

# Participatory irrigation management

## Introduction

The participative irrigation Management (PIM) approach is a management strategy in formal irrigation schemes where the stakeholders foster an inclusive approach to jointly manage and operate the irrigation infrastructure fairly, equitably and sustainably. PIM refers to the involvement of users in all aspect of irrigation management. It ensures the infrastructure is operated optimally and the resources are shared fairly. It improves the systems' functionality, sustainability and ensures the benefits are distributed equitably.

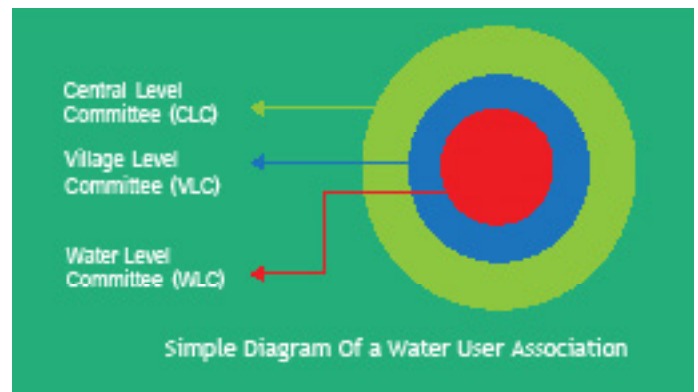


Photo: Adebayo Oke

## Key elements of PIM

**Inclusivity:** Involves all stakeholders to ensure that all voices are heard, particularly those of the marginalized, on the use of water, and other particularities within the schemes.

**Joint Management:** Stakeholders such as Water User Association (WUA's) work together to make decisions about the operation, maintenance, and improvement of irrigation infrastructure.

**Equity:** Equitable access to resources and water distribution, preventing dominance by more powerful stakeholders.

**Operations and Maintenance:** Users are actively involved in the day to day operation and maintenance of irrigation systems, including managing water distribution, maintaining channels and structures trouble shooting issues.

**Sustainability:** Focuses on the long term viability of the irrigation system. Encourages practices that conserve water, maintain infrastructure and protects the environment.

**Resource Allocation:** Decisions on water allocations are made collaboratively, ensuring that all users receive their fair share according to agreed-upon rules and schedules.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring of the system's performance and user satisfaction. Regular evaluation to identify areas for improvement and to ensure that system is meeting its goal of efficiency, sustainability and equity.

**Capacity Building:** Training and educating users on best practices for irrigation management. Building local capacity ensures that users can effectively manage and sustain the irrigation systems

## Water user association - WUA

PIM is undertaken through the operation of the water user Association.

WUA: a cooperative association of individual water users who wish to undertake water-related activities for mutual benefit within a common water system.

- The WUA is established to ensure that the interest of all water users are represented and fairly addressed.
- A WUA is typically established in response to the aspiration of its members.

## Functions of water users association

1. Acting as an interface between the farmers and the main system management.
2. Water distribution
3. Operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage system.
4. Collection of water and other user or special charges that the WUAs may levy.
5. Resolution of local disputes among members.
6. Conflict resolution between members and non-members
7. Drainage
8. Provision of domestic water from canal
9. Design and construction of new works and rehabilitation of canals and structures
10. Maintenance of commercial, financial, and water accounting records.
11. Cooperating with other WUAs to form federations of WUAs to take over larger canal sub-systems

## Elements of WUA operations

- Elections of WUA officers at the schemes, main, secondary lateral or channel level
- Establish of bye-laws and regulation that guide the operation
- Registration with the government and especially the scheme institutional management structure.
- Establishment of conflict/dispute resolutions mechanisms



Photo: Adebayo Oke



*Photo: Adebayo Oke*



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Reference: Swarn Lata Arya (2024). Published: February 2025.  
<http://www.cswcrtiweb.org/training/learning/chandigarh/wua.pdf>

This Fact Sheet was developed for the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation – Water Enabler Compact (TAAT-WEC) project (TAAT-II Rice), which was funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB)



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**Citation:** Oke, A.; Atengdem, P. B.; Zemadim, B.; Cofie, O. 2025. *Participatory irrigation management*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI). 4p.

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