6.1. Introduction:
The decade of 1990’s can be termed as the decade of decentralisation the world over as it was believed that decentralisation of power to local units of government was one of the best ways of empowering people and promoting their participation in governance and development. This argument of people’s participation in a decentralized set up was strengthened when there was pressure from the international donors to scale down implementation of development programmes to local level. It is now recognised by all in India that natural resources like land, water, and forest have been plundered for decades since Independence, continuing with the policies of the colonial government.

The last decade has seen an increasing concern with the degraded condition of these natural resources and, consequently, the emergence of community-based or group-based approach towards sustainable management of these resources. Decentralisation of responsibilities for management of natural resources to the community level took place on a large scale during this period. This had coincided with the introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment which provided for ‘reservations’ and consequently equitable distribution of power in the panchayat bodies. Chronologically, Joint Forest Management (JFM) was the first of the decentralised bodies to come into existence in 1992 followed by the Watershed Programme (WS) in 1994, 73rd Amendment in 1993. Around the same time, Andhra Pradesh made a legislation to decentralise irrigation sector which resulted
in formation of Water Users Associations (WUAs) in 1997 becoming the first state in India to implement this process.

Baumann and Farrington have argued that current policies for decentralisation are not a response to grassroots pressure and Natural Resources (NR) access was neither a priority nor a politically contested issue. The elites appreciated that the NR programmes would bring benefits to their land and work on common land was not worth their effort.

“This aspect of Decentralised Natural Resources Management (DNRM) was basically considered to be an employment programme for the rural poor, whom the elite could dispense as patronage, sometimes in pursuit of totally unrelated political goals. The rural poor also saw partnership programmes as basically a source of wage employment, since any substantive investment would take place either on private land or land owned by the forest department. To rural poor these short-term benefits were far more important than the potential worth of the NR themselves”. (2003:2)

Thus they did not expect the DNRM to either benefit or empower the poor and who, therefore, had little stakes in the programme.

The basic objective of these NRM programmes is to promote development through participation of stakeholders in the resource management. But in all the three programmes (Joint Forest Management, Watersheds & Water Users Associations) the bureaucracy plays a crucial role in the implementation process. The Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS)\(^{75}\), Watershed Committee (WC), and WUAs are aimed at consolidating and safeguarding natural resources like forest, water, and land. As a result, the incentive for participation also differs among the committees due to the nature of their constitution. This chapter looks into the participatory aspect of these decentralised NRM bodies and the working of social

\(^{75}\) In JFM, the committee formed to look after the forest is called VSS.
capital in this process as the missing link (or the actual missing of it) and how various actors at the village level like the peddamanushulu/dominant group utilise their political capital in controlling the day to day functioning of NRM bodies and strategies of the poor to serve their own ends in the study area.

6.2. JFM/CFM:
In Mahabubnagar District, Amangal is one of three mandals to have the maximum number of VSS bodies – 19 (nineteen) - the other two being Hanwada and Koilkunda with 21 and 19 VSSs respectively. Almost all the villages in the mandal have at least one VSS. Among the study villages, Pahadipur has three VSSs and Edigapalle has one VSS, Reddypalle being the only village in the mandal without any forest area. Forest, in the truest sense, could be seen only in Pahadipur and to some extent in Edigapalle. There used to be thick forest cover till the late 1960’s in the area. Most of the hillocks in the mandal used to be covered with dense forest cover but since then they were denuded of their forest cover due to frequent cutting down of trees. Over a period of time, people cut down trees whenever there was drought. They used to carry the wood in bullock carts to Hyderabad and sell it as firewood. They had to pay a marginal amount to the forest guard and he would allow them to cut down the trees. But it is the outsiders who were mainly responsible for the sudden disappearance of forest during the 1980s as they used to take away wood in Lorries with the help of local administration. According to some of the villagers, forest cover remained in Edigapalle and Pahadipur due to relative inaccessibility as the forest is in a remote
and non-motarable area. Villagers were entirely dependent on the forest for their daily needs like firewood, construction of houses and *pandals*.

A member of one of the VSSs in Pahadipur said that before the introduction of VSS the villagers were not aware of the importance of forest cover, particularly in relation to rainfall. So, there was nothing wrong with the dependence of villagers on forest as it was an age old phenomenon and the real danger to forest was not from local consumption but the outsiders who used to cut down trees in large quantities. The only time the villagers had damaged the forest was during drought. But at that point of time, they did it for their survival as there was no work available due to the failure of crops. Now the situation is different as there is increased awareness among the villagers and the existence of VSS helped in greater surveillance, resulting in improved protection of forest area. The forest area in Amangal is rich in medicinal plants, fruits and also wood.

Actually, whenever we refer to forest area, it has to be noted that thick forest cover is to be found only in the study villages and to a very small extent in four other VSSs in the entire mandal. Some of the important income generating trees/plants available in the study area are as follows – *Vusiri* (Amla – available in Edigapalle), *Jeedi mamidi* (Fruit tree – available in Edigapalle), *Ippa* (flowers used for medicinal purpose and also making liquor – available in Edigapalle), *Sitaphal* (fruit tree – available in Pahadipur and the hamlets), *Teak* (rich source of wood - available in Pahadipur and its hamlets), *Kumkudu* (Rita – available in all

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76 Platforms on which social functions take place, usually erected at the time of festivals and marriages.

77 Till the late 1970s, migration to cities was very minimal with only the highly educated going in search of jobs. It became widespread only in the latter part of 1980’s when the migration of unskilled workers became the major part of migrants.
the study villages), Chinta (Tamarind – sparsely available in all the study villages but Pahadipur has very good area) and Palakodisa (wood – used for making toys and also a medicinal plant - available in Pahadipur and its hamlets).

Traditional practices of managing the forest were found in only two villages of the mandal and both of them are not part of the study area. This could be one of the main reasons for the deforestation in this area. Every year auctions were held in Mahabubnagar for Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) like chinta (tamarind), seetaphal (custard apple), vusiri (amla) and beedie leaves. The Muttarasis of all the villages used to form as a group and take part in the auction. After that, they used to divide the forest area among themselves and they were the main protectors of the forest area during the NTFP season. But after the late 1980s usufruct rights over NTFP were completely transferred to tribals and the Muttarasis were no more part of the auction nor the protectors of forest.

JFM was introduced in the study villages in 1996 and it was extended to their hamlets in the year 1998. While the VSSs in Pahadipur and its hamlet Gutta Tanda (GT) had the same chairpersons from the beginning of VSS in their respective areas in Edigapalle and Palle Tanda (PT), another hamlet of Pahadipur the chairmanship changed hands according to the power equations in panchayat politics. As mentioned earlier, the managing committee of the VSS was elected by the Gramsabha through direct voting and initially the term was for about two years. But no election was held for the first four years of JFM and this was attributed to the lack of awareness among villagers and also the inactiveness of the

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78 This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.
forest department which preferred to have the existing chairpersons for easy dealing of affairs. Except in two villages\textsuperscript{79} in the mandal, election was not held again till the coming of CFM in 2002. As a result there was continuity of tenure and also corruption in the committees.

After the introduction of CFM in February, 2002, the tenure was increased to three years for the chairman. Also to have greater transparency and equitable representation it was stipulated that either chairman or vice-chairman must be a woman and among the members too, eight of the fifteen must be women. Along with this, cheque power was extended to vice chairman with the view that there would be greater awareness regarding the financial activities of the VSS. JFM was converted to CFM by increasing the role of community and reducing the bureaucratic control which had caused problems in JFM.

6.2.1. Election/Selection:
The first elections under JFM were held in 1996 after its inception and there was no competition for membership in the VSS and its chairmanship. Almost all the members were selected by the Sarpanch\textsuperscript{80} in the study villages. Initially, JFM was introduced in Pahadipur and Edigapalle in August 1996. It was extended to the hamlets in May 1998 and PT which was a hamlet of Pahadipur got it then. Actually, VSS was not allocated to GT and its forest area was divided between

\textsuperscript{79} While in one village the chairperson had been removed for misuse of funds, in the other village the VSS committee went for a reelection with the support of the NGO working in the area.

\textsuperscript{80} Even though the reservations were already in place, in both the JFM study villages the Sarpanch belonged to the dominant group, so it is being mentioned as Sarpanch instead of village strong man.
Pahadipur VSS and the newly created PT VSS. The lambadas of GT petitioned\textsuperscript{81} the Forest officials to allocate them a separate VSS and went on a strike in front of the Forest office in Amangal. With intervention of the MLA the issue was resolved immediately and they got a VSS five months later in October 1998. They made use of their contacts with the MLA in gaining the VSS as they found that the forest officials were not responding despite their strike at the Forest range office in Amangal. The working of the instrumental political capital is very much evident in this whole process.

Giving strength to the argument of Baumann and Farrington, that decentralised development bodies were viewed as programmes of employment generation, Humla Nayak\textsuperscript{82} who was at the forefront of the struggle explained that, VSS would help his Tanda people a great deal because, along with afforestation, it would also provide work for the people. Their Tanda is in a remote place among the hillocks and the land quality is not good enough to support their families resulting in large scale male migration to Hyderabad. The VSS would help in providing work and migration will come down a great deal as he had seen lot of works being done as part of the VSS in Pahadipur. He got his brother elected as chairperson of the GT VSS.

\textsuperscript{81} Humla Nayak the ward member from GT wanted a VSS for his hamlet. In this connection he consulted the Sarpanch and even went to the MLA. But PT was allocated the VSS as it had larger population.

\textsuperscript{82} He worked for AWARE from the late 1980s till 1992 during which he was able to develop contacts with the bureaucracy along with the mandal level politicians. He being the only educated person (studied up to twelfth standard) at that time, he became the go to man in his Tanda and he was taking care of their problems and getting works done at the village/mandal level with the help of Sarpanch. In return for this, he was delivering the votes of his Tanda to the Sarpanch of Pahadipur.
Venkat Reddy, who was a part of the dominant group in Pahadipur was made Chairperson in the VSS. While Janu Nayak, who had been instrumental in garnering support for the TDP in the predominantly Congress supporting PT, got the reward of chairmanship in PT VSS. In Edigapalle, Pochaiah, who belongs to the numerically dominant Ediga group in the village, was made chairman for his continued support to the ruling group.

However, the situation underwent a complete change over by the time of CFM elections which were held in 2002. By that time villagers were aware of the importance of holding on to some sort of position in committees as they had witnessed most of the members and particularly chairpersons earning lot of money and prestige in the village. In the second elections held in 2002, there was fierce competition for the posts of chairpersons except in Pahadipur where Venkat Reddy got re elected without any opposition. While in Pahadipur the ruling group remained unchanged even after the panchayat elections, there was a change in Edigapalle where the traditionally dominant Reddys were able to come back to power displacing the Goud family. The VSS election had to be postponed thrice due to lack of unanimity and finally it was agreed that both the factions would share the chairman and vice chairman posts. Thus Ramulu,83 became the chairman of Edigapalle VSS. In PT, a new chairperson was elected in place of the earlier one. But he got the position with the blessings of the ruling group in Pahadipur. In GT, Humla Nayak was re elected without any opposition.

83 Ramulu is an SC belonging to Madiga caste and one of the elders in that caste. He was part of the alliance forged by the Reddys against Bala Goud in Edigapalle – his task being delivering SC votes.
As we see the formation of committees it becomes clear to us that it was more of a selection rather than an election. Except in the case of Pahadipur VSS, where a person belonging to the dominant faction became chairperson, the other three VSS chairpersons were selected by the dominant faction of the village. It was obviously politics of patronage and also lack of awareness as these selections were not contested by the opposing faction in the gram sabhas. In the second term, there was a small difference in the selection process as a fight had ensued between the opposing factions to get the positions for themselves resulting in compromise and sharing of positions as was the case in Edigapalle and Pahadipur. In Pahadipur, compromise was made possible because the ruling faction agreed to accommodate Deepla\textsuperscript{84} as the chairperson of PT VSS. However, we could also see an improvement in the awareness levels of people regarding VSS resulting in the race for positions but the dominant factions in both the villages continued their policy of patronage and accommodation there by making these ‘invited spaces’.

6.2.2. Functioning of VSS:
In the initial days the VSS committees faced several problems as most of the members were illiterate and were not aware of the provisions of JFM. This situation was exploited by forest officials who had controlled the functioning of VSS as advisors and enforcers. Particularly, in the preparation of Micro plan their intervention was very high. This had continued till the coming of an NGO as a partner to VSS institutions in the mandal. Most of the time, it was found that VSS chairman had put his thumb impression and the amount given for works done as

\textsuperscript{84} KD Nayak spent more than one lakh rupees in the Sarpanch elections as he was confident of victory. He had borrowed huge sums of money and was in a difficult position to repay the loans. He approached Ramana Reddy and reached a compromise regarding a conflict between the youth of PT and Pahadipur where cases were filed against people belonging to Pahadipur and PT. He agreed to withdraw the case and Ramana Reddy decided to compromise in view of future elections where he might need the support of PT.
part of the VSS activities was not the complete amount. For a long period of time, bank pass books were not given to VSSs by the forest officials. While this was happening in some VSS bodies it was not the same everywhere. Chairpersons who were educated and those who were powerful did not allow forest officials to dictate terms to them. But altogether there was very little transparency in the first generation set of VSS institutions which functioned during 1996/98 - 2002. About six to seven lakhs rupees were spent on the works carried out in each of the four VSSs but it was found that almost all the members of the VSS were unaware of the actual amounts sanctioned and spent. This indicates a slight tension between the VSS and the department which could be understood as a fight between bureaucratic control and democratic participation.

The entry of an NGO as a partner organisation in 2000 brought about a gradual change in villagers’ attitude towards the VSS activities. The first act of the NGO was the demand for retaining their bank passbooks followed by regular monthly meetings of the VSS where in, the activities of the VSS were discussed leading to an understanding of the situation by VSS members. From being suspicious about the motives of the NGO the villagers started realising importance of the activities being undertaken by NGO to create awareness among them. This definitely helped in the Tandas which took to the NGO in an enthusiastic manner. Thus by the time of introduction of CFM in 2002, the NGO became quite active in the VSS activities. With the membership of women becoming mandatory in CFM, the NGO was able to influence the election of educated women as members in the VSS. This had resulted in two important things – first the VSS members started having a greater say in preparing their micro plan and second, with the chairman/vice-chairman post for women they started going to the forest office and
thereby reducing the opportunity of the male chairman misusing the money meant for VSS activities. This misuse of funds used to be a common thing earlier on and sometimes the chairman was not even aware of the actual amount paid to him by the forest department officials.

The major criticism of the programme was absence of proper incentives for the VSS members. Because except in the study villages where sufficient forest cover was there for members to have access to some of the forest produce, all the other villages in the mandal had very little forest and as a result very little benefit from the forest. Their only source of incentive from the VSS activities had been the works that were available for VSS members which they could plan and initiate through the micro plan. Even this could not be done properly in some of the VSSs due to groupism and the resultant fights regarding sharing of works between factions in the village. This was very much evident in Edigapalle where works were not done during the two years 2002 – 2004 due to the fight between the Gouds’ faction and dominant faction regarding sharing of work.

6.2.3. Participation – Social Capital:
VSS in Pahadipur is headed by Venkat Reddy who is one of the village elders\(^{85}\).

Unlike the image generally associated with a dominant Reddy landlord – which is that of being oppressive - he is considered as most approachable of the elite in the village. As a result he is respected by the opposing faction of the village and his continued existence as the chairperson of the VSS since its inception could be

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\(^{85}\) Each village and their hamlets have a group of elders who along with Sarpanch adjudicate during conflicts. While the concept of caste panchayats had receded the system of village elders still exist and this group generally comprises of leaders/elders of the various caste groups in the village. Generally these people also happen to be the vote delivery men during election for their respective factions
attributed to this. Because of his stature as a village elder he never faced any problem with the forest officials regarding allocation and implementation of works. Another positive factor had been the beat officer\textsuperscript{86} who was not of the extraction type\textsuperscript{87}. According to the villagers, he was happy with the amount given by the VSS people and never asked for money on his own. These factors made the VSS dispute free and good working model in the whole mandal. But there was no transparency or participation. When it came to these indicators it was again on par with other VSSs. The only difference was that they were free from interference of the forest department in VSS activities. Meetings were not held regularly and the day to day functioning of the VSS was taken care of by Venkat Reddy and Muttarasi Ramulu his close follower.

PT, which is a hamlet of Pahadipur, consists of Lambadas and most of them belong to G-L\textsuperscript{88} faction but the VSS was headed by Janu Nayak, who belonged to the R-G-Sc faction. He got this position by virtue of being part of ruling faction in the village and also being one of the more educated in the hamlet. Due to assistance of the beat officer, who also happened to be a Lambada, the functioning of VSS was smooth after 1999. But in the initial days, there was no cooperation from the forest department officials and the previous beat officer used to demand huge amounts\textsuperscript{89} during and after the work.

\textsuperscript{86} A beat officer has jurisdiction over four to five VSSs and the beat area is named after the prominent village of the area.
\textsuperscript{87} Rent seeking by government officials is quite common in the study area. They are given a specific percentage of the money allocated for works.
\textsuperscript{88} For an easier understanding of the factions in Pahadipur, I am using these initials from here. G-L is the Goud-Lambada group headed by Ramu Goud and R-G-Sc is the Reddy-Goud-SC group headed by Ramana Reddy.
\textsuperscript{89} Janu Nayak said that he used to demand ten percent of the total cost of the work which was much more than what was being paid in other villages. But he was forced to pay because of the fear of not getting works.
The VSS chairpersons of PT and GT had earlier worked for an NGO which was very active in the Kalwakurthy\footnote{Amangal mandal is part of Kalwakurthy revenue division.} revenue division (taluk) till the early 1990s. Both of them made it clear that they would not pay any extra money to the officials. Because of this, these two VSS faced problems regarding clearing of bills for works undertaken by them. After some time, the forest department people retained the cheque books and kept them under their control. As a result, none of the VSS members had any idea about the expenditure and grants. In fact the story was similar for several VSSs in the mandal and some of them were much worse where the chairperson was illiterate. As most of the VSS were located in tribal hamlets which were economically poor they used to ‘manage’ the chairpersons very easily by offering them liquor and a small amount of money. Wherever, there were literate people like in the case of PT and GT who refused to give too much money\footnote{Actually these people too are willing to give a little bit, but they said that the beat officer wanted ten percent and those in the office another ten percent which is way too high.} there was lot of trouble in the grants and payments. That was why the VSS in Pahadipur was unique as it did not face any of these problems which was mainly due to the structural political capital enjoyed by Venkat Reddy.

The case of the VSS in Edigapalle was the worst of the lot. During interaction with some of the VSS chairpersons at a mandal level network meeting we found that there were several VSSs like that of Edigapalle. In Edigapalle, Pochaiah being an illiterate was cheated several times by the forest department people regarding payments. He himself admitted to taking fifteen hundred rupees once and putting his thumb impression on several bills. But according to two of the members he had put his thumb impression like that several times, for small amounts like five hundred, six hundred, and whenever they enquired the beat officer, he used to say...
that they had already paid the money to Pochaiah. General body meetings were not held regularly and the members were not aware of the happenings in the VSS. They took up work whenever they got something.

All this has changed with the coming of the partner NGO to look after the implementation of the VSS programme in the mandal. At around the same time, several new beat officers took charge replacing the older ones who were transferred out of this mandal. Luckily for the study villages, a good beat officer\(^\text{92}\) came and he helped both the VSS and the NGO in several ways. As mentioned earlier, after the entry of the NGO, VSS meetings were held on a regular basis and more importantly, the attendance increased as they made it a point to announce about the works in the meeting. While all the members were not actually aware of the exact amount granted and spent, they knew exactly what kinds of works were being done in their VSS. As a result of increased transparency – it was made compulsory to explain the allocation and spending process in the general body meetings of the VSS.

After the introduction of CFM as women became part of the VSS committees, the NGO encouraged them to know about the various activities of the VSS. Women who were members of DWCRA\(^\text{93}\) groups were given preference in the committee

\(^{92}\) Him being a Lambada and a retired army personnel made him take his job more passionately and it also helped in easier interaction with the chairpersons as most of them were also Lambadas.

\(^{93}\) In 1982 Government of India (GoI) launched the Development of women and children in rural areas (DWCRA) program which focused entirely on the development of women and children. At the village level self help groups (SHGs) popularly known as DWCRA groups were formed with 15-20 members. The focus of the groups was on saving money with a motto, ‘one rupee per day’. Although this program and groups existed since 1980s, they gained prominence with the anti-liquor campaign in the early 1990s and TDP which came to power in 1994 actively supported the formation of groups with large scale incentives resulting in a great increase in the number of groups and savings. The DWCRA groups were given prominence in all the development activities
so that they would be more active participants in the VSS. In the case of Pahadipur vice chairperson post was given to the wife of Muttarasi Ramulu who was a follower of Venkat Reddy for a long time. She is also leader of a DWCRA group in the village. We asked her about the VSS activities and the involvement of women members in the decision making process. She said, ‘I don’t know exactly how much money was being spent, but patel has always been good to us in getting work. The idea of questioning him never occurred to us because he had been very open with all of us and also got us work when other VSSs were not having any funds for additional works’. She said that they had been very active in the implementation of the tree plantation programme. They had planted new trees in twenty five acres and they were also being taken care of by watering them regularly. But while the watering part had to be done voluntarily by the VSS, nobody was willing to do that, hence they hired a person for this work by paying him @ forty rupees per day. This person happened to be Muttarasi Ramulu. He said that, unlike the VSS in PT where they did lot of scam in the construction of check dams, we did not resort to any such thing. We spent the maximum amount available for construction of six check dams and the decision to construct the check dams was taken by the VSS committee as it would provide surplus water and also it would enable more work for the VSS members. It was because of the construction of these check dams that they were able to plan a new plantation. The present plot of twenty five acres of new plantation was made possible by the check dams as there was sufficient water in the upper reaches for wetting of these plants.

of the state government by giving membership as they are known to be transparent and participatory in their functioning.
In PT, the chairperson post was garnered by KD Nayak, who made a deal with the ruling faction in Pahadipur and thus became chairman despite being part of the opposite G-L faction on whose behalf he contested as Sarpanch in the Panchayat elections held in 2001. He had filled the committee with ‘his’ people and there were no instances of his ever being questioned of anything that he did as chairperson. Although some of the members admitted that they are not happy with his activities they never raised it in the meetings. Even the NGO could not do much here as there was no response from the people. This was mainly because, KD Nayak ensured maximum work opportunities for the VSS and got lot of work for the members. As this was the drought period (2002-04) the tribals were happy with his efforts despite the cut he was taking from the works. Janu Nayak, the previous chairman said that he was happy with the efforts of KD Nayak because he was ensuring work for them otherwise most of them would have to migrate in search of work. During his time, he was not able to do much due to the conflict he had with the forest department regarding the percentages. During 2002-04 (drought period) they had constructed four check dams and twenty seven gully controls in the PT forests.

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94 In the 2001 panchayat elections both the important posts – MPTC and Sarpanch posts were reserved for STs. During the MPTC elections, a congress candidate belonging to G-L group surprisingly defeated the TDP-BJP candidate belonging to R-G-Sc. As a result, in the subsequently held gram panchayat elections, expecting victory KD Nayak of G-L group spent more than two and a half lakh rupees but lost the elections. When the R-G-Sc group’s victory rally came to PT hamlet it was attacked by a group of people belonging to KD Nayak. The R-G-Sc group retaliated and repelling the attack they destroyed several households of the tribals as some of them sustained serious injuries in the stone throwing incident. After this, they also filed police cases against the people of the hamlet resulting in police harassment. Thus KD Nayak instead of being blamed for the attack got sympathy of the hamlet and the predominantly congress supporting hamlet became very antagonistic towards the R-G-Sc. In this background, the R-G-Sc gave away the VSS chairperson post to KD Nayak to get back at least the partial support of the hamlet it enjoyed earlier.
In GT, Humla Nayak got another term and this time, there was no conflict with the forest department as there was a change of personnel. Lachmi bai became vice chairman as she was leader of the DWCRA group in the hamlet. She was an active participant in the VSS affairs. They undertook construction of gully controls as the main activity and only two check dams were constructed during 2002-04. But they had got additional work days as they were the ‘local’ experts in the construction of gully controls and rock filled dams (RFDs). They were providing the expertise in all the study villages including Pahadipur, Edigapalle and PT.

The situation in Edigapalle had worsened after the introduction of CFM. As mentioned earlier, there was a conflict in the formation of VSS for more than a year resulting in delay in implementation of the micro plan. The conflicts continued even after the formation of the committee particularly regarding the sharing of works. Even though this was denying work to the villagers both groups remained unperturbed. Somaiah, a small land holder who mainly depended on agricultural labour and other works said that in the one up man ship struggle it was people like him who suffer the most. However, he is hopeful of getting greater number of work days as part of the sharing agreement and felt that the situation was much better than in the earlier committee and he did get his wish after the resolution of dispute regarding sharing the works.

As we had seen, the levels of participation improved a lot after the introduction of CFM in 2002. But the other important aspect, transparency did not increase to the desired levels despite the best efforts of a civil society organisation in the mandal.

95 Initially workers from Kadapa used to be employed for construction of rock structures as the locals were not aware of the building procedure of these structures. During this period, the lambadas from GT picked up the technology and from 1999 onwards stopped hiring people from Kadapa. Later on other VSS also started hiring them for construction of their structures. By 2002 they became the local experts and were consulted by eight VSS in the vicinity.
It made difference with regard to creating awareness about the programme and the regular mandal level meetings were a huge success as they helped the members to have greater knowledge of VSS activities. Ability to get works allocated was being considered as more important than transparency. This was evident from the responses of VSS members from Pahadipur and PT. In this, the structural political capital of Venkata Reddy was important as his ability to get works sanctioned had ensured no opposition and even the NGO could not do anything about his lack of transparency. The only case, where we can see the successful utilisation of social capital was in GT where the VSS members learnt the construction of rock structures from the specialist workers who came to do the works. Humla Nayak, the VSS chairperson played a crucial role in this process. This kind of innovative and long term thinking was absent in all the other VSSs. The case of Edigapalle became worse after the introduction of CFM, although it had more to do with the conflict situation in the village, where opposing factions were more worried about their dominance and control. This had a huge impact on the allocation of works and also participation as people started looking at VSS as an employment opportunity.

6.3. Watershed:

Due to its topography Amangal Mandal was one of the most favoured mandals in the district for allocation of watersheds and most of the villages in the mandal have watershed programmes. All the three study villages got watershed programmes with Pahadipur being recipient of multiple watersheds. The water situation was comparatively better than other parts of the district and except in two villages during summer; drinking water problem was also not there in the
mandal. Digging of bore wells was started in late 1980s and till that point most of the ground water irrigation was done through open wells. However, in some of the villages bore wells were dug as early as 1978 but they were few in number till late 1980s. Ground water was available at around 40-80 feet till the early part of 1990s. Cultivation of paddy increased from late 1980s resulting in proliferation of bore wells in the mandal and subsequent depletion of ground water resources. Among the study villages bore wells were found mostly in Village1, where paddy was extensively cultivated. The following tables give an indication of the number of bore wells and their impact on the ground water situation in the study area during 2001 - 2005.

Table 6.1: No. of Bore wells in the study villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reddypalle</th>
<th>Pahadipur</th>
<th>Edigapalle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Agriculture office, Amangal.

Table 6.2: Average depth of bore wells in feet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reddypalle</th>
<th>Pahadipur</th>
<th>Edigapalle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Agriculture office, Amangal.

During late 1980s, cotton was introduced in the mandal and some of the villages started cultivating it actively. Due to unpredictability of rains, several farmers dug bore wells for cultivating cotton as it was a cash intensive crop. At the same time, cultivation of paddy also increased throughout the mandal. However, in most of the villages it was found that there were several unsuccessful bore wells with

96 Data not available for the year 2003-04.
some of the farmers admitting that they dug four to five times for one successful bore well. While the above tables indicate the number of bore wells and their impact on the alarming situation of ground water, the actual figures might still be different and the expenditure incurred by farmers must be multiplied when we take into consideration the number of unsuccessful bore wells which in turn pushed the farmers into debt trap. There were several instances within the study villages where the farmers had debt mainly due to failure of bore wells.

It is interesting to note that the number of bore wells increased after the watersheds were completed in the study villages. This was so in the cases of Reddypalle and Edigapalle. The first batch of watersheds in the mandal was allotted in 1997-98 to Reddypalle and another village in the mandal\textsuperscript{97}. Pahadipur got the watershed in 2000-01 and Edigapalle got it in 2001-02. The funding body for Reddypalle was EAS\textsuperscript{98} while Pahadipur was funded by DPAP\textsuperscript{99} and in Edigapalle it was RIDF\textsuperscript{100}. Before the election to form a committee, watershed association which consisted of all the voters in the village in the watershed jurisdiction was formed and after that the watershed committee was elected by Gramsabha in a direct election.

\textsuperscript{97} Watershed cancelled due to dispute in the election of watershed committee.

\textsuperscript{98} Watersheds were funded by various line departments of the government like DRDA, DPAP, soil conservation department and so on. Consequently, they were implemented as part of a scheme of these departments like Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) given by DRDA.

\textsuperscript{99} Most of the watersheds allocated from the second batch onwards were funded by Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP).

\textsuperscript{100} The RIDF watersheds were to be jointly implemented by village panchayat and watershed committee. The allocated fund was also minimal compared to the watersheds being implemented through other departments and the duration of the body was only three years instead of five years.
6.3.1. Election/selection:

While election of committees to JFM and WUAs was incident free at least during their first term, election of watershed committees was fiercely contested by all groups in the village. The process of election in the watershed management was similar to that of VSS and the management committee was elected by Watershed Association. But due to huge amounts involved in the implementation of watershed programme there was always a tough and bitter fight between various factions within the village and there were instances in the mandal where due to tough stance of groups within the village, committees could not be elected in time and watershed programme in those villages got cancelled.

Election to the watershed committee in Reddypalle was unanimous in keeping to the trend of not opposing dominant S family in the village. Watershed was sanctioned in 1997 and it provided the strongman of the village an opportunity to be in the thick of things as he had been displaced from Sarpanch position which he held for more than a decade. Lazar, one of the close followers of SNR was made President of Watershed Association. In the subsequent committee formation, SNR became chairman of watershed committee and the all important secretary position went to Sivaiah, another close follower. Both Lazar and Sivaiah were long time supporters of S family and were rewarded with these posts for their loyalty. Other members in the committee were also selected from among his close followers. The whole exercise reiterate the point made by Baumann and Farrington (2003)\textsuperscript{101} about the role of elites in pushing through the DNRM policy

for getting out of political unemployment which was a result of reservation in panchayat bodies at the village level.

But the situation was very different in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where committees were formed only after receiving the threat of cancellation of watershed. In Pahadipur the dominant R-G-Sc wanted to take away all the posts in watershed committee which was opposed by G-L faction. Watershed Development Team (WDT) tried in several ways to make the watershed operational. They conducted about five meetings in the gram panchayat from April 2000 to November 2001 but situation remained in a deadlock with both of them refusing to allow election of the other group member to the committee. Some villagers feared that watershed will get cancelled but leaders of both groups were unrelenting. After more than a year and half of fighting, they arrived at a compromise finally in November 2001 with the all powerful secretary post being given to the G-L faction and the chairman post went to the R-G-Sc. The membership in the committee was shared (five+seven) in favour of the Reddy-Goud-Sc faction. Also, as part of the agreement works will be carried out in and around the fields of both the factions equally.

The case of Edigapalle was different in the sense that committee was elected on time but works were not taken up as there was a change in leadership in panchayat elections and the new faction wanted the watershed committee to be reformulated\(^\text{102}\) and till then suspended all the works. It must be noted that, when committee was elected after convening a gram sabha meeting it was attended by

\(^{102}\) Actually, the problem came due to the dichotomy of control between the gram panchayat and watershed committee. But as per the provisions an elected watershed body cannot be replaced in any circumstances resulting in a stand off between both the groups in the village.
the Reddy-Ediga faction who at that point of time was not powerful enough to oppose its formation. As the committee was formed in April 2001 it was full of Bala Goud followers. The main reason for their (Reddy faction) non-cooperation was that watershed programme was supported by Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) which was under the control of gram panchayat unlike the other watershed programmes and the cheque for works carried out will be approved only if there was signature of Sarpanch. Since the new faction took control of the gram panchayat in September 2001 election, they wanted to have a lion’s share of the fund for themselves. The same WDT who resolved the dispute in Pahadipur tried their best here also and were able to scratch out a formula for compromise after more than three meetings. The impasse continued for about two years and finally a compromise was reached in March 2003 where the amount of money allocated for the watershed, five lakh thirty four thousand will be shared in the ratio of (sixty+forty) by the Reddy faction and Bala Goud faction. Thus, sixty percent of works would be done in and around the fields of people belonging to their party while the remaining forty percent in the fields of Bala Goud group. According to the agreement committee will first carry out the forty percent works of Bala Goud group and then works of the Reddy faction.

6.3.2. Participation – Social Capital:
Watershed management was embraced with lot of interest by villagers as it would provide employment and improves ground water condition in the villages. But the dominant sections in the villages clashed over the formation of committees and tried their best to exclude the opposite group from watershed committee as each group was scared of the impact of the programme on their domination of villagers.
This was because, watershed programme had lot of fund, and it would provide work on a large scale over a period of five years. Each group in the village saw the watershed programme as an opportunity in consolidation of their hold over vote banks through their control of watershed committee. While this was the situation with regard to leadership in villages towards watershed programme, the general population were more interested in getting works from the programme. Among the three DNRM bodies, watershed programme involved the community much more than the other two starting from preparation of micro plan to execution and maintenance of works.

The watershed in Reddypalle started its work with the construction of a bus shelter as entry point activity (EPA) in 1997 and they gave lot of importance to water harvesting structures, gully controls, and bunding for which they had spent about 12,20,000 rupees out of the total outlay of 16,16,000 rupees released for the watershed. According to Sivaiah they laid major emphasis on these structures to conserve more water and at the same time prevent desilting and flooding in fields. When queried about watershed activities, several villagers feigned ignorance regarding implementation process but they were happy that some of the watershed works yielded good results like prevention of flooding on the eastern side of the village where some of the fields were submerged in the drain that flows adjacent to the village. Due to the construction of a check dam and then strengthening of the bund they were able to overcome the threat of flooding. One of the farmers said that due to the check dam water regeneration was good and he was able to dig a bore well and cultivate paddy in his land which earlier was not possible despite

103 This bund was very important to the eastern side of the village as it provided safety for more than 360 acres of land out of which majority belong to the OBCs and SCs. This was strengthened again later in the food for work programme of 2002.
being adjacent to the drain. The other two check dams were also built in important locations which maximised the availability of water and several bore wells became successful which were dug in the vicinity of the check dams. But these two check dams were built near the land of the Reddys.

The watershed committee members became the contractors and executed the works as per the micro plan. According to one WDT member, they (committee) were not very particular in payments and were paying very little to them as they have the advantage of having SNR. Meetings were not held regularly but most of the activities were run by Lazar and Sivaiah. One of the committee members, said that attendance register was sent to her home for signature and she attended only a handful of meetings in the whole five year period. Although, participation and transparency were very minimal in this watershed the villagers were appreciative of works carried out as part of the watershed programme. Sivaiah earned lot of money through the watershed programme and from being a dependent on SNR, the village strongman for his every need he was able to buy eight acres of land in the village and another five acres near the mandal head quarter in 2002 to develop these lands for real estate. He had bought these lands along with a partner but he came up with two lakh rupees\textsuperscript{104} on his own. Later on he sold the land in village as there were no takers for the plots. He bought the land in village @ sixty thousand rupees per acre and sold it off @ five lakh rupees per acre making a huge profit out of the deal.

\textsuperscript{104}This was what he disclosed to us in an informal interview. However, the villagers felt that he must have invested more money in buying these lands as his partner is also a small employee and his other source of income was what he earns as a commission agent in rice business.
Apart from the watershed committee members none of the villagers knew exactly what were the activities taken up as part of the watershed programme. But activities like construction of check dams, percolation tanks, and strengthening of bund were difficult to miss. As per the new rules introduced in 2001, it was made mandatory to display the activities undertaken as part of the watershed programme and it was displayed on the wall of the panchayat office in 2002. This painting has displayed all the structures, amounts, and numbers. However, participation was very limited in the whole programme and one could find very little in terms of social capital as there was very little associational activity. But for the villagers what was important was that work done was good for them both in the short term for the labourers as it provided them work and in the long term as the water harvesting structures enabled several bore wells to be successful. The fall out was that more people went for digging bore wells which could be seen in the increasing numbers during the years 2000-2002.

The situation in Pahadipur and Edigapalle was completely different from Reddypalle as there were two very strong opposite factions in each of these villages who were highly vigilant. As a result, there was always a fight for DNRM committees. As mentioned earlier, the committees in these villages were formed after a lengthy delay with the threat of cancellation making the compromise possible. In Pahadipur out of a total outlay of 14,80,000 rupees they spent 11,20,000 on water harvesting structures and no bunding activity was carried out. They had built about ten check dams at various places in the village and they were actually constructed in and around the fields of the two factions with each faction

105 See table 1 in page 150
getting five check dams. The members of watershed committee themselves acted as contractors for executing the works of watershed programme.

One of the villagers said that, they knew that both the leading groups were going to make money out of watershed programme but they were happy with the work done as part of the programme. According to Sridhar Reddy, who was the President of watershed association, they wanted to build check dams as it would be easier to share the money and also they would also contribute towards groundwater recharge enabling more bore wells. He had got a contract for one check dam out of which he made about twenty one thousand rupees. He said other people like Rajamma, the former Sarpanch who was Chairman of watershed committee, and Ramu Goud who was Secretary of the committee made more money out of the programme as they got more contracts for works. After a great deal of persuasion over a period of six months Sridhar Reddy revealed to us the percentages that were paid to various people in the watershed programme which amounted to twelve percent of the total outlay. He told that, both the chairman and secretary received five percent money of whatever work that was carried out in the watershed programme. The WDT members received seven percent which was shared by the three of them and some of it was also paid to the higher ups. The engineer, who was part of the three members WDT, received maximum money and he also got something out of each work from the individual contractors.

Meetings of the watershed committee were held regularly and the attendance was good with all the members attending due to nature of rivalry between the two groups in the village. We happened to attend three such meetings but none of the
members ever raised any voice against the corrupt practices. The villagers were aware of the activities taken up under watershed programme due to display of particulars on the village panchayat wall. However, several of villagers were not happy about the fact that, so much money was spent on check dams as they would benefit very few and particularly the close followers of both groups. But they never voiced these objections in the gramsabha meetings that were held twice a year to review various works under progress and plan for future activities. We were able to attend one such meeting where the attendance was low and it was concluded very quickly. The villagers who attended the gramsabha were there mainly to find about the availability of works and nobody had raised any questions or objections regarding the functioning of the watershed committee.

The watershed in Edigapalle was funded by RIDF and it got a small amount of five 5,34,000 rupees which was about one third of the fund generally received by watersheds granted under DPAP. Main emphasis was laid on water harvesting structures and they were located in the fields of the respective followers. While the check dams and percolation tanks were located as per the topography and advice of WDT in Reddypalle and Pahadipur, in Edigapalle they were done to accommodate the interests of the two groups in the village thereby reducing the capability of structures. Two check dams were built and one of them was placed near the fields of Bala Goud followers which was not a desirable place but had to be constructed as per the agreement between the two groups. The people of the village were vexed with the conflicts that became a regular feature between these two groups but one finds very few neutrals in the village with most of them belonging to one side or the other. Nobody was willing to cop the blame for
holding up of works or the inadequate execution without any consideration for desirability of structures in particular places.

The officials from the WDT lamented on the fact that, most of the funds were wasted as they had to accept proposals made by the committee even though they were not really useful. But there was a visible impact of watershed structures just as in Reddypalle and Pahadipur as it helped in ground water regeneration and proliferation of bore wells although it was much lesser compared to the other two study villages. This can be explained by the fact that there were two small tanks in the village which irrigate about 180 acres of land and also water availability was good in the village compared to all the other villages in the mandal. This should explain the fact that most of the fertile lands in the village were owned by the Reddy landlords of the neighbouring village. The group rivalry in the village had taken care of the sustainability aspect in the sense that nobody was interested while participation was so good that they did not allow the functioning of the watershed committee. What was apparent here was that there was awareness but it was not being channelled properly with more emphasis on power struggle rather than on development.

6.4. WUAs:
At the time of introduction of water users associations in 1997, maintenance works were not carried out in Peddacheruvu tank for more than a decade due to lack of funding from the government. As a result the tail end farmers were not receiving water for more than six years. Out of the total Kharif ayacut of 327 acres only 165 acres was getting water and out of total Rabi ayacut of 534 acres only 169
281\textsuperscript{106} acres was receiving water. Along with this problem there were complaints of over use and the land dispute between two gollas due to which 35 acres of land was not receiving water. This particular dispute went on even after the introduction of WUA and was resolved only in 2001 when both the dominant groups in the village came together and resolved it. In the study area, tank management was carried out by the minor irrigation department. In the field, it was the Work Inspector also known as ‘maistry’ and ‘lashkar\textsuperscript{107},’ who was responsible for the distribution of water. Apart from this the farmers generally appoint a person to take care of the water supply and in Pahadipur this role was assigned to the ‘kavalikar\textsuperscript{108},’ who was paid a small amount for this effort.

‘Peddacheruvu’ had a history of more than four hundred years and it was dug much before the Nizam period and during the pre-Independence period it was maintained by the ‘enam\textsuperscript{109}’ landholders. The Nizam on his hunting visits used to rest near this village in the adjacent hills. There were some inscriptions and water facility on the hill adjacent to the tank which indicate the frequency of visits by the royal entourage. After the independence the tank maintenance passed into the hands of minor irrigation department. WUAs were introduced in 1997 with support from World Bank to address the alarming situation of decreasing rate of irrigation potential. The idea behind transfer of power to the WUAs was to involve the stakeholders in the management process. In Pahadipur, during the decade long period after the inception of WUAs, three WUA presidents and two

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{106} Figures are for the year 1996-97 and provided by minor irrigation department, Kalwakurthy.
\textsuperscript{107} Lowest rank in the irrigation bureaucracy. He is responsible for ensuring water supply by making small repairs and also regulation of water supply.
\textsuperscript{108} Village watchman.
\textsuperscript{109} Village servants like Karanam, Patwari, Patel, Washeeraman, Carpenter etc. were provided with land to the services rendered by them and these lands are called ‘enam lands’.
\end{footnotes}
committees were elected but on all the occasions the members of the WUA were handpicked from the supporters of the leading groups in the village.

6.4.1. Election/Selection:
The election process for the WUAs was completely different from the VSS and WS. Election was held by secret ballot if there was a contest and all the farmers with pass book of their cultivating lands were eligible to vote. During the first elections held in 1997 government announced a cash reward of Rs. 50,000/- for committees elected unanimously. But in Pahadipur there was a contest and the efforts of the minor irrigation officials to have an unanimous body proved futile in this regard. The person supported by the dominant faction of the time - Dargaiah became president of WUA defeating the G-L faction’s Krishnaiah Goud. Dargaiah had been an associate of Ramana Reddy, leader of R-G-Sc and saw to it that he was well supported by his ‘madiga’ community during elections. Thus as a reward to the services rendered, Dargaiah was made WUA President.

The first body remained in office for a period of seven years till 2004 and during the elections held it was decided to have a permanent WUA body, where members will be elected every two years in a revolving manner for a total period of six years and with the first and second batch of retirees to be decided by lottery after two and four years respectively. By the time of these elections there is a power shift in the village politics due to the change in power at the state level. Thus the G-L faction was able to take control of the WUA and a cousin of the group’s

110 Dominance in village affairs and particularly committees is linked with the group controlling the gram panchayat and the party in power at the state level. After the 2004 elections, the power equation in the village got reversed. At the time of the first WUA formation in 1997 the Reddy-Goud (R-G) group was in the ascendance against the Goud-Lambada (G-L) group.
leader, Laxmaiah became WUA President. He was replaced as President by Jangaiah, a nephew of leader of G-L faction in 2006.

6.4.2. Participation – Social Capital:
Meetings were to be conducted every month to take stock of the water situation and the distribution of water. When queried about what goes on in the meetings, three of the five members said that, they were not having regular monthly meetings and they actually met two to three times in a year and that too all of them never attended WUA meeting at one time. One of the members said that, meetings were held initially every month but they found that there was nothing to discuss during these meetings so slowly, the frequency came down and now they meet only before the beginning of crop season when the minor irrigation officials also attend these meetings. It was mandatory for them in July and December to come and measure the amount of water available in the tank. On these occasions general body meetings were held to inform the farmers about the amount of water available for their crops during Kharif and Rabi.

An important aspect to gauge the awareness and participation levels especially in WUAs was finances. There were lot of complaints throughout the state that lots of funds were being appropriated in WUAs in the name of repairs and renovation works. In Pahadipur two tanks were granted funds by the minor irrigation department out of which one did not have a WUA. Pedda Cheruvu was granted 19,00,000 rupees during 1997 – 2005 under various heads. Money was granted based on the ayacut of the tank. While in the year of inception it was granted @ Rs. 2000/- per acre in 2005 the annual grant was given @ Rs. 200 per acre. Many
of the members had varying knowledge regarding the finances of WUA. While some of them were aware of all types of funding a few of them were not aware of amounts released under certain heads. The following table gives details of grants received by WUA under various heads during 1997 – 2005.

Table 6.3: Finances: Amounts granted to WUA during 1997 - 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of grant</th>
<th>Amount in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Desilting, Bunding and canal repairs</td>
<td>7 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Annual grant</td>
<td>1.75 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Flood repairs</td>
<td>2 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Annual grant</td>
<td>0.70 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Canal repairs and bunding</td>
<td>5.80 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Annual grant</td>
<td>0.70 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Annual grant</td>
<td>0.35 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Annual grant</td>
<td>0.70 lakhs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collected from Minor Irrigation office, Kalwakurthy.

One WUA member said that the money granted under various heads was not sufficient for desilting work which was a major work that needs immediate attention but except the first time, they did not get money for this activity. They were not able to do the desilting work completely in 1997-98 as the money was not sufficient. According to him desilting had to be carried out in the tank immediately so that all the farmers in the ayacut can receive water. Despite making several resolutions to this effect and sending them to Kalwakurthy they did not receive the money to carry out this work. They were granted 5,80,000 rupees for strengthening the bund and repairing canals in 2002 but it was not adequate to carry out this work. He was not aware of the 2,00,000 rupees granted in 1999 for carrying out flood damage repairs. When queried about it he said that he knew about the proposal sent for this particular work but was not aware about the actual amount released for this purpose. But two other members said that they knew about the amount released for flood damage repairs and canal repairs. While
all the members belong to the same faction, some of them were not even aware of the amounts released for carrying out repairs. The accounts submitted to minor irrigation department office in Kalwakurthy indicate that they had spent about 1,93,000 rupees out of the 2,00,000 rupees granted and 5,57,000 rupees out of 5,80,000 rupees granted.

Krishnaiah Goud belongs to the opposite G-L faction and lost in the first WUA election to Dargaiah. He became WUA member in 2004. He said that, they were not aware of the amount released under flood repairs scheme but knew about the 5,80,000 rupees released for repairing canals and strengthening tank bund. He said that most of the villagers knew that the amount released went into the pockets of Dargaiah and Ramana Reddy. After assuming power in 2004 the G-L faction complained to the minor irrigation department about misuse of funds by Dargaiah. The minor irrigation department officials carried out a social audit in the village in 2004 regarding the complaint and found that money was not spent properly and ordered for recovery of 53,000 rupees. According to the complainant, it was public knowledge that, Dargaiah had appropriated more than 3,00,000 rupees but the officials could only find a very small amount. Dargaiah, said that, he could not pay that much money and paid back only 20,000 rupees and the opposite faction did not press for further charges and left him with that. Aother member of the 2004 WUA said that they took pity on him as he was a poor man and also didn’t own any land so they have to send him to jail for not being able to pay the remaining amount and they were not willing to resort to that extreme step.
During a group discussion with the farmers of the tail end part, it became apparent that they were not receiving water sufficiently for more than a decade and the resolution of conflict between the gollas also did not improve the situation due to insufficient rains. Particularly, during 2001-03 they could cultivate only dry crops due to lack of water. Although, overuse of irrigation was not an issue the main problem with supply had been the lack of water. Thus, although there was 350 acres ayacut, in reality assured water was available for only 190 acres. According to them if desilting was done it would take care of major problem. They seem to be aware of the annual grants but not about the interim allocations. Corruption according to them was part and parcel of government works but what was most important for them was whether the work was executed or not. They were also happy that, WUA works were providing labour during the summer season which had resulted in reduced migration.

Despite our sincere efforts we were not able to elicit any information from Dargaiah regarding the amounts he made while being WUA President. He said that, he was not of the extraction type unlike what the villagers were saying but tried his best to do an efficient job of implementing the various works. When asked about the recovery of money and the amount paid by him to minor irrigation department he said that all people were eating money but nobody complains against these other people. On being a proxy for Ramana Reddy he defended the strongman’s role saying that there was nothing wrong in being advised and directed by people like Ramana Reddy who had great deal of experience in governance due to his prolonged presence in the political field.
6.5. Conclusion:

The presence of an NGO as a partner organisation in the JFM/CFM programme has helped the villagers a great deal as it was able to create awareness among them leading to greater activism and participation. Particularly on the empowerment front, it helped a great deal as a civil society organisation was able to interact with the existing power structures and negotiate a better deal for the excluded communities in providing them opportunities in the committees. This is a major difference that one can find among the NRM bodies. The presence of an external agency greatly helped in increasing levels of participation both qualitatively and quantitatively in VSSs. One thing is certain with regard to transparency. People were very much aware of the various works being granted to them and there was very little scope for chairpersons or vice chairpersons to grab a ‘percentage’ from the sanctioned works. But they do have to pay to the forest department people their cut of five percent. One could see greater transparency and greater attendance in the meetings of VSSs compared to the other two – WM and WUAs.

Greater associational activity leads to greater social capital – according to Putnam. But here, despite the presence of an active civil society organisation and the awareness levels of the villagers along with the social capital – they were not able to combat the evil of corruption. They came to accept it as a part of their life. However, they do talk about it and try to combat it like in the case of the no-confidence motion against WUA president Dargaiah but it had the ulterior motive of scoring a point against the opposite faction rather than punishing the corrupt individual. Because of the acceptance of this aspect by the people, there was such
a scramble for official positions among the villagers, especially when there was reservation as it gave the people an opportunity to become part of the power structure which was hitherto dominated by the traditionally powerful sections of the village.

One common thread that is interwoven through all the NRM bodies is the fear of rival groups within the village about the impact of the works generated as part of these programmes. Due to higher budgets, which sometimes is ten times that of the village panchayat, there is frequent use of labour for various works in the NRM bodies which has a subsequent impact on the economic and social relations in the village. People at the helm in NRM bodies are able to provide more work than the Sarpanch, and by virtue of this, are becoming more popular than the established leaders. During the first phase of elections, these bodies were filled up by close followers of the traditional leaders. But by the second term, there was intense competition for various posts in these committees.

As mentioned earlier about the importance of allocation of budget and works to these bodies, the opposing groups in the village were more intent in gaining some scraps of the spoils when they were weak and the maximum when they were strong, and this resulted in stalemate in the formation of NRM bodies – this is particularly frequent in the case of Watersheds in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where the committees started functioning only in the third year. This is evident in the case of VSS and RIDF watershed in Edigapalle and in the case of Watershed and WUA in Pahadipur. Reddypalle is immune to all these petty struggles as there was no opposing group strong enough to counter the influence of SNR. Each group is wary of the amount of influence that the opposing group will generate by taking
control of an NRM body. As a result they had been trying their utmost to control these bodies completely or when they are not powerful enough to control – to hold on the formation of committees so that they can get a share of the works. We witnessed this again in Pahadipur and Edigapalle particularly in the case of formation of watershed committees.

Coming to the aspect of participation we have seen that almost all the villages had a different perspective on this aspect irrespective of their caste composition. It is mainly the aspect of power which interests them more than the process of participatory development which these bodies are meant for. One has also to take a serious look into the motivation for participation in these development bodies. While the WUA should stand apart in this aspect as it involves direct benefits for the stakeholders, the issue of VSS and WS is completely different. The major drawback in the VSS is that the committees were formed in degraded forest lands and the benefits to accrue from these resources which they have to safeguard are very limited which could explain the lack of interest from the community members regarding participation. What we had seen in GT which was supposed to be a vibrant VSS was also the interest of Humla Nayak in being able to provide work for the tribals in his hamlet which could prevent migration but not the aspect of sustainability. As mentioned earlier, their forest areas of Pahadipur and PT are inaccessible due to which they have thick forest cover and receives an income of thirty to seventy thousand annually which again is not much but it is better than the other VSS. Also the issue of stakeholders and their interests are important in determining participation.
In terms of direct benefits, the tasks envisaged in WM projects are by their very nature biased in favour of those with access to land and water. The landless tend to be marginalised since the major thrust of programmes is on land. Although the landless get work and income during the implementation phase, this is not necessarily sustained. The evidence of WM as a strategy that can develop a more ‘participatory community’ in local village planning is slim. There is some evidence of increased associational activity, however in general the ‘beneficiaries’ have a very limited understanding of the project and little involvement in project implementation. Village-level institutions themselves often flounder after the project cycle mainly due to internal conflicts over transparent management of finances.

When we look at the overall functioning of the DNRM bodies in the study villages, it becomes clear that, lack of an opposing faction in Reddypalle had reduced the possibility of conflict resulting in smooth functioning of the committees. Along with that the necessity to safeguard his position has made SNR to take care of the needs of the villagers and also to implement the watershed programme well. This might be the reason for going by the suggestions of the WDT team in the implementation of the watershed programme. He did show favouritism towards his followers by allocating the contracts to them and did not do anything about the corrupt practices of Sivaiah, Watershed Secretary. He is more interested in the implementation aspect but not about how it is implemented. Throughout his dealings with the villagers he used his structural political capital to the maximum extent in seeing to it that they get what they are looking for. In
the process he gained support of the villagers and the malpractices committed by
his followers were not minded by them.

The case of Pahadipur comes out as a surprise because if the major groups in the
village merge together on caste lines nobody can beat the OBCs as they form the
majority of the population. But party loyalties divided the village and the division
is to be found in all the castes on party lines. Except for Reddys who are all on
one side, all the other caste groups are affected by the divided party loyalties. This
is true in the case of OBCs, SCs, STs and even among the Vaisyas. As a result, the
Reddys by clever use of their structural political capital were able to control the
DNRM bodies and through them the village power structure. It was only after the
elections of 2004 that the G-L faction became stronger as their instrumental
political capital was able to challenge the structural political capital of the R-G-Se
due to the change of power at the state level. It had always been the one up-man
ship of one group over the other rather than, participation or sustainability. One
can simply forget about transparency altogether.

Be it the Reddy controlled VSS in Pahadipur which along with the VSS in GT
was considered a good working model in the watershed committee which was
shared between both the groups or the WUA which was controlled by R-G-Se
faction during the first term and the B-G faction subsequently, we don’t find any
semblance of participation or transparency or for that matter sustainability aspect.
Two things that stand out in this whole exercise are the display of watershed
works done on the panchayat wall and most important of them all – the case of
recovery of money from WUA president. The second case assumes significance
from the point of view of vigilance on the part of people against corruption. However, there is a compromise between the groups and they could come up with very little against him in the social audit conducted by the minor irrigation people.

Edigapalle is the worse affected of all the study villages due to conflicts between rival groups in the implementation of DNRM programmes. Despite being blessed with good water and forest resources when compared to most other villages in the mandal, the benefits of DNRM programme did not reach the people here because of the continuous conflict between the rival groups in the village. The watershed programme is a prime example of not only the conflict between the rival groups within the village, but also an example for looking at how things can go wrong when there is conflict. It is only the VSS which is somewhat better where an agreement could be reached after three meetings regarding sharing of posts. While during the first term of VSS, the illiteracy of VSS chairman was exploited by the forest officials, things changed for the better after the entry of NGO and as mentioned earlier it brought about a change in the attitudes of the stakeholders over a period of time.