



Policy Brief **7**

Water Series

Translating Practice into Policy and Practice Change

Conflict Resolution in Conservation and Management of Tanks (small scale water bodies)



Executive Summary

Tanks are small scale water bodies that are easy to operate, have multiple uses and facilitate groundwater recharge. The multiple users of tanks include various groups and sections of the village community such as farmers, fisher folk, artisans, animal rearers and women who struggle to collect water for domestic purposes. Thus the tanks were able to meet the different requirements of the people. In any common property, resource sharing generates conflicts among the users and traditionally our Indian societies had the resilience to cope with conflicting demands, which were solved amicably through mediation. But over a period of time, the time tested methodologies of conflict resolution lost their ability to resolve issues due to breakdown of village institutions such as the Panchayats.

The centralisation of the tank administration in the last six to seven decades by the government led to severe consequences, alienating the local community from taking up collective efforts towards the betterment of tanks. Problems have become an essential component in tank, which may arise at anytime either before rehabilitation or during rehabilitation or thereafter. Disputes are common in allocating water but generally they are resolved through mediation by village elders. DHAN Foundation through its Vayalagam programme was able to successfully demonstrate that collective action involving all the members of the Tank Users was one of the ways to amicably share the precious water and land resource. Tank Farmers' Associations organised by DHAN act as vibrant local level Institutions, which have been strengthened