

Ensuring proper maintenance of field water courses through Innovation community contribution facilitated by Khairani WUA at Baksa, Assam

Context: The Khairani WUA was set up by a group of volunteers in Assam to restore flood mitigation structures. It was formally registered in 1990s mainly with an intention to streamline the receipt of government subsidies and technical assistance of the irrigation officials. As on date, the WUA is functioning effectively with 14 Central Level Committees (CLCs) and has adopted certain set of uniform working rules and compliance methods. Considering the economic position of the WUA members where a large chunk of the members hail from scheduled tribes and backward classes with agriculture as the primary source of income and thus the economic, an innovative contribution system has been developed.

Intervention: The WUA's working rules have no provision for monetary collection of water taxes. All the taxes are collected in the form of labour and activities undertaken by WUA.

Participation and contribution of labour for WUA's activities are mandatory for each member, failing which stiff monetary penalty of Rs. 150/ day is imposed. Absence in more than 3 consecutive days attracts an additional penalty of Rs. 125/ day. Additional penalties are further applied in case of absence in more than 50% working days. In case of non-payment of penalties, strict actions like seizing of properties worth the penalty fees are applied. Also, fines are imposed in case of withdrawal more water compared to the allotted one. The penalty fees form an important source for conducting repair and maintenance organization.

(Reference: Vasant P. Gandhi et al., November 2019, Institutional Structure, Participation, and Devolution in Water Institutions of Eastern India)