

**A REVIEW OF WATER-USERS ORGANIZATION IN THE MAHAWELI DEVELOPMENT AREA,
SRI LANKA.**

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The Mahaweli Development Project is of crucial importance in the agricultural development of this country. One of its main objectives is to provide water through a system of irrigation for paddy cultivation.

The success of an irrigation scheme depends mainly on the active participation and co-operation of water users. The irrigation bureaucracy alone cannot satisfactorily operate and maintain the scheme. It is equally necessary to organize collective thinking and action about water use. The Mahaweli Development Board realizing this has introduced a system commonly known as turn out groups for action on proper water use. This has been in operation for one year at the field channel level. While this system has many positive features our study in Mahaweli H region shows that there are many negative characteristics as well. These may be identified as -

- (a) Poor selection procedures has lead to farmers with inadequate leadership qualities and social awareness being selected as Turn Out Leaders.
- (b) Luck of co-ordination between the Turn Out leader and the bureaucrats. Level of trust and goodwill between these two categories are low.
- (c) The Turn Out Group has tended to buttress the control and organization of power in the village by a few rich peasants.

References:

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