

CITIZEN MONITORING AND ADVOCACY LEARNING BRIEF

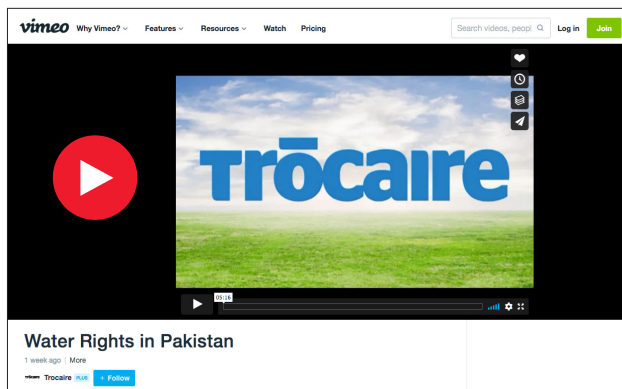
SECURING WATER RIGHTS AND USE FOR FARMERS IN PAKISTAN



Women Farmers in Mirpur Khas district. Photo credit: Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP)

This Learning Brief provides a snapshot of what Trócaire contributed to in terms of **Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy** to enable marginalised farmers in rural **Pakistan** to secure their **water rights** from 2017-2020. The brief highlights the strategies used, the main achievements, challenges and lessons learnt.

The findings are drawn from annual reports and staff reflections from Trócaire's four-year programme "**Securing Water Rights and Use for Farmers in Mirpur Khas**", which aimed to enable vulnerable farming communities, especially women, in the Mirpur Khas district, Sindh Province in Pakistan to exercise their **right to access and control water resources** and **benefit from the sustainable use and management of water for agriculture**. The annual reports included a programme participant survey and Focus Group Discussions with community members and committee members of the farmer organised groups. See short video about the programme here:



The intended audience of this Learning Brief is relevant Trócaire staff, such as Programme Officers, Programme Managers, technical advisors and institutional funding staff, as well as other stakeholders such as partners, donors, and supporters.

What is Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy?

Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy refers to targeted actions by groups of organised citizens at any level to monitor and advocate for change in state and non-state institutional policies and practices, in order to realise their rights and entitlements and hold duty-bearers to account.

Background

Pakistan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. Around 80% of cultivated lands are irrigated; however, water productivity is low and irrigation water use efficiency is only 35-40%.

Sindh, Pakistan's second-most populous province, accounts for over a quarter of the country's estimated population of 200 million. About 37% of the rural population lives below the poverty line, compared to 33% overall in Pakistan. Over 60% of the population lives in rural areas, and their main source of livelihood is agriculture. Agriculture provides employment to about 70% of the province's population and accounts for a significant portion of Gross Domestic Product. However, agricultural productivity and yields are low.

Analysis conducted by Trócaire identified **Mirpur Khas** as a district in Sindh that is highly vulnerable to water shortages with severe inequality in terms of water distribution. **Restricted access to water** or **prolonged water shortages** sometimes results in **disputes between landowners and farmers**.

Who participated and benefited?

Trócaire partnered with two local organisations, Research and Development Foundation and Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme and one governmental institution, the Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (SIDA) to deliver the four-year programme that benefitted a farming population of 11,562 people (4,140 women and 7,422 men) from 118 communities. The programme supported four Farmers Organisations (FOs) and 74 Water Course Associations (WCA). The primary interest groups in the project were small scale farmers, tenants' sharecroppers, landless agricultural workers, farmers at the tail end of watercourses, rural women, female headed households, widows, persons living with a disability and Hindu minority groups. There was a strong focus on the **inclusion of women in the programme**, with local partners sensitising communities on the importance of participation of vulnerable groups, women in particular, in the programme activities. Partners sought to ensure that **women and men had equitable participation** with a specific focus on promoting and strengthening **women's access to information** and **opportunities to participate in water forums, Area Water Board, FOs and WCAs**.

What did Trócaire support in terms of Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy for increased water rights in Pakistan?

The programme combined a Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy approach with efforts to restore and rehabilitate local water infrastructure. In terms of Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy, Trócaire's support focused on four strategies:

- **Capacity building of farmers to know and claim their water rights.** This was done via awareness raising sessions and training on different topics and for different target groups, including water leadership for youth. There was a particular focus on increasing access to information through efficient and wide dissemination of information, education and communication materials and translation of related laws and policies into their local language (Sindhi).
- **Strengthening of the decision-making committees of the FOs and WCAs** and coordination among all tiers of water management authorities and between farmers, WCAs and FOs.
- Facilitation of **participation of farmer groups in dialogue** with district and provincial water authorities. This included inclusion in consultations to get their needs and priorities reflected in water infrastructure rehabilitation schemes.
- **Advocacy by farmer groups and partner organisations** towards SIDA to influence and ensure the development of a water policy for Sindh Province.

The knowledge of committee members about water rights increased due to translations of laws and policies into their local language (Sindhi).

Achievements

Year-on-year there was a steady increase in knowledge of water rights by the targeted farmers as well as in actions by them to claim water rights. In 2020, there was an increase of almost 25% in rights awareness



Rights Based Approach training for farmers in Mirpur Khas.
Credit: LHDP

compared to 2019, with 74.6% of the targeted farming communities reporting to be aware of their water rights (88.5% of men and 60.67% of women). Furthermore, 98% men and 96% of women surveyed reported having better access to information. This enabled the **farming communities to resolve local level water related disputes, challenges or problems without any external influence.**

The focus on improving the **performance of community committees** played a vital part in strengthening their role in local water governance, which led to improved accountability and service delivery.

The programme contributed to strengthening the **coordination and collaboration** among FOs, WCAs, Area Water Board, SIDA and relevant government agencies to ensure that vulnerable farming communities exercise their right to access and control water resources and benefit from the sustainable use and management of water for agriculture. FOs were facilitated to hold meetings with the Area Water Board, Deputy Commissioner and SIDA to develop their relationship beyond the closing of the programme. In 2020, two strategic meetings were held with SIDA presided by the Chairman and attended by SIDA's senior management which helped in linking the farmers' issues to the policy makers.

Advocacy and collaboration by Trócaire and partners with SIDA led to a working paper that provides a roadmap for developing a provincial water policy for Sindh.

The programme also linked and coordinated farmer organisations with academic and research institutes such as the Sindh Agriculture University which will improve their technical knowledge through using new research and innovative models. Many Farmer



Field Farmer School session for women farmers, Mirpur Khas.
Credit: LHDP

Field Schools and trainings on water management and climate-resilient agricultural practices were conducted and moderated by technical experts from various institutions. Enhanced technical knowledge of water management puts farmers in a stronger position to advocate for practical access and control of their water resources.

Increasing farmers' awareness of their rights to access and control water resources, their accessibility to information and their **knowledge and skills on water management** and resilient agricultural practices has translated into **stronger local water institutions** and farmer communities who are **advocating for their water rights**, playing a **greater role in decision making** and adopting innovative practices of agriculture and water use to address threats to crop production due to climate change and other external stressors.

This is coupled with impacts on water efficiency, conservation and quality at the district and provincial level due to local water infrastructure restoration and rehabilitation efforts carried out during the programme. Thus, the Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy strategies were implemented to assure farmer communities can benefit from this improved water efficiency, conservation, and quality by having access and control over their water sources.

Challenges

Having to close the country office due to new Pakistani Government rules

In late 2018, the Government of Pakistan failed to renew the registration of several INGOs, including Trócaire, and ordered the closure of our country office. In compliance with the order, Trócaire closed our



Washing platforms created as part of improving water infrastructure for farmers. Credit: RDF

country office and moved to a remote management model of supporting local partner organisations. The remote management model led to challenges in the communication and accompaniment with SIDA, which in turn led to delays in progression of the Sindh Water Policy, and a planned gender audit and capacity strengthening of SIDA, with a view to ensuring a strong gender lens on the water policy. Given the difficult working environment, Trócaire eventually decided to close the programme in 2020 - one year early.

Lack of women's influence in decision making

In Mirpur Khas district, a person must be a landowner to be a member of the committees of the FOs and WCAs. Given that it is almost exclusively men who are landowners, women are essentially excluded from the decision-making processes of the farmers' groups. Furthermore, it was generally committee members who represented the farmers' groups in consultations and dialogue with local water authorities. Therefore, although there were deliberate programme strategies to ensure inclusion of women and increase their participation in the farmers' groups, this did not generate an increase in women's influence in decision-making. This was a huge challenge, and Trócaire wanted to change it.

One strategy that Trócaire wished to explore was to establish voluntary women's water networks and assist them in positioning themselves to get into consultations to have their voices heard. Another strategy Trócaire planned to use was to hire a consultant to analyse the working paper on a Sindh water policy from a gender perspective and conduct a gender audit of SIDA. A local consultant had been identified and a Terms of Reference was in development. However due to the decision to close the programme in 2020, these strategies could not be tested.

Partnering with SIDA

It was challenging to partner directly with a government institution, the Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority, from the outset. Usually, governments partner with other governments and not directly with civil society organisations, especially if there is a funding relationship and commitments and deliverables involved. The ways of working and institutional cultures are very different. There can be innate wariness or reservedness on both sides. For example, bureaucracy in government institutions is a key factor that can slow everything down, and this was the experience in the Pakistan water rights programme. Perceptions and expectations of each actor can also be very different. Trócaire perceived its role as being a facilitative partner

in advancing the provincial water policy, supporting the efforts of the local civil society organisations and farmers' groups advocating for this policy. It also had the expectation that SIDA would be more responsive and regular in communication. However, it seemed that SIDA's priorities were more influenced by other aspects of the local government agenda and less on the agreed objectives of the Trócaire contract. All of the delays with SIDA's involvement in the programme meant that the process for developing the water policy did not progress in 2019 beyond some consultations and research into cross-sectoral policies. The partnership with SIDA was formally ended in mid-2020, while other components of the programme continued until December 2020.

Lessons and Recommendations

- **Adaptive programming is crucial in Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy processes**

When it became clear that the vast majority of the women targeted by the programme were not able to influence the decision making in the farmers' groups or advocate directly with water authorities, by virtue of being excluded from the FO and WCA committees, Trócaire strategized with local partners and explored alternatives. This was a good practice, despite the inability to carry out the adapted strategies due to other operational challenges.

- **Strategies and resources to overcome women's barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making spaces should be integrated into programme design at the outset**

From the findings of our three-year action research [Pushing the Boundaries](#), Trócaire knows that in most contexts where it works, women face many barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making spaces. What our programming experience in subsequent years has shown, and the Pakistan water rights programme is a case in point, is that it is not enough to promote their participation in local committees, organised citizen groups and consultations and dialogue with powerholders if the rules or dynamics of those spaces mean that their voices will not be heard nor heeded.

It is recommended that research on women's barriers to accessing *and influencing* decision-making spaces is undertaken in the pre-design phase of the Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy components of a programme, to ensure strategies are included and resources designated from the outset to address these barriers systematically and progressively. See Trócaire's women's empowerment integration framework for further guidance.



Women farmers in Mirpur Khas district working on a demo plot.
Photo credit: LHDP

- **Partnering with a government institution is not the same as partnering with a civil society organisation. It requires an adapted approach and building relationships are key**

While it was deemed the most appropriate and strategic approach at the outset of the Pakistan water rights programme, the experience demonstrated that partnering directly with a government institution using the same partnership model as with local civil society organisations created many challenges. For future programmes, it may be better to invest more efforts in supporting local civil society organisations to engage strategically with government institutions or to adopt different ways of working when partnering with them. A high-level organisational reflection and development of guidance, based on good practice in other contexts, on how we can adapt our approach to collaborating or partnering with government institutions would be recommended.

Understanding the change process of policymaking, with its different stages, players and decision-making moments is a key part of any Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy initiative. Trócaire's direct partnership with SIDA and the development of the working paper on developing a provincial water policy ensured local civil society partners and farmers groups gained a valuable insight into this process. However, a key factor in influencing the process is through the relationships forged and the trust that is built with decision-makers and decision-influencers within the relevant institution. Identifying and fostering an allyship with champions within the institution that can lead and/or influence the policy-making process is recommended. An analysis of the motivation, capacity and opportunities of decision-makers and decision-influencers to affect change in the policymaking process by the local citizen groups and civil society organisations, is also recommended.