



Experts share project information with the village community to build awareness, generate interest, and encourage active participation in watershed development activities. (Ganesh Rajapure (WOTR))

Capacity Building Process for Participatory Watershed Development (India)

Community Participation in Participatory Watershed Development

DESCRIPTION

The Capacity Building Process for Participatory Watershed Development is a structured approach to strengthen the technical, managerial, and social skills of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Partner Implementation Agencies (PIAs), and Village-level Institutions (VIs). It includes orientation, training, participatory tools, mentoring, exposure visits, monitoring, and institutionalization. The process enhances competencies, fosters creativity and confidence, promotes community ownership, and ensures effective, sustainable planning, implementation, and management of watershed-based natural resource management and climate-resilient interventions.

Capacity Building Process for Participatory Watershed Development:

Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Partner Implementation Agencies (PIAs), and Village-level Institutions (VIs) aspire to implement participatory natural resource management (NRM) using a watershed approach. However, they often lack the technical expertise, practical skills, and experience needed for effective implementation. To address this gap, a structured capacity-building and induction strategy is essential. Such a strategy strengthens the technical and managerial competencies, nurtures creativity, and enhances their confidence to plan, implement, and sustain watershed interventions. In turn, it transforms their approach to resource mobilization, management, and sustainability. A common environmental challenge—such as water scarcity, land degradation, and climate change—creates opportunities to unite communities around shared needs. The Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) has effectively used watershed development as a unifying framework to bring people together, encouraging collective action for improving livelihoods and building resilience—especially among the poor and vulnerable.

Purpose of Capacity Building:

The overarching goal of the capacity-building process is to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence of NGOs, PIAs, and VIs in designing, implementing, and sustaining participatory, watershed-based NRM and climate-resilient development interventions.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved competence in managing watershed-based NRM and climate change adaptation.
- Strengthened community ownership and participation.
- Effective and sustainable implementation of interventions.
- Positive transformation in approaches to resource mobilization and local governance.

Methodology and Key Steps:

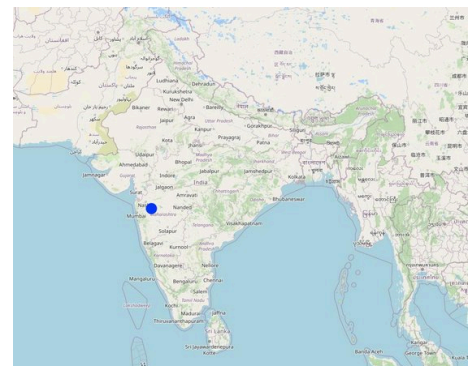
The capacity-building approach comprises a series of interlinked steps, each reinforcing the others. Together, they form a comprehensive and adaptive learning process.

Step 1: Orientation and Sensitization

Objective: Build a common understanding and motivation among all project stakeholders.

Approach:

LOCATION



Location: Ahilyanagar, Jalna, Hyderabad, Sanga Reddy, Mandala, Gajapati, Rayagada, and more, etc., Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh states, India

Geo-reference of selected sites

- 74.33321, 19.41048

Initiation date: n.a.

Year of termination: n.a.

Type of Approach

- traditional/ indigenous
- recent local initiative/ innovative
- project/ programme based
- The capacity-building process (approach) combines traditional and indigenous knowledge, recent local innovations, and project or program-based approaches for effective and sustainable watershed management.

- Conduct orientation sessions explaining linkages between natural resources, livelihoods, and resilience.
- Share success stories and best practices to inspire commitment.
- Define roles and responsibilities of community-based organizations and NGOs.

Step 2: Capacity-Building Training Modules

Objective: Strengthen technical and managerial skills, especially among field-level stakeholders.

Core Modules:

- Technical Skills: Soil and water conservation, water budgeting, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and ecosystem-based adaptation.
- Social & Institutional Development: Social mobilization, gender inclusion, facilitation, group dynamics, and strengthening local institutions.
- Project Management: Planning, budgeting, reporting, and monitoring for effective implementation.

Step 3: Participatory Tools and Methodologies

Objective: Equip local groups with practical tools for participatory planning and action.

Tools and Methods:

- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as resource mapping, seasonal calendars, and wealth ranking.
- Participatory Net Planning (PNP) for micro-level watershed planning.
- Use of digital tools and simple MIS platforms for data management and progress tracking.

Step 4: Mentoring and Handholding Support

Objective: Ensure continued learning, quality implementation, and motivation.

Approach:

- On-site technical and managerial guidance by experienced facilitators or resource NGOs.
- Regular review and feedback meetings to troubleshoot challenges.
- Peer learning and cross-visits among different project sites for shared learning.

Step 5: Exposure Visits and Learning Exchanges

Objective: Promote experiential and peer-to-peer learning.

Approach:

- Organize visits to successful watershed and NRM sites.
- Facilitate interactions with experienced community institutions and farmer groups.
- Encourage farmer-to-farmer extension to build local confidence and innovation.

Step 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Objective: Foster accountability, reflection, and adaptive learning.

Approach:

- Train partners in participatory monitoring, data collection, documentation, and reporting.
- Develop and use simple, participatory monitoring tools to track outcomes and learning.
- WOTR's existing participatory MEL tools are adapted for partners to ensure consistent data and insights.

Step 7: Institutionalizing Knowledge and Ensuring Sustainability

Objective: Build long-term local ownership and reduce dependence on external support.

Approach:

- Develop local resource persons, for example para-professionals.
- Establish local training and resource centers for continuous on-the-ground support.
- Document best practices, lessons learned, and local innovations for knowledge sharing.
- Gradually transfer leadership and responsibility to community institutions.



APPROACH AIMS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Main aims / objectives of the approach

The main aims/objectives of the Capacity Building Process for Participatory Watershed Development are

- Strengthen technical, social, and managerial skills of NGOs, PIAs, and Village-level Institutions for effective watershed management.
- Promote participatory planning, community ownership, and active engagement in watershed interventions.
- Build project management capacity, including planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting.
- Support continuous learning through mentoring, exposure visits, and peer exchanges.
- Ensure sustainability by institutionalizing knowledge, developing local resource persons, and transferring leadership to communities.

Conditions enabling the implementation of the Technology/ ies applied under the Approach

- **Social/ cultural/ religious norms and values:** Living together for a common purpose forms the foundation of society. A strong sense of ownership and active participation is essential for achieving sustainable development.
- **Availability/ access to financial resources and services:** Transparency acts as a social audit, it serves as an effective tool for accountability and openness.
- **Institutional setting:** It provides a platform for community members to develop and exercise leadership.
- **Collaboration/ coordination of actors:** It forms the foundation for building strong and sustainable institutions.
- **Legal framework (land tenure, land and water use rights):** Village-level Institutions (VIs) are linked with the local governing body, i.e., the Village Panchayat.
- **Policies:** It facilitates the process of social auditing.
- **Land governance (decision-making, implementation and enforcement):** It enhances community participation in planning and implementation.
- **Knowledge about SLM, access to technical support:** Through training that provides technical knowledge on the project's key components.
- **Markets (to purchase inputs, sell products) and prices:** Training materials can be procured.
- **Workload, availability of manpower:** Provides local animators to assist in project implementation.

Conditions hindering the implementation of the Technology/ ies applied under the Approach

- **Collaboration/ coordination of actors:** Conflicts may arise among community members due to differing opinions, taboos, or perceptions.

PARTICIPATION AND ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

Stakeholders involved in the Approach and their roles

What stakeholders / implementing bodies were involved in the Approach?	Specify stakeholders	Describe roles of stakeholders
local land users/ local communities	Farmers, Women, and Youth	Consent to work, willingness to participate in mobilization activities, and attendance at capacity-building events.
community-based organizations	Men, Women, and Local Representatives	Making informed decisions and managing conflicts effectively. Encouraging active community participation, carefully selecting beneficiaries, and monitoring the impacts of interventions.
SLM specialists/ agricultural advisers	NGO staff and team members	Planning, implementing, and monitoring activities
researchers	Researchers and community members (men and women) involved in planning, implementation, and impact monitoring	Researchers design and guide training activities, facilitate knowledge sharing, provide technical expertise, monitor progress, and assess the impact of interventions to strengthen the skills and capacities of communities and stakeholders.
teachers/ school children/ students	School and nursery teachers.	Facilitating learning, guiding children, and supporting community education initiatives
NGO	Board members	Board resolution
private sector	Technical Expert - Individual or Group	Support to the SLM specialist
local government	Gram Panchayat (PRI) Local governance body	Necessary resolutions
national government (planners, decision-makers)	Concern Departments	Content and Guidelines for Capacity-Building Efforts
international organization	Donor Agencies	Content and Guidelines for Capacity-Building Efforts Funding, technical support, and guidance for community development and capacity-building initiatives

Lead agency

The main implementing agency will take the lead role in planning, coordinating, and executing the activities (Capacity-building processes are closely linked to project implementation, so the project's nodal agency takes the lead role).

Involvement of local land users/ local communities in the different phases of the Approach

	none	passive	external support	interactive	self-mobilization	
initiation/ motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community members need to demonstrate their willingness to actively participate in project planning and implementation.
planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmers, CBO (Community-Based Organisation) members, women, and village-level animators actively participate in planning and review meetings, and contribute by passing resolutions in CBO meetings.
implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmers, CBO members, women, and the project team actively participate in executing activities and in collecting relevant contributions.
monitoring/ evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	CBO members participate in joint monitoring visits and share information for impact documentation and research studies.
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Flow chart

This visual is illustrating a Capacity Building Process for Participatory Watershed Development using a step-by-step flowchart.

It starts with key implementing institutions such as NGOs, PIAs, and Village Institutions (VIs). The process begins with Orientation and Sensitization, followed by Capacity-Building Training Modules that strengthen skills and technical knowledge. From here, the approach branches into two parallel components:

1. Participatory Tools and Methodologies → enabling communities to actively take part in planning and decision-making.
2. Partners → supporting collaboration through exposure visits and knowledge sharing.

The next stage provides Mentoring and Handholding Support to guide field-level implementation.

Finally, the process moves to Institutionalizing Knowledge and Ensuring Sustainability, ensuring that skills, systems, and learnings remain within the community for long-term development impact. Overall, the diagram shows a structured learning pathway that builds capacity, supports practical application, and ensures sustainable watershed management.



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Decision-making on the selection of SLM Technology

Decisions were taken by

- land users alone (self-initiative)
- mainly land users, supported by SLM specialists
- all relevant actors, as part of a participatory approach
- mainly SLM specialists, following consultation with land users
- SLM specialists alone
- politicians/ leaders

Decisions were made based on

- evaluation of well-documented SLM knowledge (evidence-based decision-making)
- research findings
- personal experience and opinions (undocumented)

TECHNICAL SUPPORT, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The following activities or services have been part of the approach

- Capacity building/ training
- Advisory service
- Institution strengthening (organizational development)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Research

Capacity building/ training

Training was provided to the following stakeholders

- land users
- field staff/ advisers

Form of training

- on-the-job
- farmer-to-farmer
- demonstration areas
- public meetings
- courses

Subjects covered

Key concepts and topics include: Environmental degradation, Natural Resource Management, Watershed Development, Participatory planning and monitoring tools, Community participation and contributions, Role of stakeholders, Portfolio management, Women empowerment, Gender inclusion, Sustainable agriculture, and Post-project management.

Advisory service

Advisory service was provided

- on land users' fields
- at permanent centres

In today's era of climate change and volatile markets, Indian farmers face growing challenges that affect productivity and food security. Unlike urban areas that benefit from the digital revolution, rural farmers need timely, localized, and actionable information on sustainable farming practices. WOTR's FarmPrecise app addresses this need, providing a comprehensive, data-driven tool to support informed agricultural decisions. Previously, WOTR developed an Agromet Advisory System delivering crop- and location-specific advisories via SMS using data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD). While valuable for weather forecasts, this system lacked personalization and direct farmer engagement.

WOTR launched the FarmPrecise app in 2019 to provide dynamic, farm-specific advisories. Since then, it has grown substantially, with over 1 lakh downloads, covering 30 crops across the Indian States of Maharashtra, Telangana, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh, and is available in five languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, and Odia.

Institution strengthening

Institutions have been strengthened / established

- no
- yes, a little
- yes, moderately
- yes, greatly

at the following level

- local
- regional
- national

Describe institution, roles and responsibilities, members, etc.

Village Development Committee (VDC): Responsible for planning and executing project activities, selecting beneficiaries and work sites, managing conflicts, overseeing community contributions, ensuring quality supervision and monitoring, maintaining records, and conducting social audits.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Organize women into savings and credit groups and manage SHG operations.

Village Water Management Team: Promote water budgeting, coordinate water governance, and support sustainable water management practices.

Type of support

- financial
- capacity building/ training
- equipment

Further details

Capacity-building inputs are delivered in a sequence of trainings aligned with the project cycle tenure.

Monitoring and evaluation

In regular Community-Based Organization (CBO) trainings, the monitoring component is a key focus area.

Research

Research treated the following topics

- sociology
- economics / marketing
- ecology
- technology

The baseline survey tool is used for impact documentation. It helps reach beneficiaries to record their quality of life and assess the effects of project activities.

FINANCING AND EXTERNAL MATERIAL SUPPORT

Annual budget in USD for the SLM component

- < 2,000
 - 2,000-10,000
 - 10,000-100,000
 - 100,000-1,000,000
 - > 1,000,000
- Precise annual budget: n.a.

Main sources of funding / major donors: National and international donors, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions.

The following services or incentives have been provided to land users

- Financial/ material support provided to land users
- Subsidies for specific inputs
- Credit
- Other incentives or instruments

Financial/ material support provided to land users

Although not through direct financial or material support, land users (community) benefit from improved skills and knowledge, and gain advantages through active participation and involvement.

IMPACT ANALYSIS AND CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Impacts of the Approach

Did the Approach empower local land users, improve stakeholder participation?

Greater awareness and better understanding of project management and its impact on project components led to higher participation

- No
- Yes, little
- Yes, moderately
- Yes, greatly

Did the Approach enable evidence-based decision-making?

The progress of project components is presented in common meetings, such as Gram Sabhas, enabling CBO members to make informed decisions.

-
-
-
-

Did the Approach help land users to implement and maintain SLM Technologies? Active and well-informed participation in planning, execution, and ensuring quality work.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve coordination and cost-effective implementation of SLM? Capacity building produces synergistic outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach mobilize/ improve access to financial resources for SLM implementation? The participatory Net Planning (PNP) tool in support of capacity building approach facilitates proper land-use planning with budget allocation for specific plots.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve knowledge and capacities of land users to implement SLM? Capacity building activities and net planning exercises provide inputs on the technical know-how of watershed structures.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve knowledge and capacities of other stakeholders? The capacity-building approach improved stakeholders' knowledge and skills through training, hands-on exercises, participatory planning, and active involvement in decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach build/ strengthen institutions, collaboration between stakeholders? The capacity-building process brings all stakeholders onto a common platform, fostering a shared vision, sustainable impact, and resilience.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach mitigate conflicts? It helps unite the community and reduces conflicts related to resource management.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach empower socially and economically disadvantaged groups? The principle of equity was upheld during the capacity-building process, with community members from all sectors actively involved and given equal representation in CBO and VI structures.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve gender equality and empower women and girls? Special emphasis was placed on women, with a separate Plan of Participation (POP) developed to ensure their inclusion and promote gender equity.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach encourage young people/ the next generation of land users to engage in SLM? Special focus was placed on engaging youth in the net planning process to ensure their active participation in local support and supervision.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve issues of land tenure/ user rights that hindered implementation of SLM Technologies? Informal land user issues are resolved during the implementation process.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach lead to improved food security/ improved nutrition? A well-designed capacity-building process ensures quality implementation, leading to better outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve access to markets? Market-related inputs are included in the training modules.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach lead to improved access to water and sanitation? A well-designed capacity-building process leads to quality implementation, resulting in positive outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach lead to more sustainable use/ sources of energy? The capacity-building approach promoted sustainable energy use by training stakeholders on efficient practices, demonstrating renewable technologies, and encouraging participatory planning for optimal resource use.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach improve the capacity of the land users to adapt to climate changes/ extremes and mitigate climate related disasters? A well-designed capacity-building process, combined with effective training, ensures quality implementation, leading to positive outcomes and impacts, while enhancing individuals' resilience through adaptation.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the Approach lead to employment, income opportunities? Improved agriculture creates both on-farm and off-farm livelihood opportunities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Main motivation of land users to implement SLM

- increased production
- increased profit(ability), improved cost-benefit-ratio
- reduced land degradation
- reduced risk of disasters
- reduced workload
- payments/ subsidies
- rules and regulations (fines)/ enforcement
- prestige, social pressure/ social cohesion
- affiliation to movement/ project/ group/ networks
- environmental consciousness
- customs and beliefs, morals
- enhanced SLM knowledge and skills
- aesthetic improvement
- conflict mitigation

Sustainability of Approach activities

Can the land users sustain what has been implemented through the Approach (without external support)?

- no
- yes
- uncertain

The principle of 'learning by doing' is central to the capacity-building process. Communities gain hands-on experience in various project components, developing strong technical and managerial skills at the local level. This enhances sustainability, as trained village institutions such as VDC members and community workers possess the necessary knowledge and skills for continued implementation and impact documentation.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

Strengths: land user's view

- Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge: The approach allows local and traditional knowledge to be integrated into planning and

Weaknesses/ disadvantages/ risks: land user's view how to overcome

implementation, making interventions more relevant and practical to the local context.

- **Enhanced Knowledge on NRM:** Land users gain valuable knowledge and information about Natural Resource Management (NRM), helping them make informed decisions on soil, water, and land use practices.
- **Leadership Development:** Community members get opportunities to take leadership roles in planning and decision-making processes, strengthening local governance and ownership.
- **Social Inclusion:** The process ensures participation from all sections of society, including marginalized groups, women, and youth, promoting equity and collective action.

Strengths: compiler's or other key resource person's view

- **Systematic Approach:** The capacity-building process follows a structured and step-by-step framework, ensuring consistency, clarity, and efficiency in planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- **Tested and Proven Strategy:** The approach is based on field-tested methodologies and past experiences, which have demonstrated successful outcomes in participatory watershed and NRM projects.
- **Operational Guidelines:** Well-defined operational guidelines provide a clear roadmap for facilitators and implementing agencies, helping to standardize procedures and maintain quality across different project sites.
- **Set of Tools:** The process includes a comprehensive toolkit—such as participatory planning tools, training modules, and monitoring formats—which helps streamline learning, participation, and evaluation.

- **Time Constraints:** The capacity-building process requires continuous engagement, which can be time-consuming and may interfere with regular livelihood activities of land users. **Flexible Organization of Capacity-Building (CB) Events:** Conduct training and awareness sessions at times and locations convenient for community members to ensure higher participation, especially for women and farmers with field responsibilities. **Use of Social Media and Digital Platforms:** Share project updates, training materials, and success stories through WhatsApp groups, community radio, and other social media tools to reach a wider audience effectively.
- **Lack of Confidence to Participate:** Some community members, especially those with limited education or exposure, may initially hesitate to engage actively in discussions or decision-making. **Rapport Building:** Establishing trust and positive relationships with community members helps facilitators engage participants more effectively and encourages open communication. **Interactive Methods – Games, Exercises, Personal Talks, and Corner Meetings:** Use participatory and informal methods to make learning enjoyable, build confidence, and promote active involvement among community members. **Use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Tools:** PRA methods like mapping, ranking, and seasonal calendars help participants express local knowledge and experiences, increasing confidence and ownership in the planning process.
- **Social Constraints and Gender Barriers:** Cultural taboos and social norms may restrict women's participation in meetings or leadership roles, limiting their ability to contribute fully to capacity-building and project implementation. **Encouraging attendance and use of Information:** Motivate community members to regularly attend meetings, apply shared knowledge in their practices, and contribute ideas for better project outcomes. **Confidence Building Among Men and Women:** Conduct targeted sessions to enhance the confidence of both men and women, ensuring balanced participation and reducing gender-based hesitation in community discussions.

Weaknesses/ disadvantages/ risks: compiler's or other key resource person's view how to overcome

- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** Differences in language and cultural practices can make it difficult to communicate technical concepts effectively, especially in diverse and multi-lingual communities. **Rapport Building and Understanding of the Community:** Spend adequate time in the field to understand local culture, traditions, and social dynamics. Building mutual trust enhances participation and improves the quality of capacity-building interventions.
- **Limited Literature in Local Language:** The scarcity of training materials and technical documents in local languages restricts understanding and limits wider participation at the grassroots level. **Translation of Reading and Training Materials:** Translate manuals, handouts, and key reference materials into local languages to make technical content accessible to all community members and ensure uniform understanding.
- **Communication and Facilitation Skills:** Successful capacity building depends on skilled facilitators. In some cases, inadequate communication or facilitation skills among trainers can reduce the effectiveness of training sessions and field interactions. **Upgrading Skills of Trainers and Facilitators:** Provide regular refresher training and exposure opportunities for facilitators to enhance their communication, facilitation, and technical skills—ensuring more effective delivery of capacity-building programs.

REFERENCES

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Date of documentation: Oct. 9, 2025

Last update: Nov. 21, 2025

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Full description in the WOCAT database

https://qcat.wocat.net/en/wocat/approaches/view/approaches_7656/

Linked SLM data

n.a.

Documentation was facilitated by

Institution

- Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) - India

Project

- n.a.

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- The Wasundhara Approach. 2013. Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR): <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/19427351/the-wasundhara-approach-wotr>

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- Rising Together: Building Resilient Communities for a Sustainable Tomorrow: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gCFkwkfdg&t=2s>

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