The Water User Association in Pyawt Ywar Pump Irrigation Scheme

Key messages from this experience

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WUAs: What and Why?

• An umbrella term for different organizational forms.
  • Water users sharing a common irrigation source.

• Intended to
  a) Improve irrigation performance through farmer participation in scheme management
     ▪ Enough good quality water at the right time
  b) Reduce financial and administrative burdens for government – farmers manage secondary and tertiary canals, collect irrigation fees

• Globally, WUAs since the late 1970s - mixed results.

• Many studies have looked at why. One main reason is poor implementation:
  • Lack of participatory process - farmers not empowered and trained to make and enforce decisions.
Multi-layer Structure of the WUA in Pyawt Ywar

Water User Association (WUA)
Board of Directors (All 5 Village Administrators) +
Management Board (5 members, 1 per village: Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Auditor)

IWUMD
Scheme manager and Deputy managers
DoA and other relevant agencies

PS1 Coordination Committee
Deputy Scheme Manager*
Village Administrator +
Pump operator +
Canal Representatives +
Sub-groups Representatives

WUGs
Canal Representative + sub-group representative + Farmers

Sub-groups
Sub-group representative + Farmers served by the main off-take point

PS2 Coordination Committee
Deputy Scheme Manager*
Village Administrator +
Pump operator +
Canal Representatives +
Sub-groups Representatives

WUGs
Canal Representative + sub-group representative + Farmers

Sub-groups
Sub-group representative + Farmers served by the main off-take point

PS3 Coordination Committee
Deputy Scheme Manager*
Village Administrator +
Pump operator +
Canal Representatives +
Sub-groups Representatives

WUGs
Canal Representative + sub-group representative + Farmers

Sub-groups
Sub-group representative + Farmers served by the main off-take point

Overall governance as per PIM Guidelines

Coordinated irrigation between pump stations with IWUMD

Farmers make and enforce farm-level irrigation and canal maintenance rules.

* The deputy scheme manager is not a member of the WUA but sits in the PSCC
WUAs: How?

• To incentivise farmers and other water users, they must:
  a) Feel the WUA meets their needs
  b) Feel they were involved in creating it (ownership)
  c) Have the capacities to manage it

• How? It is about the process!
  • Follow good governance principles: transparency, equity, accountability, inclusion, respect
  • Understand context – physical + social
  • Bottom-up: Involve stakeholders in each stage, help them to make their own rules and elect their own representatives.
  • Training to support performance of new roles.
  • **Challenging**: attitudes, histories, funding, TIME
WUAs: Achieving their full potential

• Need more than water to optimize scheme performance and improve income and livelihoods
• Good agricultural practices + strong market linkages
  • High value crops e.g. chilli, bitter gourd
  • Lower water demand = lower energy demand = less conflicts during dry season (low water & energy supplies)
• Use WUA to achieve these broader goals
  • WUA + IWUMD = harmonised pumping, maintenance
  • WUA + DoA = better planned cropping, knowledge, yields
  • WUA + markets = prices (collective negotiation), income
  • Equitable distribution of benefits – inclusive membership, transparent decisions, access to inputs, markets.
• But schemes are not islands: need an enabling environment
  • Roads, communication, market centres, finance = investments in regional development.
  • Water, agriculture, land use policies & rules - e.g. land use rules could allow flexibility in what crop is grown.
Resources online

All material developed under this project are available at:
https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/2019/04/people-power/