

6. While the focus of these programmes may have differed, the common theme that underpinned their structure has been the basic objective of land and water resource management for sustainable development of natural resources and community empowerment. The Prof. Hanumantha Rao, Committee, constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) studied the implementation and impact of the Drought Prone Areas Programme and the Desert Development Programme all over the country and recommended a common set of operational guidelines, objectives, strategies and expenditure norms for watershed development projects integrating the features of the three programmes under the MoRD. Accordingly, the Guidelines for Watershed Development were framed and brought into force with effect from 1st April 1995.

Need for Revision

7. More than six years have elapsed since the first set of projects was sanctioned under the Guidelines. Meanwhile, a number of studies have been conducted, evaluations made and soundings taken in various fora culminating in the emergence of many suggestions in regard to making the guidelines contemporary, transparent and easy to follow. The need has also been felt to infuse a greater degree of flexibility into the Guidelines in view of the large variation in local conditions, needs and the social structure. Detailed consultations were, therefore, organised with the State Governments, Project Implementation Agencies, NGOs and other experts involved in the implementation of Watershed Development Projects under different Programmes. In fact, Prof. Hanumantha Rao himself has brought out some of the emerging issues and their immediate redressal in his Lovraj Kumar Memorial Lecture 2000. Encompassing all these innovations in one place and making the intentions more specific, the Guidelines for Watershed Development (2001) have now been reformulated *inter-alia*, to ensure:-

- (i) Programme-specific and focused project approach;
- (ii) Greater flexibility in implementation;