, the VLCs and the project staff worked on a government "pulse polio immunisation programme", and were also involved in the 'panchataru' programme- a district wise afforestation programme of the government initiated during that time. Also small women self-help groups/micro credit societies were formed by the supporting NGO.

After September 1998, when PAHAL project formally had concluded the first phase, the supporting NGOs (PEDO and RSS) in the Bichhiwara and Dungarpur Block maintained relations with the VLCs and VLOs. In the Bichhiwara block, PEDO continued a micro credit programme with the women members of the VLO. In 1999, an attempt was made to bring the VLCs together in the Bichhiwara Block to form a federation with the objective of sustaining the institutional achievements from PAHAL. It was decided that the federation would basically be involved in the area of i/land rights; ii/water crisis; iii/inadequate infrastructure; iv/forest disputes; and v/coordination with PRIs. The federation was quite active during the initial years and organised several "awareness" meetings at the village level, and also initiated a dairy development programme (see 3.3.1). A loose federation of the VLCs in Dungarpur Block was also formed. The mission was informed that they still meets once a year and that they recently had organised a awareness meeting for the political leaders on village level issues. With the limitations in mind that this mission purposely visited successful villages only, *one can conclude that the project has had a very tangible insitutional impact in these villages.* Whether these institutions are robust enough and can be sustained remains to be seen and will be further elaborated in the Chapter 4 on Impact and Sustainability.

If we turn to the NTGCF project the original intention was to create "economically viable and self-sustaining co-operatives of tree growers, able to operate on their own after initial support from the project." The philosophy was that in order to make the co-operatives sustainable "it was imperative that the members will derive benefits that were substantial enough " for them to continue. Each local TGC had their own steering committee, who were elected by the members. They were provided training in financial management and were responsible for their own economy after some financial support had been provided by the project. *In other words, to maintain the co-operative they also had to generate funds or provide resources themselves i/from. the sale of fodder and NTFPs to begin with; ii/from trees (although this would take some time); or iii/from their own contribution.* Any remaining profit was then to shared by the members. This proved to function well in some co-operatives and was more problematic in others. Membership in the co-operatives was open to all including women and landless, although not all volunteered to become members. *The tendency was, according to one informant, that those villagers who were better off was less likely to join the tree growers co-operative, while those who were dependent on the waste lands were more interested.* A substantial amount of training was provided for the co-operatives including both the already mentioned financial

³⁸ Arya V., Parasuram R. (1998) Follow up Institutional Appraisal of PAHAL – II

management and in technical aspects (nursery management, site preparation, planting, thinning etc) and socially related (communication, participation etc.).

Photo 4: Villager discussing local institutions with the mission (Sharam village, Bichhiwara Block.).



A weakness in the initial Sida supported project was that the significance of the existing institutional framework was not fully appreciated. While acceptance from those who preferred not to be members in the TGC could be negotiated for a delineated area of common land³⁹ (that the land would not be available for them any more, unless they became members), a common problem was that some of these common lands often were used by different villages. For successful TGC, there could also be tensions within their villages after some time, particularly if the TGCs were successful. This was more pronounced in villages' with different fractions/casts. Another constraint was the difficulty to obtain leases for land to regenerate through plantation or natural regeneration. This was a constraint particularly in Orissa.

With the SVE and MTR in 1996, the institutional “approach” was fundamentally changed. *The project was from now on not going to emphasise the establishment and registration of co- operatives i.e. creation of village institutions, but rather work through existing institutions at the local level* like e.g. Van Panchayats, Gramya Jungle and Joint Forest Management groups. These groups were not restricted to common waste lands only so other types of lands were therefor included (both in terms of “use” and “tenure” regime) in the project as long as the interventions aimed at environmental restoration of land resources. As a consequence and as mentioned under Section 3.3.1 on “Technologies for improved land management”, the menu of support activities also became somewhat more diversified. Any assessment of all these different type of village institutions would require a very comprehensive study, which goes far beyond the resources and purpose of this ex post evaluation.

³⁹ This common land refers to land under the Forest departments or Revenue departments, and not common land under the village

3.3.2.2 Capacity development

The VLM were given extensive three months training (technical as well as practical) in the old PAHAL by the lead NGO. This included Micro Level Planing and social awareness issues like “empowerment, gender sensitivity, problem identification etc”. Capacity development at the village level however was limited and focused on raising awareness about land-related issues and degradation. In the new PAHAL capacity development were mainly conducted at the VLC level, since planning and managing was decentralised by the project to the local. This also required reorientation and development of new training packages for the VLCs including subjects such as soil and water conservation, animal husbandry, agriculture, forestry, accounting and issues related to institutional development.

A post PAHAL study done on local institutions that included four VLCs concluded that the “systematic HIRD and NRM based training inputs were of enduring value”⁴⁰. The same study also pointed out that ‘the training in PAHAL remained more confined to the key individuals in the VLCs as a similar level of engagements was not possible at community level. In this limitation lies a possible source of institutional weakness. The training that was implemented for the villagers were confined to specific technical themes as they emerged in the MLP. During the field visits of the mission, villagers mentioned e.g. training in animal husbandry and agriculture. The women groups expressed satisfaction with the capacity development, which will be, discussed in the gender sections below. The villagers also expressed how they now could participate more effectively in government schemes to address problems with land degradation and water scarcity as a result of the training by PAHAL in soil and water conservation.

At the NGO level however, the views on ‘capacity development’ differs slightly. Mr Devilal Vyas of PEDO (the NGO in Bichhiwara block), expressed some concern about the relevance of the training programmes, since they were not planned from the local needs in different villages. *For example training in agriculture were mainly dealing with demonstrations/trials with urea and hybrid crop varieties, that were neither adapted to the local farming systems nor to the agro-ecological conditions.* Further, the concern as expressed in the earlier evaluations over ‘technical training taking precedence over social aspects’ were reiterated. For example, Mr Kanu Upadhayay of RSS (the NGO in Dungarpur block) said ‘initially PAHAL did a lot in social capacity development- things not even included in the PD. Later the emphasis was on physical implementation, and the interaction with the people therefore suffered’. This difference in views is understandable, since *the villagers were mainly concerned with direct tangible benefits provided by the project, while the NGOs have a broader agenda beyond the boundaries and life time of the project.*

The initial efforts regarding capacity development at the local level in NTGCF concentrated for obvious reasons on the need to explain the project and the understanding of co-operatives. This training/awareness raising was targeting all villagers. This was later followed by training in organisational and management aspects for those who decided to join the tree growers co-operative. Special efforts to involve women were made by organising women training camps. Training also covered topics related to forestry and natural resource management. Training and workshops was regularly implemented for the project staff and in particularly for the SHT. Later with the changes in the tree growers project, NTGCF reports a shift in the training of the SHT both *to reflect changes in content but also the need to change the roles from “implementers” to “facilitators”*. The “mission” of NTGCF also changed from representing and servicing a number of co-operatives to a learning organisation that justified its existence more from environmental concerns rather than improving the livelihood of poor people through production and value addition.

⁴⁰ This study was made as a preparation and input to the “Workshop on Sustainable Village Institution Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience” in December 1999

3.3.2.3 Gender

It is important to understand the role of women in the social-political context of Dungapur in order to assess gender aspects. Mainly a patriarchal society, the women in the districts are not very visible in the social hierarchy. They are however important stakeholders and silent managers of the natural resources in the area. Their role has increased as a result of the seasonal migration of men looking for temporary employment elsewhere. This has increased the burden on the women as they still had their traditional tasks to manage.

The original PD (1991) states clearly that involving the women is ‘essential’ for the success of the project, and goes on to say that the project must understand and tackle many of the problems from women perspectives. *The PD included a ‘gender dimension’ in PAHAL by e.g. i/stipulating that the VLMs should consist of one man and one women; ii/establishing special women’s forum for discussion of relevant issues; and iii/ensuring that block level project officials also included women. Whether it was effective is perhaps debatable.* For these requirements on women representation specific efforts must be made to ensure that these women will be more than just a hostage.

In the new PAHAL, the revised PD gave an even stronger emphasis on the ‘gender’ dimensions. The project sought to operationalise the strategy by i/ensuring representation of women at all levels of the project structure; ii/developing sensitivity and conceptual clarity about the gender issues among its staff and in its programmes; and iii/integration of gender aspects from planning to implementation. Besides the stipulation that the VLC committee should have at least one female, the project took specific steps to ensure that the women participated in the village meetings. Some of the project assets were provided in the name of women (e.g. goats) to increase the level of self-esteem. In some VLCs females were elected as the president. *The mid term evaluation done in 1997 points out that the efforts at increasing the involvement of women at all levels had a significant impact in the project villages.* Women became more aware and vocal especially in the public fora. Their participation in training programmes awareness camps and meetings provided the women access to information and in some cases also technical skills. These conclusions are somewhat contradictory to a study done on the gender impact⁴¹ of the project in the Bichhiwara block. The study claimed that no women had any idea of the implications of the Village Institutions being registered under the society act in the new PAHAL. Most of the women were not aware of the name of the project, and as many as 63% said they signed statements without even knowing what was being documented. The VLM female counterparts claimed that they were dominated by the male members as more attention was given to the men and that they did not participate in the decision making process.

The mission’s impression – based on the visits to a few villages only though – are however positive. Five years after the project was finalised, the impact on women can be observed even today, at least in some villages. During the ex post evaluation, the team organised separate village meetings with the women only. *What emerged was encouraging- particularly the immense confidence that radiated from the women.* A specific example of this confidence in the two villages visited in Bichhiwara block is a very successful micro credit programme initiated by PEDO. This programme began by bringing the women self help groups – formed during PAHAL – into 15 larger groups under the Himmatpur panchayat, now consisting of 300 members. They now handle a saving of Rs 6 lakhs and an additional Rs 8 lakhs under a separate government scheme. The women expressed clear satisfaction with the PAHAL. They rated the meetings in PAHAL, as a ‘tool for information and knowledge’ and mentioned the reduction of several social ills like ‘wife beating’. In Box 3 below, we summarise and present some of the views expressed to us by the women in our village meetings.

⁴¹ Anon (1999) Study on Women’s Participation in VLC in Bichhiwara Block. This study was one of several made as inputs into the Workshop in 1999 on “Sustainable Village Institutions Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience.”

Box 3: Views of some women in PAHAL

- PAHAL has not only increased our status within the family but has also given us a sense of identity
- We learnt so many interesting things then, now we have nothing new to learn
- Self help groups created by PAHAL helped us during that period and has now matured into a full fledged micro credit society
- PAHAL has generated a habit of saving
- The social and physical assets created during PAHAL helped us in surviving the drought period- we did not feel the full impact of fodder scarcity even though we went through three consecutive droughts
- PAHAL created a lot of social empowerment, before we could not sit with the men and talk about general affairs in the same level
- The trainings were very helpful
- We received the same wage rate as the men in the villages, unlike in other government projects
- Wife beating stopped completely during the social pressure
- We miss the meetings very much
- After the close of PAHAL our social meetings are becoming less and less

NTGCF has not had the same focus on gender and the need to enhance the role and influence of women in the project in operational terms as in PAHAL. This being said, does not mean that gender has been neglected in the NTGCF. On the contrary the challenges with a strong patriarchal system was realised early in the old tree growers co-operative project. To cater for this separate forum with women was organised. Later the project initiated a number of gender workshops with the purpose of developing gender strategies in each of the project states. Their operational implication has not however been clear as the mission was denied any possibility to meet villagers involved in the project. Reported weaknesses include the registration of only one person from a household as members in TGCS, which always tend to exclude the women. In comparing the two projects one also needs to appreciate PAHAL's more fortunate situation in that they have been working in rather homogenous tribal areas, which has not been the case for many of the NTGCF's villages characterised by different tribes and/or casts.

3.3.2.4 Empowerment and equity

There are no doubts in the mission that empowerment was more comprehensive in the new PAHAL. Strategies, management procedures, and administrative routines were more convincingly designed and implemented to empower the villagers. Different studies in the project has however argued that 'empowerment' in the new PAHAL has been restricted to the 'VLCs' mainly. Equity beyond the gender dimension could perhaps also be questioned in terms of involving and prioritising the poorest and most marginalised in the project, even if the intention was to have representation of the poor in different village institutions. While these concerns might be justified, particularly under the pressure during the last few years of implementing as much as possible, one should perhaps not expect too much. Quoting one of the informants who was reflecting on these issues appears as a reasonable assessment – *“it is a tall order for projects like PAHAL to build institutions as well as to expect them to also ensure equity. What matters is the level of transparency in management systems and PAHAL succeeded very well in that”*.

Even in the village meeting during this mission, one clearly got the impression that the villagers had confidence in the project, and that they as a result now are capable enough to even challenge some of the government initiatives. For example the villagers of Sharam mentioned that they resisted the way the government drought relief programmes were designed since they now have the technical under-

standing of watershed projects. In another incident the women members told the mission how they organised themselves to stand against the atrocities of the Forest Department. *The mission believes that the project has accomplished a high degree of social empowerment at least in the villages visited during the mission.*

Empowerment in the local TGC would be a more tricky task to assess even if the mission could have met some of these local co-operatives. One could assume that the initial introduction of the concept and ideas of the NTGCF projects would be of critical importance. *The villagers would need to fully comprehend and understand the consequences of choosing between membership or staying out of the TGC. Equity however in terms of prioritising the poorest of the poor, is hardly relevant in the TGC if one assess the approach village by village.* The decision to join would presumably be based on each individual's assessment of what he or she will have to contribute and eventually gain from the membership. The project would not deny anyone membership because he or she is too poor or too wealthy. In practice though, it is the mission's understanding that the poorest were more interested as they usually were more dependent on the wastelands. A certain prioritising for the poor might have taken place through the selection of villages, but this would require further investigation. Any assessment of empowerment and equity in the new NTGCF with their involvement in a variety of local institutions with their different agendas would have required time and resources that goes far beyond the what had been possible for this mission.

3.4 The relation to other development efforts

3.4.1 The projects in relation Swedish priorities during 1990–2000

Both projects were on a general level congruent with the Swedish goal and objectives for development co-operation. Perhaps one should specifically mention the objective “long-term sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment” (see 2.2) as this objective at the time when the first discussions began about both projects in the late 1980s had just been adopted by the Swedish parliament⁴². *Both projects were also in line with the more specific guidelines from the early 1990s for development co-operation*, where one of the focal areas were forestry and environmental issues. Gender as an integrated part of the programs has also been addressed in both project documents although not with sufficient initial commitment at the operational field level.

Assessing the two projects in relation to Sida's emphasis on experimental and innovative projects as a strategic priority is more complicated. *Both projects represented alternative approaches to address the “wasteland issue” as compared to the normal government schemes.* But supporting alternatives will not get far, if this is not specifically considered in the project document. The term “mega-pilot” was even used for NTGCF, but not clearly reflected in the modus operandi neither in the original PD nor in the revised PD from 1998. In PAHAL the emphasis on an experimental approach is even less evident. *This is not to say that the projects were not innovative in practice, but the operational implications if one want to influence mainstream development was not sufficiently addressed in any of the projects.*

While one can agree that both NTGCF and PAHAL represented major departures from the type of natural resource management projects that Sida had supported in the 80s⁴³ does not automatically make them into methods development or pilot projects, particularly if *there was no shared understanding and commitment among the partners. This was the case for PAHAL, where at least GoR had a very different view as compared to Sida and some of the local stakeholders* (see 3.1). Noteworthy is that the emphasis on methods, institutional development, and related capacity building were even stronger in the Development Co-operation Strategy with India for 1996–2001.

⁴² The objective were adopted in 1988, not long after the World Commission on Environment and Development presented their report in 1987.

⁴³ Notable the Social Forestry Programme in Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Bihar

3.4.2 The projects in relation to Indian priorities 1990–2000

PAHAL was consistent with some important GoI's priorities. First by the selection of a poor backward district like Dungarpur, and second by promoting efforts to improve delivery system of government schemes was in line with GoI's priorities stated in the VIII plan document (initiated in 1990 and developed for 1992–97):

- “Development of institutions and organisational capabilities in the backward regions of the country and the delivery system for development programmes would need to be strengthened to deal effectively with the problems of development and redistributive justice”.

Finally and the third priority and perhaps the most obvious was the focus on rehabilitation of degraded wasteland and development of natural resources to meet the local livelihood needs, matched GoI's priority, as expressed in the VIII plan and in the related programmes for development of wasteland and forest land (see 2.1). But – and similar to the conclusions in the previous section – if the operational implications of a project with ambitions to improve government schemes are not shared among those stakeholders that matters (e.g. GoR), influence beyond the physical boundaries of the project will be limited. The NTGCF also fits into this overall policy context, but has a special background as it was originally initiated as a pilot project by NWDB, who looked for an alternative/complementary approach to address the issues of the wastelands. Inspired by the experiences of the dairy cooperatives under the NDDDB, this organisation was asked to implement a pilot project, which later was expanded into a mega pilot project with Sida support (and later also CIDA support).

A special dimension of PAHAL and to a lesser extent NTGC was the employment generated in the projects. The physical activities and in particular the establishment of soil and water conservation structures and tree planting require considerable labour inputs for which both the projects paid. This was also in line with the priorities and the means devised in the VIII plan captured in the following quotation:

- “Employment generation and poverty alleviation objectives are ultimately related to growth. However, the growth has to be accompanied with a sharper regional focus of reduced disparity and more, dispersed benefits. The backward regions and the weaker sections of the society, if not protected fully, are more likely to be left behind in the natural process of growth. Adequate protection will have to be continued to be provided to the poor and the weaker sections of the society. Adequate food supply, control on inflation,, effective working of public distribution system and *developmental programmes which generate adequate employment are among the main components of the strategy to take care of the poor...*”

So while identifying some of the policies and priorities of GoI, one might feel assured that the projects has been relevant. The counter argument might be that national policies and strategies tend to embrace many views and different priorities, sometime to the point of being pointless. It would therefore not be difficult to find policy support for projects like PAHAL and NTGCF. In this context it is also important to mention policies and strategies that a project haven't considered or even challenged.

The Indian policy on decentralisation is a good example with the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act in 1992 that strengthened the role of the panchayats and the Extension of the 73rd act to cover scheduled areas through the Panchayats in 1996 (see 2.1) in eight states and among them Orissa and Rajasthan. This has also influenced the policies and strategies related to wasteland development in India. *The development of local institutions in PAHAL (the VLO and VLC) and the decentralisation of financial management to some extent bypassed the Gram Panchayats and was a source of frustration at least in some areas.* This might have changed, had there been a second phase of PAHAL after 1999, as the question had been raised by e.g. Sida. The relation to the PRI should have been a less problematic issue at least in theory for the local tree growers co-operatives as this project was not related to government development schemes in the same sense as PAHAL.

4. Impact and Sustainability

For the assessment of impact we will use the objectives of the projects as a point of departure. The objectives in PAHAL were (using the words of the Mid Term Evaluation from 1997):

- To strengthen sustainable land use management for local economic development,
- To contribute to socio-economic development in Dungapur district, and
- To inform operational policy development within rural development in Rajasthan.

For the NTGCF we restrict ourselves mainly to the old NTGCF as their “mission” was more unique than the new NTGCF, who appears to be rather similar to other Indian “environmental” NGOs. The old NTGCF also had reasonably clear objectives:

- To improve rural income through the creation of Anand Pattern co-operatives for the production, processing and marketing of trees and tree produce
- To increase the availability of fuel wood, fodder and small timber (by planting trees and fodder on marginal and waste lands) to meet the local needs of energy, animal system and rural artisan activities
- To encourage stall feeding and reduce uncontrolled grazing and unauthorised felling of trees in the areas surrounding the society village

What these objectives have in common for assessment of impact and sustainability are related to three dimensions namely i/livelihood; ii/environment; and iii/institutions (in the broadest possible meaning of the word). There are however important distinctions if we view them as innovative pilot projects. *For PAHAL the purpose was to develop alternative approaches that could be useful for similar government schemes, while NTGCF after some initial support should generate their own resources also for expanding their own activities.* In other words they were not relevant for government schemes in the same way as PAHAL although they had sprung from the same concern about land degradation and increasing poverty. Another kind of dimension is what has been accomplished within the boundaries of the project as opposed to the influence outside the project.

4.1 PAHAL

4.1.1 The internal impact and sustainability

The most dramatic short term impact of PAHAL has been the employment generated through the implementation of physical work in order to restore and enhance productivity from land. A major share of the budget allocation has been used for labour intensive soil and water conservation structures and to some lesser extent reforestation/re-vegetation. This employment has been particularly important during years of drought, as was the case in e.g. 1996 and 1998. Apart from sustaining the households during these periods, it also made it possible for them to keep their cattle⁴⁴, to redeem assets and mortgaged land etc. There is however not possible to say anything about the significance of the employment generated as there are no quantitative monitoring data available (see 3.2.2.1).

The interventions made to restore and improve land productivity were diverse in PAHAL. As we know that large areas of land – both common waste land as well as private land – were in a state increasing degradation with deteriorating productivity, the mission believe that *many of these technical interventions has*

⁴⁴ Many farmers would otherwise have had to sell their cattle at the same time and therefor at a low market price

been sensible in order to maintain and improve productivity. This conclusion however depends on future maintenance and management of these efforts. But – as for the amount of employment generated – the absence of base line data and a monitoring system makes it difficult to present a more conclusive view on the quantitative importance of the work done in PAHAL.

Our main critique regarding some of the structures for soil conservation and water harvesting are related to the design (see 3.3.1). If e.g. the field bunds (soil or stone bunds on the contour to control run off and surface erosion) are too narrowly spaced on arable land, the area available for cultivation will be unnecessarily reduced. The increase in productivity per unit area (if the area covered by soil bund is excluded) may not make up for the loss of arable land – at least in the short term. On some gentle slope, one could even question if soil bunds of the type used in PAHAL were required. *Apart from the potential loss in production, project resources are wasted that could have been used elsewhere.* There is also a possibility here that the immediate gains from the employment opportunities has had a negative impact on both the choice of land for soil conservation structures as well as a bias for more “costly” technologies or tendencies for “over design”. *The impact on livelihood will therefor be mixed and to determine whether it will positive or not in the short, medium and long term perspective would require a more comprehensive special study. An exception where we can clearly see a positive short and long term impact from soil conservation structures are those areas of reclaimed arable land that has developed as a result of siltation behind check dams for gully control.* The magnitude of this is of course limited as the total area of this type of land is small.

The work done to protect and restore common wasteland (usually for fodder and fuel wood) has and will have a positive impact as far as those demonstrated for the mission are representative for the project. There are positive medium and long-term externalities of reduced run off and erosion from these areas on arable land and the improved water regime in the watershed. It also brings short-term benefits through enhanced fodder production and to some extent fuel wood (see Photo 5). These protected and developed wastelands have been significant for some villagers particularly during years of inadequate rains. The weakness has been poor survival rate of planted tree seedlings. *Cost efficiency could have been enhanced, if the project had relied more on natural regeneration.*

Photo 5: The positive effects of protection and management of common wastelands has been clearly demonstrated in PAHAL.



The more specific efforts to increase production and income on the farm include the introduction of high yielding crop varieties of different agricultural crops and improved livestock breeds. These efforts has not been widely adopted by the poor farmers as they require investment in seeds, chemical fertiliser and sometime also irrigation in a farming system mostly characterised by rainfed agriculture and diversification to minimise risks. The introduction of improved breeds has had a more mixed outcome. The new goats have apparently been widely adopted. *So with the exception for the goats, any positive impact on livelihood has probably been more pronounced for the less poor farmers.* Another exception is those limited areas where irrigation has been feasible. *These schemes have been rather successfully applied and has therefor had a positive impact on livelihood.* The Lift Irrigation system mentioned in the section on technologies is expected to result in a substantial increase in yields, according to the local farmers (see Box 4).

Box 4: Impact on yield from an Lift Irrigation scheme

Wheat, which so far is the only crop irrigated by this scheme, is provided irrigation support with 5 waterings over an area of 32 ha. It is forecasted that the productivity of wheat, made possible due to this LI system, will be 600–700 kg per *vigra*. At a price of Rs. 8 per kg, the gross agriculture return per *vigra* amounts to Rs. 5600/-. It was reported that this scheme yielded benefits even during the recent severe drought by being able to support, at the minimum, drinking water needs of cattle and population. It is interesting to note that in view of above benefits, the village community could absorb the stress of recent drought.

The other major impact of PAHAL is the local institutional development in the more successful villages. To what extent this has been decisive for the physical achievements in quantitative terms is not clear. A traditional government scheme might have accomplished the same, but the mission believes that the difference will be for the sustainability of the work done. By the empowerment and the decentralised management procedures, the efforts in the field have been internalised. *The sense of ownership that follows from this makes it more likely that maintenance will be better than in a traditional government scheme and hence also sustainability.* The programme has contributed to improved land management and a better environment.

But the impact of the institutional development – in those villages where PAHAL had interacted for a sufficiently long time – goes beyond the accomplishments in the field. The capacity building of in particular the VLC has built capability and confidence that has enabled them to take initiatives on their own. The irrigation scheme mentioned above is one but not the only example that has been initiated by the VLC themselves (see 3.3.2.1). The fear that the institutional achievements of PAHAL would collapse, when the project was terminated in 1998 has proved wrong. *This is not to say that the institutions established will last and be sustainable. Moreover it would be wrong to have this as a yardstick for assessing the success of PAHAL,* as this kind of institutional development takes place in a larger context of policy and institutional changes and related government and non government support programmes.

Of particular significance for PAHAL, was and is the government policy on decentralisation of responsibilities and devolution of power to PRI. The implementation of the “new” PAHAL by passed the panchayats to a considerable extent and this was apparently a source of frustration even to the extent that the VLCs has had difficulties to co-operate with the panchayats in some areas after the project ceased. In other villages there has been less problematic relations particularly when VLC members have been elected for the local Gram panchayat. One can always debate whether it was a strategic mistake by PAHAL not to establish stronger relation with the panchayats or even implement the project through them. *With the pressure to spend funds towards the end of the project, the mission believe that perhaps less would have been accomplished had the project been implemented through the PRI.* This is not only a conclusion regarding the field activities, but also regarding the capacity building in the villages.

Apart from the capacity developed for the VLC and the VLO, the achievements in gender is worth taking note of. The project have achieved a considerable impact in some villages over a short period of time, since

gender really did not gain momentum until after the revised project document came into force. *The mission however believes that there is a danger these “gender achievements” will not last.* The much appreciated women groups need the outside support for some time in order to make a difference. Gender mainstreaming is difficult and as opposed to capacity building in planning, management etc. that were useful for the individuals of the VLC (even when these cease to exist) as it does not challenge social norms and traditions in the same way.

4.1.2 The external influence

The mission has already mentioned the differences in expectations (see 3.1 on Ownership) and particularly noted the very different view of GoR representatives. They did not see PAHAL as an innovative project, that might have had implications for policies and in particular how the project could assist in making implementation of policies – and by extension – government programmes more relevant, effective and efficient. This view contrasts sharply with the view of the local administration as well as Sida. The type of GO-NGO collaborative approach in PAHAL was new in the natural resource management sector. The only similar experience and an inspiration for PAHAL came from the SWACH project who were active in health and sanitation⁴⁵. The State Steering Committee of PAHAL was headed by the Chief Secretary of the State, so *it appears as if the potential for contributing to policy and implementation of other government program would have been there. And yet it did not happen.*

The most important factor, ultimately, that accounts for the project’s ability to influence policies is the “views” (on the project) of key stakeholders, who constitute the policy makers. *As stated earlier, GoR viewed PAHAL as an “add-on” implementation activity and not as a learning platform. This observation become even more remarkable as the issue of Go-NGO collaboration was on the policy agenda in Rajasthan.* A noteworthy development for facilitating GO-NGO collaboration was the creation of ARAVALI⁴⁶, an NGO in Jaipur, based on an idea proposed by the then Secretary Shri ML Mehta. ARAVALI, being a GoR’s initiative was founded in 1994 with the purpose of facilitating collaboration between government and the voluntary sector. The first Chairperson was the Chief Secretary, GoR and the Minister, Rural Development, GoR is the current Chairperson of ARAVALI. Unexpectedly and surprisingly the mission noted that interactions between PAHAL and ARAVALI has been low.

One can only speculate about the reasons for the low profile of PAHAL in GoR, even if the project received significant attention and interest from individual stakeholders during its implementation. *One explanation put forward to the mission was that TAD was appointed the nodal agency who’s influence is limited both as it is active only in tribal areas and is a small government department and therefor not influential.* It would perhaps have been different had the nodal agency been e.g. the Agriculture Department or the Watershed Department as they have a presence and mandate for the entire Rajasthan. While some of the explanation or even critique for this weakness must fall on GoR, *PAHAL can also be criticised for not making sufficient efforts in communication and sharing their experiences with other actors in the state.*

4.2 NTGCF

4.2.1 The internal impact and sustainability

As this mission did not have the possibility to interact with villages involved with NTGCF, we will not be able to say much about the impact in the same manner as for PAHAL in the previous sections. The assessment here on impact and sustainability will be based on views expressed to us by others, the documentation made available but also on pure speculations. Moreover regarding progress reports, we would like to re-iterate the difficulty to assess progress over time (see 3.2.2.1) brought about by the

⁴⁵ The project has e.g. been successful in eradication of guinea worm

⁴⁶ Association for Rural Development through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement

changes after SVE and MTR. As the mission has concluded earlier, these changes were fundamental to the point where it makes more sense to view the new NTGCF project as different project. These changes and how they came about are in themselves an issue that we have elaborated in section 3.2.3.

The project has in terms of area coverage accomplished well beyond what was set as a target when the project began. Most of this has been achieved in the new NTGCF, but then we do not know if one can compare the “old” with the “new” NTGCF. The new project embraced essentially all kinds of local existing institutions and for some of these it would automatically be easier to cover more extensive areas of land than for the old project who were confined to local tree cooperatives and the land made available to them. Even more difficult is it to assess the quality of work done on the land covered by NTGCF.

The impact of the old NTGCF was not accomplished as projected at the outset of the project in 1991. Excluding Tamil Nadu, the performance rate has been estimated to 40% for area cover, 60% for formation of local TGC and 70% for membership in the cooperatives slightly before the first phase was originally planned to be completed (see Table 4). *These figures confirm the difficulty in receiving land on lease as the accomplishment on area coverage is not even 50% of what was set up as a target.* While the other figures are also lower, one can see that the interest for the TGC has been the least problematic, if we accept membership as an indicator for this. A potential issue is if the differences in performance for these three parameters may imply that the benefits (income and in kind) has been or will be lower than expected for each individual member as the area per member will be less than originally planned for

Another reflection one can make here is to what extent the employment generated in nurseries, plantation work, and management is an explanation for the relatively better performance in membership. The mission does not have any information on this regarding the old NTGCF project. The proposed PD from 2001 reports that person days generated amounted to 15.5 lakh for the “Sida” supported project since 1991. *As this was not an end in itself – as in PAHAL – and as we do not know the actual payment and how labour was shared between households, the significance for livelihood is difficult to assess other than that it is likely to have been important.*

A key question is to what extent these co-operatives showed any sign of becoming viable institutions, in other words sustainable after project support was withdrawn – normally after 5 years. In a study by Acharyulu ⁴⁷ different case studies for management of commons by local institutions has been compared, which also included the TGCS. The study brings attention to early experiences of the first TGCS established and how the issue of sustainability was discussed and agreed. In 1993 an agreement was reached between NTGCF and the TGCS, which included three components. Beside the commitment from NTGCF to support the newly established TGCS financially and technically for five years, it was agreed that this should be met by a social and financial commitment on part of the TGCS. The former was to ensure that both the present and future needs should be met for the TGCS and the latter that a small fraction (2%) of the annual harvest (products/byproducts) should be ploughed back to the NTGCF. This would contribute funds for them to be able to expand into new villages. The study reports that the successful pioneering TGCS were willing “to offer even more than 2% of their annual harvest for this purpose”. In 1995 – 172 out of 265 TGCS⁴⁸ – had entered into formal agreements! *This must be seen as a major achievement. Not only would this go a long way to ensure the sustainability of each TGCS, but it would support the expansion of the NTGCF – provided that the agreement became operational and survived the changes in NTGCF after 1996.* The study estimated – under certain assumptions – that this kind of contribution from a TGCS for a period of three years would correspond to the funding normally provided for a “new” TGCS for their first five years.

⁴⁷ Acharyulu, A.V.R (2000) New Paradigms for the Commons, Amrita Institute of Management, Coimbatore, India.

⁴⁸ This refers to all TGCS and not only those supported by Sida

Another part of the equation to make the original NTGCF successful in terms of improving livelihood as well as to ensure sustainability and expansion was development of processing and marketing i.e. add value to the products and by-products from the land. The progress here has been slow. This is not to say that it has not been on the agenda in both the old and new NTGCF projects. The RTGCF in the old NTGCF project was expected to play a role in this, but this level of the organisation was never really developed. There have been ideas ranging from saw mills to further processing of wood into different products like e.g. wooden pallets. In both the old and the new NTGCF efforts has been made at the TGCS level – with support from the SHT – to process and/or market the produce when the opportunity has been there. These have in general been short lived in character e.g. a temporary demand in the market that the project has exploited. Processing and marketing also include different Non Timber Forest Products. The most significant is the Neem Biocide Plant established in 1997 near Anand⁴⁹. It is claimed to be operated with a profit, but it's raw material – the seeds – comes from different sources mainly the open market. The linkages with local TGCS needs yet to be developed, if indeed this is on the agenda in the NTGCF of today. *The impact from processing and marketing as an integrated part of the NTGCF concept is therefore limited, although it may have been significant in some local TGCS, but then mainly temporary in nature.*

Finally we believe that the NTGCF – both the new and old – have contributed significantly to capacity building at the local level be it the TGCS or other village institutions. While we haven't any documented information about quantity and quality on this aspect, the testimony from discussions with former staff members of NTGCF and different consultants involved with the project all have provided the same observation.

4.2.2 The external influence

The major constraint, apart from that the project appears to have been too optimistic about getting access to land and the productivity of some of these wastelands, has been a number of institutional issues related forestry, marketing and processing of forest products and possibly also regulations related to cooperatives who wish to engage in more business like operations.

This include regulations regarding harvesting rights, regulation for marketing of some NTFP which in some states was reserved for the State Forest Departments. Experiences has also demonstrated how the trade in wood in some places are influenced by saw mills who distort the market by tax evasion, purchase of illegal wood and how state government regulation related to NTFP cripples the possibilities for local communities to get benefits and income⁵⁰ etc. *It is in view of the mission somewhat surprising that these institutional issues has not surfaced more visibly both in the dialogue between the project and the donors as well as being a critical point for advocacy work by NTGCF.*

One can also speculate, if the rehabilitation of “virgin” wastelands got in the way for what this mission believe was just as important focus, namely the development of a very specific type of business oriented village institution, as the TGCS were in the old NTGCF. This includes the exploration of possibilities, but also challenging unnecessary restrictions in relevant regulations related to co-operatives. *For all of these issues*

- *Distortion of wood markets through different irregularities;*
- *The unjustified control and restriction related to trade in forest products and;*
- *The possibilities and challengers in the existing institutional framework for local cooperatives to do business*

⁴⁹ The rawmaterial comes from the seeds of the Neem tree.

⁵⁰ In Orissa for instance the NTFP has been divided into Minor Forest Products, Nationalised or Lease Bar. The nationalised are controlled by the government and the trade in Lease Bar NTFP are restricted.

the NTGCF could have joined forces with other movements/local institutions like the JFM and different voluntary forest protection groups, poverty oriented NGOs etc for advocacy work to bring about necessary changes. Moreover some of these locally initiated groups could have been invited for membership in NTGCF (either fully or as part of marketing/processing operations of the NTGCF). The NTGCF could perhaps have assisted them to achieve secure user rights to the degraded land they had already started to develop.

Several sources of information has emphasised the relative anonymity of NTGCF. An indication of this is a recent publication sponsored by DFID and EU⁵¹ on private small scale forestry, which also include a list of donor funded projects in the forestry sector, which among others include PAHAL but not NTGCF! Sida have also recognised the weaknesses in communicating experiences from the project but seems to have accepted this to some degree possibly because the project and it's staff demonstrated such commitments for their work. *This might have been a fundamental strategic mistake for a project that is bound to challenge existing institutions and even vested interests.*

The new NTGCF has in this sense been more open to co-operate with other local institutions. But the agenda has been changed and the focus is more on environmental restorations and protection of different kinds of land, while the focus on productive use for benefits and income generation and the creation of self sustained local institutions is not emphasised any more. *This change has been unfortunate and the mission has elaborated on this in section 3.2.3.*

5. Technical Assistance

The technical assistance component of PAHAL was a mixture of national short-term advisors and a permanent international advisor based in Dungapur. In addition to this there was also an international coordinator from the consulting company who regularly visited the project. The role of the permanent advisor was essentially to facilitate and support the implementation of the project, while the coordinator were responsible for the consulting service as a whole. The coordinator was also involved in overall discussions regarding the role of PAHAL in a larger context beyond the immediate activities of the project. Comprehensive use was also made of national short-term consultants in support for HIRD and in special studies.

The impression of the mission regarding the TA component of PAHAL is somewhat mixed. It appears as if the use of the advisors by the project (and by Sida) was more intensive at the outset of the project. This role is perhaps not surprising, given the PD and it's high ambitions coupled with a complicated context (both given as well as created through the project set up). Their insights in Sida's policies and priorities for development cooperation in India as well as the overall Indian/Rajasthani context were probably useful and significant. In the later stages of PAHAL, it seems as if the advisors have been increasingly alienated. This has been more pronounced and therefor more frustrating for the permanent advisor, who interacted with the project on a daily basis.

A particular dimension of the advisory service is that it has represented the only continuity of the project together with some of the individuals from the NGOs in PAHAL. The GO side suffered from constant shifts of personnel, as a posting to PAHAL by many was seen as a deportation rather than deputation. This reportedly had a

⁵¹ Saigal S., Arora H., Rizvi S.S. (2002) The new foresters – The role of private enterprise in the Indian forestry sector. ETS, IIED and DFID, EU

negative impact on the project. This may also explain the varying utility of the advisors over time as at the end of the day it is the relation between individuals and how they interact that can be decisive for the outcome.

It is tempting to conclude that the long term TA has not been very cost efficient given the high cost they carry. As we do not know the outcome of the project – had there not been any advisors – an assessment of efficiency would have to look on other aspects. The mission believe that *the efficiency has been rather low*, but this is due to the overall in-built ambiguities of the project and the lack of a clear defined role of the permanent advisor and the coordinator as well as the frequent shifts of GO staff and among them also the Project Director. It appears on the other hand, as if the *TA component has been rather effective* in terms of doing the right thing and having the skills and experiences needed for the project. *Statements made during the mission's field visit suggest that by and large the TA component has been seen useful for the project.* The usefulness of short term TAs – nationals as well as internationals – varies as one could expect. Among the more recent and noteworthy inputs are the institutional study and the inputs in connection with the preparation of the project proposal for the second phase.

The NTGCF never had a permanent long term TA in their project. When the project began in 1991/92, Sida already had a Swedish consulting company engaged for the Sida supported Social Forestry Projects (SFP) in Bihar, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. This company did not only provide TA for the different SFP, but were also coordinating these projects and other Sida assistance in the forest sector under what was usually referred to as the Forestry Cooperation Programme (FCP). For this purpose a Forest Coordination office had been established and when the TGC was initiated, it was linked to this office. The Coordinator of the FCP then had regular interaction with the director of the NTGCF. The consultant company had somewhat dual roles, as they both provided *short term TA for NTGCF project* as needs were identified as well as a “*monitoring*” function partly on behalf of Sida. The operational arrangement for the latter was through regular “technical reviews” with staff from the consulting company. This potential conflict of roles does not seem to have had negative consequences neither in terms of relations nor in terms of usefulness for TGC.

After the last SFP was phased out in Orissa in 1995/96, the FCP came to an end and there were no justifications for a continuation of the “coordination” function of the consulting company. These changes more or less coincided with the changes in NTGCF that the SVE and MTR brought about. For a few years (1997–99), there were no Sida funded TA working with the NTGCF project. But with the formulation of the revised PD in 1998, the need for TAs were identified and following a tender process the same consultant company was selected. This time the TA component consisted of a Coordinator and a few different thematic advisors. Allowing for some generalisations *the profile of the TA component in the new TGC were more “environmental”, while during the old TGC the profile were more management/ business oriented.* Short term inputs were provided in e.g.

- Understanding ecological processes
- River fish management
- Wild life management
- Improvement of indigenous water mills
- Etc.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the TA support in the NTGCF project is impossible to assess with any degree of confidence for this mission, given the lack of interaction with NTGCF. From what limited sources of information we have, *it appears as if the TA component has been effective* in responding to

the needs of the “old” and “new” TGC respectively. Given the initial difficulties in NTGCF in terms of lack of common waste land for leasing and the total lack of progress in Tamil Nadu, *one could perhaps suspect that some STA inputs were less useful and therefore less efficient in the old NTGCF*. The new NTGCF had the benefit of almost one decade of experiences and could perhaps identify TAs that were seen as more in tune with the new NTGCF. In this sense – and on a purely speculative note – they might therefore have been more cost efficient.

In both PAHAL and the NTGCF project, the consultants were recruited by Sida and not by the respective projects (or rather GoR and the NDDDB/NTGCF). To what extent a joint recruitment and contracting with relevant organisations on the Indian side would have had any impact on the performance of the consulting services is difficult to assess. Much of this is determined by the extent of communication and discussion that might have taken place between Sida and the Indian counterpart organisations.

6. The events leading to the finalisation of the projects

In section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 we touched upon the reasons for the termination of the two projects, without elaborating the process behind this in any detail. In this section we will attempt to describe and assess the process – for two reasons mainly:

- That the intention and expectation on both sides and for both projects were that there would be a second phase.
- The common experience from so many different projects of the difficulty of finalising or terminating projects or what sometime is referred to as a lack of an exit strategy.

There is a striking difference between the two projects in that the termination of PAHAL has not left too much of a bad sentiment at the local level (district, block and village). The GoR was never really interested in the project other than as an additional support to their development budget and they might have been frustrated for some time, but not overly concerned. The separation between the parties in the NTGCF project was in contrast rather acrimonious.

Both projects were initially planned for period of approximately 5 yrs (TGC 1991/92–1995/96 and PAHAL 1991/92 – 1996/97) and both projects spent less than anticipated in the PDs and in the respective SAs. The reason for this was in PAHAL the initial time and emphasis on HIRD at the expense of the more costly physical implementation at field level. In NTGCF project there were also slower progress initially coupled with the fact that only two states were effectively part of the project as opposed to the plan of including three states. Moreover the commodity aid provided by Sida generated more profit than expected and the budget were therefore substantially larger than Sida’s contributions in the SA (SEK 50 million). This allowed for number of extensions of the two projects. Besides these similarities, there were also considerable changes after some years of implementation in both projects. Both PAHAL and NTGCF prepared project documents for a second phase and both proposals were appraised. While the appraisal of PAHAL were more critical and eventually led to a revised proposal, the appraisal of NTGCF proposal were essentially positive and recommended support for a second phase.

PAHAL was extended a few times (formally twice) after the evaluation in 1997. The evaluation was in favour of a second phase, although with important recommendations/conditions attached and the

parties agreed to initiate preparation of second phase by arranging a LFA workshop. While the workshop did not succeed much in bringing the process forward it revealed the differences in views and understanding of PAHAL. The preparation continued however by forming a planning group at district level in Dungapur (with representatives from VLC, NGO, and GO) and by engaging a consulting company⁵². The PD was presented in February 1998 and appraised a few months later⁵³. The appraisal raised concerns, emphasised new opportunities and called for changes.

The process however came to a standstill following Sweden's decision to freeze development cooperation as a result of India's test of their first nuclear bomb in May 1998. When Sweden decided to resume their development cooperation in 1999, the conclusion of the first phase and the preparation of a second phase continued. For the conclusion Sida decided to support a workshop on the experiences of PAHAL⁵⁴ and for the preparation to engage a consultant to revise the PD proposal from 1998. This revised PD was finalised in early 2000. For some reason Sida Head Quarter now advised against a continued cooperation in a second phase of PAHAL, with reference to Sweden's new Country Co-operation Strategy. The Embassy then suggested that a minor support could be provided to enhance/integrate cooperation between PAHAL village institutions (primarily the VLC) and other relevant organisation and perhaps primarily the Panchayat Rai Institutions. This idea could be seen as an intention to enhance the sustainability of PAHAL and a more organised finalisation of the project. A proposal for a one-year project was also submitted and approved. *While the mission have serious concern with management routines in Sida as a whole that first allow a preparation of a second phase to proceed as it did and then make decisions not to support a second phase, we believe that the Embassy did a reasonable effort to conclude co-operation with PAHAL.*

Apparently and without clearly communicating their intentions GoR already in late 1999 decided to wind up PAHAL. Simultaneously it appears as if GoR was not fully aware of the intentions from Sida in 1999 to possibly support a second phase of PAHAL. The confusion also meant that the one-year "finalisation project" never took off. *By and large it seems as if the communication between the parties (in this case GoI, GoR and Sida) never functioned properly.*

The main issue regarding a possible second phase of support to the NTGCF was the "sustainability" of the overall organisation. In the old NTGCF, the assumption was that small contributions would be made from the local TGCS to ensure their own viability, but also the expansion into new villages. At the Regional (state level) and National level (NTGCF), it was assumed that membership fees and eventually the profit, from the processing/marketing through NTGCF own facilities (Neem Biocide plant, saw mills etc) would ensure the financial viability of NTGCF, but also to provide dividends to the members of the cooperatives. These assumptions were questioned in the mid 90s e.g. in the MTR, mainly due to the slow progress in the project. In view of this mission however, *the MTR did not demonstrate convincingly that there were something fundamentally wrong with these assumptions* as such other than being too optimistic regarding the time factor.

While the events that changed NTGCF in 1996/1997 (SVE, MTR) were focused on the organisation and what it wanted to accomplish (it's vision), it seems as if the sustainability were forgotten in the process and particularly how the organisation would fund it's operation both in the field as well as at the central level. It was agreed to establish and gradually develop a Corpus Fund. Sida also agreed that a small part of the project funds could be allocated as a contribution to this Corpus Fund. This would however not be enough and other sources of funds would have to be identified and approached.

⁵² Ecotech Services (India) Pvt Ltd

⁵³ This appraisal consisted of two exercises – first a general/technical appraisal followed by an institutional appraisal.

⁵⁴ A workshop on "Sustainable Village Institutions Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience" organised 15–16 December 1999.

This was why Sida raised the issue of sustainability with the NTGCF in 1999/2000, including also other aspects (e.g. their weakness in policy advocacy and outreach), which lead to intensive discussions and exchanges of letters. *The implicit message was that Sida would not support a second phase unless the issue of sustainability was not convincingly addressed.*

Meanwhile, a proposal for a second phase was drafted and a project document presented in late 2000 (for a two year project). Sida agreed to an appraisal of the project document, which was done in 2001. While the appraisal concluded that the organisation (now reshaped and renamed to the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) never could be sustainable, it also were essentially positive to the project proposal. This however did not address Sida's concern, which upset the leadership in NTGCF/FES. The two parties had at this point in time no longer any common ground for further discussions. Consequently Sida decided not to support a second phase.

To this mission, it appears somewhat peculiar that Sida went on with an appraisal, without an acceptable response on how NTGCF would address the issue of sustainability. At the same time, *we agree that the responses and indeed views expressed by NTGCF on sustainability were not convincing*⁵⁵. More important though is that we do not understand, why this issue (and a number of others) did not emerge already in connection with the SVE, MTR and the process that lead to the revised PD from 1998. *Sida appears not to have been so concerned about these changes and remained content since the NTGCF as an organisation and their committed staff was viewed as very professional.* On a purely speculative note one can perhaps assume that the funding mechanism⁵⁶ for the NTGCF did not provide Sida much leverage to address some of the key issues until discussions on additional funds for a second phase was high on the agenda.

7. Main conclusions and Useful Lessons

In this last chapter we will highlight/summarise the main conclusions and elaborate on some selected lessons, that the mission believe are of special significance. Consequently we will not repeat all the findings and conclusions that we have indicated in *italics* throughout this report. There are also other lessons that we will not highlight here, mostly related to technologies applied in the field as well as the approach and methods used for local institutional development. We avoid this for two reasons. First the mission has not had the possibility to assess the “technologies” and “methods” sufficiently in depth other than the type findings already included in relevant sections. Secondly, there is a wealth of information available on these topics in various publications and on the internet. We have selected “lessons” that are of specific relevance for development co-operation, although there are other issues that could have deserved attention as well. The mission believe that in particular the issue of “employment generation schemes” and “co-operatives as a vehicle to enhance livelihoods” deserves more attention, but that these warrant special focused studies that goes beyond an ex post evaluation of this type.

⁵⁵ Based on the documentation made available to us by Sida, but also based on informal consultations with former staff members of NTGCF.

⁵⁶ The initial support was provided as commodity aid (cooking oil) and proved to be very profitable when NTGCF monetised it. Part of the profit was seen as a NTGCF contribution to the project.

7.1 Overall assessment of the two projects

The mission has been rather critical, as most evaluation missions tend to be in their search for what could have been done better. There is therefore a tendency to not always appreciate what projects also achieve. A lot of the issues raised in this report has however more to do with concepts, strategic questions, management and a shared understanding of what the projects were all about. Before we elaborate on this, the mission wants to bring attention to what the projects have accomplished. It appears – based on the progress reports – as if both projects have accomplished a lot of what they set out to do in terms of quantitative targets i.e. land area coverage, trees planted, village institutional development etc (see table 3 and 4)⁵⁷. This took some more time than anticipated, but this is not a serious issue.

The quality has been more difficult to assess. For PAHAL we believe that the quality of physical work (including design and actual work) could have been better for some activities while others are satisfactory (see 3.3.1). The development of village institutions and related capacity building (see 3.3.2) has by and large been impressive and in most cases above average compared to many other similar programs and projects at this time. The mission has no hands on experience of the quality of work in NTGCF. But if we use the sources of information available (progress reports, resource persons with different kind of experience of NTGCF), the indications are that the quality of work in general has been good. As in PAHAL, the tree growers have also struggled with survival rates in some of their plantations, but has also in response to this introduced natural regeneration. It appears however as if PAHAL worked more convincingly with gender than NTGCF (see 3.3.2.2). It has not been possible to have any view on village institutional development in NTGCF after the changes introduced in the revised PD in 1998. *This should justify a special study, if it has not been done already.*

The reports of the NTGCF are more informative particular on quantitative performance, than those of PAHAL (at least those made available to the mission). On the other hand PAHAL has produced a very good report on their experiences of village institutional development based on a workshop⁵⁸ after the first phase of PAHAL came to an end. This coupled with our field visits to Dungapur has made it possible to speak with some more confidence about the quality of work in this project as we have done in relevant sections. Our general impression from PAHAL is positive, something that is supported by another study on issues in Panchayats, where one of the selected districts was Dungapur. In this study different development activities were compared and ranked by the beneficiaries and only one scored higher than PAHAL and this program did not really address the same target group.

⁵⁷ For PAHAL the mission only had reported figures for two out of the four Blocks.

⁵⁸ Workshop in 1999 on “Sustainable Village Institutions Through Natural Resource Management – A PAHAL Experience

Table 7: Ranking the value of different development activities in a Panchayat in Dungarpur District, Rajasthan*

Activity	Score ^{a)}	Most common explanations
Participatory Approach to Human and Land Resource Development (PAHAL) ^{b)}	33	All villagers get benefits in terms of labor. Land is developed to become more productive. Few people also mentioned that the transparency is high compared to other development activities.
Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish – education ^{c)}	47	Education is perceived to be the gateway to the future. Uneducated people have fewer possibilities.
Women's savings group ^{d)}	66	Savings enable productive investments in assets of own choice (e.g. wells, land-levelling, livestock)
Farmer's Cooperative Society ^{e)}	8	Loans are provided that enable investments in crops. (Members are mostly larger land-holders)
Gram Panchayat	92	Individual benefits are few. Little transparency and corruption is high. Exception: One man said that it is a permanent structure and therefore valuable whereas other development activities are temporary.

^{a)} The score was arrived at by calculating the average of the 20 informants. The lower the score, the higher the value of the activity. No differences were found in ranking on the basis of gender, social group, education etc.

^{b)} PAHAL is a Government of Rajasthan integrated land use management project located in Dungarpur district. It was funded by Sida till October 1999.

^{c)} These projects are both aiming to spread and improve primary education in Rajasthan. Financial support was provided by Sida till 1998.

^{d)} This was launched by an NGO, PEDO, in Dungarpur district. The project currently involves approximately 100 women's savings groups. The objective is to decrease dependency on money-lenders and enable women to make investments of their own priority. *More information is provided in section 3.3.2.3 of this report.*

^{e)} Throughout India various cooperative societies and banks provide farmer members with short-term loans. The aim is to increase the capacity of farmers to make crop investments and ultimately increase agricultural output. *While this is the most appreciated development activity, it is not particularly useful for the poor.*

* This table is from the report "Issues in Panchayats" by Dr. N. C. Saxena, Secretary, Planning Commission. Additional information by this mission is indicated in italics in notes above.

7.2 The need for a shared understanding

The common point of departure for the two projects was the wastelands. *The projects clearly mirrored Sida's strategic preference for innovative and experimental projects and added a special dimension to this as they represented two very different approaches.* The argument for Sida's preference for innovative projects was that "the grants from a relatively small donor are additional and should be used strategically" e.g. by developing methods and approaches that can be useful for improving development efforts in general. *The mission believes that this argument made and makes a lot of a sense.* Beside this, the projects have contributed to the general aim of improving livelihood and have in this sense probably achieved a reasonable result. But the key question is if they have contributed significantly in terms of methods and approaches?

The mission has reviewed and assessed the ownership and what set the scene for the two projects (see section 3.1). Both projects began as Indian initiatives and were presumably attractive for Sida for this reason, but also since they corresponded well with Swedish priorities in terms of addressing environmental issues with obvious poverty dimensions. During the preparation of PAHAL, the Indian initiative was somewhat lost at least at the local level, mainly as a consequence of formal procedures of both the GoI, GoR as well Sida. This was perhaps unavoidable, but what would prove to be more serious was *the fundamentally different perceptions about PAHAL among the important actors or at least the key individuals. This would eventually prove to be PAHAL's major weakness.* There are of course different explana-

tions behind this, but if we limit ourselves to the partners and the formal documents – the Specific Agreement (SA) and PD – we can already here see what might be behind this. First, neither the SA nor the original PD say anything about innovative approaches that could have had a more general influence on other development programs. The mission finds this somewhat peculiar. *It was only in the revised PD that something to this effect is mentioned in terms of “operational policy development”. This did not however bring any changes into the SA, which remained as it were.* Second, as the SA is signed by GoI and Sida, any implicit understanding at this level that there were innovative aspects in the project may not have been understood or accepted by GoR, who were in practice the most important partner for future reviews and annual negotiations and therefore any possible expansion of the approach within Rajasthan.

In all fairness, we should also remind ourselves about the different views on PAHAL at different administrative levels in Rajasthan and that GoR is an ambiguous term for what in practice were key individuals in different positions in the government. One theory that has been proposed as to why PAHAL did not receive much attention was that TAD as the nodal department was a small and not very influential department with their activities confined only to certain areas of Rajasthan. To what extent this might be an explanation is difficult to judge as the view of the secretary of TAD itself was that PAHAL was only an addition to normal government schemes, which all evidence from the field suggest it wasn't. *On a purely speculative note the mission wonders if this view of the Secretary explains the peculiar fact that while efforts by other key persons in GoR to promote innovative partnerships between GO and NGO for government funded programs manifested itself in the establishment of ARAVALI (see 4.1.2), the experiences in PAHAL went on unnoticed, until it more or less already had closed down.*

Given Sida's strategic preference for innovative projects, we find it surprising that Sida did not address this issue more convincingly, in the dialogue in connection with the preparation of the PD and the drafting of the SA. This in itself might not have been sufficient, but it would have gone some way in making future deliberations between the parties more fruitful. In order to have a shared understanding of a project, the formulation of objectives, outputs, and identification of beneficiaries etc. needs to be tested and discussed to minimise misunderstandings and to facilitate future reviews. *The mission would also like to bring this a step further and question if these kind of issues shouldn't warrant more attention already when Sida formulates their country development strategies.* In other words – what are operational implications of a strategy that includes a mixture of priorities in terms of target groups, priority sectors, cross cutting issues (e.g. gender), type of interventions (e.g. pilot projects or implementation), funding mechanisms and ownership etc.

The NTGCF on the contrary remained as an Indian initiative, owned more specifically by NWDB and NDDB. The project did not suffer from the same ambiguities in the SA and PD and was generally described as a Mega Pilot (also by Sida), even if the term “innovative” or “methods development” was not used in the SA. The original PD was also reasonably clear in terms of purpose, objectives, and targets. i.e. there was a shared understanding among the key-actors. There was also another significant difference, if we compare their innovative ambitions. The NTGCF would if the Mega Pilot was successful have expanded through its own momentum, while PAHAL was expected (by those who saw PAHAL as a pilot project) to influence others, in principle other government schemes. *The changes in NTGCF as a result of the SVE and MTR, changed these fundamental rules of the game and it seems as if Sida (and CIDA²) lost sight of the original idea with NTGCS.* What could otherwise explain that they more or less accepted these changes without raising the critical questions? As the mission has concluded elsewhere in this report, the outcome was a new project, not necessarily bad but very different!

7.3 Methods development and Pilot projects and special management requirements

There are many examples of what we may call innovative/experimental projects that are seen as unsuccessful. What we tend to forget is that a fair number of this type of projects actually can fail to deliver on expectations and still be successful. If a project was set up to test something and assume that it has been well managed in all aspects, and the outcome of the test was not what we hoped for, the project may still be viewed as a success, because it provided the required information. This may seem to be an obvious statement to make, but apart from that projects are misjudged, the desire to deliver sometime has an unfortunate impact on project preparation/formulation as well.

Another experience with methods development or pilot projects is that one should start small (why waste money, if you can get answers in a small project?). In this sense the NTGCF was ideal as it began as a small pilot project, got initial experiences that presumably were promising and identified new issues that should be tested on a larger scale i.e. a Mega Pilot. Without being entirely clear for the mission, our understanding is that this included the need to test the project in different environmental and institutional contexts. But there was also a requirement to look further into the “viability” issue of the tree growers cooperatives. A related important issue was how they could be federated and benefit from “economy” of scale. Presumably this was not only the “financial” aspect, but also how they might become more influential in relevant institutional issues. Accepting these assumptions *the mission then suspect that the objectives and particularly the targets might have got in the way for these issues, which in a sense should be the most important ones. Moreover this have clear implications for how the projects is monitored and assessed.* The hectares, the members and the number of TGCS are interesting, but one might easily loose sight of more important issues. It follows, that it can be tempting to re-design a project in order to accomplish the targets instead addressing the more important issues. This appears to have happened with the NTGCF.

Another fairly common oversight in development co-operation is that there are different types of innovative projects. Method development, pilot project, models, demonstrations etc. might all fit under the umbrella of innovative projects. Some care is required though to make clear distinctions between different type innovative projects or activities. PAHAL was diverse and perhaps a bit everything, but in general *it attempted to i/develop new approaches in the NRM sector regarding village institutional development and ii/tested a new type of GO-NGO collaboration.* What was unfortunate were the number of objectives and the formulation of these in the project document, which led the evaluation mission in 1997 to conclude that the key actors did not have a common understanding about PAHAL. *This also explains why the project struggled with the Monitoring and Evaluation System.*

But there are more issues related to monitoring of methods development projects. The most common mistake is that the systems tend to be far too complicated and are therefor either not implemented or they are not very informative. At the same time we shouldn't shy away from the fact that monitoring of methods development projects require special efforts and will therefore be costly. On top of this we also have the “normal” requirement of monitoring and reporting that goes with every development project. The mission believe that PAHAL managed to monitor and report

- *Satisfactory to GoR*, if we accept TAD's view on the project, that it was implementation similar to any other government development scheme. The primary concern was physical targets and use of budgets;
- *Somewhat satisfactory to Sida* (after some time), regarding the budget and the use of funds;
- *Not satisfactory on effectiveness, efficiency and impact* on aspects of relevance for those who saw PAHAL primarily as a methods development project. This included Sida, some of the actors in Rajasthan/ Dungapur, but not the central department (TAD).

- *Satisfactory to local communities* in terms of transparency at least in comparison with other development programs.

The trick is to be able *to demonstrate what is what* or else there won't hardly be any "implementing" government organisation who can use the information and yet avoid making it too complicated. The part of the monitoring system that is related to methods development must be specific and visible regarding how it should be done and the resources required. Even if this is likely to be costly, it is also usually temporary and should therefore be acceptable for the time the project is implemented.

7.4 The critical need to understand local context and livelihood systems

In our meetings with some of the resource persons with prior experience from PAHAL, the insufficient understanding of local farming systems was mentioned as a weakness particularly among some of the government line departments. The evaluation mission in 1997 brought attention to the same issue. The experience of technical line departments in many countries is frequently that of being technology driven where the aim usually is to maximise yield/production through specialisation and heavy investment in purchased inputs. What is often forgotten in the process is whether it is "profitable" and the risks involved. The preference of poor farmers is usually that of diversification and minimisation of risks. *The mission share the concern, but would like to add that there is nothing inherently wrong with new technologies on the contrary, but they need to be introduced and demonstrated in a manner that makes sense to poor farmers.* The standard type of models and demonstrations often fails to do this.

Understanding the farming system is however not enough. The perspective needs to be broader and look at the livelihood systems as such. Over the last 10 years or so there has been a development of livelihood concepts and models for how to analyse them that are useful in this context. But it might have been too much to expect PAHAL to consider this – as the project was terminated short after these recent developments in livelihood analysis gained momentum. But what could have been interesting is if these aspects would have been incorporated in a second phase of PAHAL. A special feature in Dungapur is the seasonal migration of household members (usually the men) looking for temporary jobs elsewhere. In the development discourse there are now sometime an unfortunate polarisation between rural and urban development. The arguments vary but are general of two types. Either there is a general fatigue with some rural based natural resource management projects because they haven't delivered (this might be true, but usually the analysis does not go much further than this!) or the increasing number of poor people in urban areas are seen as an argument for shifting focus. *A second phase of PAHAL (or a new project in Dungapur) could have worked more holistically and tried to exploit the opportunities of both – natural resource management in Dungapur and seasonal labour elsewhere – to enhance livelihood among the poor in Dungapur.*

Another alternative path for a second phase could have been how to work more closely with the PRI e.g. by channelling part or all resources through them. The issue of the relation between PAHAL and the PRI has also been cautiously raised by Sida. *The mission believe that it was wise by the partners not to push the issue when PESA came into force in late 1996, as the project only had a very short time left.* But the question might have been justified also in a second phase. Table 7 illustrates the low score achieved by the Gram Panchayat in another study in Dungapur district as opposed to e.g. PAHAL. The issue of corruption and that support channelled through the PRI are used for political purposes appears to be the most frequent frustrations with the Panchayats. Moreover the Panchayat's efficiency sometime suffer from the ambiguities in roles and responsibilities between the "elected" Sarpanches" and the government "appointed" Panchayat Secretaries. *The key question for a donor, who is in favour of decentralisation – but also poverty focus, democracy, accountability, transparency etc. – is whether it makes sense to channel all support directly through an institutional set up, where the support can be exploited politically to maintain persons or parties in power, who otherwise might have lost the next election.* The trick is really to expose and make visible the performance of

those in power to their constituency. Governance in terms of participation, transparency, and accountability can go a long way to address this, but is it enough? The mission has no view on this other than that *a general positive view on decentralisation is not a sufficiently strong argument in itself for channelling all donor resources through the PRI. There are a number of other aspects that needs to be considered as well.*

Annex 1

Terms of Reference

for an Evaluation of the National Tree Growers Cooperative Project and the Pahal Project in India

1. Background

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Authority (Sida), initiated support to the National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation and the PAHAL project in 1992. Both the projects were innovative initiatives at that time focusing on method development as well as testing new institutional models for natural resource management. Both the projects had poverty alleviation as an important objective.

As a result of the termination of the development cooperation agreement with India in 1998, following the nuclear tests, both the projects had concluded abruptly. However, they were being implemented well beyond their expected original time frames on the basis of repeated extensions to the Agreement between Government of Sweden and Government of India. The budget frames for both PAHAL (SEK 40 million) and NTGCF (SEK 50 million) were underutilised (around 50%) in both cases despite the extended period of implementation.

Both the projects had substantial technical assistance components with a permanent resident advisor placed in Dungarpur to advise the project management for PAHAL and regular visits by a team of consultants for the NTGCF projects. PAHAL concluded in 1998 and NTGCF concluded in 2000.

In accordance with the country plan for India 2003, this end of the project evaluation is proposed to be conducted before December 2003.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, goals attainment, cost effectiveness, sustainability and lessons learned.

3. Scope and Focus of the Evaluation

The evaluation shall concentrate on, but not necessary be limited to, the following issues:

- a. Assessment of past performance
 - Assess the overall progress of the programme.
 - Were the project objectives achieved as planned? Explain the reasons for variances and comment on their validity and causes.
 - Comment on the focus, scope and usefulness of the Sida monitoring consultants;
 - Follow-up on the recommendations made by the monitoring team and during the annual reviews;
 - Assessment of particular aspects of the programme
- I. NTGCF and PAHAL's role in the projects:
 - Assess the achievement or probability for long term sustainability of the activities supported by NTGCF and PAHAL;.

- NTGCF/FES role and comparative advantages in influencing policies.
- NTGCFs strategy for alliance building with other actors.

II. Institutional development, including capacity building and empowerment at different levels:

- Discuss the ownership of the programme and activities among different stakeholders;
- Strategies and activities to influence policy;
- Community participation, including the development of strategies adapted to different states and to involve women in the project areas, as well as the development of gender strategies.

III. Financial aspects of the programme:

- Summarise investment and operation and maintenance costs (where applicable) of different parts of the programme. The summary should be based on available reports and studies;
- Comment on the relationship between the implementation of local cost recovery schemes and the need for an overall reform for pricing of water in the sector.
- Comment on the implications of the cost of the project activities for the sustainability of the project activities.
- Comment on the probability of programme sustainability if funding were the sole responsibility of the Indian government and communities.

b. Assess organisational aspects related to

- Systems for planning, monitoring and reporting.
- Procedures for reporting results and the utilisation of impact indicators and their suitability for internal management tools and for external reporting,
- Reporting to Sida, especially on results and their appropriateness as indicator of cost effectiveness.

c. Lessons Learned

- Summarise the lessons learned in the projects. Elaborate on the difficulties met, the results achieved, co-operation between different parties and steps taken to solve problems.

4. Methodology

The evaluation shall consider the main objective for Swedish support to India in the sector, as well as the project objectives. The evaluation shall also consider possible environmental consequences of the programme.

The evaluation shall include analysis of relevant documents produced by the projects, including feasibility studies, operation plans, monitoring and evaluation reports, and other relevant reports. A list of general documents will be described in an annex.

The evaluation shall include visits to project sites in Rajasthan and two other states after discussions with NTGCF/FES.

5. Conduct of Evaluation

The evaluation shall be carried out in co-operation with NTGCF/FES and Government of Rajasthan and Government of India;

The Team/Consultant will be responsible for the overall planning of the evaluation and reporting processes.

It is estimated that approximately five consultant weeks will be necessary to carry out the evaluation. The two Indian consultants shall have five consultant weeks for assisting the team leader.

6. Reporting

The report is to be product and responsibility of the Team leader/Consultant. The Team/Consultant shall be responsible for the overall planning and presentation of the evaluation and reports to Sida.

Draft written conclusions shall be presented to and presented to Sida and possibly NTGCF/FES and Government of Rajasthan;

The Team/Consultant shall present the Draft Report to Sida no later than two weeks after completing the field-visits.

Ten copies of the Final Report shall be presented to Sida no later than two weeks after receiving Sida's and possibly NTGCF/FES and Government of Rajasthan's comments on the Draft Report.

7. Time Schedule

The evaluation is planned to be carried out as soon as possible but to be completed by December 2003.

Staff resources

The team shall possess knowledge and experience from India and will consist of a team leader (Swedish) and two Indian consultants with extensive experience in the NRM sector;

All members of the team are fluent in English language.

The team-leader shall have considerable experience from managing evaluations, preferably of the same size and character as the present.

Sub-appendices

1. List of general documents.
2. Sida Evaluation Report – A Standardized Format.

Annex 2

List of documents

Author/Year	Title
Acharyulu, A.V.R. (2000)	New Paradigms for Commons, Amrita Institute of Management, Coimbatore, India
Anon	Draft ToR for the Planning Team: PAHAL II Project Design and Preparation
Anon (1991)	The Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (DIWDP) – Plan of Action
Anon (1998)	Participatory Approaches to Human and Land Resources Development (PAHAL) Project II, Dungapur. Project Document. GoI, GoS and GoR
Anon (2000)	Minutes for the seventh JPRC Meeting of TGCP assisted by CIDA and Sida held at Anand on 11–12 May, 2000
Arya V, Parasuram R. (1998)	Follow up Institutional Appraisal of PAHAL II
Audette R. (1996)	Sustainability study for the National Tree Growers's Cooperative Federation, Poulet Theriault Inc.
Bharati P. et al (1997)	Evaluation Report: PAHAL Project, Rajasthan/India
CIDA (2003)	ToR for the Review Team for a Progress Towards Result Review of the Tree Growers Cooperative Project
Djurfelt G (1997)	Social and Institutional Issues in the PAHAL project. Department of Sociology, Lund University
Flint M (1997)	LFA workshop and checkpoint meeting. PAHAL Project, Dungapur
Karmacharya S.C. (1998)	Sustainability: Tree Growers Cooperative Program. Sustainable Development Strategies International
Kumar A (1997)	PAHAL, Proposal for support services, Ecotech Service New Delhi, India
Laan J (1998)	Report on water resource development in the PAHAL project, Ecotech Services/Euroconsult
Lundgren B, Saxena N.C. (2001)	Appraisal of the “Revised Project Document” from the National Tree Growers Cooperative Federation (NTGCF)
Mukalla R (2000)	Travel Report – Joint Project Review Committee Meeting of the National Tree Growers Project
Rao J (2001)	Letter to inform Sida about the establishment of FES
Tamm G (1997)	The PAHAL Project 1991/92–1996/97: A supplementary note on the completion of the consulting assignment

Ved A. et al (1998)	PAHAL II–Draft report of the appraisal team
NTGCF (1998)	Annual Report 1996–97
NTGCF (1991)	Reappraised Project Document I , TGC project NDDDB and
NTGCF (1991)	Reappraised Project Document II , TGC project NDDDB and
NTGCF (1995)	Progress report for 1994–95
NTGCF (1996)	Revised Project Document , Sida assisted TGCP (1996–2000)
NTGCF (1996)	Shared Vision 2010. National Tree Growers’s Cooperative Federation Limited
NTGCF (1996)	A Decade of Learning – A Participatory Mid Term Review Summary of Sida and CIDA Assisted Tree Growers Cooperative Project
NTGCF (1997)	Covering letter with progress report, workplan, budgets, etc
NTGCF (1997)	Discussion paper on Sida assisted Tree Growers Cooperative Project – Joint Project Review Meeting February 1997
NTGCF (1998)	Disucssion paper for Joint Project Review Meeting in March
NTGCF (1998)	Revised Project Document , Sida assisted TGCP (1998–2000)
NTGCF (200?)	A discussion note on the implementation of the tree growers cooperatives project and an appropriate institutional form
NTGCF (2000)	Disucssion paper for 7th Joint Project Review Meeting in March
NTGCF (2000)	Revised Project Document – Sida TGCP, January 2001–December 2002
NTGCF (2000)	A summary of the progress on technical assistance and training component of Sida support in NTGCF
NTGCF (2000)	A response on the sustainability of NTGCF and its operations and the strategic plan for the Sida assisted Tree Growers Cooperatives Project
PAHAL (19??)	Heifer Project document ...
PAHAL (1998)	Progress Report 1997–98 (April 97–Dec97). PAHAL (DIWDP) Project Dungapur
PAHAL (1998)	Progress Report 1997–98 (April 97–March 98)
PAHAL (1998)	Sixth Joint review mission – Progress Report 1998 (status 1998–99)
PAHAL (1998)	PAHAL Project phase II, Dungapur, GoI, GoR, GoS
PAHAL (1998)	PAHAL PROJECT, Follow up institutional appraisal of PAHAL II (Arya V, Parasuram R.)
PAHAL (1998)	PAHAL II, Draft Report of the Appraisal Team (Arya V et al)
PAHAL (1999)	Seeventh Joint review mission – Progress Report 1999 (status 1998–99)

PAHAL (2000)	PAHAL Phase II, Environmental Resource Management India
PAHAL (2000)	Proposal for 2000–2001
Sida (1991)	Specific Agreement on support to the Tree Growers Cooperative Societies Project in Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu – Extension
Sida (1991)	Utvecklingssamarbete med Indien 1992/93–1993/94
Sida (1992)	Specific Agreement regarding support to the Tree Growers Cooperative Societies Project in Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu
Sida (1992)	Agreed Minutes from the first joint project review of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (1992)	Specific Agreement on the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (DIWDP)
Sida (1994)	Agreed Minutes from the second joint project review of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (1994)	Agreed Minutes from the third joint project review (mid term) of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (1995)	Agreed Minutes from the fourth joint project review (mid term) of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (1996)	Agreed Minutes from the fifth joint project review (mid term) of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (1996)	Agreed Minutes from the third joint project review of the Tree Growers Cooperative Societies Project
Sida (1996)	Landstrategi Indien 1 juli 1996–30 juni 2001, Regeringsbeslut 21 november 1996
Sida (1997)	Agreed Minutes from the fourth joint project review of the Tree Growers Cooperative Societies Project
Sida (1997)	Specific Agreement on support to the Tree Growers Cooperative Societies Project in Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu – Extension
Sida (1997)	Specific Agreement on the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (DIWDP) – Extension
Sida (1998)	Agreed Minutes from the sixth joint project review (mid term) of the Dungapur Integrated Wasteland Development Project (PAHAL/DIWDP), Rajasthan
Sida (2000)	Specific Agreement on Support to the Tree Growers Cooperative Project in India – Extension
Sida (2001)	Different letters between Sida and NTGCF related to future cooperation

Annex 3

Resource person met

1. Mr. Ramesh Mukala, Program Manager, Sida, New Delhi
2. Dr. Owe Andersson, Counselor– Sida, New Delhi
3. Mr. T.Sampath Kumar, Advisor-development, CIDA
4. Mr. Lalit Mehra, Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department (TAD), Jaipur, State government of Rajasthan
5. Mr A P Bhat, Deputy Director, Jaipur, Government of Rajasthan
6. Mr Jaipal Singh, Director, ARAVALI, Jaipur, and former Spear Head Team (Sht) leader of NTGCF (Ajmer),
7. Mr Sohan Devpura, Project Manager, SWATCH, Udaipur, Ex Project Director, PAHAL
8. Mr. Sudershan Sethi, Divisional Commissioner, (TAD), Udaipur
9. Mr. Rajiv Khandelwal, Sudrak,
10. Ms. Neelima Khetan, CEO, Seva Mandir
11. Villagers and members of Sharam and Virpur VLC, Bicchiwada Block
 - i. Mr. Chandulal, President, VLC
 - ii. Ms. Maniben Gameti(women), Vice President, VLC
 - iii. Mr. Meghraj Kharadi, Secretary, VLC and member of Virpur Panchayat
 - iv. Mr. Narendra Damor, Treasurer, VLC
 - v. Mr. Ramlal Manumal
 - vi. Mrs. Ditliben Ninama (women)
 - vii. Mr. Udaylal Damor
 - viii. Mr. Ramlal Damor
 - ix. Mr. Shantilal Damor
12. Mr Devilal Vyas, PEDO
13. Kanubhai Upadhyay, Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Udaipur
14. Villagers and members of VLCs from Dungarpur block
 - i. Mr. Chagganlal Parmar, President, VLC, Naya Gaon
 - ii. Amjilal Patidar, President, VLC, member Panchayat Samittee, Dungarpur and member, Planning Group.
 - iii. Kelviji Patel, President, VLC, Davdi
 - iv. Surajmal Ahari (VLM), VLC, Rayni Khabra, Davdi
 - v. Pankaj Mehta, Master Trainer, RSS
 - vi. Shuklal Ahari (VLM), President, VLC, Raghunathpura
 - vii. Rajendra Kumar Jain, staff SWACH and member of Gram Vikas Prabandh Samittee

15. Mr. Pankaj Ballabh, Ex Spearhead Team Member of NTGCF, now working in Development Branch of SHELL
16. Dr N C Saxena, Ex Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission, Government of India
17. Mr. V B Eswaran, Retd Bureaucrat, Government of India, Board Member SPWD.
18. Dr Gordon Tamm, Former Consultant and Coordinator in PAHAL
19. Mrs Anita Ingewall, former Program Officer at the Swedish Embassy
20. Mr. V K Misra, Former Managing Director in NTGCF
21. Mr. Per Thege, Ex Home Office Program Coordinator, ScandiaConsult Natura
22. Mr Peder Nilsson, Former Consultant and Coordinator in NTGCF
23. Mr Ulf Öhman , Former Consultant and Coordinator in NTGCF
24. Dr. Marie Byström Former Consultant 0in NTGCF

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