

Facilitating canal restoration and effective WUA operation through community mobilization by agency at Satak Tank Project in Khargone district, Madhya Pradesh

Problem statement: The Satak tank minor irrigation scheme at Khargone in Madhya Pradesh was facing deterioration in irrigation system structures with decline in water availability at tail reaches. This was further exacerbated by the lack of any legal provision for enabling the WUAs to impose any collection levy on the water users to conduct regular maintenances.

Intervention: Action for Social Advancement (ASA), an NGO, was appointed to facilitate capacity building of the WUAs for the Satak minor irrigation scheme in Khargone district. The key objective was to ensure effective functioning of the Satak WUAs and generate adequate funds for the canal restoration process through community collection drive. Some of the steps taken by ASA to ensure the same are summarized below:

- a. Community mobilization through awareness campaigns:
 - ASA held series of awareness campaigns using village wise quiz competitions, local folk media (Kalki-turra) and wall paintings. 36 community volunteers were trained as Jal Praharis, who also helped later in the water distribution process. Baseline surveys were conducted to understand the needs of the farmers and also agriculture support services were provided.
- b. Capacity building initiatives:
 - A training module was prepared by ASA – in the 1st phase emphasis was put on communicating the rights, role and responsibilities of the WUA and its members while in the 2nd phase, attention was focussed on developing the institutional capacity of both the WUA and WRD through training programmes on water distribution management, gender sensitization and dispute resolution. Training were conducted on social audit.
 - Exposure visits were conducted to neighbouring states

c. Community contribution collection drive:

- To ensure a transparent collection process, a formalized instrument of agreement 'anshdaan anuband' was introduced between the WUA and the users. Contribution receipts were given to the payees and collected fund was deposited in the common bank account
- To encourage more collection, letters of appreciation were issued to the payees and printed posters were pasted at the gram choupal

d. Gender mainstreaming

- WUA voting rights were extended to spouses of the existing WUA members through necessary amendment in the PIM act.
- Extensive awareness campaigns were conducted to sensitize the villages about women participation and franchise rights
- Self-help groups were set up to ensure women empowerment

Impact:

- Community contribution by farmers touched 20% of the cost of physical works which exceed the 10% target set by the authority (ICEF). Such contributions for canal restoration also helped to create a sense of ownership among farmers.
- Increase in irrigation rotation frequencies resulted in 20-30% improvement in wheat production (in Balkhar village), increase in jobs for agricultural laborers with greater adoption of labour intensive commercial crops like cotton and chilli which greatly helped the landless labourers
- Around 73% of spouses of landowners casted vote in the last reported WUA elections
- Social audits were conducted in every 6 months

Sustainability: Hand-holding activities and capacity building programmes organized by ASA improved the technical competency of the WUAs. Also the half-yearly social audits and the transparent mechanisms set up for fees payment and undertaking of physical works helped to instil of sense of trust among the WUA members. However, in terms of sustainability the following concerns were reported:

- Scope for further hand-holding of sub-committee member and women participants were reported for ensuring sustenance of their operation
- Continuation of equitable water distribution particularly to tail end farmers is dependent on the physical condition of the canal structures to operate at full discharge capacity

- Financial sustainability of the WUAs need to be ensured by retaining their ability to levy and collect taxes and through establishment of backward and forward market linkages to agricultural activities.

(Reference: Action for Social Advancement, "ICEF-M.P. WRD Project on Participatory Restoration and Management of Irrigation Systems by Water Users Associations in M.P.")