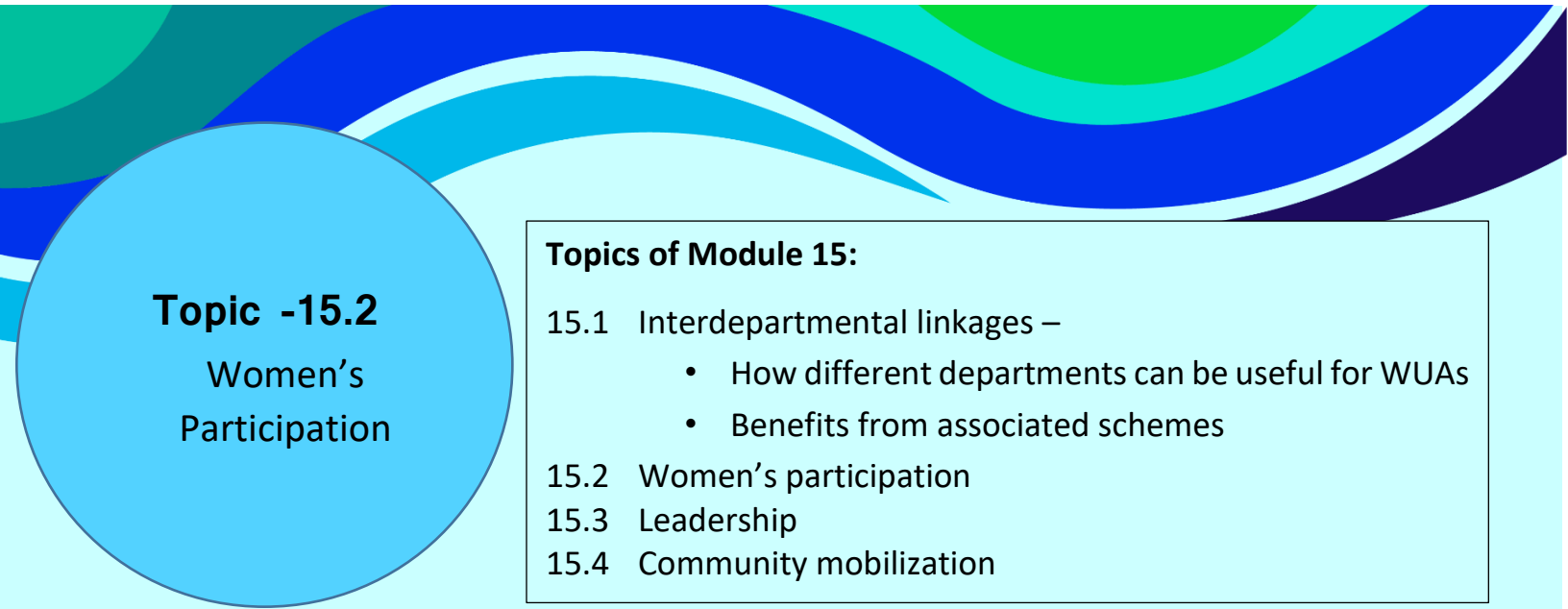


Certificate Course on Participatory Irrigation Management (CCPIM)

Module 15- Strengthening of Water User Associations

Topic 15.2- Women's Participation



Topic -15.2 Women's Participation

Topics of Module 15:

- 15.1 Interdepartmental linkages –
 - How different departments can be useful for WUAs
 - Benefits from associated schemes
- 15.2 Women's participation
- 15.3 Leadership
- 15.4 Community mobilization

1. Background

The Water Users Associations (WUAs) are the backbone of Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT), or in other words, the success of WUAs mark the effectiveness of an IMT programme. Across the country, the WUAs are formed through state-specific Acts or Amendments to the existing Acts and in some cases through Government Notifications as well. Within the country, the WUAs are at different levels of evolution. At very few places they are successful; on the other hand, at majority of places, the establishment of WUA is more like a work-in-progress.

Besides usual Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of canal system in its jurisdiction, any of the WUAs are also engaged in irrigation charges collection.

Some of the 'very progressive' WUAs are also engaged in several other activities and that makes them different from many other WUAs in the country.

The objective of this Module is three-fold:

- a. to discuss various aspects that can aid strengthening of the WUAs – awareness and information.
- b. to encourage the farmers towards a sustainable and active model of WUA – capacitate
- c. to share some real-life case studies to make the WUAs believe that, 'YES this is possible' – self-belief.

The Module is divided into four parts, that is:

- i. interdepartmental linkages –
 - how different departments can be useful for WUAs
 - benefits from associated schemes
- ii. women's participation
- iii. leadership
- iv. community mobilization

Here we will discuss the second part, that is, Women's Participation.

1. Women's participation

The active participation of women in the affairs of WUAs is a critical element. A first and crucial condition for enabling and questioning women's participation is the recognition, at all levels, of women as resource users and managers, and the acceptance of women's resource and management needs as legitimate. In the context of irrigation, and with possible exception of female headed farms, women often continue to be perceived as support-system of their husbands (Ruth Meinzen-Dick and Margreet Zwarteveen 1998).

However off lately, there are several examples, where the women have come forward and contributed to the betterment of the WUAs in different geographies of the country. These examples are some of those encouraging factors for not only

rest of the women WUA members to motivate them to take the lead, but also suggests their male counterparts in the WUAs to share the responsibility and leadership with women for the betterment of the WUAs.

These examples in terms of short case studies are discussed.

a. Paliganj Distributary system WUAs in Bihar

Paliganj distributary is an offshoot of Patna Canal, 75 km downstream from its head from Sone Barrage (near Indrapuri in the Rohtas district of Bihar). It has two sub distributaries: Chandos and Bharatpura. The length of Paliganj distributary is 26.5 km. The Paliganj distributary has designed discharge of 180 cusecs and CCA is over 12000 ha. The command area falls in over 50 villages of Patna and adjoining district.

The WUA members claimed that, women played critical role in collection of water charges by persuading and pressurizing defaulters. They created a 'women cell' at the distributary level, bringing farmers who usually did not pay the charges, to the fold and payment of 5% commission to members of Village Level Committees (VLCs), who collected charges. This has not only improved the water charges collection but also financially empowered the VLCs.

b. Aunli Pani Panchayat in Odisha

The Government of Odisha enacted Pani Panchayat Act in the year 2002 and later on, the State Government amended this Act in 2008.

There is a provision in Pani Panchayat Act to reserve 33% women at *chak* level. The Aunli project in the district of Angul had the distinction of becoming the first all-women WUA in the country. In Lakheshwar Pani Panchayat, the women farmers are getting priority. In this Pani Panchayat, the meetings are held regularly. As the Pani Panchayat has quality leadership, and farmers are clear about the objective of Pani Panchayat – this Pani Panchayat is judged as the one, which is functioning well.

c. Wagad system WUAs in Maharashtra

Since 1999, Wagad project in Nashik District of Maharashtra has got 24 WUAs and project level WUA. In all 24 WUAs, 3-3 women members work as 'Body Members'. i.e. 72 women are participating in all WUAs under Wagad project. Women in Wagad project are involved in poly-house, floriculture, micro-irrigation, value addition etc.

d. Sreeramsaagar irrigation project WUAs in Telangana

In Sreeramsagar irrigation project in Telangana, women in a WUA village organized among themselves to remove obstructions in the canal and guard the water flow. The monitoring and enforcement reduced water theft, and elicited the following comment from an old male farmer: “We have seen that nobody is bold enough to obstruct women and it has made things easy for us”. Another female played a leading role in settling water related conflicts amongst WUA members.

The *neerpaccis*, or common irrigators, in South Indian tanks are traditionally male employees of the WUA. In several cases, women have been seen carrying out the water distribution tasks – not as *neerpaccis* themselves but carrying out the work to help their husbands.