

## **Approaches to Community Management of Groundwater in Deccan Traps of Maharashtra, India**

YUGANDHAR MANDAVKAR<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Vice-Chairperson, Grass Roots Action for Social Participation (GRASP), V-18, New Shreya Nagar, Aurangabad - 431005 (India). Phone : +91-240-2351224; +91-94222-93439  
E-mail : grasp\_agd@sancharnet.in and yugman007@gmail.com; URL : www.grasp.org.in*

As groundwater reserves are fast depleting in most hard-rock areas, increasing competition and conflicts put pressures for reforming the social institutions governing water allocation. Due to deterioration of recharge conditions on one hand and increased demand on the other, this relatively accessible and reliable resource is strained, thereby making it difficult for the poor communities to access it for their domestic, agricultural and livestock needs.

Public policies are gradually shifting away from top-down state-controlled approaches towards greater participation and decentralisation. Yet there are only a few successful examples in this direction. Lack of overall knowledge and understanding about the resource is the main hindrance in social participation and community action in this regard. In addition, it is necessary to evolve a community based mechanism and socially acceptable norms for effective community action towards sustainable use and conservation of a depleting resource.

The paper presents experience of GRASP in watershed GPP-1, Sindkhed Raja block of District Buldhana in central Maharashtra, India, demonstrating successful management practices through systematic capacity building of community on scientific understanding of groundwater behaviour and promoting institutional arrangements that are democratic and decentralised in nature. The initiative was taken up as an Aquifer Water Management Pilot (AWMP) under Jalswarajya Project of Department of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Government of Maharashtra. The paper argues that collective action by community is possible if it is based on overall knowledge and shared understanding of aquifer behaviour.

**Keywords:** aquifer; community management; capacity building; groundwater assessment; Deccan Traps; GRASP.