CHAPTER - 4
FUTURE STRATEGY

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 One major lesson that has emerged from the experience of the working of DPAP and DDP is that these programmes failed to make the desired impact in areas treated not so much because of the wrong identification or inadequate allocation of funds, but mainly because of (a) poor and ad-hoc planning without any serious regard for watershed approach; (b) almost complete lack of people’s participation; and (c) weak coordination between, and lack of integration among works undertaken by different agencies involved in operation. The Committee has kept this in view while making recommendations for future planning and implementation of the Programme.

4.1.2 Experience has also shown that the individual beneficiary-oriented programmes like JRY and IRDP have overtaken the area development programmes like DPAP and DDP in terms of the interest shown and attention given by the administration as well as the response from the beneficiaries. This may be explained by the fact that the former are disbursement-oriented and the benefits from these programmes are immediate whereas area development programmes have a long gestation period and require detailed planning through community participation.

4.1.3 As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are wider forces operating in the economic system which have an adverse effect on the rural environment, particularly in the dry areas. Without simultaneously addressing such issues it would be difficult to counter the processes of degradation through Programmes like DPAP & DDP alone. The movement for conservation of natural resources has to become sufficiently widespread by motivating the local inhabitants to participate in such activities. For this, conservation of natural resources has to be made privately profitable by providing necessary infra-structure, technologies and institutional back-up. Further, the pattern of socio-economic development and the set of macro-economic policies including the pricing of inputs which reduce pressure on natural resources, augment such resources by arresting their depletion are going to be critical for protecting the environment. The specific Programmes like DPAP & DDP can make a visible impact only in such a favourable macro-economic setting.

4.1.4 Besides, in the highly degraded eco-systems where the carrying capacity is very low, unless the natural-resource centred programmes like
DPAP and DDP are supplemented by other people-centred programmes to improve their livelihood and raise their awareness, it would not be possible to achieve the objectives of ecological conservation. This calls for a reorientation of approach and strategy for the development of ecologically vulnerable areas. In the first place, it has to be recognised that the people in such areas have developed over a period of centuries their own strategies to cope with the adverse consequences of droughts. Greater attention has to be given to peoples' own strategies and their own indigenous technologies including the locally preferred plants so as to incorporate them in the Programmes to mitigate the rigours of drought. Thus, the focus has to shift to what these areas and the people inhabiting such areas have rather than merely focusing on what they do not have. For example, in desert area, animal husbandry has a comparative advantage so that investment in dairy development including improvements in breeding may reduce pressure on natural resources arising from increase in cropped area and number of cattle, even as they improve the livelihood of the people. Greater priority to drinking water, pasture development and fodder banks in such areas would serve the same objective. It has been observed that there has been a bias against these areas in respect of the provision of services under the Minimum Needs Programme. Provision of adequate infrastructure and other facilities would be necessary to attract and retain the talented professionals and administrative personnel to service the developmental and the Minimum Needs programmes.

4.1.5 Policies in the non-agricultural sector in such areas will have a close bearing on the protection of environment by reducing biotic pressure. For example, the availability of raw materials like wool, leather and hides and skins are abundant in such areas but those supplying such material get very little income mainly because of high price-spread and larger margins expropriated by the middlemen. Establishment of wool-processing units and tanneries in such areas can raise the employment and income for local people and thus reduce nomadism and migration which will have favourable impact on environment. Development of crafts and other income earning opportunities will have the similar effect of reducing nomadism. All this would require the development of infrastructure and research in the evolution of location-specific technologies based on indigenous innovations including the tapping of solar and wind energy abundantly available in such areas. This would require venture capital to support local innovations so that activities contributing to significant value addition could be introduced. These have to be backed by a credit plan as an integral part of area development plan. Credit policy so evolved has to be sufficiently flexible not only to allow group lending but also permit repayment schedules so as to take into account the gestation periods of different activities. People-centred approach would also imply the development of their capabilities through improved literacy and health care, particularly for women, apart from training in useful skills.
4.1.6 The sum total effect of such a strategy would be to reduce biotic pressure on extremely fragile areas and improve awareness and resource-literacy for the protection of environment. In extreme situations it would also mean retaining people in the area with improved capabilities to be available for activities aimed at conserving the environment. The Committee would therefore like to emphasise that the overall development strategy in ecologically vulnerable area has to be informed by such concerns for the improvement in the livelihood of the people. In the absence of such a strategy, Programmes focussed on natural resource conservation per se would fail to achieve their objectives.
4.2 Planning & Implementation

4.2.1 The Technical Committee reiterates that harmonious management, development and utilisation of land, water and vegetation resources on watershed basis, and the creation of complementary opportunities for processing and marketing of value added goods produced in such areas should be the essence of these area development programmes. In desert areas where delineation of watershed is not possible due to impeded drainage system, Index Catchment and Cluster of Villages approach as currently followed in DDP areas is scientifically feasible and administratively functional. But, if the concept of watershed is to be followed, which signifies harmonious use of land and water resources rather than a mere geo-hydrological unit marked by drainage lines, even desert areas could be managed and developed following the watershed approach.

4.2.2 Watershed as a scientific unit has been accepted the world over for area development because of following advantages:

1. Water resource utilisation which is most crucial in DPAP and DDP areas is best optimised through basin-wide management.

2. As the water resource component is analogous to the blood systems in animal bodies, it provide the best method to diagnose the state of natural resources in a given watershed.

3. Fluctuation in water regime is most widely inter-related to the other objectives of area-based development.

4.2.3 Since the objective of the watershed development is, ecological improvement and conservation of natural resources as well as socio-economic development of the local population, watershed management efforts must incorporate soil and water conservation and land use planning into a broader frame-work that takes into consideration not only physical inter-relationships but economic, social and institutional factors as well.

4.2.4 The benefits that would flow from the development of watershed in an integrated manner would include increase in sub-soil water regime, recharge of wells along the downstream of the watershed and augmentation of drinking water availability. The Agricultural production would be enhanced and there will be greater availability of fodder, fuelwood, small timber and raw material for rural industries. In the process some intangible benefits like institution building as people get together to manage the watershed, and increased bio-diversity of the watershed can also be expected.

4.2.5 The treatment plan for the watershed should include all categories of lands including private, village commons, Revenue and degraded Forest
Lands. As far as possible the selected watershed should be covering a village/hamlet. Even if the watershed is not in physical proximity of the village, the benefits from its development should accrue to the villagers. Appropriate arrangements should be made for distribution of benefits to the watershed community from the Government lands in the watersheds developed.

4.2.6 Careful selection of the watershed would be Central to the proper planning and implementation of the Programmes. Thus in any State first priority should be given to those districts that are prone to drought more severely. By adopting NCA (National Commission on Agriculture) recommendations, if drought is occurring in 40% years, such districts should get preference over those experiencing drought in 20% years. Once the blocks are chosen as per the criteria discussed elsewhere, different micro-watersheds of area not exceeding 500 hectares may be identified in each village of the block using remote sensing techniques. Then severity of degradation of the resource base may be assessed using remote sensing techniques with particular reference to soil erosion and depletion of vegetal cover. The already available data from the State Remote Sensing Agencies, NRSA, NBSS & LUP, CAZRI, CSSRI, CSWCR & TI may also be used for the purpose. Highly degraded areas may be chosen on a priority basis. Since it is proposed to cover each village in a block within 10 years, prioritisation may be made of the villages, preferably on cluster basis. This will enable better servicing facilities which include inputs alongwith credit, training to create awareness and assisting in preparing action plan for each micro-watershed.

4.2.7 If the degradation of the resource base is more or less similar in more than one micro-watershed, the following criteria may be used in selecting the priority watershed.

- Scarcity of drinking water.
- Larger population of SCs/STs.
- Preponderance of common lands.
- Watersheds where actual wages are significantly lower than the minimum wages.

4.2.8 The planning and implementation mechanism at watershed level is most crucial for implementation of the Programmes. The Technical Committee is of the view that watershed development programme should be implemented with the total participation of the beneficiaries. This can be ensured by having a watershed development team (WDT) whose General Body shall consist of all the adult members of watershed area. However, for operational convenience the watershed development team shall consist of 10 members of whom atleast 5 shall be women. The representation to SCs. & STs. in the watershed team shall be in proportion to their strength.
in the general body. The leader of the WDT shall be chosen by the General Body of the beneficiaries of watershed. Funds will be earmarked for watershed development and released to the watershed development team through the Panchayats or Voluntary Agencies as the case may be. The watershed development team shall render the accounts to Panchayats. It is also necessary to provide administrative and other support to the watershed development team. The team shall be assisted by 2 persons comprising of a village Level Extension Officer/Worker drawn from Agriculture/Animal Husbandry/Forest/Horticulture Department and, another preferably a Matriculate educated village youth selected by the beneficiaries of the micro-watershed. Wherever viable village bodies exist, one or two functionaries may be selected by the watershed development team. The village Youth shall receive a honorarium of Rs.500/- per month and the term of his appointment shall be two years.

4.2.9 In any given year, only a micro watershed with about 500 ha. will be taken up for management and development. The assignment of watershed functionaries shall take effect six months previous to the commencement of the year in which the watershed is taken up for development. The functionaries shall undergo a multi disciplinary training during the first three months and they will spend the next three months in survey and preparation of plan for implementation during the year of operation. The selected village Youth will also be given assistance to set up a Kisan Nursery to supply saplings to the villagers and he can also be decentralised seed producing farmer for the village. In short, the village Youth also will be a model demonstrative farmer supplying essential requirements like quality saplings and seeds to the villagers. The appointment of the selected Youth will continue for another six months after the year of implementation, to assist the Watershed Development Team in some of the essential items like immediate maintenance and settlement of accounts. It should be mandatory to make accounts public through the General Body of the WDT. Since the village Youth is also proposed for allotment of Kisan Nursery and Seed Production Activity, he can continue to serve the villagers and watershed community even after completion of watershed programames and also derive income to support himself.

4.2.10 The preparation of Watershed Development Plan and construction of structures, check dams etc. involve a higher level of technical knowledge, which may not be available within the Watershed Development Team or at the level of watershed functionaries. At present this technical assistance comes from the line departments of Agriculture, Forests, Minor Irrigation and Horticulture, which have to provide the technical assistance and supervision in addition to their normal duties in the non-watershed areas of jurisdiction. Since the proportion of area of jurisdiction outside
the selected micro watershed during a given year would be much more than the area covered by the micro watershed taken up for implementation, the time and attention of the regular Officers at block level of line departments would be devoted more for their normal duties than for watershed duties. Consequently, watershed programmes which are basically an exercise in convergence and concentration of larger funds in limited areas for development according to certain objectives suffer from want of desired time and attention from the field functionaries of line departments. Therefore, there is a need for providing assistance by a Multi Disciplinary Technical Team comprising of block level officers drawn from the above departments. While it would be not affordable financially to think of providing the services of block level field functionaries for each watershed, it may be a desirable proposition to create such Multi Disciplinary Technical Team of block level officers for cluster of watersheds and could be located in a centrally and accessible places like taluk or block headquarters to cater to the needs of the cluster of watersheds.

4.2.11 When droughts occur, large amounts are spent on relief works. Since these works are not planned in advance as an integral part of area development plans, sizeable amounts are spent on ameliorative measures of a short term nature which do not result in the creation of durable productive assets for mitigating the effects of drought. While finalising the plans of the concerned States, the Planning Commission should ensure, through appropriate mechanisms, that in drought prone areas, the relief works are integrated with area development plans designed to conserve soil and moisture through the development of watersheds and to generate other income earning opportunities on a sustained basis which alone can mitigate the adverse effects of drought on a lasting basis.
4.3 People's participation

4.3.1 Several studies as well as the first hand information gathered by the Committee during its visits and discussions have revealed that barring a few exceptions there have been no systematic efforts aimed at involving people of the areas concerned in preparing and implementing DPAP and DDP. It has also been found that even where voluntary organisations have been involved, the really genuine ones among them did not get the encouragement and opportunity they deserve. Under the programme administration, the power and authority for planning and implementation effectively vested with the State Governments and the District Administrations. Consequently, the programmes were conceived, evolved and implemented through bureaucratic mechanisms. For effectively ensuring people's participation in the implementation of DPAP and DDP, it is necessary to modify both the process of planning and implementation. Democratically constituted local self-Government institutions and Voluntary Organisations of the people would have to be mobilised and fully involved in shaping DPAP and DDP programmes taking into account the resource endowments and requirements of the areas. The authority and the responsibility to implement the programmes should unequivocally vest with the elected local Government institutions and Voluntary Organisations of people constituted for the purpose. Financial resources flowing from the Central and the State Governments for the programmes should be placed at their disposal. Thus, the responsibility for planning and implementing DPAP and DDP should be transferred to the democratically constituted local self-government institutions and to the Voluntary Organisations of people. Government functionaries at all levels should act as facilitators for implementing the people's programmes by providing the necessary technical inputs and supportive role of coordination.

4.3.2 As it would take some time for the democratically elected local self-Government institutions to take roots and the Voluntary Organisations of people to come up in many parts of the country, it may not be possible to effect total transfer of the DPAP and the DDP at this stage to them. For quite some time to come, Government Departments organised in the traditional mould, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Voluntary Organisations would have to assume varying degrees of responsibility, taking into account the prevailing local conditions in different parts of the country. For instance, it is conceivable that in certain areas Voluntary Organisations could play the leading role in evolving and implementing these programmes but in some other areas, they may be non-existent. Besides, on account of the deep-rooted traditions of bureaucratic implementation of developmental programmes and the ignorance and apathy of people, it would take quite some time for an appropriate development-oriented work culture involving Government functionaries, elected representatives of local self-Government institutions and People's Organisations to evolve and become
operational. During this intervening period of experimentation and transition, we should be prepared for shortcomings and failures in spite of regular reviews and midterm corrections.

4.3.3 The scope and contents of the DPAP and the DDP and the mechanism for their implementation are not widely known even to the beneficiaries of the areas in which they are being implemented. Hence, awareness-raising including dissemination of relevant information relating to the programmes is of prime importance. Voluntary Organisations are best equipped to undertake this task which is perceived to be the very basis for mobilising people’s participation in the implementation of these programmes.

4.3.4 Against the background of the foregoing discussions, the Committee is of the view that determined efforts and concrete steps are required to promote voluntarism in evolving and implementing DPAP and DDP. Initiatives are needed to catalyse promotional efforts towards this end by the State Level Committee. This would mean not only the involvement of the existing voluntary organisations who are genuine and competent, but creating conditions, through favourable policy and bureaucratic receptivity, for the proliferation of local groups consisting of motivated and dedicated people for undertaking such responsibilities. Hence, it would be desirable to move towards the goal of entrusting ultimately 25 per cent of watersheds to the voluntary organisations for the implementation of DPAP and DDP programmes. Keeping this objective in view, the Committee makes the following specific recommendations for facilitating effective people’s participation through Voluntary Organisations in the implementation of these programmes:

i) The State Governments concerned may constitute State Level Committees for the Promotion of Voluntary Action for DPAP and DDP. The Chief Minister of the State may Chair the Committee which may consist predominantly of representatives of established Voluntary Organisations and senior officers of the Government Departments concerned.

ii) The State Government concerned may give adequate publicity to DPAP and DDP and invite applications district-wise from Voluntary Organisations for taking up these programmes.

iii) Secretary of the Department of Rural Development may be the Member-Convener of the State Level Committee.

iv) The State Level Committee may from time to time approve the list of Voluntary Organisations which can be entrusted with the DPAP and DDP. The Committee may lay down the general guidelines for the functioning of Voluntary Organisations and also evolve appropriate policy measures for promoting voluntary action.

v) Wherever reputed Voluntary Organisations are forthcoming, imple-
mentation of 25 per cent of the DPAP/DDP watersheds in a district may be entrusted to them. A Committee at the district level under the Chairmanship of the District Collector consisting mainly of representatives of Voluntary Organisations may be constituted for the purpose.

vi) The District Level Committee shall encourage Voluntary Organisations to take up implementation of the programmes.

vii) The District Level Committee may approve the project proposals including the financial outlays of Voluntary Organisations for implementing the programmes. The project proposals may either be for awareness-raising/training the people and local functionaries for evolving and implementing the programmes or for the whole process of formulation and implementation of watershed-based plans involving the local people, especially the beneficiaries.

viii) Based on the decisions/recommendations of the District Level Committee, funds for implementing the programmes will be released to the Voluntary Organisations directly by the State Government/Zilla Parishad/DRDA, as the case may be. This arrangement could be formalised in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding broadly on the pattern being implemented by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation in respect of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA).

ix) The Voluntary Organisations entrusted with the implementation of the project will be fully responsible for its completion in terms of the project proposals and shall submit audited accounts annually to the prescribed authorities. The VAs may be permitted upto 10 per cent of the project cost to man their staff.

x) For effective mobilisation of local people’s participation in the programmes, the Voluntary Organisations shall constitute Watershed Development Teams for the implementation of the programme and shall share the accounts for the grants given for watershed development with the General Body of WDT.

xi) The functionaries of the line Departments of the Governments may extend their full cooperation, specially in providing the necessary technical guidance in the preparation and implementation of the programmes.

xii) The assets and benefits accruing from the programmes shall vest entirely with the beneficiaries/local communities which will be responsible for the proper maintenance of the assets created including plantations etc.

xiii) The District Level Committee may periodically monitor the functioning of the Voluntary Organisations in the implementation of the programmes and take appropriate action in order to ensure that the programmes are implemented in terms of the approved project proposals.