

Certificate Course on Participatory Irrigation Management (CCPIM)

Module 2- Status of Water User Associations (WUAs)

Topic 2.3: Good practices adopted by successful WUAs and WRD

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Topics of module 2

- 2.1 Status of Water User Associations in India
- 2.2 Constraints, Issues and Challenges for WUAs
- 2.3 Good practices adopted by successful WUAs and WRD
- 2.4 Factors of success of WUAs and future of WUAs

1- Good practices adopted by successful WUAs and WRD

To define a successful WUA is a complex task. On a pragmatic note, a WUA which has succeeded in increasing (i) percentage of water charges collection, (ii) area under irrigation and (iii) equity of water distribution in terms of water availability in tail ends, (iv) encouraging water saving, and (v) collective action for input and produce can be considered as a successful WUA. By this standard, there are many examples of successful WUAs in Gujarat and Maharashtra on Government Irrigation Schemes. Many informal water user associations have been found quite successfully running in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra lifting water from rivers for irrigation through community efforts and resources. The success of WUAs constituted on public irrigation systems is heavily dependent, at least in the initial stages, on the attitude and support of irrigation department/ line agencies. Main strengths of successful WUAs in Gujarat and

Maharashtra as well as good practices adopted by Water Resources Departments (WRDs) / line agencies to support them are briefly discussed here in the following para.

(a) Strength of WUAs in Gujarat

In Gujarat, fixing hourly rates for irrigating a unit area, authorization to collect water charges over and above rates fixed by the government, payment of water charges to the government after retaining WUA share of water charges collection (30% + 20% for 100% collection in time), stress on consensus than election, taking irrigation charges in advance and good upkeep of financial records and annual balance sheet make the WUA effective and responsive. The assistance and support of an NGO namely Development Support Centre (DSC) is also an asset for WUAs.

(b) Strength of WUAs in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, volumetric supplies of water to WUAs, hourly charging system for irrigation water from the farmers, tail to head irrigation scheduling, separate office building for WUA, and stress on consensus for office bearers and good rapport between lower and upper level WUAs make the WUAs an engine of entrepreneurship. The system of transparent accounting and publication of annual reports by WUAs and the assistance and support of an excellent NGO, Samaj Parivartan Kendra (SPK) is also an asset for WUAs.

Picture 1: Office building of Water User Associations at Ozar, Maharashtra



2- Good Practices by WRD/ line agencies contributing to success of WUAs

2.1 Supplying irrigation water through WUAs

WRD, Maharashtra and Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited, Gujarat have taken a policy decision that irrigation water will not be supplied direct to farmers, instead it is supplied to WUAs and the WUAs will supply water to the farmer members.

2.2 Supplying irrigation water on volumetric basis / per irrigation basis

Department of Water Resources in Maharashtra and Gujarat supply irrigation water to WUAs on volumetric basis and the WUA supplies it further to farmers on volumetric/ hourly basis which prevents wastage and improves water use efficiency. In Madhya Pradesh it slightly differs but on the lines of volumetric basis as the irrigation fee is charged on “per irrigation basis” which prevents the farmers to provide extra irrigation.

2.3 Consultation with WUAs in construction and rehabilitation work

Maharashtra Government has taken a decision that work of distribution system with discharge capacity less than 1 m³/sec shall be executed once WUAs are constituted. Also, execution of rehabilitation work done by contractors will be done under supervision of contract management committee which constitutes chairman of WUA, one member especially from tail end/divisional accountant and Executive Engineer of the concerned project. Under Gujarat PIM Act, the WUAs are expected to carry out ordinary repairs of irrigation facilities up to minor canal level but in case special repairs are needed, the department will carry out the special repairs in consultation with WUAs.

2.4 Special treatment to WUAs in carrying out new works, remodeling and rehabilitation works

Gujarat PIM Acts provides that WUAs may enter in to contract with the WRD for construction of new works and remodeling and rehabilitation of existing works. As per the Govt policy, the work given to the WUA will be considered equivalent as departmental work. Earnest money or security deposit shall not be asked from the WUA. Deduction of income tax shall not be made at the time of payment for the work done as the WUA is working on the principle of no-profit. 2% of the estimated cost of work will be admissible to WUA as contingency.

Inclusion of labors welfare up to 2% and outside consultancy cost up to 10% shall be acceptable by the department provided the expenses do not exceed the approved estimated cost. The WUA shall have to share 10% of estimated amount as contribution to implement the works of repair and rehabilitation. In case of new works, WUA shall have to share 5% of estimated amount. At the time of entrusting the sanctioned work to WUA, one third of sanctioned amount shall have to be given to WUA without any mortgage. While releasing funds to the WUA by the Government, the contribution of WUA will be deducted.

2.5 Taking assistance from NGOs in formation and capacity building of WUAs

Gujarat PIM Rules provide for engagement of NGO for purpose of formation or establishment of WUA and carrying out various activities lay down under the rules by the officer in the rank of Superintending Engineer and above. The SE may invite and engage the competent and reputed NGO or a successful WUA who is successfully working in different irrigation sector and will be able to promote WUA and supporting them in PIM through motivation as facilitator or community organizer. In case of non-availability of facilitator or community organizer, the SE may assign the competent assistant engineer (AE) or additional assistant engineer (AAE) who is devotee and capable of promoting WUA and supporting them in PIM through motivation. The Government shall give incentive to that AE or AAE for such assigned activity as per norms laid down from time to time for payment of facilitator or community organizer.

In Gujarat (Dharoi Irrigation Project), Maharashtra (Waghad Irrigation Project), Chhattisgarh (CIDP) and Uttar Pradesh (UPWSRP-1), the NGOs have helped establishment and capacity building of WUAs. It has been observed that the continuous hand holding is needed by an NGO for 3-4 years for capacity building of WUAs. After exit of NGO, the good will, cooperation and assistance of the WRD to WUA is essential for their sustainability.