

## **Farmers' Organization in Surface Irrigation Projects : Three Empirical Case Studies From Maharashtra**

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In a country of uncertain rainfall and with a large population directly dependent on agriculture, multifarious role of irrigation development can hardly be overemphasised. Subject to different agro-climatic conditions in a country of continental dimension, irrigation is expected to usher an era of high productivity with stability in agricultural production and a wider distribution of available water both in terms of area and number of users served. On counts of both efficiency and equity the performance of most surface irrigation systems in India leaves much to be desired. Apart from the technical difficulties, the main factor responsible for the below par performance is unsatisfactory irrigation management, particularly the delivery and utilization of water at the farm level. Viewed against this background the issue of farmers' involvement and participation in water management and distribution is mooted. In this study we present three case studies of farmers' participation in irrigation management through users' co-operative on three surface irrigation systems in Maharashtra.

### **Introduction**

Supply side economics hitherto followed in the case of surface irrigation development in India does not seem to have borne fruit. Most of the surface irrigation systems created in the country, specially the large and medium ones, are working with much reduced efficiency than was expected or projected. The extent of underutilization of irrigation potential created is also reported to be as high as twenty per cent and above in many such systems, specially in water scarce regions of the country. In a country of uncertain rainfall and with a large population directly dependent on agriculture, multifarious role of irrigation development can hardly be overemphasised. Subject to different agro-climatic conditions in a country of continental dimension, irrigation is expected to usher an era of high productivity with stability in agricultural production and a wider distribution of available water both in terms of area and number of users served. On counts