



Local Manager
Kurunegala
Sena

Rapid Appraisal ;

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DJG, SB

KIMBULWANA OYA IRRIGATION SCHEME <

This is the 2nd rapid appraisal of farmer participation; the first was Dewahuwa. Sena contacted the DD, Kurunegala to arrange a meeting with the IE in Hiriela (sp?). The T.A. (Gunadasa) who has single-handedly created the Kimbulwana management structure, would not be available, but the IE would be. We left Digana at 7:00 am, and reached the IE's office (after tea and checking at the DD's office) at 9:15 where he was expecting us. Since neither Sena nor I had seen Kimbulwana previously, we spent about 15 min. talking with the IE in his office and then went out to the scheme, accompanied by the IE, to continue the discussion on site. The IE took us to the tank bund where we looked at the (small) LB sluice, and the primary sluice on the RB. The tank is less than 1/4 full now. Water was flowing in the RB for chillies (paddy issues ended a week ago). We sat down by the RB channel and interviewed the IE.

Interview with Mr. W. Jayatissa, Irrigation Engineer

I. Irrigation System

Total designed area = 1,450 ac with 50 ac encroached. [In fact, the encroached area is much greater than this.] Cropping intensity is >200% though he does not know how much area will be triple-cropped; in 1985 it was ca. 300 acs. There are no other water sources (wells) but there are a few small anicuts to recycle drainage water. These have been constructed through the IHAP (International Human Assistance Program - an American PVO) project now ended. Water is adequate; the LB will be expanded ca. 50 ac soon. The original tank dates to the 2nd Century AD; it fell into disrepair and was reconstructed in 1955 (settlement date is 1956). During 1979-82 it was rehabilitated under the World Bank IRDP. According to the IE, nothing was done to the bund [in fact, it was raised a few feet]. New sluices and outlets were installed; the tank bed was desilted (and needs it again, he says; about 2 feet of silt have accumulated from erosion of hills in the catchment). The IE knows nothing of the settlement history (although he has been here for 2 years). Other data on the scheme (from files provided by the IE): Catchment area = 38 sq. miles; Full Supply Level = 590 acs; Capacity = 5578 ac ft.; Useful Storage = 5328 ac. ft; Irrigable area = 205 ac (LB) + 1177 ac (RB) = 1382 acs.

The irrigation units comprise about 50 f-channels. There is no exact figure, as some of them can be considered either f-channels or D-channels. The size range runs from one allotment to ca. 30 or 40 (F.C. 23). In general, however, there are identifiable f-channels. One farmer mentioned 8 f-channels in his area which varied between 3-8 allotments each. Paddy allotments come in two sizes: 2 and 3 acres. On a system level, there are 3 "units" which do not appear to be of operational significance, except, perhaps, for water rotations(?).

II. Functions of Farmers

Farmers provide labor to clean the main channel. Shramadanas are organized by the CO, TA, and others; this was last done in June (2 months ago). At the f-channel level, the Vel Vidanes mobilize farmer labor. Water distribution is handled by the Irrigation Department at all levels. All gates (both turnouts, and control gates along the FCs) are locked, and the key kept by the ID workers. Pipe outlets to individual allotments are opened and closed by farmers, but enforcement is done by the Vel Vidane. The VV has the authority to impose fines, but according to both the IE and farmers, no fines have been imposed since 1980 when the TA introduced the current management system.

III. Functions of Irrigation Department Officials

Labor for all maintenance of the canal system, from the main channel down to the FCs, is provided by farmers, but any repair work requiring capital inputs is handled by the ID, even at the FC level. Labor mobilization is handled by ID officers (TA, Colonisation Officer) or Agrarian Services officers (CO, VVs). The IE has Rs. 50,000 in his maintenance budget for Kimbulwana but has not needed it because of the shramadanas. Most farmers paid Rs.100 O&M fee for 1984 (though not necessarily in 1984); about Rs. 50,000 is still owed from farmers [the numbers are probably incorrect but this is what the IE reported]. No money has been collected for 1985 because farmers provide labor instead. There is a total of Rs. 225,000 (from the 1984 collections) in a fund controlled by the Govt. Agent. Farmers have asked to be paid for their shramadana labor from this(?) budget (or from the Rs. 50,000 maintenance budget?) but no decision has been taken yet.

Water distribution is entirely in the hands of the ID. The TA sets up many of the procedures; the Work Supervisor (or overseer) sees to it that they are carried out, and the two Maintenance Laborers are the ones who actually keep the keys and open the gates. The two COs on the scheme have no direct irrigation functions. They also oversee 10 small tanks in the area.

IV. Farmer Organization (according to the IE)

The IE did not know the area covered by an FC, the number of allotments, or the number of cultivators. There are ca. 50 FC committees, whose leaders are govinayaka. They meet before kanna meetings so they can represent their farmers. Tenants do not belong to the committees. The govinayakas report to the work supervisor or to the TA (or other officers). The committees were formed by the VVs after rehabilitation (and after the establishment of the VVs following the 1979 Agrarian Services act). Leaders are selected by the farmers. The committees clean their FCs but do not do repairs and do not have water distribution functions. [Note: there is no evidence of these committees from farmer interviews.]

The next higher level corresponds to the area under the jurisdiction of one Vel Vidane, perhaps 50 allotments. The IE insisted that not every "D-channel group" (his term) is headed by a VV, but could not give counter examples. There are about 15 VVs [the Kimbulwana report says 11]. The leaders were elected by farmers several years ago; there have been no elections since the IE took his post two years ago. The VVs are paid in kind

(the usual Agrarian Services salari). D-channel meetings are held every week before the project-level meetings (see below), and are called by the VV. They are held at a community center, or in less formal settings. No written records are kept. [Note: there is little evidence of these meetings from farmer interviews.]

At the scheme level is a water management committee (WMC) or jalla pallana which meets "every Tues." before water issues. Since the Yala water schedule was normally 7 days off and 8 days on, this may mean every other week. Meetings are attended by both officers and VVs, and interested farmers, and are usually held in the school in Unit 2. The last meeting was the last week in July. The IE is the president of the WMC, but does not usually attend; the TA then presides, and also serves as record-keeper. The WMC is concerned with other issues in addition to irrigation: fertilizer, credit, crops, and marketing. It appears that the kanna meeting is actually a WMC meeting, perhaps attended by more farmers than usual. [This fits with the report in Weeramunda 1985 that very few farmers attend kanna meetings at Kimbulwana.]

PART B: FARMER INTERVIEWS

Interview #1 - Middle-aged man and two sons in Unit 3, FC 3

I. Background

Middle-aged man and two sons; he came here 31 years ago from a village just 1.5 miles away where he had been doing rainfed farming. He is one of 14 farmers from his village who were given allotments in the scheme and now live in the homestead area of Dunugalle. Most people in the area are farmers, but a few are employed in fishing, trading, government service, masonry, carpentry, and the army.

He is satisfied with the water supply. When he irrigates, he knows that his next water issue will be 10 days after his last day of irrigation (since he irrigates for 4 days and the rotations, during both Yala and Maha, are on two week cycles).

II. Farmer Organization

FC 3 which serves three allotments for a total of 6 acres; this is at the tail end. There is no pipe outlet from the FC; water flows through a cut in the upstream neighbor's channel. There are 8 operators involved. In this allotment there are two different leasees (.5 + .5 ac) in addition to this farmer. He has also encroached on some highland area adjacent to his allotment, where he is irrigating ca. .25 ac of chillies (by gravity). All other fields in sight were paddy, about to be harvested.

There is no leader among the three allotments in this FC except for the Vel Vidane who has a large area. When asked how many allotments were included in the VV's jurisdiction, our informants held a long discussion among themselves to determine the number. They were not even sure which field channels were included. Clearly, there is no sense of a "group" among

the farmers who share the services of a VV. The role of the VV is to verify that the correct rotations are being practiced, as set by the TA. Within the VV's area there are no regular meetings, but if there is a special need, the VV will call a meeting. This happened two days ago to discuss water issues for chillies. A meeting was held at the cooperative hall and attended by ca. 75 farmers (only those with chillies), plus the [only one?] CO and their VV. [Note: It appears that this refers to a project-level meeting, rather than one confined to the area of a single VV. The VV may have encouraged them to attend the meeting, since they are chillie farmers.] As a result, water issues began for chillies yesterday at 10:00. The VV was elected 4 years ago by farmers; elections were held at the community center. There have been no elections since, and this farmer is not aware of any plans for future elections. They pay their VV one bushel per season for their two acres.

This farmer cleaned his section of the FC (up to the next outlet) in May. The key for the FC gate, which takes off from the main channel, is with the Maintenance Laborer. This informant claims that the ML opens the gate for the rotation, then gives the key to the vel vidane to close at the set time. This farmer has never been to a project-level water management meeting held each Tues. These are mostly for officers, he said, though farmers can go if they want to. Their VV goes, and they are very happy with him.

Interview #2: Two middle-aged farmers near tail-end of FC 23.

I. Background

One farmer came to the scheme with his parents in 1963, from a village 3 miles away. His parents have an allotment, but he is a second-generation encroacher. As part of the IRDP rehabilitation he paid Rs. 100 for a pole (concrete pipe outlet) and now has the right to irrigate his acre of paddy land, and has temporary title to the land. The other farmer has no title to his acre of encroached land and takes water field-to-field from his neighbor. There are a number of encroachers living in this area, many of whom have encroached residential plots, but have no agricultural land. Even those with land are legally landless, and cannot receive credit for agricultural inputs (normally arranged by the KVS). Many work as wage laborers; some migrate seasonally to Polonnaruwa (but not to System-H). The IHAP helped them build latrines, wells, and repair roads.

Farmer 1 has .5 ac paddy and .5 ac chillies; Farmer 2 has 1 ac paddy (already harvested). They referred to the project level meeting on Tues. which resulted in special water issues for chillies.

II. Farmer Organization

FC 23 is a long field channel with different parts of it under the jurisdiction of three different VVs. Asked how many allotments are in the FC, there was some discussion and an estimate of 30. This part of the FC includes 10 allotments and 12 encroachers. There is no farmer leader other than the VV. If these farmers, who are at the tail end of FC 23, have difficulty getting water, they tell the VV. During normal issues they receive water first (before the head end) for 1.5 days, then the upstream portion has water for 2.5 days, then the entire FC is flowing for 1 day.

During their 1.5 days of issue the top enders keep their outlets closed, except sometimes at night, in which case, "we go and close their outlets." They have never gone to the VV for help with the top enders; they get enough water. Within their unit of 10 allotments and 12 encroached areas there is no rotation and never has been since 1980.

Cleaning of the FC is divided according to lengths. One farmer said he is responsible for 20 lengths of about 6 ft. each. He cleaned this once in May and again after Yala land preparation. Everyone participates when the VV tells them; if not there would be a fine (but no one has ever been fined). The VV also calls them for shramadana for cleaning the main channel. This was last done at the start of Yala (before water issues) and involved between 2-6 hours work for ca. 30 farmers. Their VV was elected in 1979; there have been no other elections.

The only meetings they are aware of are the Tues. meetings at the project level; this meeting is for all the VVs, not for farmers. They pay their VV the usual amount. They paid a maintenance fee in 1984 of Rs. 100, but not since. Now they provide their labor instead [This corroborates the IE's account.] They do not know what happened to the Rs. 100. They have never been to the Tes. meetings. They do plan to attend the kanna meeting. They have met the TA but have not seen him for a long time.

Interview #3: Mother and her two sons harvesting rice, FC 35

I. Background

This family originates from a village on the Dambulla road. Other families in their residential area come from this or other nearby villages. All came in 1956. Of her 2.5 acre allotment, she has recently mortgaged 1.5 acres to relatives, to pay for a death in the family (her husband?). The mortgage is for three seasons, but she has doubts that she will be able to get it back. Her water supply is not adequate, because the outlet is too high. Even so she has planted only rice, because she has no financing for OFCs and they have only a little land and need to eat rice.

II. Farmer Organization

Five allotments are served by this FC, with a total of 18 operators. All pipe outlets are kept open at the same time; no rotations. Their FC outlet receives water three days each issue. This FC is part of perhaps the only Distributary channel in the scheme. The entire D-channel is under one VV who constitutes the only formal leadership. Though she has water problems, she went to the VV only once, to complain that top enders were stealing water during her issue. He stopped it and she was satisfied.

She does not remember exactly when she cleaned her FC but she did it individually, not as a group activity. There was a shramadana called by the TA before Yala water issues, to clean the D-channel. The CO is mostly concerned with fencing and cattle damage; he rarely comes to the fields. She paid Rs. 100 maintenance fee in 1984, but not since. There is a project level meeting every Tues., but no separate meetings for the D-channel.