



Mains Practice Question

Q. What is the rationale of Participatory Irrigation Management. Explain its utility in irrigation management in India. (150 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by defining Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM).
- Briefly mention the objectives and necessity of PIM.
- Highlight the constraints in the implementation of PIM.
- Enumerate some steps to implement it.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The term participatory irrigation management (PIM) refers to the participation of irrigation users, i.e., farmers, in the management of irrigation systems. It is done by creating local water regulatory bodies like **Pani Panchayat or Water Users' Associations (WUAs)**.

Objectives of PIM

- Creating a sense of ownership of water resources and the irrigation system among the users, so as to promote the economy in water use and preservation of the system.
- Improving service deliveries through better operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems.
- Achieving optimum utilization of available resources, precisely as per crop needs.
- Striving for equity in water distribution.
- Increasing production per unit of water, where water is scarce and to increase production per unit of land where water is adequate.

Body

Necessity of PIM

- **Need to increase Agricultural Production:** The human as well as the bovine population has been increasing all over the world and more so in India.
 - It is, hence, imperative to increase agricultural production to keep pace with the requirement.
 - Irrigation being the lifeline of agriculture, its development and meticulous management is the necessity of the day.
- **Problem of Fiscal Availability:** As there is severe budgetary competition at the government level under different sectors, the ratio of financial outlay for the irrigation sector to the total outlay is coming down year after year.
 - Under such circumstances, the investment of more money by the Government on operation and maintenance of the old system appears difficult.

- Thus, farmers have to take up this responsibility themselves in order to avoid overburdening of the Government exchequer and to become self-dependent.
- **High Maintenance Cost and Low Recovery of Irrigation charges:** Often the cost of recovery of water charges by the Government is more than the amount recovered.
- This is causing severe budget constraints to the Government and consequently, maintenance of irrigation systems could not be properly carried out resulting in system deficiency and unreliability of irrigation water to farmers.
- Thus, the **Water Users Associations** could play this role in a better way.

Constraints in Implementation of PIM

- **Lack of legal backup and policy changes:** In many States, there is no or very little legal back up and clear-cut policy decisions at the Government level to take up PIM.
- **System deficiency:** There are many problems like deterioration of old control and measuring structure, leakages and seepage at various places, erosion of banks and beds. These problems hinder farmers from taking over irrigation management.
- **Uncertainty of Water Availability:** Farmers are reluctant to take on the responsibility for managing the system unless deliveries of water are made reliable, flexible, practical and responsive to need.
- **Fear of financial viability:** Farmers are apprehensive to take irrigation management, due to the absence of surety of finance, it would be difficult for them to fulfil the requirement of funds for operation and maintenance.
- **Demographic Diversity:** Due to variation in economic, ethnic, education levels etc. diversity of farmers, PIM is taking much time in India.

Way Forward

- **Rationalisation of Water Rates:** There is a dire need for rationalization of water rates so as to meet the expenditure on account of Maintenance of the irrigation system.
- **Women's Role in PIM:** Considering the importance of women in terms of their numerical strength and the significant contribution they make to the agriculture labour force, there is a need for women to play an important role in the PIM.
- **Need For A Legal Framework:** A model act can be framed by the parliament, which will ensure the systemic involvement of beneficiaries in the management of the irrigation system at various levels.
 - Also, a provision for adequate financial support needs to be incorporated under the act.
- **Need For Monitoring:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the WUAs is necessary for the development of the PIM programme in the country.

The experience shows that wherever farmers have been actively engaged, the overall management of the irrigation system and the water use efficiency have significantly improved. Thus, in light of the increasing vulnerability of Indian agriculture, PIM should be actively pursued at all levels.