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Stakeholder Engagement From PIM to Integrated Water–Agriculture Systems

Three decades of practitioner lessons on farmer-friend engagement, trust, institutions and shared accountability for inclusive water management



"Farmers experience water, farming and markets as one livelihood system."



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WHY ENGAGE?

The farmer’s livelihood is integrated

Since 1994: PIM + watershed → IWRM → water-to-income systems

Water security → **Productive agriculture** → **Lower cost + higher yield** → **Better price realisation** → **Livelihood resilience**

The farmer’s reality is connected

- Surface water
- Groundwater
- Rainfall
- Soil health
- Farming practice
- Markets

Engagement is needed because institutions are separate, but farmer reality is connected.



THE COMMAND IS CHANGING

From “system command” to “farmer command”

Irrigation systems and farmer communities keep changing; the purpose of engagement must evolve with them.

SYSTEM COMMAND

Canal schedule
Designed command
Few planned crops
Department-led operation



FARMER COMMAND

Canal + well + borewell
pond + rainwater
multiple crops + markets
risk and return decisions





Implication: even strong WUAs need fresh support when water sources, crops and market risks change.

KNOW THE STAKEHOLDER

Different actors work with different mandates, incentives and clocks

Map people, capacities, constraints and trust history — not only institutions.



Mandate | Resources | Constraint | Risk | Gain / loss | Incentive | Trust history

FARMERS
head/tail • small/large • women/youth • tribal/non-tribal
Reality: risk, aspiration, limits
Strength: local knowledge + legitimacy

GOVT OFFICERS
engineers/admin • hierarchy • workload • transfers
Reality: rules + accountability
Strength: authority + scale

CSO / NGO
field trust • facilitation • continuity • flexibility
Reality: credibility + resources
Strength: ecosystem coordination

CSR / DONOR
targets • timelines • compliance • reputation
Reality: results + risk
Strength: flexible finance + innovation

RESEARCH / WALMI
methods • evidence • training systems • institutional calendar
Reality: standard packages
Strength: science + capacity building

MARKET / FPO
price • volume • quality • reliability
Reality: transaction logic
Strength: services + better price realisation

Before bringing them to my problem, I must understand their problem.

Practical test: What can this stakeholder gain, what might they lose, and what makes cooperation worthwhile?

From beneficiary to co-manager

Higher participation came when a farmer-friend mindset was backed by rights, responsibilities, incentives and continuous support.



6 Self-govern / sustain

5 Manage + collect charges

4 Plan repair + distribution

3 Dialogue with officers

2 Consult / listen

1 Inform / announce

Three practical tests

- Who controls water decisions?
- Who maintains and pays?
- Who resolves head–tail issues?

"Formation may take a meeting. Irrigation management takes seasons."

DSC learning: opinion leaders can mobilise; WUAs need trained irrigation managers.

WHAT MADE ENGAGEMENT WORK

Architecture matters more than one meeting

PIM worked where social mobilisation, policy instruments, technical repair and trust-building moved together.

Policy + rules → **Formal agreements** → **Rights + incentives** → **Canal repair support** → **Capacity building**

Institutionalise | **3-season follow-up** | **Champions inside system** | **Dialogue forums**



Participation becomes real when responsibility, authority and incentive travel together.

Farmers and NGOs were treated as partners — not only beneficiaries or contractors.

Farmer-friend mindset | **Trust through delivery + evidence** | **Training as managers** | **Continuous monitoring**

A WUA cannot survive forever on one source and one service

Even WUAs that performed well for 10–20 years need fresh inputs when water sources, farmer choices, leadership and risks change.

CANAL WUA
irrigation service

→

RENEWAL
renew after 10–20 years

→

IWRM
surface + groundwater + rainfall

→

WATER–AGRI–MARKET
income services

→

SYSTEM
policy • finance • capacity

RESOURCE REALITY

design around capacities that exist

Start feasible; small success builds confidence for larger change

INCENTIVES + AUTHORITY

responsibility must travel with power and benefits

Rights, repair support and revenue collection make participation meaningful

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Panchayat • Agri Dept • KVK • FPO • CSR • markets

Water-to-income systems need a trusted ecosystem facilitator

Champions open windows; institutions keep the window open after the person leaves.

Connecting institutions around the farmer

The farmer experiences one livelihood system; institutions work in compartments. A trusted facilitator builds the bridges without replacing them.





COMMUNITY / WUA

organised demand
evidence • discipline
contribution •
responsibility

→

ECOSYSTEM FACILITATOR

evidence
translation
mediation
follow-up
connect sectors +
clocks

→

GOVERNMENT / SYSTEM

field reality
feasible action
policy space
accountability + scale

Evidence changes conversations

Dharoi RBMC irrigated area

22,512 ha → 36,412 ha

+61.7%

2003–04 → 2007–08

INCLUSION NEEDS WATER LITERACY

Surface water, groundwater and rainfall must be discussed together

Inclusive water management means influence over decisions, services and future livelihood.





TAIL-ENDERS

adequate water + grievance route

WOMEN

decision power + NRM leadership + enterprise

SMALL / MARGINAL

voice + affordable technology + benefits

YOUTH

viable farming + enterprise role + return to roots

Presence is not participation. Participation means influence over services and outcomes.

A strong partnership monitors whether engagement changes equity, service delivery and institutional performance.

Joint outcome scorecard

Service equity	Head reach ↔ Tail end
Water literacy	Surface + GW + rainfall
Gender voice	Women ↔ Men in WUA / EC
Financial health	Fee assessed ↔ Fee collected
Water productivity	₹ value / m^3 + crop choice
Institutional renewal	Active • viable • diversified

WHAT NATIONAL POLICY CAN TAKE

Practitioner lessons for inclusive water management

From DSC's journey across PIM, watershed, agriculture, markets and IWRM.

1. Farmer-friend mindset + learning
2. Rights + incentives + agreements
3. Three-season facilitation + manager training
4. Trust + evidence + champions
5. Govt capacity + CSO ecosystem role
6. Dialogue + renewal + water-to-income





Water → Production → Income → Livelihood → Wellbeing

POLICY OPPORTUNITY: National + regional dialogue to renew irrigation cooperatives / WUAs

Ministry of Cooperation + water-resource institutions + States + sector leaders

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Thank you

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