

FORMATION PROCESS OF FOS IN PUNJAB EXPERIENCE FROM HAKRA 4-R DISTRIBUTARY

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The presentation has five parts:

1. Objectives;
2. Selection criterion and characteristic of pilot site;
3. Methodology;
4. Constraints in the social organization;
5. Lesson learned for larger replication.



OBJECTIVES:

It was a five years project funded by the Netherlands's Government. The main objectives of the project are:

1. To Organize the farmers at secondary level of irrigation system as WUF;
2. To develop interface of WUFs with operating agencies;
3. To seek possibilities of coordinated irrigation and agricultural service for WUFs;
4. To test social, technical, and financial viability of organized water users for distributary's O&M; and
5. Use the methodology for replication.

CRITERIA FOR SITE SELECTION AND CHARACTERISTIC OF PILOT SITES

Background information of pilot site

The farmers in Punjab, especially in the southern part, are faced with constraints of low agricultural productivity due to unfit ground water. Besides, Bahawalnagar district is almost situated at the tail of the Punjab's canal irrigation system. The only source of irrigation is the canal system. The performance of which has gone down over the years due to several economic and socio-political factors. In the given situation, neither the government nor the farmers alone can solve these problems. It was one of our long felt needs that the farmers should be organized to improve irrigated agriculture, a major source of our livelihood.

There are five main criteria of selection:

- 1 Hakra 4-R distributary comes under Fordwah Eastern Sadiqa South (FESS). It is a World Bank project on lining and drainage of canals. In addition, under this project, OFWM is doing the same organization work at Sirajwah distributary, so we coordinated with them for the organization of farmers.
- 2 The farmers of the Distributary have diverse backgrounds such as local, Molijir and settlers etc.
- 3 With little intervention by the agency, for development work there was an incentive for the farmers to be organized.
- 4 It is a medium to large, 57-k.m long distributary with 124 irrigation outlets. The design discharge is 193 cusec, which was sanctioned in the 1966.

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- 5 The gross command area is 48250 acres and culturable command area is about 43400 acres.
- 6 Presence of hydraulic structures, which would help the water users to monitor the discharge in terms of space and time

These drop structures represent the five subsystems,

- The first sub-system falls from RD-0 to RD-46, with 25 irrigation outlets (Ghulab Ali zone);
- The Second sub-system falls from RD-46 to RD-72 with 24 irrigation outlets (Haroonabad Zone);
- The third subsystem falls from RD-72 to RD-112 (tail) with 27 irrigation outlets (Tail Zone);
- The fourth subsystem is 1RA/minor with 15 irrigation outlets (Khatan Zone);
- The fifth subsystem is 1R/minor with 33 irrigation outlets (1R Zone).

METHODOLOGY

Base line survey

The base line survey was conducted in thirteen sample watercourses, in July and August 1995. It covered socio economic and technical information of the area. The purpose of the base line survey was to use this information to interact with the water users for establishing the WUOs.

Five Dialogic Steps in social organization

Social Mobilization process is based on five dialogic steps. Each step is the base of next step. If one is weak then next cannot be obtained. It is iterative. Each step leads to the next step.

Familiarization Meetings

The initial interactions with the people in the project area helped the field team to accomplish the following combination activities:

- Introduce IIMI and its programs to the people;
- Importance of the program;
- Explain the project objectives;
- Preliminary calibration exercise;
- Collect or construct warabandi schedule; and
- Identification of Social Organization Volunteers (SOVs)

The process was launched from September 1995 to May 1996. The purpose of the identification was to help the field team comprising of five members and to involve the community in the organization work. The internally generated demand for social organization has a greater chance of making these organizations productive and sustainable. It was difficult for a small field team to interact with 4500 water users, so 158 SOVs were identified. The selection of the SOVs was based on the following criteria:

- Referred by the majority;
- Knowledgeable;
- Honest;
- Educated;
- Have experience in speaking at public place;
- Already taking part in the collective action.

The SOVs were trained for one day. In the training their role and interaction with the community was discussed.

Awareness building Meeting

After the identification process, Series of the meetings were arranged. Here the SOVs were only the target. The purpose of the meetings was to further clear their mind about the program and IIMI, so as they can interact with the community with great zeal and zest. The role of the SOVs was also discussed in the meeting. The participation ratio in the meeting remained 70%. The process was completed within the period of four months.

Consultation Meeting

The meeting was held at the larger scale, at village level. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the tentative plan to establish water user organization, membership of WUAs, organizational structure and procedure for identifying organizational leaders. The meeting also worked as a follow up to the earlier awareness building meetings. The participation rate in the meeting was 39 %. This step was completed within the period of four months.

Selection Meeting

A series of the meetings were conducted for discussing the process and finally taking the decisions for selecting the organizational leaders at watercourse level. There was considerable gap, 6-8 days, between the planning and organizing of the meeting. The idea was to give maximum publicity and provide equal opportunity for all eligible water users to come forward for leadership. The average participation rate was 77 % in the meeting. The members framed the informal committee that comprised on 1 to 7 persons, with consensus. They sent one person, who is the chairman of the committee, for the general body of the water user organization. The number of general body of an organization (subsystem) depends upon the number of watercourses.

The general body of each subsystem selected their own office-bearers, president, vice-president, general secretary, joint secretary, secretary information, and treasure. Each subsystem nominated five persons for federation members. This step took six months to complete.

Federation Meeting

The general body of 25 federation members in their two meetings selected five office-bearers on 5 March 1997. In this way, the organization process was completed.

The approach for social organization

The approach was based on direct interaction with the community. Information was not one way, it was exchanged between SOs and community, SO and SOVs, SOVs and community and among community members.

Three tier organizational structure (WUAs, WUOs & WUF)

First the farmers were organized at watercourse level into 124 WUAs, then they were organized at subsystem level covering five subsystems, and later they were federated at distributary level. There were two main reasons of three tiered structures at the Hakra 4-R distributary. Firstly, to involve maximum water users in the irrigation management decision-making for the sustainability of the program. The office-bearers are comparatively more active than the non-office-bearers. So in the three tiered structures, almost 600 hundred people come ahead. If these office-bearers are active then there are more chances of its sustainability.

Secondly, to increase the interaction among the water users, as the distributary is 57 km long and it is very difficult for the headers and tail enders to interact with each other. Now they can interact easily through three tier organizational structure.

Constraints during the process

1. Propaganda by the people benefiting from status quo
2. Disappointment among the community
3. Corruption and farmers Anarchy
4. Low collaboration from relevant agency
5. Lack of legislation
6. Cultural Factors

Propaganda by people benefiting from status quo

Those people who were taking illegal benefits from the system started propagating against the activity. They were usually free riders who do not take part in collective action but get benefit from it. They boosted the doubts and misinterpreted things. They propagated that meter would be installed on the outlets, privatization of the system and raise in water charges etc.

Disappointment among the community

This constraint is based on the past collective effort/actions and non-implementation of the programs. Some people related it with cooperatives and Usher/Zakat where nominations are made from the top level and no value is given to public opinion. Therefore, some people were disinterested at the initial stage.

Corruption and farmers Anarchy

People were not sure of the implementation of the program due to wide scale prevalence of corruption and political system. According to them the only solution was blood revolution.

Low collaboration from relevant agencies

Low collaboration was only due to insecurity among the agency's staff. They thought that there was a chance of losing their jobs if the program is implemented. That's why they did not participate in the farmers meetings.

Lack of legislation

There was not any clear policy about the program due to lack of legislation. The people felt it was useless without legal protection. If they organize themselves without recognition, there will be no incentive for the organization, so they showed disinterest initially.

Cultural Factors

It is in our tradition to value the elder's role, to be lethargic, to ignore tenants and to build "Chudraht" or izzat (class status). The reason for low participation rate (10% to 40%) in the meetings was that mostly people thought they were supposed to obey the elders' decisions and also what one committed on others behalf, would be acceptable to others. People wanted to show their "Chudrat" status at all costs during site selection and selection of office-bearers. It happened only at few watercourses.

LESSON LEARNT FOR LARGER REPLICATION

Effective collaboration is the most important determinant of success

Organize the workshop at initial stages and define the role of relevant operating agency. Also clear people's doubts by making them aware that joint management improves the system without damaging their interests.

Advertisement through mass media is beneficial for awareness creation

As it is a novel experience, there is need to publicize it through mass media. Tell people about the importance of the program, so they participate in the process with great zeal and zest.

Manageable group size per SO

The group size should be manageable, so the SO can interact with the community regularly to avoid the rumors and keep it well aware about the existing situation.

Legal protection

For the effectiveness of an organization, legal protection is very important. If an organization makes a decision, there should be legal protection for its implementation.

Organization process through democratic way

The best way is the democratic way. It is nice if the process is completed with consensus, or through the election. The democratic way is the only way for the sustainability of the organization.

Make the process free from politics and "brotherism"(family/ethnic connections)

We should make the process free from the politics contacts. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, so we should at least avoid politics and brotherism.