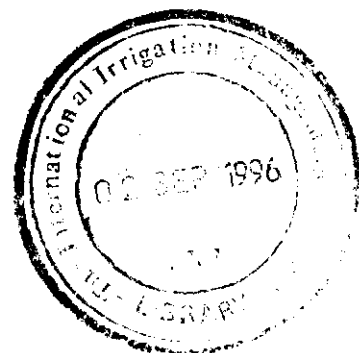
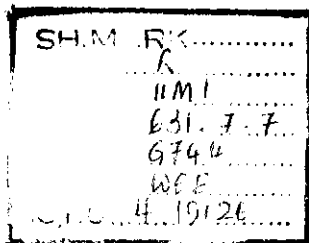


Farmer Participation in Rehabilitation of NIRP Schemes: Farmers' Perspective



*Proceedings of the Workshop
on Farmer Participation in Rehabilitation
of NIRP Schemes: Farmers' Perspective
Held in Galgamuwa, Sri Lanka
on February 25, 1995*

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Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Acronyms	xi
1. Introduction	01
Objective of the Farmers' Forum	01
Methodology	02
2. The Discussion Proceedings	03
Formation of Farmer Organizations	03
Farmer Participation in Planning	06
Farmers' Contribution to 10 Percent	08
Construction Contracting by FOs	10
Construction Supervision by FOs	12
3. Summary of Issues Raised at the Forum.	15
Annex I : Program	21
Annex II : List of Participants	23

Preface

EXPERIENCES FROM PAST rehabilitation projects have indicated that without effective farmer participation in the rehabilitation process, it is extremely difficult to achieve cost effective and quality rehabilitation. This led the National Irrigation Rehabilitation Project (NIRP) to mandate farmer participation in planning, design and implementation of rehabilitation projects with the ultimate objective of handing over operation and maintenance (O&M) responsibilities of rehabilitated schemes to FOs.

Late in 1993, the Irrigation Research Management Unit (IRMU) carried out a rapid rural appraisal (RRA) of five NIRP schemes to evaluate the effectiveness of farmer participation. Results were presented in a the workshop in October, 1994. At the recommendation of the workshop the study was expanded to cover a significantly larger sample size (20 more schemes) with a view to more thoroughly analyze issues raised. Preliminary results showed that farmers bear wide-ranging views on their participation in rehabilitation and takeover. This situation necessitated the need to consult farmers to draw on their views and opinions, to further strengthen the rehabilitation process being pursued by NIRP.

Many workshops and seminars have been held in the past to solicit opinions of experts on the subject including documenting experiences of the agency officials engaged in the implementation of rehabilitation projects. IRMU has taken a step forward by obtaining feedback directly from the farmer leaders on the issues that contribute to further strengthening farmer participation in the rehabilitation and turnover of NIRP schemes.

The workshop provided a forum to the farmer leaders to frankly and openly express their opinions and share their experiences. Proceedings of these discussions were meticulously recorded and this report provides the outcome of those discussions.

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THE WORKSHOP ON *Farmer Participation in Rehabilitation of NIRP Schemes: Farmers Perspective* held on February 25, 1995 at the Sri Lanka Irrigation Training Institute (SLITI), Galgamuwa was successful beyond the expectations of the organizers due particularly to better interaction between participants and the facilitators.

First of all, we would like to sincerely thank the 19 farmer representatives who gathered at SLITI from various parts of the island to participate in the workshop.

We also thank Mr. B.M.S. Samarasekara, Deputy Director, IRMU for his invaluable support in organizing the workshop as well as for his active participation.

We are grateful to Mr. H.M. Jayathilake, Deputy Director, SLITI and his staff for providing excellent logistic support for the smooth holding of the workshop.

Dr. C.M. Wijayaratna, Head, Sri Lanka National Program of the International Irrigation Management Institute and Mr. I.K. Weerawardana, Consultant, National Irrigation Rehabilitation Project deserve special citation for skillfully facilitating the workshop by inducing lively discussions and helping farmer representatives focus on the pertinent issues.

Our special thanks go to Mr. S.M.K.B. Nandarathna and Mr. P.B. Aluwihare for helping organize the workshop and preparing notes on the discussions.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the European Union for holding this workshop.

Editors

Acronyms

BTT	- Business Turnover Tax
DAS	- Department of Agrarian Services
DC	- Distributary Channel
DD	- Deputy Director
FC	- Field Channel
FO	- Farmer Organization
FR	- Farmer Representative
ID	- Irrigation Department
IE	- Irrigation Engineer
IIMI	- International Irrigation Management Institute
IO	- Institutional Organizer
IRMU	- Irrigation Research Management Unit
NIRP	- National Irrigation Rehabilitation Project
O&M	- Operation and Maintenance
PEU	- Provincial Engineering Unit
RRA	- Rapid Rural Appraisal
SAR	- Staff Appraisal Report
SLFO	- Sri Lanka Field Operations
SLITI	- Sri Lanka Irrigation Training Institute
TA	- Technical Assistant

INTRODUCTION

FARMER PARTICIPATION IN the management of irrigation schemes is based on three major assumptions. The first assumption is that participation should begin at the grass-roots level. This means that the farmers at the turnout level should be given an opportunity to participate in all aspects of rehabilitation. Second, it assumes that participation should take place at all stages of the development process, that is from the preplanning, planning and design, and the implementation stage, to the monitoring and evaluation stage. Third, it assumes that participation should be available up to the main decision-making level in the schemes' Project Management Committee and this should be through organized group representatives (FOs). Experience gathered from a number of projects has proved that participatory management in irrigation schemes is the most desirable management system that is suited to this country's irrigated agriculture sector.

The changing scenario in the irrigation systems during the last decade has shown that due to shortage of funding, the physical structures have deteriorated and this had led to poor performance of the systems. This situation has in turn resulted in low yields and a final drop in the farm incomes. Therefore, the NIRP, having identified the problems related to the irrigation scheme, had suggested that there should be maximum participation of farmers at all stages during the rehabilitation.

The NIRP, therefore, has laid down three principles. The farmers are called upon to establish FOs at the preplanning stage,

Second, the FOs should agree to contribute at least 10 percent of the construction costs; and third, the FOs should agree to maintain the scheme in accordance with the O&M plan, once the rehabilitation is completed and the scheme is handed over to the FO. In self-managed schemes (the minor schemes) the FOs will take responsibility for overall policymaking for implementation of O&M and resource mobilization of the whole system right after rehabilitation with guidance and advice from the irrigation agency. In joint management systems (the major and medium schemes) the FOs along with the irrigation agency, will jointly share the management of the headworks and the main canal, while the distributary channels (DC) and below will be the responsibility of the FOs. The mechanism adopted to implement this is the Project Management Committee system, where the FO representative and government officials jointly decide on overall policy issues. The FOs will take responsibility for O&M in field and distributary channels while the agency will continue to look after the headworks and the main canal, until a final decision to hand over is taken at a later date.

Objective of the Farmers' Forum

During 1994, the IRMU studied five selected NIRP schemes to evaluate the participatory management system being implemented in those schemes. The results of this study were discussed at a workshop held at the Irrigation Department in October 1994.

This workshop identified the need for further consultations with the beneficiaries. A workshop for FO representatives from 20 NIRP schemes was therefore organized by the IRMU to get feedback from the farmer representatives themselves on selected issues pertaining to the participatory aspect of the project.

During the last decade there have been numerous lectures, seminars and workshops attended by eminent academics and the implementors, on the topic of participatory management of irrigation schemes. Various viewpoints and experiences have been shared at

these seminars and workshops. However, there was a demand for a rare workshop involving only the beneficiaries namely the farmers and it is to meet this demand that the IRMU organized this workshop to share their experiences and to arrive at conclusions as to how the beneficiaries feel about the implementation of the participatory principle and what action could be taken to further strengthen it.

This workshop was also intended to provide an opportunity for the policymakers and implementors to educate themselves and learn lessons from the experience gained so far on the participatory process in the NIRP from the beneficiaries themselves.

Methodology

This farmers' forum was organized by the IRMU and was held at the Galgamuwa SLITI on February 25, 1995.

Twenty farmer representatives from 20 FOs in NIRP schemes were invited to the workshop. The representatives were from the FOs in the ranges of the Deputy Directors of the Irrigation Department of Hambantota, Moneragala, Bandarawela, Kandy, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Galle and Colombo.

The schemes they represented belonged to major, medium and minor schemes. Some schemes had just been identified for rehabilitation, while a few others were undergoing rehabilitation and a few more were where the rehabilitation work has been completed and are awaiting handing over to FOs.

The discussion, therefore, reflected the experiences of the FOs regarding all stages of rehabilitation.

The farmers were divided into four groups based on their geographical setting. The workshop had two sessions with two groups participating in each session. Each group represented irrigation ranges to which it belonged and each farmer represented his scheme.

Each session was led by a facilitator. First, the facilitator briefed the participants on the objectives of the workshop and explained how to present their experiences under each component. The five components selected for discussion are as follows:

1. Farmer organization formation and preparation
2. Farmer participation in planning and designing of rehabilitation schemes
3. Farmer contribution of 10 percent of the resources needed for the rehabilitation
4. Construction contracting by FOs
5. Construction supervision by FOs

The facilitator guided the farmers so that they presented their views on each topic stated above. They were briefed as to the openness of the forum, where they could come up with their own independent views and experiences without any inhibitions or constraints.

The FO representatives were also told that this was not a session where long speeches could be made and answers expected from the officials present. The farmers were the only actors at this workshop and the officials were only there as observers. Each farmer was given an opportunity to come up with his own experiences on the subject at issue.

During the session, the farmers not only commented on the respective components but also came up with recommendations to improve the activities as presently being followed with a view to obtaining better results.

THE DISCUSSION PROCEEDINGS

Formation of Farmer Organizations

The farmer representatives who attended the forum discussed the issue of the formation of FOs and they described their experiences with regard to the various steps taken both by the farmers and the officials in the organizing process.

Almost all the FO representatives stressed the need to have an awareness built up before the FOs are formed. They said that FOs must have specific objectives that will help the people. The project objective to increase the farmers' incomes through rehabilitation is a very broad objective. This should be translated into specific objectives and activities, so that the people will both understand and participate in FO programs. Rehabilitation should be considered as just another activity.

The FO representatives went on to describe how their respective FOs were established. Those who came from major-medium schemes said that the basis for their FO was the DC boundary while the representatives were selected from FCs. Most FOs were established even before the scheme was selected for rehabilitation and registered under Section 56A of the Agrarian Services Act. The representatives who came from Hattota Amuna and Manankettiya said that their FOs were reorganized to meet the new demands like O&M and better FO administration as a result of the rehabilitation program. They found that the new FO demarcations are more logical and useful than the earlier demarcations.

The FO representative who came from Kalutara said that in minor schemes the FOs were established by the *Grama Niladharis* (village-level government administrative officer) in collaboration with the Divisional Officer (DO) of DAS after summoning a meeting of the farmers. Here too the boundaries were adjusted to cover the rehabilitation scheme. At Hattota in Kalutara District and in many other minor schemes, the representatives said that the area covered by the FO was over and above the area earmarked for rehabilitation and therefore a new demarcation of boundaries had to be made.

Both groups stated that due to lack of the awareness about rehabilitation, the attendance at the original meetings was not very satisfactory. However, once the FO was formed and registered and the office-bearers selected, the farmers found the FOs to be useful organizations. In doing so they were thankful to the ID and DAS staff for the cooperation they received from them to set up the institutions. The farmers were given a draft constitution; the provisions of the Agrarian Services Act were explained and the necessary coordination lines established.

Once the FO was formed the office-bearers had to prepare correct lists of farmers, collect data and start programs to get more farmers to join the organization. Each FO had its own system for the enlistment of membership, for example in the Ambewela FO, each farmer had to pay Rs 10 as a membership fee and Rs 100 as a share capital which could be paid in installments. In certain other FOs like Ketawela only the membership of Rs 5 is collected.

Most FO representatives spoke about the delays in registration of new FOs by the Department of Agrarian Services. The application for registration of FOs in Ma Ela is still pending said the representative from the Ma Ela FO.

Once the FOs are formed they continued to hold regular meetings with farmers. The FOs present said that the committee meetings are held once a month. The meeting place is either the residence of one of the office-bearers or the local school hall. The lack of an office was considered a felt need. A general meeting of farmers is held once every season while a few FOs said they hold meeting once in 3 months. They spoke about the necessity of each FO to

have a separate office. The FO representatives from Manankettiya and Ketawela said that the NIRP has constructed an office and a meeting hall in their scheme. The FO representatives were told that there is provision to construct an office and a meeting hall in each all medium/major NIRP scheme.

On the subject of training of farmers, the FOs agreed that this should be a very important component in the establishment and development of FOs. They were aware that the first module in the training program prepared by the project is on awareness. But some FO representatives said that this is not conducted properly. The facilitator explained that as far as FOs are concerned there are five training modules. They are, Awareness, Strengthening of FOs, Financial Management, Construction, and Operation and Maintenance. The Galgamuwa Training Institute did the training for major-medium schemes while the Department of Agrarian Services was responsible for training FOs in minor schemes.

The FO representatives of Buttala and Kukurampola FOs described how the awareness program helped them to organize the farmers. They said that it was the TA who had done the initial awareness program and organized the FO. The Buttala Amuna representatives said that at the beginning the response from farmers was very poor but after sometime the situation improved.

The Buttala representative said that the FO collects a bushel of paddy from each farmer per season as their contribution towards the development fund to be used for O&M and other development programs. This FO now owns a tractor and they are ready to undertake O&M once the scheme is handed over. The Panugala representative wanted the Agrarian Service loan-schemes to be implemented and tractor sales to be extended to FOs in major/medium schemes as well. At Kukurampola, the representatives said that the initial participation of farmers was very poor. The FO representatives had gone from house to house to explain the rehabilitation program and as a result they were able to get membership of over 75 percent. At Hattota Amuna too, the farmers were not aware of the rehabilitation program at the beginning but here the Institutional Organizer (IO) appointed by the project was very helpful. He has helped the FO to establish and consolidate itself. He was able to reorganize the FOs on the basis of better water management. The farmer leaders along with the IO visited the farmers in their own houses, and they were able to establish four strong FOs. The people have agreed to pay Rs 100 as a share in addition to the membership fee.

The FO representative from Hambantota stated that they had organized the farmers and sent up the papers for registration to the DAS but they had not been registered to date. The FOs discussed the usefulness of the IOs in establishment, restructuring and development of FOs. The FO representatives from Matara and Kandy said that originally the FOs were established as a top-down institution where the Grama Niladhari summoned a few farmers and organized the FO. But after the appointment of the IOs by the NIRP the situation has changed. Most IOs have helped the FO representatives to organize the farmers. The IO, they said acted as a liaison between and a coordinator with the agency officials and others. The ID officials and the IOs thus helped FOs to develop the organization. The representative from Ma Ela, Kandy said that as physical rehabilitation work had not yet started, the IO helped them to concentrate their attention on other activities like youth and women projects with a view to strengthening the FOs. In some FOs the IOs attended to the meeting arrangements and discussed the rehabilitation proposal with the farmers. They linked the FOs with the services provided by the government, specially in the minor crops sector. The IOs helped the FOs to organize *shramadana* (voluntary work). The Ketawela FO representative said that they had done over 10 shramadanas before the beginning of its rehabilitation program, although most of their members were part-time farmers and therefore mobilizing them was not an easy task.

They had requested those who could not attend the sharmadana to send a laborer or to pay a day's wage.

The Hambantota representative said their FO is now well established and is providing the following services to the farmers:

- * fertilizer at low cost
- * tractor plowing on an easy payment basis,
- * beekeeping boxes
- * providing seed paddy by cultivating a 15 acre seed paddy farm
- * providing implements like hoes at low cost
- * planting trees like coconut

Almost all FO representatives showed their dissatisfaction over the long delays in getting the construction work started. Mr. Indrasiri from Akuressa said that the officials at the preliminary meeting promised many items of work but they have not included all of them in their estimates. They still do not know whether their anicut will be repaired or not. It is a long time since these officers have come and inspected the site of the old anicut but nothing has happened since then.

Mr. Dharmasena, FO representative from Hambantota, also stated that their rehabilitation has not yet started and that they are unaware of the progress made by officials. There are five FOs under the scheme; due to the delay in starting the rehabilitation work the farmers are losing interest and it is difficult to summon them even for a meeting. This has weakened the functioning of the FOs.

The representative from Wennoruwa disagreed with the above situation and said that it is incorrect for the farmers to depend on the rehabilitation and wait without strengthening the FO. The FO is a more important and a permanent institution for the farmers. It should not depend only on rehabilitation and in such a case the FO will end up as a failure. The farmers will lose interest as soon as the rehabilitation work is completed. He said that they must have a much more greater vision in the establishment of FOs.

Mr. Ranasinghe, FO representative who came from Anuradhapura said that their FOs function well but in the establishment of FOs there is the question of giving membership to the third generation farmers living within their scheme. They have no land of their own but cultivate land together with their parents or relations in the scheme. The actual problem is that when electing farmer representatives, the question of their eligibility is raised by some farmers as they cannot be officially included as cultivators. They do not possess any land permits as the lands are still under the name of their parents; however, the allotments are unofficially divided.

He also stated that in the establishment of FOs, political issues have come to play an important part. During the last regime the FOs were mostly controlled by the supporters of that regime, but now with the change of government, those who support this new government want to take over the control of FOs. This has created dissatisfaction among the farmers and has affected progress. The DAS has decided to reorganize the FOs and in doing so there will be a change in the present officeholders. If this happens it would mean the need for a fresh awareness program although the new representatives will not know anything about the NIRP rehabilitation and the concepts of participatory management. The representative from Ketawala said that the farmers too prefer to elect those who support the present government as they feel that they can get greater support from their parliamentarians. Some other representatives who were present did not agree with this viewpoint.

The representative from the Tammita FO said that they have diversified their activities. They have started a milk collecting center and the milk is purchased by the Nestle Co. At the same time they have distributed nearly 500 coconut plants in this area. The representative from Ketawela said that the officials once appointed to a scheme should not be transferred till the rehabilitation work is over, as this will affect the personal relationships he has built up during the years. It will take time for a new officer to understand the scheme and the people and this will be a drawback for the rehabilitation program. Almost all farmers insisted on the need for official support to get the FOs stabilized. They wanted the IOs be allowed to continue for sometime after rehabilitation is complete, and also said that there should be more training program to farmer representatives and farmers on subjects like O&M and agriculture.

Farmer Participation in Planning

The SAR has laid down very specifically that the agencies should adopt the participatory approach in identification of work items, in the preparation of designs and in the schemes selected for rehabilitation. The mechanism to be adopted for such participation by the beneficiaries is through consultations, walk-through surveys, formal meetings, etc. The technical staff of agencies are expected to go through this process with the FO representatives and the other beneficiaries in the area. Every attempt should be made to accommodate the requests of the FOs and the beneficiaries. If the suggestions made are technically not feasible the technical staff are expected to explain the reasons clearly in order to prevent misunderstanding. This is a part of the participatory process. It will also help the agency to avoid problems at the time of handing over. Once the designs and estimates are ready the agency staff are requested to attend a ratification meeting organized by the FOs where the items taken up for rehabilitation have to be explained. At the end of the meeting, the farmers are expected to take a decision as to whether they agree to the items or not, and if they agree they should attend to their 10 percent contribution, and take over the management of the scheme once the rehabilitation is completed.

At the forum, the farmers from Gampola Raja Ela, and Udugoda Bandara Ela who represented two sample schemes taken up at the beginning of the NIRP, expressed their opinions and said that they were not properly consulted. They were not aware of any meeting to find out their needs. Even the ratification meetings were not well attended, as the farmers were not aware of the NIRP procedures at the beginning. Furthermore, at that stage they did not have an IO and their FOs were not properly organized. On the other hand, the representative from Buttala Amuna said that they were satisfied with the rehabilitation procedure. He said that they had a strong FO to start with and therefore could react better. He said that almost all the rehabilitation contracts under the scheme were undertaken by the FOs in the scheme and all their requests were accommodated.

The representative who came from the Kukurampola Scheme was very appreciative about the way discussions and consultations are done right now. This is a new scheme that is to be taken up for rehabilitation. He said that the agency staff held a number of meetings and visited the sites a number of times for the purpose of preparing the designs and estimates. The representatives from Kande Ela too said that the agency staff and the consultant had meetings with them and had a walk-through identifying the number of places which needed channel lining and outlets. They were able to show the damage caused to the channel by the people cultivating on the reservations and also the illicit tapping by rich farmers. They were happy that the agency staff had given them the assurance that the reservation encroachments and illicit

tapping would be controlled once the rehabilitation work commences. The Kande Ela representative also said that one of their major problems is the shortage of water to the Kande Ela rice farmers. This he said will be solved through rehabilitation as a result of the agency agreeing to divert some amount of water from the Ambewela Scheme which, at the moment, has excess water. It was due to the study made as a result of rehabilitation that this was made possible.

According to the Kande Ela representative their main problem was that the rice farmers who cultivated at the tail end of the scheme were far away from the reservoir and that they got no water because the rich potato farmers syphoned their water midway. They originally suggested a pipeline and a storage tank which would have been very expensive. Now due to the rehabilitation discussions the agency has found that it could divert some excess water from the Ambewela Reservoir. Therefore, their original suggestion was found to be redundant.

The Ambewela FO representative was also thankful that it was not a unilateral decision of the agency, as would have happened in the earlier days but that it was arrived at through a consultation process where both scheme representatives together with the ID officials discussed the problem and arrived at a settlement. The Deputy Director, ID agreed to be the chairman of the committee representing both schemes to decide on the question of diverting the water. They were thankful about the procedure laid down in the NIRP which helped this process.

The representative from the Murapola FO said that over 100 farmers attended the preliminary meeting to discuss their rehabilitation proposals. This was followed by a walk-through which helped the Technical Officers to identify correctly the places which needed lining. They also saw the difficulty in communication between villages as the scheme was over 10 miles long. They said that when the agency staff and consultants realized the difficulty of managing this scheme they even suggested to introduce an internal telephone system, but this was turned down by most farmers, as maintaining such a telephone system would not be possible for the FOs once they took over the scheme. Instead they suggested a better road system. They too were happy about the consultation concept adopted in the NIRP.

The farmer representatives from Ketawala stated that they wanted a number of places lined, but this was curtailed due to lack of funds. They said that the pro-rata rate fixed by the project is a constraint in including all the items needed to rehabilitate the scheme. When the scheme is large and neglected for a long period, the money available on the pro-rata is inadequate. If the total needs are not met they shared the view that the farmers may refuse to take over, as most of their needs had not been attended to under rehabilitation.

The Manankattiya representative spoke about the delay in starting rehabilitation work. They said that the time spent on designing and the final ratification was too long and the farmers had got frustrated. Even the FOs find it difficult to face the people and the IO is kept idling. They suggested that once the items for rehabilitation are identified the work should start without too much delay. However, they were thankful for the rehabilitation which has now started after a delay of about two years.

The Hattota Amuna representative said that an area which was originally considered as an encroachment is now included in the scheme and this is an asset to these farmers who, up to then, had to undergo hardships. Now these farmers have been organized under a separate FO.

The representative from the Labonuruwa FO also mentioned about the delay in taking up their scheme for rehabilitation. He suggested that it is better to do a preliminary survey and an assurance given to them as to whether the scheme would be taken up and if so by when. If not, they find it difficult to develop their FOs as they lose all interest in cooperating with the

FOs activities. Most farmer representatives agreed with this view. Thus there is a need for better communication between the FOs and the constructing agencies.

The representative from the Ketawala FO said that once the rehabilitation process starts the officials connected to this should not be transferred. This he referred specially to the Technical Officers. The knowledge that these TAs get from listening to farmers cannot be transferred to other officers during the course of the rehabilitation process. Therefore, those officers who are there at the beginning must be allowed to stay till the construction work is completed.

The representatives from the Murapola FO also stated that the awareness about rehabilitation is very vital. Before the designs are prepared there should be a good awareness program which will help the people to cooperate. If this is not done the rehabilitation will be confined only to the agency requirements. He said that the FOs should arrange general meetings at which agency officials should participate. The representative from Gampola Raja Ela also spoke about the IO being appointed at the appropriate time. He can do much of the awareness program and organize the FOs better and s/he will also act as a link between the agency and the farmers. S/he can help the FO in a number of ways.

At the same time, the IOs too should not be taken out from the scheme till the final handing over is done. He spoke of the situation at Gampola Raja Ela when the earlier IO was transferred and two female IOs were appointed; it took sometime for the new IOs to know the area and the farmers.

The representative from Kaltota said that the planning and design stage was done with their fullest cooperation but when it came to implementation they were not told about the details of items and the estimates but were only told of the items in general. They said that the farmers should be given all details so that they could see that the contractor does a good job of work.

The representative from Ketawala said that the agency staff had discussion with them, they had a walk-through and that they were able to show the officials the places that needed outlets. But when the final design was done, instead of the 28 outlets they were given only 8. The farmers were not very happy about this. This could have been avoided if they were told the reasons for this reduction. As for the lining they are now aware that this was reduced due to financial constraints. The Ketawala representative went on to explain that without proper lining their main channel would become broader and broader due to erosion. They urged that this be reconsidered also as a result of the limitation in outlets which will affect the rotational distribution of water. The Murapola FO representative said that most of the channel sides are subject to landslides due to the steep slopes and therefore lining was needed. They said that they had a very good discussion with the agency staff before rehabilitation.

The Buttala representative said that work in their scheme is almost complete and they are very happy about the rehabilitation. Now they can distribute the water well as the measuring gauges that have been installed will help them. However, no action has yet been taken to hand over the distributary channel to them. What they now need is training in operation and maintenance.

Farmers' Contribution of 10 Percent

Another precondition for NIRP is that the farmer should contribute 10 percent of the total value of the rehabilitation estimate. The main purpose of this concept is to get the farmers to participate in the rehabilitation process and to give them a sense of ownership in the scheme. The SAR states that the FOs should agree to contribute at least 10 percent of the cost of

rehabilitation and improvement in the form of free labor or any other acceptable form. This is a precondition to rehabilitation and the FOs are expected to pass a resolution at the ratification meeting to the effect that they will provide this contribution.

The general opinion of the FO representatives is that organizing the 10 percent is easier in minor schemes than in major schemes and that it is easy to implement the 10 percent contribution in rural areas but difficult in schemes closer to urban areas as most farmers are part-time farmers.

It was found that FOs use different strategies to get this 10 percent contribution accomplished.

The FO representatives stated that they have to face problems, as some agency staff do not divulge the total cost of the rehabilitation. As a result, they are unable to account for the 10 percent when they are questioned by farmers. In certain other cases, the FO has to wait till the contractor completes his part of the contract to show the farmers' 10 percent, as this can only be done afterwards as for example in turfing.

The FO representative of Udawela Maha Ela said that, in case the farmers refuse to do their part of the 10 percent the FO is unable to take any action against such farmers, as there is no legal authority for noncompliance. However, on the whole, the FO representatives agreed that the farmers did not show much dislike for contributing this 10 percent.

A representative from the Kaltota Scheme said that some Technical Officers have included the 10 percent in their main contract. The contract itself is given to the FO and every time the FO gets a payment for work done, 10 percent is deducted as the contribution. The FO representative said that they do not mind this as long as the contract includes earthwork but when it comes to concrete items this system is not at all suitable and the FO loses on the contract.

In the Ketewala Scheme the 10 percent is contributed by the farmers who work on the normal contract given to the FO. The FO has asked the farmers to work one hour more on a voluntary basis to cover the 10 percent. Thus they are paid a day's wage for working 9 hours instead of for the stipulated 8 hours.

The Murapola representative said that they have organized a number of *shramadanas* to contribute the 10 percent. Those who did not participate were asked to pay for the labor. In the Wennoruwa Scheme, where most farmers are employed as part-time farmers the FO finds it difficult to get the 10 percent contribution. The FO had decided that all cultivators should pay their contributions in cash. The FO in turn employed daily labor and completed the work. However, one FO at Wennoruwa has still failed to get the full 10 percent because the owners had defaulted in their payment.

In most minor schemes the FO representatives said that they apportion the 10 percent based on the *pangu* list and got the work done in this manner as an obligation. The representative from the Kalutara District said that in the Haltota Amuna Scheme they have done more work than the 10 percent as part of the contribution because they wanted to do the items that were dropped due to lack of funds (on the pro-rata rate). They said that at Udawela Maha Ela in the Kandy District the farmers had done work for over 25 percent contribution.

Thus, it was seen that the farmers adopted their own methods to contribute the 10 percent. These could be summarized as follows: 1. Shramadana, 2. Working extra hours, 3. Collecting money from the owners and cultivators, 4. By deducting the 10 percent from the main contract, and 5. By giving a specific allocation under the *pangu* list.

Construction Contracting by FOs

Another important principle followed in NIRP is that the rehabilitation construction contracts should first be offered to the FOs if they are capable of undertaking them. It is normally the implementing agency that decides this, but the general rule adopted is that if the contract is technically not complicated, it is given to the FOs; otherwise, it is given out to private contractors. Sometimes, the technical staff split the total contract into a number of small contracts. Those involving earthwork are offered to the FOs while those involving more complicated items are given to outside private contractors.

The decision to give contracts to FOs is generally made at the ratification meeting. In the case of minor schemes, the Divisional Officer of Agrarian Services, and in the case of medium schemes, the Technical Officer in charge help in making this decision. Where work on the contract is done by an outsider the FO is expected to see that it is done well by appointing a subcommittee for the purpose. The FOs that take the contract and make a profit deposit this amount to their development fund.

All FOs are given a training about construction by the Training Division of the SLITI or DAS. The purpose is for the farmers to know about construction which would help both when they do their own contract and when they supervise the private contractors' work.

Most FO representatives who attended the workshop said that they had all undertaken contracts. The Gampola Raja Ela representative said that in their scheme out of the 32 contracts the contractor defaulted only in 2 cases. Some work on contracts done by the private contractors was not to their fullest satisfaction. Although they had appointed a supervision committee they found it difficult to make complaints against the contractor, because they felt that the agency would not like such complaints and that the FO would be penalized at a later stage. However, some FOs said that after making representations to the agency they were able to overcome the defects through discussion.

The representative from Udugoda Bandara Ela said that the estimate prepared by the Irrigation Department was low and this made it difficult for them to make any profits. They cited the example of the Hume Pipes. The estimate allowed only Rs. 7,000 for one pipe while the market price was Rs. 10,000.

They also said that there were long delays between the preparation of the estimate and the final award of the contract. In between the prices of items would escalate. When they make representation about this situation the reply of the agency is that the contract cannot be amended at this stage. They also cited examples of the price changes in the open market. Very often there is the difficulty of obtaining cement. This has resulted in delaying the contracts which would in turn result even in damage to the work already done due to rain and other natural reasons. Also the half-done structures when left for long periods get damaged by other means.

The representatives who came from Ketawela and Panugala said that except in the DAS the work estimates are prepared in English and that the FO finds it difficult to understand these estimates. They requested that they be given a Sinhala translation.

The representatives from Hattota Amuna said that they cannot get the mobilization advance in spite of the government circular which allows the FOs to get such an advance up to 20 percent of the value of the contract. This is because the agency staff is not ready to certify this advance and undertake the responsibility of recovery. Almost all representatives agreed that this is a severe constraint and that the NIRP should make representations to the government and solve this problem.

The private contractors, on the contrary, get this advance on production of a bond. The FO representing Keselhenawa said that in case of minor schemes the DAS gave them an advance from the Agrarian Trust Fund on the recommendation of the Divisional Officer of Agrarian Service. They requested that a similar system be adopted for major schemes also. A revolving fund supported by the project may be one answer to this.

In the case of Imbulgoda Amuna at Matara the farmer representative said that they collected their own money from a few members who could afford it and used this as a fund to start work. This was paid back at the end of the contract. The FO from Manankettiya and Hattota Amuna stated about the lack of work and how the supervisor had hampered their work. The lack of knowledgeable persons at the work site to assist them when they undertake the contracts is a major constraint. The Technical Officer comes only occasionally and they find it difficult to get advice from any other person. In case of private contractors they said this is not a constraint as they are more experienced than FOs and can do even without a work supervisor. They also raised the issue that without a departmental supervisor the private contractor can resort to do substandard work; that even the FO supervision committee finds it difficult to complain as there is no one at the site; and that even if they go to the office and complain it would be too late.

The representatives from Buttala Amuna Scheme said that they have undertaken a number of contracts and that they have earned a profit. However, they said that the procedure to get money for work done is very slow and they had to go a number of times to the agency officers. They said that if this is expedited the FOs can do more work as they need a quick turnover for work done to pay the laborers and purchase material. They also said that when FOs take over a contract they lose money on it because they are inexperienced in implementing the contract. They often bring more than the required amount of materials and do not know the correct timing to bring such items. They said that if they could be advised by the agency it would be useful. They also said that the construction training they receive from the project is very general. It is good if the construction training is based on the specific contract that they are expected to undertake.

The opinion of some representatives is that a few Technical Officers are not sympathetic towards FOs, and therefore, they are not keen to undertake contract work even if they have the capacity, because of the lack of mutual trust. The Technical Officer preferred to give work to private contractors as they are less troublesome and not demanding like the FOs. The FOs are harassed when they go to collect their cheques; or they have to go there a number of times.

The Gampola Raja Ela representative spoke about the poor quality of work done by private contractors and mentioned about a structure that got washed away due to rain.

The representatives from Ketawela spoke about the threat to one of their FOs from a group that wanted to change the office-bearers of the FO for the sole purpose of getting the contracts. He deplored this trend. He said there is danger to the stability of FOs if they exist only to do rehabilitation contracts. The FO will not be sustainable after the rehabilitation is over. Most FO representatives said they are unable to take contracts due to lack of capital. Some Range Deputy Directors of the ID provide construction material instead of money but the FO complained that the material given by the Department costs more than in the market and that they have to pay a 25 percent departmental charge for materials given. This, they said, should not be done to FOs.

Almost all FO representatives complained about the low rates given for work in the estimates. They said that there should be a method to change the rates of the items when the market prices go up. Some private contractors abandon the work and therefore the work stands idle for long periods. They only do the items of work that are profitable and abandon

the rest. In such cases, the FO finds it difficult to face the farmers. If the agency provides better supervision over contractors this could be avoided.

The representative from Hattota Amuna said that the work-to-rule campaign by the TAs has affected them. During the last maha season there was a delay in certifying the work done. There was rain in between and a part of their work got washed away. The FO has to face a loss. He said that there should be greater cooperation by the agency. Otherwise, the FO as a movement cannot sustain itself.

The Gampola Raja Ela representative stated that they started supervising the contractors as they were unhappy about the work. After making complaints the contractor disappeared and did not turn up to continue his work.

The contracts taken by the FO in the Udugoda Bandara Scheme ended up with a loss to the FO.

The deduction of 5 percent BTT is another reason for the FO losing on the contracts. The FO representatives suggested that this should be stopped as the government has already exempted the cooperatives from this tax.

Construction Supervision by FOs

Another important aspect in the NIRP (SAR) is the responsibility given to the FOs to supervise the construction program. The purpose is to get the farmers interested in what is being constructed. This is a logical conclusion to the consultation process. One of the complaints received in earlier rehabilitation projects was that the beneficiaries were kept in the dark and that construction was only a contract between the agency and the contractor. To overcome this, the project has two in-built alternatives. One is to give the contract to the FO itself and the other is to get the FO to appoint a subcommittee to supervise the work done by the contractors. This aspect of supervision in the project activities is one of the weakest, as implementation is extremely difficult due to a number of reasons. The views of the FO representatives were that the normal accepted system to date in the construction arena, is for the technical staff to take over the responsibility of supervising the contract; and that supervision by FOs is a thing the technical staff has always resisted. Giving this authority to FOs needs an attitudinal change by the agency staff. Under the project the FOs are expected to report any defects to the very same Technical Officer who is in charge of the work. The officer will not like such complaints as it would reflect his inefficiency and bring disrepute to him in the face of his superior officers.

There is also the general impression by a majority of officials that contracts are technical matters on which the farmers are ignorant and therefore they are incapable of performing the task of supervision. It is to overcome this problem that the project has included a training module on construction both for the farmer representatives and for the farmers. The FO representatives were of the opinion that this training program does not keep pace with the construction program; second, the training is very general which is hardly adequate for the purpose of supervision and it has little relevance to the actual contract. Another aspect which most FO representatives pointed out is that they are not given the contract details by the agency staff but that they are given only to the private contractor. They are thus unaware of the actual specifications laid down in the contract. Even if they ask the Technical Officer they do not get a satisfactory reply. Furthermore, all contracts except those done by the DAS are written in English and this makes it difficult for the FO representatives to understand.

It has been found that the farmers and the FO resort to their traditional method of sending petitions if they want to point out any defect in work done by the private contractors. This was told by the representative from Buttala. He said that the petitions sent to higher authorities brought better results than making complaints to the officers in charge of contracts.

The representative from Matara stated how an IO who went to the agency office to find out details of a contract was asked to leave the office and he was even reported for not following the correct procedure of going through the hierarchical system on these matters. He went on to say that unless there is an attitudinal change by all officials, this transfer of supervision authority to FO will never work.

The representative from Panugala pointed out that the FOs need authority to supervise and report on contracts. He said if this is to be done they must either be given such authority in writing by the Project Director or this matter must be included as a clause in the contract document; if this is not done they will have no say in this matter. One FR said that the Technical Officers are hand in glove with the private contractors and therefore there is no purpose in pointing out any defects to such officers.

The representative from a Kandy FO said that because the IO questioned the Technical Officers at a meeting about some construction defects, the agency staff has even refused to attend IO meetings thereafter. They said that the IO progress meetings held at the Kandy Agrarian Office are not attended by the Provincial Engineers.

However, all the FO representatives said that they still continue to appoint a subcommittee but the working of the committee depends on the strength of the FO and their relationship with the construction agency. The members of the committee are of the opinion that farmers authorized to do this supervision do so only as time permits. They do not follow any specific time schedule as they have so much of other work and cannot spend all their time at the work site.

The Farmer Representative (FR) from Wennoruwa said that the private contractors do not recognize this supervising committee at all. They do not keep the committee informed as to when construction items like concreting takes place and as a result they find it difficult to supervise the work done. However, sometime later when the farmers complain that the work was not done according to the specifications, then it is too late even to make a complaint. One of the most common allegations is that the contractor uses large-size metal instead of the stipulated 1/2 inch metal to do concreting, etc. But it is not possible to prove this once the job is done. The FOs themselves are unable to prove the allegation which is often made to them through another farmer. They are thus unable to take full responsibility and make a complaint to the authorities.

The construction supervision is further aggravated due to the lack of works supervisors, (which has already been discussed).

Some FRs however spoke well about the role of the Technical staff. They said that the FOs get the fullest cooperation from them and in fact some TAs take great pains to see that the work is done well and they are always personally present when concreting takes place. The FO representative from Hattota Amuna said that they should build good relationships with the Technical staff and the contractor. If this is done much of the allegation made could be overcome and a good job of work could be assured.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED AT THE FORUM

Priority of the issues for implementation

- * Top Priority
- ** Second Priority
- *** Low Priority

Component 1. Farmer organization formation and preparation.

Issues	Suggested Remedies
01. Need for increased awareness among farmers on project objectives and activities*	Improved communication with the farmers on project objectives and activities.
02. Some FO boundaries are not suited for participatory and O&M activities (e.g., administrative and hydrological)	Need to redemarcate boundaries more convenient to the farmers or establish new FOs
03. Delays in registration of FOs*	DAS should be more prompt in registering FOs
04. In some schemes, IOs are not available to organize FOs*	Early action should be taken to fill vacancies
05. Delays in the start of physical rehabilitation*	Technical staff in ID, DAS and PEU should expedite the process
06. Need to increase representation of youth and women in FOs***	IOs should help improve this situation including amending constitution, if needed
07. Need for greater agency support**	Agencies should be more responsive to FO needs

Component 2. Farmer participation in planning.

Issues	Suggested Remedies
01. Farmer requests for work items had not been included in the rehabilitation plans in some schemes**	Agency should accommodate farmers' requests. Wherever these cannot be entertained the agency should provide clear explanation to FOs
02. Insufficient consultation at early stages with farmers*	Agency should involve farmers from the very early stage of rehabilitation
03. Essential work items were dropped from estimates due to limitation in pro rata rate**	PD should have discretion in dealing with special cases
04. Design and estimate take too long*	Agencies should shorten the process
05. Transfer of technical staff and IOs should be avoided once the scheme is identified for rehabilitation*	Agencies should avoid such transfers
06. An IO should be appointed from the beginning of the process of rehabilitation as this would help FOs*	Project management should take appropriate action

Component 3. Farmer contribution of 10 percent.

Issues	Suggested Remedies
01. Total cost estimate of rehabilitation is often not made available to FOs. This creates problems in computing the 10 percent contribution*	Agencies should make estimates transparent
02. Identification and estimation of the 10 percent contribution is often delayed*	Expedite the process
03. Contractors' delays lead to delays by FOs**	- do -
04. Lack of cooperation by FO members in contributing 10 percent work*	More training/awareness is needed for FO members
05. Lack of legal support to deal with defaulters**	Legal authority is needed for FOs

Component 4. Contracts by FOs.

Issues	Suggested Remedies
01. Estimates are low, thus making it difficult for FOs to undertake contracts*	Agencies should take suitable steps to solve this
02. Long delays in the award of contracts lead to the escalation of market prices of materials	Agencies should act promptly in awarding contracts to FOs
03. Shortage of construction materials including cement	Agencies can help in procurement
04. Contract estimates are in English which is difficult for FO members to understand*	Agencies should provide a translation in Sinhala/Tamil where applicable
05. Mobilization advance is selectively given to FOs at the discretion of the IE*	Project management should make arrangements so that each FO can obtain a mobilization advance
06. In instance where construction materials are supplied by the agency, 10 percent of the total cost is retained as departmental charges**	Project management should waive this requirement
07. BTT is deducted from FO contracts**	This matter should be taken up with the ministry to get this charge exempted from FOs
08. Shortage of work supervisors at sites is adversely affecting the work progress*	Project management may take appropriate action to redress this situation
09. Delays in getting payment for work done by FOs*	Agencies must avoid unnecessary delays in payment

Component 5. Construction supervision

Issues	Suggested Remedies
01. Lack of cooperation by some technical staff on complaints made**	Agency should discuss with FO about complaints. Agency officers should be more responsive to the FO needs
02. Lack of construction knowledge of FO representative	Training must be more contract-specific than general
03. Contract details are not divulged to FOs**	Agencies must discuss these details with farmers to clear doubts
04. No authority has been given to FOs in supervising the contracts implemented by private contractors*	Authority should be given to FOs
05. Getting farmers to serve on work supervision committees is difficult as this is an honorary job and farmers cannot devote their full time for this purpose***	Farmers suggested that the project management should compensate for this. (We think this is a responsibility of the FO.)
06. Supervision committees find it difficult to supervise the contract work because private contractors avoid providing work schedules*	Agencies to ensure that such schedules are provided to the FOs

WORKSHOP ON FARMER PARTICIPATION IN REHABILITATION OF NIRP SCHEMES: FARMERS' PERSPECTIVE

Date : Saturday, February 25, 1995,

Venue: Irrigation Training Institute, Galgamuwa

PROGRAM

Inaugural Session

- Chairperson:** - Mr. B.M.S. Samarasekara, Deputy Director, IRMU
- 8.30 - 9.30 a.m. - Registration and Lighting of the Oil Lamp
- Welcome Address by Mr. H.M. Jayathilaka, Deputy Director, SLITI, Galgamuwa.
- Introduction to the Workshop Mr. B.M.S. Samarasekara and Mr. W. J. J. Upasena
- 9.30 - 10.00 a.m. - Tea Break

Morning Session

- Chairperson and Facilitator:** - Mr. I. K. Weerawardana, Consultant, NIRP
- 10.00 - 11.00 a.m. - Presentation of Group I (Farmers from Hambantota and Galle DD Ranges)
Rapporteur: Mr. P.B. Aluwihare, IRMU
- 11.00 - 12.00 noon - Presentation of Group II (Farmers from Bandarawela and Kandy DD Ranges)
Rapporteur: Mr. S. M. K. B. Nandarathna, IRMU
- 12.00 - 12.30 p.m. - Suggestions from Farmers
Concluding Remarks by Chairperson
Rapporteur: Mr. W. J. J. Upasena, IRMU
- 12.30 - 1.30 p.m. - Lunch Break

Afternoon Session

**Chairperson and
Facilitator:**

- Dr. C.M. Wijayaratna, Head/IIMI-SLFO

- 1.30 - 2.30 p.m. - Presentation of Group III (Farmers from Monaragala and Kurunegala DD Ranges)
Rapporteur: Mr. S.M.K.B. Nandaratna, IRMU

- 2.30 - 3.30 p.m. - Presentation of Group IV (Farmers from Anuradhapura and Colombo DD Ranges)
Rapporteur: Mr. P.B. Aluwihare, IRMU

- 3.30 - 4.15 p.m. - Suggestions from Farmers
Concluding Remarks by Chairperson
Rapporteur: Mr. W. J. J. Upasena, IRMU

- 4.15 p.m. - Vote of Thanks by Mr. B.M.S. Samarasekara,
Deputy Director, IRMU

- 4.30 p.m. - Closure

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Farmer Representatives

Name	Irrigation Range	IE Division
Group 1		
1. Mr. R.K. Piyadasa	Hambantota	Hambantota
2. Mr. E.K.Gunapala	Hambantota	Hambantota
3. Mr. S.M.Sudubanda	Monaragala	Monaragala
4. Mr. R.M.Ariyadasa	Monaragala	Wellawaya
Group 2		
5. Mr. H.M.Jayasekara	Bandarawela	Badulla
6. Mr. S.A.R. Appuhamy	Bandarawela	Badulla
7. Mr. Gamini Wimalaratna	Kandy	Kandy
8. Mr. K.D.Wimalasena	Kandy	Kandy
9. Mr. J.K.M.Tikiribanda	Kandy	Kandy
10. Mr. K.M. Kiribanda	Kandy	Matale
Group 3		
11. Mr. H.D.R.Wegantale	Kurunegala	Hiriyala
12. Mr. W.M.Jayasingha	Kurunegala	Hiriyala
13. Mr. T.M.Dharmasena	Anuradhapura	Anuradhapura
14. Mr. K. Sudharmasena	Anuradhapura	Anuradhapura
Group 4		
15. Mr. I.D. Premadasa	Galle	Ambalangoda
16. Mr. D. Y. Indrasiri	Galle	Matara
17. Mr. Milton Gamage	Colombo	Gampaha
18. Mr. J.A.E. Jayasooriya	Colombo	Gampaha
19. Mr. M. A. Cyril Ranasingha	Colombo	Ratnapura

Officials

1. Mr. B.M.S. Samarasekara, Deputy Director, IRMU
2. Mr. H.M. Jayathilaka, Deputy Director, SLITI, Galgamuwa.
3. Dr. K. Azharul Haq, Technical Advisor, IRMU
4. Dr. C.M. Wijyaratna, Head/ IIMI-SLFO: Chairperson and Facilitator
5. Mr. I. K. Weerawardana, Consultant, NIRP: Chairperson and Facilitator
6. Mr. W. J. J. Upasena, IRMU/IIMI: Workshop Coordinator/Rapporteur
7. Mr. S. M. K. B. Nandarathna, IRMU/IIMI: Rapporteur
8. Mr. P.B. Aluwihare, IRMU/IIMI: Rapporteur
9. Mr. S. S. L. Weerasinghe, IE/NIRP
10. Mr. M. Balakumar, IE/NIRP