

FARMER PRESENTATIONS : EXPERIENCES OF FOs FROM SINDH AND PUNJAB

ACHIEVEMENTS OF FOs IN SINDH

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INTRODUCTION

The process of mobilization of farmers to managing the part of irrigation and drainage system was initiated in 1995 by International Irrigation Management Institute under Left Bank Out Fall Drain (LBOD) project on three pilot distributaries. The farmers participation in the management of system was a novel idea for both farmers and agency. There was cynicism regarding the role of farmers. Some circles felt that in peculiar Socio-cultural context of rural Sindh, farmers couldn't be organized. Bringing change in the attitude and behavior of rural people was not an easy job but was not also impossible.

The social mobilization process, which was well planned and systematic, produced results in one year when farmers of all three distributaries were organized at two tier organizational system. Firstly they were gathered at watercourse level and formed watercourse association in which all the farmers having water entitlement on that particular watercourse become members. At the second step these watercourse associations were federated at distributary level at three pilot distributaries into farmers' organizations. In all 80 watercourse associations and three farmers' organizations were formed on three distributaries in Sindh.

The second phase of farmers' organizations was to manage the irrigation system but management was not transferred to them due to some legal issues. So their achievement can be judged on organizational consolidation activities, resource mobilization for the organization as well as maintenance of the distributaries, linkage development and human capital development.

Organizational Domain

Farmers' Organization (FO) as mentioned above is a very novel idea. Though On-farm Water Management (OFWM) organized some farmers at watercourse level for the single purpose of renovation of watercourses, the farmers ushered in the new era of their activities and are a part of single entity called farmers' organizations. These achieved the status of a single body among farmers and were recognized as representative institutes of farmers.

Membership and other formal activities

In the organizational sphere all three FOs established their offices, opened bank accounts, audited their account from chartered accountants and developed links with several governmental and non governmental organizations. The essence and strength of the organization is its membership. More than 90 percent farmers' at all three distributaries have registered themselves as members. The following table shows the membership list among farmers.

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Table 1. Membership of FOs in Sindh.

S#	Distributary/Minor	Total Farmers	Members	Percentage
1	Bareji Distributary, Mirpurkhas	354	330	93
2	Heran Distributary, Sanghar	718	600	84
3	Dhoro Naro Minor, Nawabshah	464	399	86

This is significant achievement of FOs to have a large number of farmers as members and to mobilize them for organizational activities and maintenance of distributaries.

Transparency in Account Books

A well managed farmers institution is supposed to maintain the financial accounts in transparent manner. Because the money collected have a share of all people and they have a right to know how it is used. All the FOs have been very transparent, though are not well educated to maintain the financial record. All the necessary books of accounts such as cash book, receipt book, voucher file, bank account are maintained by them to a satisfactory level. At the end of financial year 1998-99, all three FOs accounts were audited by the chartered accountant.

Sharing Responsibilities

The performance of the organizations proved that farmers are well aware about their problems. They actively participate in the discussions, debates and issues. Now the trend of taking responsibilities is also taking roots. At the initial stage farmers were reluctant to take some responsibilities but with the passage of time their confidence in organization and themselves has developed.

There is division of responsibilities also, every office bearer is well aware of his duties and performing them in a well-planned manner. The Secretary is custodian of entire record and treasurer collects the fees and maintains the financial record. The Chairman distributes the work, monitors it and up to certain level is involved in conflict resolution. Thus the habit of taking responsibilities of common cause has emerged and is being consolidated.

To perform various jobs, FOs have formed different committees. Every one knows their responsibilities. The committees are formed for irrigation, drainage, agriculture etc.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF DISTRIBUTARIES

The factor affecting the viability and workability of farmers' organization is the mobilization of resources for various purposes. The willingness of farmers or any beneficiary to pay is the key to the success of that organization. The efforts of FO in this venture can't be under estimated. Their contribution for the operation of organization as well maintenance and development of distributary is remarkable.

On various occasions all the farmers of distributaries contributed in almost all the major activities planned by the FO. Farmers deposited cash amount for desiltation, running of the affairs of organization, contributed cash and labor for development and maintenance of distributaries, provided tractors, labor for desiltation etc. The resources can't only be counted in the shape of finance, but the major contribution of farmers is in providing labor, equipment and voluntarily work to the organization.

As part of this resource mobilization process some figures are available and have been calculated on various occasions. The calculation has also been made for the man-days utilized either for desilting or other maintenance activities. The break up is given in table No 2.

Table No. 2 shows farmers willingness in the activity of desilting. Since it benefits the farmers directly, they were eager to participate in it. The level of resources mobilization is encouraging and is a big achievement of FOs at all three pilot sites tested so far.

The FOs in Sindh have been involved in following major maintenance activities;

- Walk through surveys and annual desilting;
- Qila bushing;
- Strengthening the banks;
- De-weeding the distributaries and paths;
- Construction of culverts; and
- Tree plantation

Table 2. Summary of Resource Mobilization by the FOs.

Activity	Summary of Resource Mobilization by the FOs		
	Dhoro Naro Minor, Nawabshah	Heran Distributary, Sanghar	Bareji Distributary, Mirpurkhas
Desilting 1997	27,500 (Jan 1997) 40,000 (June 1997)	108,900	6,800
Desilting 1998	25,700	92,000	56,000
Desilting 1999	40,000 (June 1999)		100,000
Silt clearance from the banks			9625
Development work	164 600	148 900	95 500
Repair of head regulator		5,000	
Construction of FOs office	25,000		
Repair/ Furnishing of FOs office		6,000	1,500
Total assessed value	322.800	360.800	269.425

Walk Through Surveys and Desilting

This is the inajor area where the performance of FOs can't be ignored. They have contributed well in this activity. At all the three distributaries FOs have been desilting on their own since 1997 in annual canal closure period with the technical assistance of IPD and IIMI. Before executing the activity, farmers walk along the distributary and identify the maintenance problem, and then they call the meeting and plan the activities.

Strengthening the Banks

During the annual walk through surveys, farmers found some portions of the banks weak and were dangerous for the better operation of distributary. So they undertook some work for stabilization of banks. For strengthening of banks FO mobilized their own resources with some assistance form IIMI. These works were carried on cost sharing basis. The over all cost, FOs contribution and the area of banks strengthened is given in the table No 2 in the head of development works.

Construction of Culverts

Feeling the need of paths along the distributary, some culverts were also repaired or constricted on cost sharing basis. It gave the FOs confidence in their own work, as these simple things were lying unattended since years and were disturbing the maintenance of the system. The FOs on their own identified the problem and with technical and to some financial help did these jobs. The break up of the cost is given in the table No 2 under the head of development work.

Basically the FOs involvement in Desiltation, deweeding the paths, construction of culverts and other such minor maintenance activities is the foundation stone of farmers' organization and has been instrumental in building their confidence. This proves that organized farmers can do various jobs on their own by mobilizing their own resources. Thus the achievement in these areas facilitated the departments and reduced the workload of department to some extent. While farmers have gained the experience of doing these types of activities on the platform of FO. They have also experienced problems while performing these activities.

INVOLVEMENT IN DRAINAGE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The pilot FOs are working in the area of LBOD project where big drainage infrastructure has been constricted by WAPDA. As usual farmers or other beneficiaries were not involved at the initial period of the project implementation. Now when the mega project is nearing completion, the government is facing problems concerning its maintenance and operation,

There has been a need to involve the farmers in drainage operation and maintenance. FOs have agreed to some extent with reluctance to participate in the drainage functions. Also. Initially they have agreed to understand that drainage also has same importance as irrigation channel so they should not be silent spectators and keep themselves at distance but come forward and be active partners in drainage management.

All three pilot FOs have succeeded in convincing their members to contribute in the drainage management to a certain extent. Presently in this sphere FOs are doing the following major activities:

- De-weeding the drains;
- Monitoring tube well and sump houses;
- Establishing information system; and
- Coordinating with LBOD officials.

Collaborative Activities

The FOs have gained the external support from various departments and line agencies. Their introduction as FOs is being given importance. Besides, FOs have also established links with non-governmental organizations, fertilizer companies, pesticides companies etc. These well-established links indicate the external recognition of the organization. Through these links FOs are organizing various programs of awareness and information sharing.

The summary of the services received through these links is presented in Table No, 3

Table 3. Collaborative Activities.

Activity	Beneficiaries	Organizations
Lecturers and Training		
Wheat Cultivation	115	Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam
Cotton Production	230	Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam
Role of FOs in Improved Irrigation practices	62	IIMI
Tile Drainage Technology	12	Drainage & Land Reclamation Institute of Pakistan (DRIP)
Optimum use of Irrigation water (Scheduling)	60	Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam and IIMI
Operation and Maintenance of Distributaries	125	IIMI
Organizational Management	63	IIMI
Piezometer and its importance and monitoring	65	IIMI
Finance Secretaries Training	105	SAFWCO and IIMI
Organizational Management, Motivation and Communication	55	NRSP and IIMI
Walk-through-Survey of the pilot distributaries	230	IIMI
Water Measurement at watercourse and Distributary	140	IIMI
Lectures on Crop Husbandry	Village dwellers	Agriculture Department, Private Sector
Demonstration Visits and Study Tours		
On-Farm Water Management Training Institute, Sakrand	63	IIMI
Sindh Agriculture & Forestry Workers Cooperative Organization (SAFWCO), Shahdadpur.	25	IIMI
Pakistan Institute for Environment Development Action Research (PIEDAR) Punjab.	22	IIMI, Swiss NGO
The Community Organizations of National Rural Support Program (NRSP)	24	IIMI
Participatory Irrigation Management Systems in Nepal	19	SDC
Video Movie on wheat cultivation	119	Agriculture Extension
Health Camp	380	SAFWCO, RWWO, Health Deptt. Local Administration
Animal vaccination (Animals)	6821	Animal Husbandry & Livestock Department
Tree Plantation (Saplings)	7850	Forest Department
Formation of Community Organization	10	National Rural Support Program (NRSP)

CONCLUSION

The farmer organizations formed under the pilot projects are socially viable. They have made almost all the water users their members at the watercourse level. The members have been motivated to contribute towards the development works and maintenance of distributaries even though the management transfer of irrigation system has not yet been materialized.