

PEOPLES' AREA WATER PARTNERSHIP

Promotion of IWRM by Capacity Building of Farmers and Water User Groups

Background

The river Ramial, a tributary of river Brahmini, serves as a water-cum-life line to the 37 main villages situated along the two banks, within a stretch of 38km in the State of Orissa, India. The water users are mostly peasants, who use this river for cultivating seasonal crops.



Stakeholder consultation at the joint IWP-AIRA session of LWPs



Block / sub-district level consultation on water issues / partnerships

Indrajeet Nallah is a perennial water source which emanates from the fall point of the functionally dead minor irrigation project's diversion weir-cum-reservoir near a known rural point called Anlaberani, on the major district road that links the district headquarters of Dhenkanal and the sub-district headquarters of Kamakhyanagar. It runs through a course of 11km, touching farm zones of 5 gram panchayats with a population of 35,000. Integrating ecosystems and land / water management is a priority for these communities, a good majority of which is agrarian.

Reasons for Formation of the Peoples' Area Water Partnership (PAWP)

In the absence of an organized, well functioning irrigation system in the area, the informal and traditional irrigation activities failed to deliver the required level of services. Neither surface nor lift irrigation systems were functional, which adversely affected the area's farming activities. The situation was further aggravated when the rainfall was deficient. The aspirations of the communities were not correctly presented to the appropriate authorities. These critical issues necessitated the formation of PAWP, with the initiative of the Arun Institute of Rural Affairs (AIRA), a partner NGO of the India Water Partnership (IWP) operating in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa.

Steps followed and activities undertaken for the formation of the PAWP

As a first step towards mobilizing stakeholders, AIRA organized consultative meetings in 8 villages (out of a total of 45 villages within the project area), in the Southern cluster of Kamakhyanagar Block of the Dhenkanal district, to educate and involve the primary stakeholders on the optimum utilization of existing infrastructure, natural resources and water bodies. 197 Men and 67 women participated in these meetings and expressed their views on livelihood matters. A brief resource assessment was also made, taking major occupations into consideration including farming.

As an important component of the local natural resource base, the case of Indrajeet Nallah was discussed. As competition for water is expected to increase when more land owners close to the stream decide to grow rabi crops in the near future, it was necessary to educate stakeholders, on one platform, on the management of irrigation systems and also to empower them to protect and maintain the existing water bodies through a participatory approach.

Outcomes of the above Exercise

As a result of the first round of consultations held in the 8 villages, a profile of the area with information on local water resources and water management systems was prepared.

The other important outcome was the integration of gender in the communities planning for water resource management.

Following this, a second round of consultations in another 8 villages of the Northern cluster of the district was organized. The points discussed in these meeting were;

- The receding water flows of the Ramial and tributary nallahs
- The silting of nallah beds (that require earthwork and treatment against bund erosion)
- The cross-bunding of nallah for judicious water flows - post rabi crops
- Dispute resolution at community / area level
- The viability of cane crops in the context of water shortage - experience sharing
- Preparing for pre-monsoon with collective action, water source wise

PAWP Formed

With the active support of the IWP and the continuous and dedicated efforts of AIRA since 2008, the PAWP came into existence on the 15th of June 2010, covering river Ramial and Indrajeet sub-basins in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa, involving 45 villages. The PAWP now covers an area of 140km². Under the PAWP, 2 Local Area Water Partnerships (LAWP), 1 each in the Northern Ramial and Southern Indrajeet clusters, comprising of 8 Micro Area Water Partnerships (MAWPs) in each LAWP have been constituted.

Activities under the PAWP

AIRA, with the technical and financial support of the IWP, is constantly strengthening the PAWP by holding periodical meetings with the members of the PAWP, farmers, Water User Groups, women, etc. to educate them on the management of irrigation systems, empowering them to maintain water bodies, evolving mechanisms for water sharing and defining allocation priorities, encouraging them to follow best practices on water management, linking

them with other stakeholders, integrating gender dimensions, better crop management, inculcating the habit of voicing demands from line departments of the State Government, optimizing community participation in the planning process, water conflict resolution, checking water corruption, circulation of reading materials on water use efficiency, media coverage, conducting workshops/ seminars on water conservation measures at block & district level, etc.

Some Achievements of the PAWP

Since the PAWP is still in its formative stage, major achievements would only be felt after a few years. However, some of the achievements conceived by the PAWP during the short period of its formation are as follows;

PAWP action helps local farmers -

- PAWP stakeholders' consultations have facilitated actions by various departments for taking up promotional activities in recent times; at 4 points in particular, where MAWPs (under the PAWP) exist .
- A new lift irrigation point has been erected on River Ramial at the Bhagirathipur village, for growing rabi and summer crops.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and govt. functionaries such as the Local Revenue Administration and the Irrigation and Agriculture Department Units, are in good contact with PAWP members (facilitated through the interface rounds and common/ joint sittings/ consultations organized by AIRA-IWP).
- The district irrigation authorities, in the presence of the district magistrate agreed on 18th March 2011 to construct two small diversion weirs near the villages of Kotagara and Kamagara, downstream of the Indrajeet Nallah. The representatives of Zilla Krishi 'O' Paribesh Suraksha Parishad (where PAWP representation counts) were parties to the discussion across the table with govt. officials.

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India Water Partnership (IWP) is a non-profit organization with a goal of promoting Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). It is also accredited by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) headquartered at Stockholm, Sweden as GWP Country Water Partnership known as GWP-India. The mission of IWP is to support action of sustainable and integrated development and management of water resources at national, regional river basin/sub-basin and local levels in India through promotion of Integrated Water Resource Management. Addressing adaptation to climate change with the support of zonal water partners across the country; encouraging use of innovative low cost water saving technologies by the farming communities ; sustainable natural resource management; integrated domestic water management; promoting Area Water Partnership (AWP) for river basin management; conflict resolution on water sharing; inter-state trans-boundary water sharing issues, gender mainstreaming, etc. are some of the core priority areas of IWP.

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