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“All the things I would do, if I had a little money...” so sang Abba in the 1970s, symbolizing the mantra that took root in that decade and has continued to only become a bigger and bigger reality for people. It is true that money takes us a long way, especially the poor – it means that there is food available, that children and families don't go hungry, they are adequately clothed and sheltered, that there is access to education, resources and opportunities, that basic needs are met. It goes to create a sense of security taking the family and the community towards a better sense of well-being.

No doubt one of the most visible impacts of Watershed Development is on the economic conditions of the community. Increased water availability and regenerated vegetation directly translate into more and diverse agricultural productivity, which means more income for the families. And more income has definitely meant springing up of enterprises and creation of many and diverse livelihood opportunities. It also means that streams and rivers run longer, making water available for longer periods of time.

In a post-watershed development scenario, typically ground water levels increase 25% to 60%, cultivated areas increase by at least 80%, irrigated agriculture areas increase five to ten-fold, crop production climbs 90% to 145%, school enrolment increases by 25-40% to 75-100% of all children, milk production increases by at least 200%. All these mean that communities depending on these watersheds move out of dire, poverty-stricken conditions to more prosperous and secure conditions.

Yet something strange has been happening in the last decade or so. We have begun to see new patterns, new

emerging realities: inspite of stupendous impacts that generate strong financial in-flows, the money doesn't seem to stay within the village economy. The demand and pressure on natural resources only seem to grow. While there is more food security, there seems greater uncertainty and vulnerability.

Which brings us to the question what is this force that systematically strips communities off their natural resilience? Changing climate is one. But the more pervasive, underlying factor seems to be the relationships of the communities to market-forces. How can this be counter-balanced?

This month's issue brings to you 4 articles that explore some of these key questions and brings some insights into the problems and their solutions. The story of Wankute is a typical watershed development story. We see how watershed development has changed, for better, the economic, socio-political and culture fabric of the community. Mihir's article foresees global economic trends in the coming recession. The article from our director's desk shares some of the ponderings on development and economy... and finally we share grassroots' explorations on what kind of development is required for a strong and resilient local economy, especially in the face of uncertain climate conditions.

We hope to hear from you, dear reader, your feedback and insights and yes, sharing of your own experiences too.

- Editor

The Coming Recession

Mihir Mathur

Money and money making are two different and independent aspects of modern economy. The former is a medium to transact, having no intrinsic value and the latter is created out of thin air. How much money is created in an economy depends on multiple factors out of which demand is one. Hence, governments and banks across the world pump money into the system to create purchasing power and galvanize the economy. Global Bailout packages were the saviours during the last recession which helped the economy to recover and come out of the recession, albeit temporarily. This mirage is about to be broken because we are on the verge of witnessing another dip in international markets and its cascading affects will be felt across nations, including emerging markets specifically in India.

The last recession came on the back of very strong economic growth. This meant that our economic health and ancillary support was at its best which made bailout packages conveniently possible for countries. It is going to be different this time. We have not yet fully recovered from the after effects of the last recession while the next one is staring at us. It is much more complex this time and I guess a handful of people understand what are the potential effects of downgrading of US credit ratings. But yes, let us give it a try!

US treasury investments are considered as "safe havens" - i.e. the place where one has least risk if not none. Downgrading of this "safe haven" means that now there is some element of risk in it. What made the credit rating companies think so? One answer would be US has got a 100% Debt to GDP ratio, i.e. their national debt is equal to their gross domestic output. Under such circumstances one should hesitate to call US debt market/treasury as "safe haven". It may not be one.

What has India to do with this? Any investment is judged based on the return it generates against the potential risk that it carries. If the world's "safe haven" has become riskier now, then in relative terms everything else is also risky. Higher risk necessarily needs to be backed by higher returns which means the companies listed in the stock markets need to come out with flying colours if they want their investors to stay put



and attract fresh money. But with input costs soaring due to sustained high inflation: profit growth may be tough. Indian markets have tanked in the last week and would continue to go down till one thing happens – the price of oil falls. The economy has witnessed enough slowdown that it pulls down the demand for oil and subsequently its price. A fall in oil prices should ease things out considerably and provide us with some breathing time. But that won't happen until we have reached a downside threshold in demand.

Once the demand has shrunk and oil prices have come down by half, it would be the time to galvanize the economy. But will we be able to create money out of thin air this time too? That is the moot question this time. In the last recession US bail-out package was largely funded by China who had bought US treasury bonds worth \$878 bn. It is doubtful the same thing will happen this time. There is a fair possibility that India will witness a slowdown in its trade inflows i.e. income through exports - especially if dollar value declines and so does US's purchasing power.

Domestically we face a steep challenge – that of managing increasing fuel costs and ballooning subsidies. With India having a 75% oil import economy, it is unlikely that this problem is going to be solved anytime in the near future. Hence, our fiscal deficits would keep getting bigger and this recession will make it worse.

My take is money making will not be easy this time and currency valuations will come under severe stress.

long-term solutions
to immediate problems

Local Economies

-from the Director's desk

The year 2008-2009 is going to be known as a Watershed year – a year that might well be the beginning of a series of financial oscillations that the world might well be going to face. A year that has squarely brought to attention the urgency of the current situation. The oil-price shock, the related skyrocketing food and commodity prices, and toppling of the American credit system that set off a global recession reflected the flimsiness of structural weaknesses and highlighted our vulnerabilities to risks that are unresolvable if things were to continue as they stand now.

Deep down all of us knew that this was not just any other recession but it was a precursor of things to come, an outcome of development paradigms followed and a looming question “Growth at what price?” and “What is Growth?” - questions asked a million times in a million ways for sure.

In our opinion, more than just Growth, it is how the Growth has happened that is important. This defines the nature and quality of our culture and progress. It is important to see not only the quantity of growth but quality of growth – has it been achieved in ecological harmony or has it created dissonances in the social, cultural, political fabric? Has it been creative, regenerative or has been exploitative and destructive? Has it been equitable and just or skewed and imbalanced? What has been the result of growth – has it led to well-being and peace or has it led to strife, conflict and divisions?

One of key components of the way growth has happened is the economics of it. As UNEP reports in its Green Economy Report, most economic development and growth strategies have only encouraged rapid accumulation of physical, financial and human capital. And this has happened at the expense of excessive depletion and degradation of natural resources and ecosystems. It is well-recognized that this pattern of development and growth has had detrimental impacts on the wellbeing of current generations and presents tremendous risks and challenges for the future. The recent multiple crises are symptomatic of this pattern. The report further goes to say that the causes of these crises vary, but at a fundamental level they all share a common feature: the gross misallocation of capital. The last two decades have seen much capital poured into property, fossil fuels and structured financial assets with embedded derivatives. However, relatively little in comparison was invested in renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transportation, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem and biodiversity protection, and land and water conservation.

As a common (wo)man, one wonders how is it that our Economy seems to serve Business, rather than serve the people? How has it come about that People seem to be paying to cater to Business needs? - seen by the fact that policies and market incentives allow businesses to run up huge, largely unaccounted for bills paid for in subsidies costing social and

environmental pay-outs that has systematically stripped the people – more significantly the poor – of their resource bases. It has pushed us into an ecological scarcity which seems impossible to rejuvenate. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment finds that 60% of the world's major ecosystem goods and services are degraded or used unsustainably.

But these are global issues, needing deeply thought out policy level, concerted interventions. While all these impact the last person at the ground, there is an urgent question – how can one protect oneself from the global volatility and market insatiability? At an urban level, perhaps there is little one can do. The external dependence on basics such as food, water and energy is so high, that the question might seem un-addressable without those policy interventions. But what about the rural level? At rural level there are still opportunities and means to build coping mechanisms.

The argument for building strong Local Economies is not something new. New Economics describes it as a method of systematic development of individual responsibility, the effective preservation of resources and the environment, respect for qualitative and not just quantitative values, respect for feminine values, and the need to place ethics at the heart of economic life. It reflects a growing demand from ground-up for new ways of economic life that will conserve resources and enable people to meet their own needs themselves - all of these principally to be reflected on the kind of livelihoods taken up, whose needs it satisfies, and what kind of growth it engenders.

Modern livelihoods have certain key characteristics: they have been created by a handful of experimenters/ entrepreneurs creating new products, services, processes with a channel/ institution helping them to propagate it to reach the masses. The masses, in most cases, have passively adopted a new livelihood in an environment and setting designed by someone else who is usually far removed from their own culture and geographical place. Fundamental assumptions/paradigms around which the system is designed is rarely challenged.

This has resulted in a systematic erosion of local skill-sets, while acquiring new ones that cater very little to local demands and needs, which in turn has meant that these demands and needs are met by external expertise. This has spiralled the local populations further and further away from local self-sufficiency to external dependence. And inspite of “development investments” being poured in, the communities continue to be at the edge of constant risk of external political and market forces.

The New Economic Foundation sums up the situation well. It says that it is absurd that the world's economic life is based on the assumption that people can make a decent living only by competing with people on the far side of the planet to produce goods and services which nobody strictly needs.

What then is a way-out?

We have asked ourselves this question. We arrive at a logical, natural conclusion that if communities are to be resilient and able to cope with and survive the climate crisis, if communities are to be able to absorb volatile market shocks, something else also needs to happen than just “growth” or “development”. They need to shift from a global-market-centred system to a more local, people-centric market system. They need to move away from just money-measured growth and measure their success in social, environmental and economic parameters. Communities need to create their growth opportunities within their locales and move towards a self-driven, self-sufficient system.

Our Climate Change Adaptation program's central theme lies in this belief that a localized economy is more likely be able to adapt to Climate Change and will simultaneously contribute to reducing carbon emissions by having a smaller carbon footprint. If our communities are to be adaptive and resilient and if India needs to follow a low-carbon path, one of the answers lies in a localized economy.



**PRICES
CLIMB**

SHAKE-UP

HARDSHIP

INFLATION

No Fool's Gold

A look at Local Money Multiplier

The idea of strong and self-sufficient Local Economies has been, for long, seen as the solution to current chaos – whether it was through Gandhi's Swadeshi proposition, Michael Shuman's summing it up as the tension between TINA (there is no alternative) v/s LOIS (locally owned import substitution) or Wendell Berry's concept of Solving for Pattern, the process of finding solutions that solve multiple problems, while minimizing the creation of new problems. To us, in WOTR, it seems more and more the only viable way out and towards a longer-term sustainable solution. If our development efforts have to work, they need to be based on the foundations of a Local Economy that works... and it is with this in mind, we set out to understand the dynamics in the local economies in the village clusters of our Climate Change Adaptation program.

The Local Multiplier Effect (LME), we understand, is a very valuable, hidden feature of our economies. The term refers to how many times the dollar (or in our case the rupee) is re-circulated within a region's local economy before leaving through the purchase of an import. The 'multiplier' is an economics concept with which we can intuitively understand how money entering into an economy multiplies (or drains) in way it is spent and re-spent. More re-spending within the local economy naturally means a higher multiplier effect because more income is generated within it.

Local Money Multiplier (LM3), a concept developed by New Economics Foundation, is a simple indicator that can help measure the money flows and helps communities to think about the leakages and how these can be plugged and highlights where the community can build its resilience.

LM3 derives its name from the 3 steps that are followed to measure Local Money flows. The measuring process starts with (1) identifying the source income in a defined region, (2) following how it is spent and (3) re-spent.

At WOTR, we started out by calculating the LM3 of Akole cluster – a cluster of 9 tribal villages. Surprisingly, we found that 97% of the income in



Akole cluster drains out in the first round itself and only 3% gets re-circulated for another round. The surprise lay in the fact that the Akole cluster is predominantly tribal, remote and seemingly cut-off from the external economy... and yet, the local economy was so highly porous!

The writing on the wall was clear – while our development activities increased the money inflows within the community, the external dependencies marked by the outflows remained high. These dependencies left the communities highly vulnerable to external market shocks and continued to erode their resilience.

It was therefore important now for us and the communities to understand and find out how these drains to the local economy could be reduced.

We used the metaphor of the “leaky bucket” and through games and discussions opened up conversations in the communities about local economy and money flows into and out of that community. The bucket was the local economy - into which water was being poured - to represent inflows through agriculture, livestock, forest produce, labour etc. and

leaks out of the bucket being purchases of goods and services from outside the cluster.

The next step was to see what opportunities existed that could help plug these leakages.

We did this through an exercise of “envisioning the cluster” with the leaders and opinion makers of the region. We explored, along with them, their “dreams” and needs, the obstacles that prevent these being fulfilled, potential enterprise opportunities and the resources needed to dynamize them. We pondered on a few questions: How could goods and services be delivered differently such that it could keep money circulating locally, and reduce waste? What impact would these actions have on the 5 capitals (natural, human, financial, social and environmental)? What assets do we (as a community) already have? What abilities already exist within the community and what new abilities do we need to acquire? What are our self-defeating and self-validating attitudes that we need to overcome and nurture respectively? What actions need to be taken and who would take them?

To the people's surprise, what emerged was a long list of options that existed within the community. All that was required was an infusion of right capital at the right place and development of skills and techniques, which were the obstacles the group saw as being the major one.

The learnings from these experiences have been enriching. It is clear – to the communities as well as to us - that the starting point for building a strong local economy is the energy within the community, and the natural resourcefulness, skills and passions of local people. The principle understanding is that people who live and work in a place, and others who care about its future, are best positioned to find enterprising



solutions, implement them and reap the rewards. Local enterprises are more likely to employ local people, provide services to improve the local quality of life, spend money locally and so circulate wealth in the community, promote community cohesion and are likely to have a smaller environmental footprint. The approach also recognises that communities do not develop their local economies in isolation, but need to be strongly connected and networked within an appropriate geographic area to become resilient and be able to sustain themselves in the long run. This can build resilience within the communities that can not only rejuvenate their natural eco-systems, but also reduce external dependencies, withstand market volatility and face down climate variability.

Designer Watersheds:

Wankute – a winner all the way!



It is all about design. A good design can make or break a brilliant idea, a convincing program, and committed action.

Let's see... the triangle, it is said, is one of the most stable structures in the world. The triangle is perfectly stable, because each side braces the two opposite sides, preventing them from moving in relation to each other. The tensions between any two vertices get resolved at the 3rd vertex. Most of us have had little experience working with triangles, and their three dimensional cousin, the tetrahedron, even though ironically, it is usually these very shapes and their relatives that are found in the natural world holding atoms, plants, people, and planets together!

One might wonder what triangles have to do Watershed Development. Our theory is this: a two way partnership that is imbalanced (think circus bicycles!) might require you to be a gymnast... or may be enough to make rounds in the circus ring ... a two way balanced partnership can take you some way. But a three way partnership can take you a long way... add the fuel of capital and capacity and you are set for a long and sustainable journey.

Our Wasundhara approach is a firmly based on these principles. It is based on partnership - an equal and equitable partnership between People, Funders and NGOs. It ensures equity, inclusion, and participation. It takes into account Technical, Social and Environmental factors. Perfected over the years it has resulted in over a 1000 watersheds being successfully rejuvenated.

Village Wankute's is one such story...

Wankute, settled at the foothills of the Sahyadri in Western

Maharashtra, was, like many of the villages around, teetering on the edge of disaster – riddled with poverty and rife with politics. The landscape stretched black and thorny – black basalt rock that heated up in raging summers, and the few cacti that managed to survive them. Sitting on the top of the hills in a rain-shadow region, it was water starved. All the rain that fell rushed out into the valleys. 3 months in a year, water tankers lumbered up the hill to distribute water to Wankute and the neighbouring villages. The rest of the year, the women trudged long distances to fetch water and firewood for the family, while the men went off to the nearby towns in search of work and wage, leaving families behind. With just 5 hectares of land under perennial irrigation and 20 hectares under seasonal irrigation, and just over 150 hectares that completely depended on rain, there was just not enough food produced to support the families.

Did Wankute have a future? It did.

Wankute had been hearing about watershed development projects transforming poor, brown, barren villages like theirs into rich, green, fertile places. After visiting these villages and seeing the transformation first hand, Wankute decided that this was what they needed for themselves.

But the transformation of Wankute from parched to lush was not about to happen overnight. It came with its own share of challenges and difficulties. With WOTR acting as a catalyst and enabling partner, the people worked together to find solutions for their water woes and all the challenges that came with it.

The greatest challenge faced was trying to unite a village that had been used to being divided on the basis of caste, class and gender. In addition, villagers found it difficult to stomach the ban on tree felling and

free grazing of cattle, which they depended on for firewood and fodder, respectively. The ban was required for the regeneration of trees, grasses, and biomass and a non-negotiable requirement of WOTR's Watershed Development approach. Eventually, the sceptics and those reluctant to participate were won over by the constant demonstrations of the benefits of the ban and persistent persuasion by WOTR and committee members.

Together, through measured monetary contributions and volunteering labour, the villagers began to own the project, coming together and building a series of technical land and water treatment structures like farm bunds, contour bunds, check dams, etc. using only locally available materials.

The village also came up with a united vision of the future and then prioritized, implemented and monitored all the activities at the pace best suited to their needs. Over time, the future they envisioned became the



reality that they are living today.

Wankute, today, is visibly different from what it was 7 years ago. The hill sides and wastelands, once rocky and cacti ridden, are now covered with 110,000 trees and grasses, reducing soil erosion and increasing ground water levels.

It also enjoys sufficient water all year round, no longer having to depend on tankers for three months in a year. With this assurance of water supply, agricultural employment increased from just 3 months a year to 8 months in a year. So, while previously upto 60% of villagers were migrating out of Wankute in search of jobs, now Wankute not only has enough jobs for their own residents, but has to import labour from other villages to help in their farms.

This is not all. 142 Wankute women set up and run 9 self-help groups. Through these organizations, the women were trained on issues concerning women's health, growth monitoring of their children, nutrition using local resources, personality development, and legal and entitlement literacy.

But beyond just training, the women took their futures in their own hands. With the ban on felling trees for fuel, the women purchased solar lamps, hot water chulhas and smokeless chulhas to reduce their

dependence of wood as a source of fuel. Says Rohini Hande, “Before the solar lights, I used to be harassed by the kerosene lamps. I had to walk 7-8 kilometres to bring the kerosene from the outlet. Sometimes, I had to make 2 or 3 trips as there was no way of knowing whether the shop would have the kerosene. But now with the solar lights, I have forgotten all about the kerosene issues in the last 2-3 years.”

Wankute's future was all tied into this increasingly scarce resource: water. Despite all the initial reluctance, scepticism and even a fear of giving up the old way of doing things, a united Wankute not just implemented a successful watershed development project, but also proved that progress need not always come at the cost of the environment. Even without the much deserved recognition they received through the TOI-JSW Earth Awards, Wankute is a winner.

As we say... it is all in the Design.



Five months in India: An odyssey of mind and body

Sam Jewler

A week before my trip to India, I opened a Word document and titled it “What do I know about India so far.” After two and a half sentences I called off the charade. I was reading books about the country, but really it was a total mystery to me. I knew nothing.

My first day in the country, I ventured out of my Bombay hotel for just a few minutes. I walked up the block and back, feeling totally overwhelmed and not a little peeved at all the taxi drivers who tried to insist on driving me places. I remember feeling a visceral shock at the fact that everyone on the street was actually Indian.

From that raw, vulnerable state, WOTR took me in like a warm, mentoring guardian. Tireless WOTR employee Jones picked me up from the train station, took me out for dinner and delivered me to the guest house. My mind was swirling, trying to process the noisy chaotic traffic, hungrily imagining all the adventures that obviously lay before me. How could this country not offer adventures? My rickshaw just cut off an elephant!

Everyone in the office gave me a warm welcome, and I soon became close friends with several of my colleagues. They showed me where I should live, where I should eat, how I should take rickshaws without getting ripped off.

But it was hard. After the first week I started asking myself why I had come here, why I'd made a five month commitment to a place about which I could only muster 50 words of knowledge and nary a mental image. Luckily my bosses are accustomed to having Westerners work here, and

they gave me plenty of time to adjust. Within a few weeks I began to feel quite comfortable, and now, at the end of my five months, I feel even more so. (This may suggest I've matured to some extent, but let's not get ahead of ourselves!)

A famous man once said of his travels, “I remember more than I did and I did more than I remember.” What I'll always remember about being here is all the time I spent in places tourists never see – in an office and in villages. I worked hard for a cause I truly believe in, and WOTR gave me access to places and people I never could have imagined.

In the villages, I got to talk to people whose lives were totally revolutionized by their work with WOTR. I got to hear from farmers who know even less about climatology than I do but can sense the climate changing. I got to sit in the homes of generous villagers and eat delicious, authentic Indian food. And when I came back to the office in Pune I wrote stories about these experiences. I edited and helped publish newsletters, spread awareness of our work through Facebook and our new blog, and applied for funding awards. I made friends with co-workers, trading lessons on writing for insights on culture.

Now my time here is ending, and my feelings are about as jumbled as they were when I first came here. I've seen people, things, ways of life that I never knew existed. I've seen that poverty doesn't have to mean misery. And I've seen that, though we face countless social and environmental problems, we have the solutions to turn things around. Now let's get to work!

Senior Researchers

We require Senior Researchers with a background in Environmental Sciences/ Economics and/or Agri Economics with a strong understanding of the Policy environment to lead the Research component of WOTR's CCA Program. Candidates with a Ph.D. in these subjects and a prior experience of at least 3-5 years of carrying out research are invited to apply for these positions.

Research Assistants

WOTR is seeking Research Assistants with a background in Environmental Sciences, Agri Economics, Environmental Economics, and/or Sociology. Candidates with a Masters in any of these subjects with a prior experience of at least 2 years are invited to apply for these positions.

Program Manager

– Climate Change Adaptation Program

We require candidates with a strong background of managing development programs related to CCA with 7 - 10 years of experience in managing large-scale, up-scalable projects. The candidate will be required to lead the implementation of WOTR's Climate Change Adaptation Program in 3 – 5 locations within Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. S/he will contribute to the strategic planning, management and implementation of the program, and reporting to the donors.

Statisticians

WOTR is seeking Statisticians who can collect, analyse, interpret, and present the findings to support the research program. S/he will analyze and interpret statistical data; design methods that apply valid scientific techniques; develop and test experimental designs; plan data collection methods for specific projects; process large amounts of data for statistical modeling and graphic analysis; prepare data for processing by organizing information; supervise field teams collecting and tabulating data; report results of statistical analyses, including information in the form of graphs, charts, and tables.

All salaries negotiable.

Please send in your applications to hr@wotr.org.

Watershed Development Exposure

The Watershed Development Exposure & Orientation Program is meant for middle level personnel involved in implementation of watershed development projects and interested in learning, contextualizing and sharing of experiences. Issues related to community based organizations, participatory planning, involvement of the different stakeholders in watershed management will be taken up during exposure visits as well as during discussion sessions.

Orientation Program – Village Experience

Dates: 20-23 September, 2011

Course Fees: Rs. 5,000.

Venue: Darewadi Training Centre
Village Darewadi
Taluka Sangamner
District Ahmednagar,
Maharashtra.



In lighter vein...

What is recession?

This story is about a man who once upon a time was selling sandwiches.

He was illiterate, so he never read newspapers. He was hard of hearing, so he never listened to the radio. His eyes were weak, so he never watched television.

But enthusiastically, he sold lots of sandwiches. He was smart enough to offer some attractive schemes to increase his sales. His sales and profit went up. He ordered more and more raw material and bread and used to sell more and more. He recruited few more supporting staff to serve more customers. He started offering home deliveries.

As his business was booming, the son, who had recently graduated from college, joined his father.

Then something strange happened.

The son asked, "Father, aren't you aware of the great recession that is coming our way?" The father replied, "No, but tell me about it."

The son said, "The international situation is terrible. The domestic situation is even worse. We should be prepared for the coming bad times."

The man thought that since his son had been to college, read the papers, listened to the radio, watched T.V., he ought to know much more than he did and his advice should not be taken lightly. So next day onwards, the man cut down his raw material purchases, removed the colourful signboard, removed all the special schemes he was offering to his customers and became less and less enthusiastic. He laid off half his staff.

Very soon, fewer and fewer people bothered to stop at his sandwich stall. His sales steadily came down as did his profits.

The father said to his son, "Son, you right. We are in the middle of a recession and crisis. I am glad you warned me ahead of time".

Moral of the story: It's all in your mind! We actually fuel the recession more than it is!

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