

Pani Panchayats for Water Management

- **Pani Panchayats in Odisha shows the way; over 28,000 formed till May 2018**
- **Within one year, 36% more cultivation recorded in Sunei Medium Irrigation Project in Mayurbhanj district in Odisha**
- **Cultivation of only cash crops like oilseeds, pulses etc. yields better results**

Backed by Pani Panchayats Act (2002), participatory irrigation management is flourishing in Odisha. In Sunei Medium Irrigation project of Mayurbhanj district, the efficient coordination amongst Pani Panchayats under the supervision of the project committee coupled with adherence to rotational irrigation practice (beginning with the tail end of the command area) led to a whopping 36% increase even in a drought-like situation in 2015-16 Kharif season. The decision of the Project Committee and Pani Panchayats to restrict paddy cultivation during Rabi season also proved to be effective in maximizing output. As on 31st May 2018, altogether 30,033 Pani Panchayats have been programmed out of which 28,105 have been formed by conducting elections.

Not only such participatory irrigation management bring equity in water distribution, improve crop productivity through collective effort and create a sense of ownership among the farmers for the irrigation infrastructure, it also integrate women into mainstream through a provision in Pani Panchayat Act to reserve 33% women at chak level. The formation of Water Users Associations in all categories of irrigation commands supplements this participatory approach.

Besides, through Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance, 251 Pani Panchayats have been identified to strengthen activities in 6 Medium and 5 Major Irrigation projects. The assistance would include strengthening of Operation & Maintenance (O&M), Command Area Development (CAD), Agriculture Livelihood and Skill Development support activities. In this regard, orientation-cum-onsite interactive training programmes of Pani Panchayats have been conducted in ADB sub-projects with the help of Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI), Odisha in which, agriculture and horticulture

officers along with the officers of CAD-PIM Directorate participated to educate the Pani Panchayat members on different field activities. In June 2018, a team conducted such onsite interactive training programme of Pani Panchayat members of High Level Canal, Range-I sub-project at Kaema of Jajpur District, of Kanjhari Medium Irrigation Project at Jhumpura of Keonjhar District and of Kansbahal Medium Irrigation Project at the dam site in Sundargarh district which have been completed successfully.

Pani Panchayat Act

Pani Panchayat (PP) Act, 2002 and Rule-2003 was enacted to provide statutory backing to the WUAs with necessary amendments in 2006, 2008 and 2014 for better implementation and higher participation. The Act, which provides for farmers' participation in the management of irrigation systems through efficient and equitable supply and distribution of water ensuring optimum utilization by farmers, further states:

- scientific and systematic development and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure is considered best possible through farmers' participation;
- And whereas, such farmers' organization have to be given an effective role in the management and maintenance of the irrigation system for equitable and dependable supply and distribution of water;
- And whereas, it necessary in the State of Odisha to enact a law for farmers participation in the management of irrigation systems by way of forming Pani Panchayat.
- ...such farmers' organization means and includes Pani Panchayat at the primary level consisting of all the water users, as constituted within a specified hydraulic boundary of a major, medium and minor irrigation projects funded by the government.



Interactive Training at Kaema



Interactive Training at Kanjhari Irrigation Project



Rehabilitation of Canal by Pani Panchayats



Canal Cleaning by Pani Panchayats



All Women Pani Panchayat – Aunli Medium Scheme