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Does Political Power Matter for Amount and Type of Resource Contribution in the Locally Managed Irrigation System: A Case Study from Trans-Himalayan Region of Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal is an agricultural country where more than 76 % of the population depends upon agriculture for their livelihood and this sector provides 38 % GDP for national economy. Irrigation is considered as the heart of agricultural growth but it is the most limiting factor in Nepalese agriculture because only 32 % of total cultivated land is irrigable even though Nepal is considered as rich in water resources. Water scarcity is more prominent in mountainous and hill area than the plain areas of Nepal. Many studies show that the scarcity of resource leads to the politicisation which ultimately affect benefit and cost sharing among the beneficiaries. Therefore, three water scarce villages of trans-Himalayan region namely Lomanthang, Chhoser and Chhuksang of Mustang district of Nepal, where people used to manage the irrigation system through institutional approach and the class stratification have direct influence on water allocation and resource contribution, were selected. The major source of resource in the form of cash, labour, food and material are considered as the fuel of irrigation system in this locality and beneficiaries from the different classes used to contribute the resource differently in this locally managed irrigation system. The objectives of the research are firstly to analyse the types and amount of resource contribution by different classes and secondly finding out the scientific base of this resource allocation practices, remodelled it if necessary considering the equity and efficiency aspect. The result of the study revealed that people who are politically strong involve in the decision making and distribution aspect of the irrigation system while the people who are weak in political power contribute more labour force for repair and maintenance irrespective of their landholding.

Keywords: Beneficiaries, institution, political power, resource allocation