

Participatory Management-Farmers Experience

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1. Introduction

Conditions prevailing before the implementation of the participatory management program in the Sirsia-Dudhaura Irrigation System (SDIS) are described below.

a) Water control

Dhalpas controlled the water supply from the dam to the canal under instructions from - what was then - the Parwanipur canal division. How the water was controlled in that part of the system was unknown to the farmers.

b) Water division

The engineer of the Parwanipur Canal Division, on advice from the dhalpas, ordered for the release of water into the various branch canals. The farmers had no idea what-so-ever regarding the number of days of water supply. Dhalpas received cash and food grains from the farmers, thus favoring the more productive regions. A farmer could also request water from the engineer.

c) Water distribution

A farmer who requested water was given the first priority. After he had irrigated his land, then it was the dhalpas who decided when to stop the water supply.

If a farmer used water without permission and was reported to the dhalpas, he could be locked up as punishment.

d) Repair and maintenance

Repair and maintenance works were conducted by the technicians of the canal division. The farmers had no information regarding the work description, contracts, etc. Sometimes, the farmers were told to do certain maintenance works before water could be released into the main canal and branch canals. The farmers acted accordingly.

e) Resource mobilization

Needy farmers contributed voluntary labor for carrying out repair and maintenance works. A cash donation was not required.

f) Solving disputes

Disputes occurred regarding the use of water. The dhalpas and the office concerned tried to stop illegal users. There were no procedures for settling such issues.

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1 Sirsia-Dudhaura Water Users' Association.
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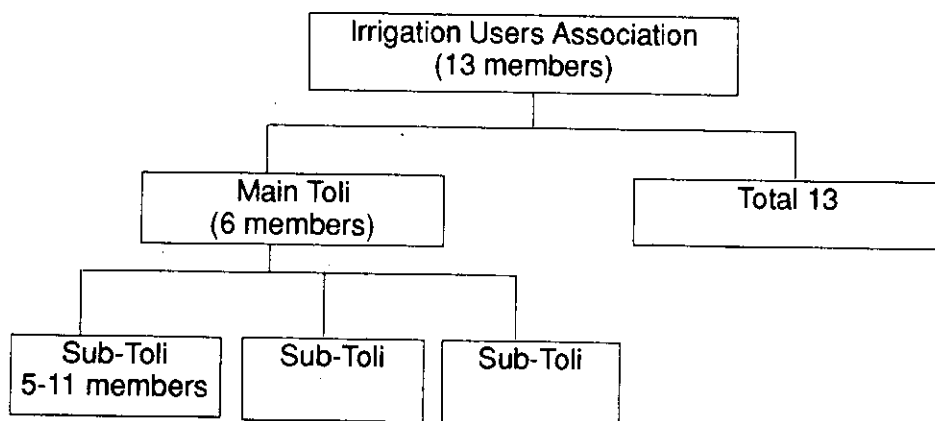
g) **Crops**

Summer crops: Bhadaiya and Aghahani paddy were the main crops

Winter crops: Pulses, musoori, Khesari, gram, and wheat were grown.

2. Formation of Water Users Group (WUG)

At the beginning of the Irrigation Management Project (IMP) one or two representatives from the irrigated area of each branch canal were chosen. In the command area of the SDIS fourteen ad hoc groups were formed, each with 9 to 11 members. The chairman of each toli became an honorary member of the Water Users Association (WUA). Among the 14 members, one chairman, vice-chairman, and a secretary were chosen. All this was on an ad hoc basis. To give it a constitutional status, a users group was instituted. The term of office was fixed at three years, according to the constitution. The WUA was registered with the government. Only 13 tolis were formed with three sub-tolis in each toli. The chairman and secretary of each sub-toli became members of the toli and they comprised the toli. The chairman of each toli was an honorary member of the users group. There were 13 members in the sang.



2.1 Selection of Officials

The criteria for selection of officials are as follows:

- He has to be a farmer,
- mentally fit,
- not suffering from infectious diseases,
- well known by all the farmers, and
- conform to the conditions set in the constitution.

2.2 Rules and Regulations Prepared by the Farmers' General Meeting

The general meeting of farmers in the group was held according to the constitution. A consensus was required for elections. In some places, like Rampur, a consensus was not reached and voting was undertaken. During the voting to

elect the association's chairman some disputes arose. The farmers enthusiasm was noteworthy.

2.3 Cooperation of Irrigation Office and Association Organizer (AO)

- AO provided information on the needs of the toli and association for irrigation justification provided for having both toli and association
- AO provided information regarding the procedures for toli and association election.
- AO aided in the formation of sub-tolis, formation of associations, drafting the constitution, and registration with HMG, etc.

2.4 Canal Operation, Repair and Maintenance

a) Canal operation

i) **WUG's role**

The water distribution chart passed by the association was aided by the AO's suggestions. It was aimed at an equitable distribution of water.

The release of water into the canal is done according to the recommendation of the toli, and it followed the water distribution chart that had been agreed upon. Toli's recommendation was responsible for reducing or increasing water supply in the canals or for changing the water distribution time-table. The dhalpas were instructed accordingly and it was published for the knowledge of all.

ii) **Procedures for preparing the water distribution timetable**

Each toli chairman, after a discussion with farmers on their water requirements, informed the association regarding their needs. This was the basis for canal operation. The office was then given the job of releasing the water according to the timetable prepared.

A timetable was also decided upon by the toli members for irrigating fields from the panis (mini-canals). The water distribution chart was passed at the monthly meeting of the association.

iii) **Irrigation office-farmer relations**

Problems or changes in the water distribution timetable was made known in time for the AO to request its implementation. Cordial relations existed for cooperation.

iv) **Resource mobilization**

The farmers who devoted time to the preparation of the water distribution chart or in attending meetings were considered to have contributed, and no remuneration was provided. They provided their presence at other times as needed.

b) Repair and maintenance works

i) **WUG's cooperation**

Most of the sub-branches and painis (mini-canals) were cleaned by the farmers themselves. The irrigation office paid for the cleaning works undertaken on the main canal. The farmers were involved as much as possible, and 10% of the payment received for the works was deposited into the toll fund.

Small repair works were done by utilizing the toll fund. Sometimes voluntary labor was also called for.

Mass meetings were organized to curb encroachment by cattle and regulation were devised to levy fines on defaulting farmers.

ii) **Resource mobilization**

Voluntary labor on an equitable basis was called for if cleaning works on the painis (mini-canals) had to be undertaken. The same was done if emergency works were needed.

Group suggestions made to the irrigation office for the implementation of repair and maintenance works was helpful. The time and labor spent was considered as social work.

2.5 Role, Duties, Rights, Penalties

a) WUG's rôle in the implementation of irrigation management activities:

- Help in repair and maintenance program.
- Help in preparing the water distribution timetable.
- Equitable distribution of water.
- Resource mobilization for repair and maintenance works.
- Supervision of the canal.
- Help in preparing a record of the irrigated area.
- Help in canal operation works.
- Quality control over repair and maintenance.
- Help in food distribution works.
- Participation in training program.
- Demarcation of command area.
- Help in collecting data on repair works.

b) Rights and responsibilities

- Circulate the water distribution chart.
- Change the chart if necessary.
- Create understanding between the group and irrigation office regarding repair and maintenance works.

- Quality control over repair maintenance works.
- Create records of farmers benefitting from irrigation facilities.
- Judicious use of tolj fund.

In carrying out these responsibilities, if any farmer refuses to follow the rules he is liable to be assessed a penalty as decided upon by WUG.

2.6 Present State

There has been a U-turn on the use of the above mentioned rights and responsibilities. WUGs are not receiving the required amount of cooperation from the irrigation office.

The water management activities are now limited to the tolj level. WUG meetings are rarely held and decisions arrived at are not enforced.

2.7 WUG's Influence on Present Irrigation Program

The irrigation management related activities have narrowed down since the formation of WUG.

The water distribution and canal operation procedures are not reliable. Some tolis near the source of Dudhaura canal system have been able to meet their own requirements, but not in the Sirisya region.

Dhalpas are indifferent toward the canal operation works. Management of the canal system has deteriorated.

Lack of budgetary allocation is used as an excuse for not carrying out repair and maintenance works by the irrigation office. But, the smaller maintenance works by the farmers are still done. The WUG is lost as to what steps it has to take.

Disputes relating to water are still settled by the tolj. The overall conditions are now worse than what it was before the implementation of the IMP program.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Lessons

- a) Realization among farmers that the irrigation system and facilities are for their own benefit.
- b) Ties were made with agricultural development program.
- c) Understanding of the group and the association's significance.
- d) Preparation of water distribution charts and its importance.
- e) Procedures for cleaning the canal.
- f) Procedures for resource mobilization.
- g) Methods of canal supervision.
- h) Canal maintenance.
- i) Improved farming techniques through training.

- j) Technical knowledge regarding quality of repair works.
- k) Ways to deal with disputes.
- l) How to conduct meetings.
- m) Preparation of a water levy record

3.2 Problems

- a) Difficulties in forming tolis.
- b) Resistance while preparing water distribution chart.
- c) Difficulties in requesting voluntary labor.

These problems are not that important at this time. But, supervision of the canals by the farmers is still a problem.

The biggest problem is the lack of repair and maintenance works for head gate, regulator gate, sluice, and etc.

3.3 Expected Cooperation from Irrigation Office

- a) Adequate budgetary allocation for repair and maintenance works
- b) Support from irrigation office towards irrigation management program
- c) Formation of water levy team from the WUG
- d) Cooperation in elections of WUG
- e) Availability of consultants like AO
- f) Division of water for irrigation canal over Dudhaura and Sirsiya rivers.

3.4 Recommendations

- a) A long-term program must be envisaged while implementing the participatory management program in the irrigation system.
- b) An adequate training program must be organized by the irrigation office.
- c) Training for improved farming techniques must also be conducted.