

Role of Water Users Associations in Irrigation Management.

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Introduction

- Participatory Approach is crucial for management of irrigation projects for conserving and optimal utilization of resources
- Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) refers to involvement of irrigation users in all aspects of Irrigation Management and at all levels
- **Water Users' Association (WUA)** has been registered for the purpose in various states in India

Definition of Water Users Association

- A Water Users Association (WUA) is a co-operative association of individual water users who wish to undertake water-related activities for their mutual benefit
- The specific nature of the service that a WUA provides will differ from case to case
- Because member needs will differ from one area to another, a WUA is normally established in response to the aspirations of its members



www.aidindia.org



www.cirad.fr

Scope of WUAs

- **An efficient and equitable supply and distribution of water ensuring optimum utilization for improvement of agricultural production**
- **Scientific and systematic development and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure**
- **Management and maintenance of the irrigation system for effective and reliable supply and distribution of water**

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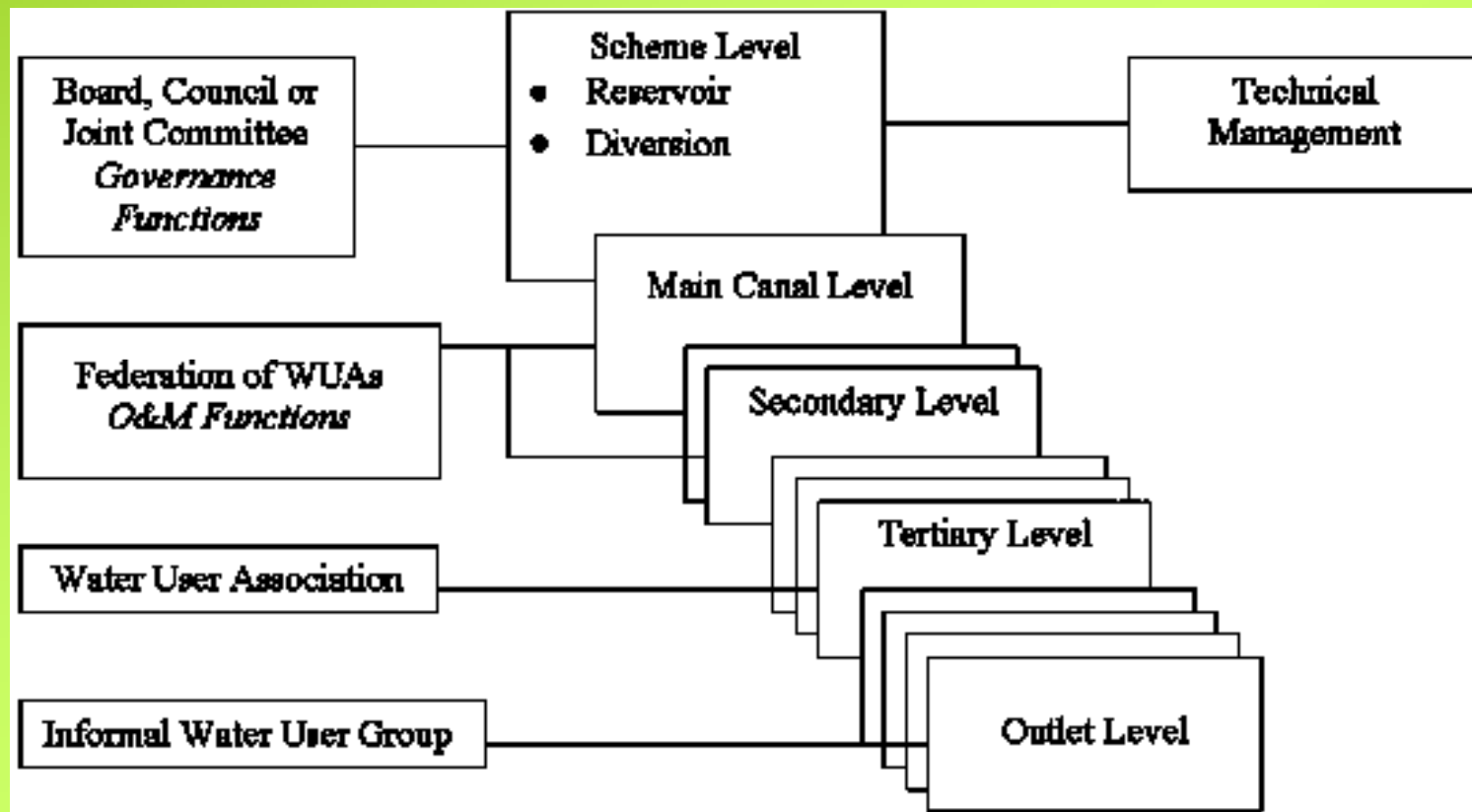
- **Play coordinative role in recovery of irrigation water rates from the beneficiary farmers**
- **The protection of the environment and ecological balance**



Scale of Operation of WUAs

WUAs differ enormously from one another in their geographical scale of operation. One reason for this is that they are often federated upward in up to three tiers, each of which covers an area of operation of an entirely different order and performs substantially different functions for its members or member organizations.

A Multi-tiered User Organization of a Surface Irrigation Scheme



Each user organization may have either and management functions or both

Functions of WUAs: Core functions

1. **Acting as an interface between the farmers and the main system management .**
2. **Water distribution.**
3. **Operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage system.**
4. **Collection (and assessment) of water charges and other user charges or special charges that the WUAs may levy.**
5. **Resolution of local disputes amongst members.**

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Core Functions. Cont.

- 6. Conflict resolution between members and non-members**
- 7. Drainage**
- 8. Provision of drinking water from canals**
- 9. Design and construction of new works as well as rehabilitation of canals and structures**
- 10 Maintenance of commercial, financial and water accounting records**
- 11. Cooperating with other WUAs to form federations of WUAs to take over larger canal sub-systems**

The additional and optional tasks could be as follows:

1. **Recommending of cropping patterns and package of agricultural practices suitable for the WUA's farmers.**
2. **Helping to arrange for other inputs, to members for undertaking irrigated agriculture.**
3. **Irrigation extension and propagation of better on-farm water application and better intra-outlet command water management.**



Image- www.agnet.org



www.difd-kar-water.net

The additional and optional tasks :cont.

- 4. Agriculture extension and farmers training.**
- 5. Encouraging and taking up of conjunctive water use, including community lift irrigation.**
- 6. Post harvest practices (grading, packaging, storage, marketing).**
- 7. Any other task as mutually agreed upon by the members.**

Election to the WUA's:

- In a WUA, all water users are its members. The Act provides with voting rights, to those members who have been registered as owners or tenants in the record or rights. Where both the owner and the tenant are landholders of the same land, the rights are given to the tenant.
- The WUA has a Managing Committee, which attends to the day-to-day functioning. This body has a President and Managing Committee members ranging from 4 to 10, who are elected by the members.



www.fao.org

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Resolving disputes:-

- The Managing Committee of the distributory committee determines a dispute arising between a member and the Managing Committee of the Water Users Association or between two or more Water Users Associations.
- The Apex Committee whose decision shall be final shall determine a dispute between a member and the Managing Committee of a Project Committee.



State Government Role in Participatory Irrigation Management

- **The State Government has to create an enabling environment through policy resolutions, specific programs, projects and activities to be implemented or sponsored by the government,**
- **Providing intellectual, administrative and implementational leadership,**
- **Putting into place legal and administrative provisions and procedures,**
- **Undertaking mass awareness building and promotional efforts,**
- **Providing technical advice and technical back up, as well as funds, to WUAs for selective activities,**

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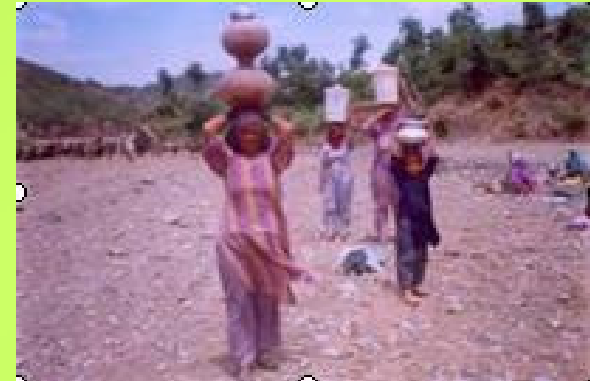
- **Ensuring attitudinal and behavioral change amongst employees of all government departments directly or indirectly concerned with Tank, Canal (and Community Lift) irrigation,**
- **Creating nodal points of PIM in all concerned government departments both at the Central Government and State Government levels**

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- **Preparing guidelines and field manuals**
- **Arranging for various sorts of PIM related training**
- **Helping WUAs to rehabilitate old irrigation systems to bring them up to at least a minimum operational level**
- **Involving NGOs and Community Organizers**
- **Providing incentives, monetary, or otherwise for (i) farmers to undertake PIM, and (ii) government staff to facilitate it((p) helping WUAs in conflict resolution with other agencies**

Gendered Issues in WUAs:

- Rules for membership in Water Users Groups are problematic as patriarchy and male dominance. The concept of water user is deeply ingrained in Indian culture as the one who owns the land
- Although women have legal rights to inherit, and own land, the practice is different
- **Women particularly, landless are not perceived as water users and therefore not perceived as eligible as members of water users associations**



www.dawn.com

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Policy Issues in WUAs

- It is clear from the above that the provision of secure access to water is an important tool with which poverty can be alleviated, although its effectiveness depends on secure access to other productive resources such as land and training and capacity building.
- It should be kept in mind that WUAs institutions are a set of rules. These includes the official rules and procedures as well as unofficial values, norms, traditions and practices. These together determine how authority and power are distributed among the membership. Changing official rules alone does not lead to actual change unless associated practices are also changed.