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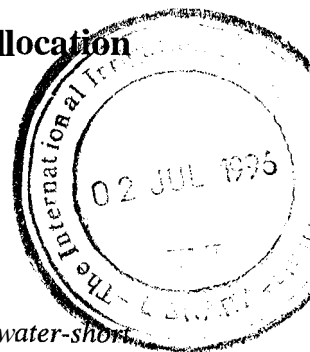
Kirindi Oya
Sri Lanka

farmer association / water allocation / decision making
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The Struggle Of Farmer Organizations In Taking Water Allocation Decisions²

A case study of the Kirindi Oya Irrigation and Settlement Project (KOISP) in Sri Lanka

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Abstract Water allocation decision-making among and between sub-systems in a water-short irrigation system is a difficult task for farmer leaders, who represent the interests of water users of the respective sub-systems at higher level joint management committees such as the Project Committees (PCs) or the Project Management Committees (PMCs). This becomes even more difficult when sub-systems exist with farmers who claim their traditional water rights and extended new sub-systems with farmers whose water rights have not been defined by the authorities.

The conflict over seasonal allocation decisions among sub-system farmers and their leaders often bring opportunities to politicians to intervene and change rational allocation decisions made by the farmer committees for efficient management and equity in allocation. Based on the experience in seasonal water allocation decision-making in two maha seasons (1992/93 and 1993/94), this paper discusses the impact of farmer leaders' relations with party politics on the water allocation decision-making process of the Project Management Committee of the KOISP.

During the maha season of 92/93 water issues were made for paddy to the Left Bank (LB) area of the project at the very moment when some farmers were cultivating Other Field Crops (OFCs) on the basis of a PMC decision. This clearly demonstrates how the interference by politicians with independent decision-making of the PMC on the request of their client farmer leaders can damage and discourage the attempts by the farmer leaders to bring stability and harmony into an irrigation system torn apart by conflicting claims over water.

Maha 1993/94 in contrast shows the struggle of the leaders with their experience in the previous season to tame the politicians and take independent decisions. Analysing the results of the two seasons, the paper attempts to demonstrate how the political power relations of the farmer organizations can be effectively used for rational decision-making. The major issues to be discussed include:

- How do political power relations influence "rational" (formal) water allocation decision-making processes and what are the implications?
- What are the available options to discourage and prevent these "undesirable" political interventions?

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² Responsibility for the contents of this publication rests with the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of any reviewers, the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI) or any other organization.

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I. Introduction

The Kirindi Oya Project is an irrigation and settlement project, located in the dry zone of the southern quadrant of the island, about 260 km. from the city of Colombo. The project planned to augment irrigation water supplies for the existing irrigation systems Ellegala and Badagiriya which cover about 4,500 ha. Besides the project intended to provide irrigation facilities through the Right Bank and the Left Bank Main Canals from the newly constructed Lunugamvehera reservoir for an additional area of approximately 8,400 ha. and settlement of about 8,320 families on the newly irrigated lands. Increasing food production and providing employment through settlement of landless people are the important national objectives for the project.

Under Phase I of the project, the reservoir at Lunugamvehera was commissioned in early 1986. New and improved irrigation facilities were provided for 8,775 ha. of which 4,584 ha. were already under cultivation. Phase II construction commenced in 1987 and was meant to develop an additional 4,100 ha. of new land. The phasing of the project was necessitated by large cost overruns and time delays. The project has been in operation from 1987 yala.

The climate of the project area is tropical and is characterized by nearly constant year-round temperatures (26°C to 28°C). Evaporation is uniform throughout the year, with an annual average approximating 2,100 mm. Mean annual rainfall is 1,000 mm. in the project area with maha season rainfall (October to February) approximately three times the yala season (March to August). Soils in the project area consist of well-drained reddish brown soils (RBE) in the upland and intermediate zones, and poorly-drained low humic gley soils (LHG) in the lowland areas (IIMI, 1995ab)

11. Irrigation Management Innovations in the KOISP

Based on research findings in the ADB Phase I study on Irrigation Management and Crop Diversification (IMCD) carried out from 1988 to 1990, high level government officials selected a few important and implementable recommendations for field-testing by IIMI through a participatory action research program for the KOISP to improve the performance of the irrigation system (IIMI, 1990, 1994a). This action research program was implemented in Kirindi Oya from yala 1991 to maha 1993/94. The three major areas for research were: (i) improvement of main system management; (ii) improvement of tertiary system management; and (iii) a pilot program for OFC cultivation.

An important component of the improvement of main system management was the development and implementation of a **seasonal crop and water allocation plan**. Prior to maha 1992/93, the seasonal water allocation in Kirindi Oya was done in an ad-hoc manner and the decision making power lay with the administrative authorities rather than the water users (Brewer et al., 1993). At the commencement of a season, the FRs requested water for the tracts which would receive priority in that particular season. The decision to issue water was taken at the PMC after considering the water availability in the reservoir.

These decisions were not always supported by a technical analysis of the water situation in the tanks, the expected inflows and the drainage flows that would be received by the Ellegala Irrigation System (EIS). On one or two occasions the FRs did not follow the technical advice given by the officers and faced serious water scarcity problems leading to crop failures in their systems. There were also water related conflicts among the sub-systems.

Because of the serious water problems faced by the farmers in the KOISP, the top management of the irrigation bureaucracy felt the need to develop a rational method for water allocation, to establish a procedure for planning the cultivation activities and to formulate a set of guidelines for the operation of both the new and the old systems of the KOISP. A Ministry level sub-committee was appointed for this purpose and prepared proposals based on the following objectives:

- to develop a data base for the preparation of technically sound and socially acceptable seasonal plan;
- to establish rules for water allocation among the sub-systems;
- to establish rules for commencement of cultivation seasons and water distribution;
- to assure the EIS farmers of the cropping intensity enjoyed by them prior to the construction of the Lunugamvehera reservoir;
- to attempt to provide an opportunity for new area farmers to cultivate paddy at least in maha seasons;
- to supplement Badagiriya tank with a maximum 5,000 acft of water for Badagiriya farmers to cultivate paddy in maha;
- to promote OFCs in the project in order to increase farmer incomes.

An important objective of this plan was to alleviate the poverty of the settlers in the project by providing an opportunity to them to cultivate (paddy and OFCs) in both seasons. The planners expected that the farmers would accept their ideas and start the cultivation activities according to the guidelines. They also envisaged that the plan would bring the unsettled people back to the project area and alleviate the water shortage induced poverty of the farmers. In addition, the plan envisaged improving supply of other services to farmers so as to minimize the period needed for land preparation.

The seasonal plan prepared within this context was implemented for several seasons after maha 1992/93 with introducing some modifications based on the experienced gained in each season. The implementation process and the results and achievements of each season are described in detail in the next section of this paper.

111. Procedures for Implementation of the Seasonal Plan: Maha Season 1992/93

The program for maha 1992/93 prepared by the Technical Committee⁴, was presented to the PMC of the KOISP on 25 July 1992. Only two FRs from the EIS attended this PMC, as the other FRs were in conflict with the management over a total crop failure in the previous season (yala 1992) due to water scarcity (a.o. reported in Brewer et al., 1993). The water availability in the system under 80% exceedance probability (see Table 1) and the relevant crop plan for this probability was explained to the FRs.

⁴ This committee has been appointed at project level to design the seasonal allocation plan. Its members were: DDI and his staff (Southern Range), AD Agriculture, Assistant Commissioner, LCD, Assistant Commissioner and Divisional Officers. ASD and IIMI researchers.

probability	of Season	Maha Season	Yala season
80%	Dry	66,000 - 70,000	50,000 - 55,000
75%	Normal	80,000 - 85,000	60,000 - 65,000
70%	Wet	90,000 - 95,000	70,000 - 75,000

The plan spelled out to the farmers can be summarized as follows:

- cultivation of OFCs in 40% of the land in both maha and yala seasons in the new area. Paddy will be cultivated in the other 60% in maha. During yala, 60% will be under fallow or rain-fed cultivation.
- Ellegala farmers to cultivate paddy in 95% of the land and OFCs in the rest in maha season. In yala they would raise OFCs on 10-15% of the land and paddy in the remainder.
- Badagiriya farmers to raise paddy in 95% of the land and OFCs in the rest in maha. They would go for 30% of OFCs and 70% paddy in yala.
- The water levels in Lunugamvehera reservoir, Ellegala tank system and Badagiriya as well should be above MOL before the commencement of water issues for maha.
- The last date for crop establishment for paddy cultivation is 15 December in maha.

In addition to these proposals, DD (ID) informed the FRs that the farmers in tracts 2 and 5 could be allowed to raise OFCs in the highlands and paddy in the lowlands under irrigated conditions. The lowland farmers in other areas could grow upland paddy (*kakulan*) with rain, and would be provided with two irrigation issues at a later stage. The farmers holding irrigated highlands could start growing OFCs with rainfall and the ID would provide a few irrigation issues for these farmers during dry periods towards the end of the season. The committee's proposal that the water levels in the reservoir, the Ellegala tank system and Badagiriya should reach their MOLs to make water issues for the season was explained to the FRs as well. The active capacity of Lunugamvehera before the commencement of the season should be more than 10,000 acft according to these clarifications.

The FRs from the new system responded that the farmers were not in favour of raising OFCs and their preference would go to paddy in maha seasons. In addition, the FRs requested officers to hold meetings at hamlets and tank levels to explain the program to the farmers.

Meetings at hamlets and tank-level

Hamlet level meetings to discuss the agricultural program were held in August and September. The attendance at these meetings was very poor. The majority of the people who attended the meetings rejected the program and preferred to raise paddy in maha seasons. Some farmers asked for 6 irrigation issues to cultivate OFCs. Fixing a last date for water issues for paddy annoyed them very much. They wished water for paddy at any time when water is available in the reservoir.

The meetings held in tracts 1 and 2 LB and Tract 1 RB too had failed. The farmers discarded the program and desired to have water for paddy. However, some farmers wanted to raise OFCs in case water would *not* be available for paddy. They were convinced and promised by the officers that they would receive a few irrigation issues for the crop during dry periods.

The potential threats to the program could be observed from the very beginning of the implementation of the plan. At the PMC meeting held on 27 August, the FRs briefed the committee that the recently formed anti-IMD independent farmer organization had started working against the proposed program.

During several other meetings during the season (PMC 24 September, 4 October with the Divisional Secretary, Lunugamvehera, *kanna* meetings towards the end of October) no real support for the plan was constituted! One of reason for this was that farmers were not provided with barbed wire for fencing to protect the crops from stray cattle.

PMC decisions over water issues for maha 1992/93

Although the PMC was ready with the program and had had discussions with the farmer groups, the water situation in Lunugamvehera did not reach the expected level during the period from August to October 1992. At the PMC meeting held towards the end of October, a decision was taken to hold a special PMC on 2 November to resolve the water issues to EIS as the capacity in the Lunugamvehera had not increased significantly by this time. Since the active storage was only 6,400 acft (159 ft.) by 2 November, the PMC proposed to meet again on 10 November 1992 to settle on the water issues.

By the time the PMC met on 10 November, the active storage at Lunugamvehera had increased to 185,00 acft. (163.7 ft.). However, the water levels in the tanks under the EIS and Badagiriya were still below the MOLs. The PM (IMD) proposed to wait until the tanks would reach their MOLs and the DD (ID) supported the idea as well, stressing the necessity of adhering to the guidelines proposed under the agricultural program. In spite of these explanations, the FRs from the EIS requested that water be issued at least to some tanks under the EIS to start cultivation.

When the PMC met again on 19 November to make a final decision on the water issues, the water level in the reservoir had reached 172.6 ft. The active capacity of the tank by this day was 51,000 acft. The water allocation decisions made at this committee were as follows:

Paddy Cultivation

Ellegala	- 24,000 acft
Badagiriya	- 5,000 acft
Tracts 2 & 5 RB	- 35,000 acft

OFC cultivation

Tracts 6 & 7 RB	- 5,000 acft
Tracts 1 & 2 LB, Tract 1 RB	- 6,000 acft
Tract 3 LB	- 2,000 acft
Banana cultivation	- 3,000 acft
(from July to September)	

At this meeting the FRs for tracts 1, 2 LB and 1, 6 RB requested that water issues be made for paddy to their farmers, who were either not in a position to raise OFCs due to soil problems and water logging, or who saw their crops damaged as a result of heavy rains. They further pointed out that the farmers at the *kanna* meeting said they would refuse to raise OFCs. The president of the SPC for the RB informed the committee that the independent farmer organization was initiating

farmers to demand water for paddy, which became a problem for the FRs of the IMD backed farmer organizations. He asked the PMC to consider the consequences, if the present decision would be changed and water issues were made to Tract 1 RB and Tract 1 and 2 LB for paddy. This would create serious problems for the officially recognized farmer organizations. The FRs representing these areas did not refer to farmers who had already started OFCs by this time and the consequences they were likely to face if water would be issued for paddy.

In response to these demands, the ID officers pointed out that there is still a deficit of 24,000 acft. even for the EIS, Tracts 2 and 5 and Badagiriya (which are the areas receiving top priority in this season). So the decision taken at the PMC meeting to issue water to the EIS, Badagiriya and Tracts 2 and 5 of RB was implemented from 20 November onwards. However, the leaders of the independent farmer organization backed by the majority of farmers willing to raise paddy did not give up their hope. They appealed to the political authority to intervene and issue them water for paddy.

The interventions by politicians

The independent farmer organization held a meeting on 20 November at a hamlet in the LB area to mobilize farmers to obtain water for paddy. According to the farmer leaders of the independent farmer organization, OFCs were cultivated on approximately 200 acres. The FRs explained the farmers that the water situation was improving, and once water level in the reservoir would reach 172 ft. they would be able to start paddy cultivation. Meanwhile, a local level politician from Hamlet 1/2 LB met the Minister for Irrigation, Land and Mahaweli Development and the State Minister for Irrigation in Colombo through a MP for the Moneragala district. On the Minister's direction a special PMC meeting was held in Kirindi Oya with the participation of the Director (IMD) and the DD (MC) of the Department of Irrigation.

This special PMC was chaired by the Director (IMD) himself. The water level in the reservoir was 173.6 ft. on this day. The active capacity was 55,500 acft. At this meeting, the ID pointed out that there was a deficit of 24,000 acft even for the areas to which water issues had been made at this moment. The FRs from Ellegala, Badagiriya and Tracts 2 and 5 of RB opposed any water issues to LB Tracts 1 and 2 and RB Tract 1. It should be noted that it were only the FRs who received water for rice stood in support of the agricultural program. Tract 6 and 7 farmers also wanted water for paddy and claimed that it was they who had the second priority and not the Tract 1 & 2 LB and Tract 1 RB. They opposed water issues to Tract 1 and 2 LB and Tract 1 RB. The stand of the IMD-based farmer organizations too had changed. The Tract representative of the IMD farmer organizations in LB Tract 1 said that farmers refused to grow OFCs.

The FRs from the LB area pointed out that former leaders of the FOs were behind the move to get water for paddy. They accused the provincial secretary too for instigating farmers to demand water for paddy. At the same time all FRs in these three tracts requested water issues for paddy and did not even mention the OFCs already grown in the fields. In response to the Director's (IMD) remark that 1,232 acres of OFCs were cultivated in these three tracts on the initiation of the PMC, the FR of Tract 1 LB told that the OFCs were either damaged by rain or by cattle by this time. A decision could not be taken to make water issues as per the agricultural program at this meeting, since the FRs as well as officers attending the PMC meeting opposed it.

On the same evening a meeting was held in Tract 1 RB with the participation of a MP of the ruling party representing Hambantota district. This meeting was attended by the PM (IMD), the DD/ID, the RE (RB) and the FRs of the independent farmer organization and farmers. One leader of the

independent farmer organization who is still a representative of an IMD backed DCO criticized the PM (IMD) for trying to deprive the farmers in these tracts from cultivating paddy. The officers explained the water situation, but the farmers in these areas believed that the ID figures misjudged the water availability with 12,000 acft. However, the farmers included the capacity between 150ft (zero and sill level) and 156 ft (MOL) as water which could be utilized for cultivation.

Since the MP could not resolve this problem on the spot, he requested the FRs to designate three persons to meet the Minister. This meeting was held in Colombo during the first week of December with the participation of the Minister of Irrigation, Land and Mahaweli Development, the Minister of Agriculture, several State Ministers and MPs, the Director (WID), the DI, the DD (Southern Range) and three FRs of the independent farmer organization. Water level had reached 175.6 by this day. At this meeting the Director (IMD) mentioned that OFCs have been cultivated in 50% of the land in the new area. However, according to the FRs who attended this meeting, they convincingly argued that it was only in merely 5% of the area that OFCs had been raised. Also, they stated that it was meaningless to conserve water received in maha for banana cultivation, since yala inflow could be used for that purpose. In addition, the FRs said that some farmers in the area had completed their first plowing with rain and were agreeable to complete first and second plowing with rain. With this assurance given by FRs, the Minister agreed to issue water to these areas on the following conditions:

- first and second plowing should be completed with rain before 20 December
- the crop establishment should be completed between 20.12.1992 and 10.1.1993. The water issues will be made during this period.
- the releases from Lunugamvehera for this cultivation should not exceed 16,000 acft. If the inflow into the reservoir is not sufficient, a meeting would be called by the Ministry on 10 January to take a decision with regard to water issues for the period ahead.

The GA, Hambantota issued a notice to this effect on 8 December 1992 on the instructions received from the Director of Irrigation (DI). The decision to issue water to Tracts 1 and 2 LB and Tract 1 RB was further discussed at the PMC meeting held on 18 December 1992. The DD/ID told the FRs at this meeting that the water issues would be made only to the allotments in which the two first plowings had been completed by 20 December. The DD denied the request made by the president of the SPC for the RB system who demanded to issue water not only to those who had completed their first and second plowings, but to all the farmers. The DD said that he could and would not go against the Minister's will. However, the water situation in Lunugamvehera had improved by this time. The active storage on this day was 79,000 acft. When the requirements for the areas which received priority in this season were set aside, there was a balance of 9,000 acft on this day.

The FRs requested that the farmers be explained that water issues would be made only to those who had completed their first plowing, because farmers expected water issues on 20 December. The official farmer organizations refused to organize meetings to convey this message to farmers. The IMD officers neither accepted responsibility for organizing farmers as the farmers in these areas were very upset with the IMD for taking a decision unfavorable to them. An important observation of these PMC discussions was that no mention was made of farmers with OFCs in their fields. It was the PM (IMD) who reminded farmers about the OFCs in the field, but they did not respond to it in a constructive way.

The progress of land preparation by 20 December was not very significant. The FRs explained the low progress of LP due to insufficient rain during the first three weeks in December. Since the ID

had to issue water to the lands in which two plowings had been completed, this became a serious and unexpected problem for the ID officers. The DD wanted to carry out the Minister's order and was anxious to go beyond it and issue water to all farmers in these three tracts since there was insufficient water in the reservoir. Thus, the DD organized a meeting at tract 1 RB to explain his position with regard to possible water issues. He explained the water circumstances to the farmers and also the Minister's decision. He pointed out that they would need to consult the minister again to alter his decision.

The farmers were very irritated over the decision to issue water only to those who had completed two plowings. When the water issues were finally made, several disturbances could be observed. The ID field-level officers could not take charge of gate operations and other normal duties in these areas. The gate opening to the Ellegala feeder canal originating from the LBMC was blocked several times by LB farmers. There were also threats to the FRs of the IMD backed farmers organizations. IMD could not intervene in these activities as the farmers were very upset with the PM (IMD) and most of his field staff.

The MP for the area intervened again at this juncture. The provincial secretary acting on the MP's instruction had two sessions with FRs and the DD/ID. These two sessions were necessary because the FRs of the official farmer organizations did not attend the morning session as they had not been notified. However, some FRs in the LB area informed the research team that they had not been notified at all. But the attendance at this meeting bore evidence that the irrigation tracts were represented by the tract representatives of the official farmer organizations. It was also understood at the interviews with relatively less biased FRs and farmers that the FRs of the official farmer organizations had received threats from a group of unruly farmers who were backed by some *mudalalis* who instigated them for their own benefits. This could have been one reason for them to avoid this meeting. E.g., the FR of DC 9 and 10 organization on LB Tract 2 was assaulted at the meeting for refusing water for paddy to protect the OFCs in his area. The provincial secretary had informed the MP about the following decisions taken at this meeting through his letter dated 24 December 1992:

- to issue water to tract 1 and 2 LB (except DC 9 and 10 in LB) and tract I RB from 26.12.1992
- to issue water to DC 9 and 10 in LB tract 2 from 1.2.1993
- to propose water issues to RB tracts 6 and 7 based on the decision taken at SPC meeting to be held on 24.12.1992
- to cultivate 3 months paddy varieties in DC 9 and 10 in tract 2 LB.

The water issues to DC 9 and 10 in tract 2 LB had been delayed on the request of the FR representing the DCs. He made a request not to make water issues by 26 December in order to save OFCs in his area. However, the FR representing tract 2 LB is said to have told at this meeting that there are no OFCs in tract 2 area and requested water for paddy. It was the very same representative who requested water issues to tract 2 LB at the PMC meetings in which the decision regarding the maha season was taken.

One FR of the independent farmer organization took this letter to the MP who directed them to the Minister who came to Tissamaharama area on an official visit. The FRs met the Minister at the Nimalawa temple. The DD/ID and some of his officers also attended this meeting in which the Minister ordered water issues from 27.12.1992 after having consulted the irrigation officials.

The plight of OFC farmers

Although the paddy farmers in these three tracts were victorious, the farmers who had raised rain-fed OFCs were faced with serious problems according to Agricultural Department sources. The ARTI undertook a study on the situation of OFC cultivation in these three tracts as a result the water issues for paddy. The ARTI reported the following losses:

Crop	Total extent of affected area (ac)	Total Production Cost (Rs)	Total Loss in Gross Income (Rs)
Green Gram	231.75	81,125.00	2,317,500.00
Groundnut	135.40	866,560.00	2,437,200.00
Chillies	116.40	232,800.00	10,476,000.00
Vegetables	80.00	80,000.00	3,840,000.00
Red Onion	1.75	70,000.00	210,000.00
Other crops	78.90	276,150.00	789,000.00
TOTAL	644.20	5,151,835.00	200,697,000.00

In the end, the government had to provide compensation for the farmers whose OFCs had been affected due to the water issues for paddy during this season. The farmers in DC 9 and 10 in Tract 2 LB could cultivate paddy after reaping their OFC harvest. They were the only people who really benefited from this intervention in this season....

Some survey findings

A survey was conducted towards the end of the season to explore the farmers' views of the seasonal planning intervention in the LB area. A sample of 5% was selected from three DCs, DC3 in Tract 1 LB in the head reach, DC7 in Tract 1 LB in the middle reach and DC 9 in Tract 2 LB in the tail reach of LBMC. The results of this survey can be summarized as follows:

- OFCs were cultivated by 45%, 28% and 66 % of the sample farmers in DC3, DC7 and DC 9 respectively.
- The majority of the farmers who did not cultivate OFCs reported that they did so because the land was not suitable for OFCs. The other major constraint to grow OFCs is the stray cattle problem.
- In DC 3 and DC 7, 30% and 17% of the crop was entirely damaged due to water releases for paddy, while 15% and 8% was partially damaged. In DC9, to which water issues were made after harvesting OFCs, the damage has been caused by stray cattle. However, DC 9 farmers (might have) exaggerated these losses with the expectation of compensation for this loss.
- Although the damages to the OFCs occurred due to imprudent political decision-making, DC7 and DC3 farmers (who supported water issues for paddy) did not put the blame on the politicians. Instead, they condemn officials, the PMC or tried to avoid giving a comprehensive answer. In case of DC 9, where the majority of farmers raised OFCs, the politicians are held responsible for the damages to OFCs by most farmers.
- The majority of the farmers were knowledgeable on the plan for rain-fed OFCs with supplementary irrigation. However, the interviews at farmer level showed that they were not

familiar with the seasonal plan. They gained this knowledge only towards the end of the season through their experience.

- While the majority of farmers were aware of the plan for water issues for rain-fed OFCs, a significant number of them in DC3 and DC7 did not know who actually prepared this plan. Farmers in DC9, in which a majority cultivated OFCs, were however aware of the role of farmers, FRs and PMC in planning for the season.
- The majority of farmers were of the view that the seasonal plan was changed in this season by the intervention of the irrigation minister. A significant number of farmers in DC 9 were of the opinion that this decision was changed by misinforming him about the extent of the OFCs cultivated in order to obtain water for paddy by paddy growing farmers.
- Most of the farmers in DC3 and DC7 were of the view that the minister's decision to issue water for paddy was just, while the majority of the farmers in DC9 felt it was unfair.
- The Minister's decision is right because it provided an opportunity for farmers in DC3 and DC7 to cultivate paddy. However, DC9 farmers felt that it was unjust because it destroyed the OFCs cultivated by the farmers in the LB area.

Results and Achievements

The objectives of the seasonal could not be achieved in this season due to the following reasons as expressed by the FRs and farmers in the project area.

- The rigidity of the seasonal water allocation plan and the way the plan was presented to the farmers had a negative impact. Although the planners stated they took the farmers' crop preferences into consideration and prepared the plan in such a way to allow farmers to raise a paddy crop based on water availability, this could not be observed in the plan. The plan had a fixed final date i.e. 15 November 1992 for issuing water for paddy. In addition to the original plan explained to the farmers, all the highland farmers (40% in the project area consist of RBE soils) had been asked to raise OFCs in both seasons. In fact, this was the message received by the FRs as well as field level officers such as IOs and AIs working with farmer groups. The plan did not bring out clearly the provision to allow farmers to raise paddy in a water abundant season after cultivating a rain-fed OFCs as the farmers in DC 9 and 10 did in the previous maha season.
- The seasonal plan was not well explained to the farmers. The understanding at the farmer level was that this formed a plan for the particular maha season alone, and not a long-term plan to bring stability to seasonal implementation of crop planning in the project. This awareness could not to be noticed even among the top level FRs.
- The banana cultivation for which the FRs had given priority was given less importance in the seasonal crop plan. This was due to the problems associated with the supply of saplings, supply of water for banana cultivation during dry periods etc. The FRs who organized farmers for banana cultivation without a proper planning at higher level were frustrated as the expected institutional support did not come from the agencies as they proposed.
- The weakness of the farmer organizations and leadership was a real problem. The communication between the DCOs and the PMC was found to be very weak. The decisions taken at PMC reached FRs after several weeks or did not reach them at all. Even the IOs who had direct and regular contact with DCOs came to know about the PMC decisions only after one month, i.e. through the PMC report they receive after one month. The FRs were not cognizant of the real field situation and reported to the PMC and other meetings that no OFCs were grown in their areas, even though the farmers claimed damages for the loss of OFCs at a

later stage. This indicates that the communication between farmers and leaders needs improvement.

- The existence of conflicts between certain key officials in the project had a very negative impact. The farmer groups were divided between these officials and worked for their short-term benefits.
- IMD in its reorganization of DCOs had displaced certain leaders who had some recognition in the community. They worked against the seasonal plan to retaliate to the IMD. As the IMD backed farmer organization had a very weak leadership, they could not resist the independent farmer organization led by former leaders who were expelled from their DCOs.
- The OFC farmers were very few in number in most of the areas except DC 9 and 10. The reason for this was that the planners failed to guarantee them more than two irrigation issues which the farmers had requested at *kanna* meetings.

111. Procedures for Implementation of the Seasonal Plan: Maha Season 1993/94

Introduction

Although some officials in the Department of Irrigation and other line agencies had been discouraged by the problems faced in the implementation of the seasonal plan in maha 1992/93, the achievements made in experimenting with the plan in Ellegala system in yala 1993 (not reported here) kindled some hope in them. Further, the local level politicians and even some national level politicians showed interest in the affairs of the project. One reason which made the national level politicians more concerned with the KOISP were the damages to the OFCs in the LB Tract 1 and 2 area in Maha 1992/93 due to water issues for paddy made on a political decision. The OFC farmers insisted the Government should pay compensation for the losses to their crops. On the other hand, some local level politicians requested the Irrigation Ministry to take actions to solve the problems of the farmers in the project area.

The Ministry sent two Members of the Parliament to assess the situation and to make appropriate recommendations to solve the problems of the farmers. During this period two state ministers representing the Hambantota district in the Parliament, met the project officials and leading FRs who attended the PMC. At the meeting held with these politicians, the leading FRs and the project level officials could convince them of the necessity of a water allocation plan for Kirindi Oya. The FRs requested the MPs at these meetings not to interfere with the decisions of the PMC, because of their earlier experience of political interventions.

Thus, a plan of the technical committee was discussed with the leading FR at a meeting held in the DTC, Weerawila on 8 July 1993. The CRE explained the objectives, assumptions and suggestions of the plan. The objectives were:

- to assure the EIS farmers of the cropping intensity enjoyed by them prior to the construction of Lunugamvehera reservoir.
- to attempt to provide an opportunity for new area farmers to cultivate paddy at least during the maha seasons.
- to supplement Badagiriya tank with a maximum 5,000 acft of water for its farmers to cultivate paddy in maha.
- to promote OFCs in the project in order to increase farmer income

Based on the probability analysis of inflow, it was assumed that 85,000 acft would be secured in the reservoir in a normal maha season and 30,000 acft in a yala season. The plan proposed to allocate the inflow received in the reservoir on a percentage basis (see below), and a division of the new area of the project into three zones which would receive water in each season on a priority basis. The three zones proposed are (i) LB Tracts 1 and 2; (ii) RB Tracts 1 and 2; and (iii) RB Tracts 5, 6 and 7.

	New area	Ellegala	Badagiriya
Wet maha	75%	20%	5%
Dry maha	55%	40%	5%
Yala	40%	60%	

The LB Tract 3 area was considered as an OFC area to which water issues would not be made for paddy. The farmers in LB Tract 3 were to cultivate OFCs with maha rain. If required, supplementary irrigation in maha would be provided to them. In yala they could cultivate OFCs with irrigation.

The cultivation in the EIS and zone 1 in the new area would start when the tank storage would be 10,000acft above MOL. The rainfall in the command area would also be considered to avoid water wastage due to excessive land soaking requirements under dry weather conditions. The most probable date to start the cultivation in EIS and Ellegala would lie between 15 October to 25 October. After reviewing the water situation on 10 November, water issues to zone 2 would be made depending on water availability. And water issues for paddy to zone 3 would be considered only after 10 January depending on water availability.

The FRs proposed to modify the plan since farmers in the Ellegala system would not be able to cultivate 70% of the command area with paddy in yala with the 60% of inflow allocated to them. Therefore, allocation of 80% was to be considered. Further, it was suggested that farmers in third zone can opt for dry land paddy (*kakulan*) with rain or OFCs with rain to receive supplementary irrigation later. Other ideas were to reduce Badagiriya's allocation to 3,000 or less, banana and OFC cultivation for the new area which are the most appropriate for RBE soils, to tackle the cattle problem and non-residence of new area farmers, and a change should be considered in the tenancy relations in the Ellegala system by acquisition of the land which is held by landlords. This lands should subsequently be allocated to the tenants who are the real cultivators. From the point of view of farmers, landlords are not in favour to see their tenants cultivating OFCs.

After this meeting was held at the DTC Weerawila, some farmers and FRs joined together to prepare an alternative plan. At the PMC meeting held on 22.7.1993 the CRE became aware of the alternative plan, and requested the FRs to make their proposals to the technical committee before 9.8.1993 to enable him to prepare the final plan and submit it to the ministry for approval. He further told the committee that the decision regarding the cultivation calendar and cropping pattern for maha 1993/94 needed to be taken by mid-September.

The alternative plan

The alternative plan suggested to divide the new area of the project into 2 zones (i) LB Tract 1, 2 and RB Tract 1 and 2 (zone 1); and (ii) RB Tract 5, 6 and 7 (zone 2). For the Maha season the guidelines would be:

- Ellegala - 100% paddy in Ellegala, cultivation should commence after the individual tanks reach their MOLs. No water issues to the tank to bring their water level to MOL.
- RB Tract 5,6 and 7 - commence LP work for paddy with rain and water issues as required at a later stage.
- Zone 1 in the new area - commences cultivation with water issues from Lunugamvehera on 10 November.
- If the rains are not received to commence cultivation in any of the zones, such zones will receive the priority in the subsequent maha season or will be allowed raise paddy in a *mada kanna* or in yala depending on water availability.
- The dates proposed above will be altered depending on water availability in the reservoir.
- One month after the crop establishment in the new area, water issues to all tracts in the new system will be stopped for two days per week to save water to allow LB Tract 3 farmers to raise paddy in maha seasons.
- Badagiriya will start its cultivation only after having received 3,500 acft to the tank from its own catchment. If Badagiriya faces water shortage due to a drought, the water saved from two days canal closure can be released to Badagiriya on the basis of a PMC decision.

According to the plan, the water requirements for the sub-systems were as follows:

requirement for Zone 1 and 2	= 86,842 acft
requirement for LB Tract 3	= 5,684 acft
requirement for Ellegala	= 6,000 acft
requirement for Badagiriya	= 3,000 acft
total requirement	= 101,526acft
deficit	= 16,526acft
savings through the proposed rotation (2 days canal closure)	= 12,600 acft
savings from limiting LP period to 25 days	= 4,825 acft
total savings	= 17,425acft

Implementation of the seasonal plan

PMC meeting held on 17.9.1993: the amended seasonal water allocation plan was presented to this PMC for its approval. The only major amendment made in the plan was the allocation of 80% of yala inflow to Ellegala instead of 60% initially proposed by the Technical Committee. In addition, the CRE pointed out that even though there was a request from the Members of Parliament representing Tissamaharama to issue water to LB Tract 3 for paddy, the Technical Committee has no authority or technical competence to do so. Further queries by FRs forced the CRE to tell the

committee that he had no other alternative but to refer it to a higher authority for finding a settlement.

The FRs stated that although they concurred to the plan, the majority of the farmers did not. So, they requested that a series of farmer level meetings would be held to explain the plan to farmers of the LB area, mainly because of the fact that the committee had decided to give first priority to the RB Tracts 5, 6 & 7 and the second priority to RB Tract 1 & 2. One reason to give the second priority to the RB Tracts 1 and 2 was to save water. The committee agreed to give at maximum 5,000 acft to Badagiriya for paddy.

Awareness meetings to farmers: after this PMC meeting, the PM (IMD) held meetings at DCO and Hamlet level in the LB area. Initially, the meetings were not attended by the ID officials. As a result, the FRs of the Independent Farmer Organization who brought out the alternative plan could not be technically defeated.

These meetings were attended by less than a half of the members of these Organizations. At one meeting held without officials from the ID, the FR who discussed the alternative plan with the farmers managed to convince farmers that it would be possible to cultivate the entire system with paddy in maha seasons, if the alternative plan was adopted. However, at a meeting represented by ID, the IE (Water Management) showed the farmers of the risk involved in undertaking the cultivation in the entire project area at the same time as proposed in the alternative plan. In the IEs point of view, the water requirements for land preparation are very high. When the risks involved were explained to the farmers, they were convinced that the seasonal plan was the most suitable technical solution to the water scarcity problem in Kirindi Oya.

When the *kannna* meeting for LB was held on 18 October 1994, the departmental officials attending the meeting told farmers the necessity of growing OFCs with rain and assured irrigation water supply for the crop when required. They were also promised a *meda* crop after harvesting OFCs in case there is sufficient water in the reservoir. The representatives of Independent Farmer organization objected to the proposal to cultivate OFCs in LB (stray cattle, barbed wire).

PMC Meeting held on 21.10.1993: when PMC met on 21.10.1993, the water level in the reservoir was 155.7 ft (5" below MOL). The IE (Water Management) said that water level is likely to reach 160.5 ft. (10,000 acft above MOL) by the first week of November. He informed the committee of the decisions (i.e. dates of commencement of the season) taken at the different *kanna* meetings for this season.

It was decided to issue water to RB Tract 1 and 2 for paddy depending on water availability by mid-November. Farmer representatives from EIS requested that they be issued water immediately. The CRE said that the ID would wait until the water level would reach 160.5 ft. (10,000 acft above MOL) to avoid a crop failure.

The FRs from LB Tract 2 said that the crop establishment (OFCs) in LB area was delayed due to a delay in holding the *kanna* meeting, which might have serious consequences for farmers who cultivate OFCs with rain. If the establishment of OFCs is delayed, they cannot go for a paddy (*meda* crop) in time if water situation improves towards the latter part of maha season.

PMC Meeting held on 18.11.1993: at this PMC meeting, the IE (Water Management) reviewed the water situation in Lunugamvehera and informed the committee that OFCs had been established

in LB Tract 1,2 and 3 according to the *kanna* meeting decisions. Four supplementary water issues would have to be made to LB Tract 1 and two during dry periods on farmers' request. LB Tracts 3 needed 8 irrigation issues from 10.11.1993 on farmers' requests. These requirements should met from the water presently available in the reservoir (29,000 acft.). The secretary stated that the probable inflow into the reservoir would be 90,000 acft., on the basis of which the allocation for the new area is 67,500 acft (75% of the probable inflow), 18,000 acft for Ellegala (20%) and 4,500 acft for Badagiriya (5%). The water requirements for the various sub-systems were as follows, with the assumption that the deficit could be met from the inflow during maha later in this season:

RB Tracts 5, 6 and 7 (paddy)	- 67,500 acft
RB Tracts 1 and 2 (paddy)	- 32,000 acft (cultivation n.y. started)
LB Tract 1,2 and 3 (OFCs)	- 2,500 acft
Badagiriya	- 4,500 acft
Ellegala	- 15,000 acft
Total requirement	- 88,000 acft
Deficit	- 59,000 acft

The FRs proposed that water issues to RB Tract 1 and 2 be made on 25.11.1993. After a discussion of the risks involved, the ID officers explained the possibility of receiving the required quantity according to their probability analysis. The members of the committee agreed to the proposal made by FRs of the RB system.

Referring to the small extent of OFCs in his area (approx. 10%), the RE (LB) requested the committee to consider for OFCs to some other areas of the project where farmers have an interest in raising OFCs. The FRs of the LB system pointed out to the committee that the cattle owners have, so far, not taken their cattle out of the command area. creating serious problems for the OFC farmers in LB due to the damages to the established crop by stray cattle. The *kanna* meeting decision was to take out the cattle from the LB area from 25.10.1993. The representatives from the cattle owners organizations informed the committee members that the Forest Department has launched a community forestry program in the areas which they have been using as grazing grounds after the development of their grazing lands as paddy fields under Kirindi Oya System. A gazette notification has not been issued so far by the government declaring some areas as grazing land for them to take their animals.

Jayasekara Lokumahattaya's attempt to defeat the seasonal plan

While the officers of the government agencies in the project were trying to implement the seasonal plan, Jayasekara Lokumahattaya (a local level politician) made an announcement in November that he would be able to obtain water for paddy through political influence, if farmers refrained from cultivating OFCs and started land preparation with rains. His influence was felt in several DCs in LB Tract 1. However, the Minister of Agriculture (aware of the plan and briefed by the Minister of Irrigation) requested Jayasekara Lokumahattaya to wait until the OFCs were harvested. But the farmers in Hamlet 1 and 2 believed that Jayasekara Lokumahattaya would be successful in his mission to secure water to LB for Maha 1993/94.

Special PMC Meeting held on 25.11.1993: this meeting was summoned to discuss the issues related to a request by farmers for water issues to cultivate paddy in LB Tract 1 and 2 in which OFCs have been raised by some farmers based on a *kanna* meeting decision. The CRE addressing

the meeting informed the members that water issues have been made to RB Tracts 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7. The water level in the reservoir is 172.4 ft (50,000 acft above MOL). He said that FRs had to decide whether to give up the seasonal plan because of some stubborn farmers in the LB area or continue with it. He stated further that the Minister of Agriculture requested the DI to issue water to Tract 1 of LB because of an appeal made by the farmers in that Tract. In his conversation with the Minister, the DI made him aware of the technical inability of this, and that the PMC should make a decision on it own.

The FRs for LB Tract 2 said that a significant number of farmers cultivated OFCs. This crop needed to be protected. If water issues are to be made, it should be made to both Tracts at the same time after paying an adequate compensation for the damages to OFCs as a result of water issues. The representative for LB Tract 1 told the committee that the extent cultivated with OFCs in DC 1, 2 and DC 3 areas is relatively small, and that farmers were prepared not to claim damages for OFCs in case of water issues for paddy. He further pleaded for more awareness raising meeting as a lack of farmer knowledge about the seasonal plan would cause a threat to it. He warned the committee of the possibility of political interventions to change the plan. The president of the Sub Project Committee for the RB system said that changing a plan, prepared with the participation of farmers, would lead to undermining of the farmer organizations.

PMC meeting held on 24.12.1993: the water data presented by the ID showed an excess of 30,000 acft (121,000 - 90,000) in the reservoir. The FR for LB Tract 3 informed the committee that the OFCs cultivated in his area were damaged due to water logging after heavy rains and requested the PMC to issue the excess water to LB Tract 3 to cultivate paddy. The CRE in reply told the FR that LB Tract 3 has been declared an OFC area by the Ministry and therefore he did not have the authority to issue water.

The FR for LB Tract 1 requested water issues for *kakulan* paddy cultivation (he did this for the farmers who used rainwater and established paddy on the initiative of Jayasekara Lokumahattaya who had assured them of immediate water issues if they would complete LP with rain). The CRE in his reply referred to the agreed-upon seasonal allocation plan. He was supported in this by others as this would create precedents for the future.

Sathyagraha (hunger strike) of Jayasekara Lokumahattaya: even after the Minister of Agriculture asked Jayasekara Lokumahattaya to wait until OFCs would have been harvested, he was not prepared to give in. He tried his best through local level politicians such as Provincial Council chairmen, *Pradeshiya Sabha* members and MPs representing Monaragala and Hambantota districts to obtain water issues to LB immediately. But the PMC could resist them because the Minister of Irrigation had realized through his bitter experience in the previous season that political influence would bring unfortunate results. When Jayasekara failed in his attempt to get water he started a hunger strike at LB sluice of Lunugamvehera reservoir on 3 January 1994. He had displayed the Following demands in a banner which was hanging over his head at the place of the hunger strike:

- *Granting equal priority rights enjoyed by Ellegalafarmers over water to LB Tract 1 area.*
- *Immediate water issues for the entire LB area including LB Tract 3 for paddy.*
- *Reorganizing farmer organizations.*

In addition there were a number of posters with the following slogans:

- *My attempt is not for any political gain. It is solely for the welfare of Tract 1 LB farmers.*

PMC Meeting held on 25.1.1994: at this meeting, the incident at the *kanna* meeting held on 20.1.1994 was further discussed and FRs condemned the assault. The PM (IMD) (considered as a guardian of water users' interests) told farmers that he had not been able attend this *kanna* meeting as he had left for Colombo to make arrangements to receive compensation for the OFCs damaged during Maha 1992/93. FRs accused him of not bringing the culprits before law, and damned the politicians who prepared their release.

The CRE's expressed his views on this matter. According to him there are "conceivable shortcomings in the plan", and more flexibility would be required to consider the views of Jayasekara Lokumahattaya and thereby try to win them for the plan. He proposed water issues at least to a portion of LB Tract 1 by 25.1.1994. But all the representatives as well as the department officers opposed this idea. Wijepala, the president of the Sub Project Committee for LB proposed 10.2.1994 as the most suitable date for water issues to LB area. However, the majority of the LB farmers did not agree. They were of the view that water issues should be delayed for a yala cultivation to obtain the potential yield.

This demonstrated a kind of a resistance to PMC decisions. The PMC wanted farmers to start a *meda* by 15.2.1994, but the majority of the farmers initially preferred water in November or December to have a late Maha crop. Once this seemed impossible, they insisted on a further delay to grow a yala crop against the PMC decision not to cultivate paddy in yala seasons.

PMC meeting held on 22.2.1994: a decision was taken to issue water to LB Tracts 1 and 2 on 25.2.1994. A decision was also taken to issue water to LB Tract 3 which had been declared as a pilot area for OFCs. At a meeting held in LB Tract 3 area, politicians representing the Tissamaharama electorate claimed this as an another victory made by them on behalf of the poor farmers in their constituency.

Some Survey findings

Another survey was conducted towards the end of the season to explore the farmers' views of the seasonal planning intervention in the LB area (DC3 in Tract 1 LB in the head reach, DC7 in Tract 1 LB in the middle reach and DC 9 in Tract 2 LB in the tail reach of LBMC). The results of this survey can be summarized as follows:

- OFCs were cultivated by 35%, 31% and 41 % of the sample farmers in DC3, DC7 and DC 9 respectively, which shows a marginal increase for DC7 (3%) and declines for DC3 (10%) and DC9 (25%).
- Again, the reasons for not cultivating OFCs were unsuitable soil conditions (poorly drained) and the stray cattle problem. Not surprisingly, the bad experience of Maha 92/93 was referred to as well.
- In general, water users were not well aware who takes decision for OFC cultivation during the season. Many of them do not see it as their decision.
- The majority of the farmers in DC 3 and DC7 supported the attempt to secure water for paddy as they did in previous season. But farmers in DC9 opposed these attempts mainly because they were cultivating OFCs.
- Those who oppose water issues for paddy do so because they or their fellow farmers have cultivated OFCs.
- The majority of the farmers preferred to receive water after 15 February 1994. The seasonal plan also advocated water issues for a *meda* crop after 15 February. This indicates that there

was a communication problem between the farmers and PMC, as some of the farmers went against the seasonal plan and demanded water issues without delay.

Views of farmers and farmer representatives on seasonal plan

According to the secretary of the (DCO) for DC 2 and 3 of LB, OFCs can be cultivated only in 20 per cent of land in LB Tract 1 during maha seasons. Seepage brings the water level in the area very close to the surface. After the maha rains most of the land receives too much water. Therefore, the majority of farmers cannot cultivate OFCs. In addition, farmers have a preference for paddy (even the farmers whose field are suitable for OFCs).

The secretary of the DCO had not even collected data on OFCs cultivated by the farmers of his organization and advised the research team that there were no OFCs in his area. Just like the other farmers, he preferred to secure water for paddy at the beginning of the maha season and did whatever possible to discourage farmers cultivating OFCs. The treasurer of this organization blamed the officials of the Government agencies in the project for the allocation decisions made in favor of the old Ellegala system. According to him, the officials were always biased towards Ellegala farmers, because they are economically and politically more powerful than farmers from the new system.

These accusations and allegations against the officials of the Irrigation Department need to be quoted here, although our observations do not substantiate these claims. As such, they merely reflect perceptions from certain farmers. It should be noted that both the secretary and the treasurer of this organization have lands unsuitable for OFCs.

Now the tank is filling up. But the Irrigation Engineers further open the sluice gates and discharge extra water into the main canals. They do this purposely to waste water so that the LB farmers can be deprived of a cultivation during this Maha. They do this to retaliate, because we received water through political influence last time (1992/93 maha).

Several FRs from DC 4 and 5 in LB Tract 1 were interviewed as well. The treasurer of this organization confirmed that the members of his organization do not prefer to raise OFCs. The reason, in his words is that *the farmers believe that they can obtain water for paddy through political influence as they did in the previous season.* The president of this DCO held similar views. The majority of farmers do not cultivate OFCs because of Jayasekara Lokumahattaya's assurance that he would get water for paddy through the Minister of Agriculture. However, he sensed that Jayasekara Lokumahattaya would not have been able to get water for paddy in this season, as it would disturb the implementation of the seasonal plan prepared by the engineers and the officers of the other agencies. According to this FR, the zoning system proposed in the seasonal plan is ideal for a water-short system like Kirindi Oya. The only problem for the implementation of the recommendations of the seasonal plan is the intervention by politicians, in his view.

According to the president of DC 6 and 7 Organization in Tract 1 LB only 5 to 10% of the land in LB Tract 1 area is suitable for OFCs. In DC 6, only 5% of land is suitable for OFCs, and in DC 7 where he owns his land, about 25%. These lands are imperfectly drained or ill-drained and therefore OFCs can not be grown during maha seasons. However, crops like chilies, ground nuts and onions can be grown in some of these lands on raised beds. While approx. 50% of the land in the LB area has been classified as suitable for OFCs in both yala and maha, it is only 25% which is really

- *The tank is full of water, paddy lands wet with rain. But farmers look at the tank and the field and weep as they have not been issued water for cultivation. Let a curse be on the PMC!*
- *Down with the zoning system created by illegal FRs. They all have held these positions very long without going for a vote.*
- *We protest wasting 10,000 acft of water by direct issues to Ellegala tanks. A wiser thing was to issue water to the LB area so that tanks get fill up with drainage water.*
- *Let the curse of our children be on the FRs, AIs and other pundits who advocate the cultivation of OFCs in marshy lands,*
- *Cancel the kanna meetings held without the participation of the relevant Divisional Secretary for the area.*

Special PMC meeting held on 5.1.94: Because of the situation created by the hunger strike, another special meeting was held with the participation of Mr. Tissakutti Arachchi (State Minister of Parliamentary Affairs), members of *Pradesiya Sabha* and several representatives of the independent farmer organization. The CRE briefed the committee about the history of seasonal planning attempt and pointed out the necessity of adhering to the plan. He further told the committee that water issues could be made for paddy after harvesting OFCs in the field.

Jayasekara Lokumahattaya's demands were taken up for discussion. Water issues to LB Tract 1 in a water short maha would create scarcity in other areas of the system. The State Minister asked why the PMC could not take a decision to issue water to LB for paddy when there was a surplus in the reservoir. The CRE responded that LB Tract 3 was announced as a pilot area by the Ministry of Irrigation to test whether OFCs could be grown both in yala and maha. So the Ministry would have to take a decision to consent to LB Tract 3 farmers to grow paddy. The date for harvesting OFCs would only be known after a field visit scheduled for the next day.

After a long discussion, the participants agreed on a potential water issues: 25.1.1994. However, Jayasekara Lokumahattaya did not agree with the proposal made at PMC to issue water on this date. He and his followers continued fasting. When some PMC members including the IE (WM) visited the LB Tract 1 area in the afternoon, a *Pradeshiya Sabha* representative from DC 7 (Hamlet 3) area, tried to assault IE (Water Management). Normally a SLFP supporter and always opposed to Jayasekara Lokumahattaya (UNP), he supported the demand for immediate water issues to the LB.

Special PMC Meeting held on 10.1.1994: Mr. P.M.B. Cyril, The Minister for Environmental Affairs and MP for Hambantota district, Mr. Tissakutti, the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Ranjith Maddumabandara, MP for Monaragala district participated in this meeting. Mr. Cyril claims to be the originator of Lunugamvehera Scheme and is generally known as "the father of Lunugamvehera". He had assured JL that water would be issued before 25.1.1994 after he came to know about the hunger strike. This assurance, incl. its impacts (possible compensation, political interference) were taken up for discussion.

The LB tract 1 farmers had informed the president (by letter) that a majority was not in favour of water issues immediately. They preferred water for paddy in yala instead of a *meda* crop. The representative for LB Tract 1 could however not participate because he was too much under pressure from particular water users. The CRE explained the proposed seasonal plan to the Minister and told him that LB area would receive water for a *meda Kanna* by 25.2.1994. He thanked Mr. Cyril for intervening to stop hunger strike.

The Minister in reply made a lengthy and passionate speech (see Appendix I), and asked the FRs from LB whether they wished water. Their reply was positive, but without damaging OFCs. The Department of Agriculture could not agree with water issues to the LB at this stage as it would definitely damage OFCs. This would jeopardize their efforts to promote OFCs, as was evidenced by the previous maha season (a significant drop of OFCs' area).

After these explanations both Mr. Cyril and Mr. Tissakutti looked annoyed. The committee refused immediate water issues to LB for paddy, but aware that Jayasekara Lokumahattaya stopped fasting on the assurance given by the Minister. Finally, the committee decided to hold another special committee meeting to take a decision on water issues, after making a field inspection in the LB area to explore the possible date for harvesting OFCs.

Special PMC Meeting held on 13.1.1994: Jayasekara Lokumahattaya and his followers attended this meeting. The CRE once again explained the plan to Jayasekara Lokumahattaya and his group and showed them its necessity. Jayasekara Lokumahattaya addressed the meeting and stressed that he had no intention to disturb the seasonal plan by *satyagraha*. His case was mainly based on the improper soil conditions for OFC production. Jayasekara Lokumahattaya's followers requested water issues before 15.1.1994 as there were lands plowed and cultivated with rain alone. They said there were only 1-2.5 acres of chilly in their area (damaged after heavy rains).

Farmers confirmed JL's observations about the soil conditions. The CRE said that if the LB Tract 1 farmers are not able to cultivate OFCs, they would have to fallow their land as there is no other alternative when they have the third priority in a given Maha season. Farmers responded by submitting letters from the OFC farmers in their area which stated that they would not claim compensation for the damages to the OFCs as a result of water issues for paddy. However, the secretary of the PMC who had made a field inspection advised the committee that OFC farmers in Tract I told him that they would sue the departments in case their crop would be damaged due to water issues. After a threat by Tract 2 farmers also would try to take water by lifting or damaging cross regulators at the main canal, it was decided to hold a *kanna* meeting to take a decision on water issues.

The Second Kanna Meeting: this meeting was held on 20.1.1994 at the school in Hamlet 3 in LB Tract 1 with the participation of the GA, Hambantota, and a large number of farmers from LB Tract 1 and 2 and the officials of the agencies concerned. LB Tract 2 farmers wished to have water only after harvesting OFCs, and insisted that both Tracts be issued water at the same time. Some farmers in LB Tract 1 wanted to have water immediately. It was revealed at this discussion that OFCs cultivated in upstream areas (from DC 1 to 5) had been harvested. The possibility of water issues to these 5 DCs were considered. However, farmers in other DCs (DC 6 and 7) in LB Tract 1 wanted to have water at the same time. The president of the Sub Committee of LB who himself had cultivated OFCs in his fields located in DC 7 in LB Tract 1, opposed immediate water issues to his DC. He said that he should be adequately compensated if the crop is damaged due to water issues. Some farmers in Tract 1 told him that they are waiting to pay him compensation. There were serious arguments following this incident and the GA asked the Tract 1 farmers to leave the meeting. When they went out some farmers assaulted Mr. Wijepala, the president of the Sub Committee for the LB system. The GA cancelled the meeting. Wijepala had been wounded and blood was pouring down from his forehead. The police came after some time and went in search of the culprits.

suitable to raise OFCs in maha, according to him. However, he agreed that more than 60% of land in this area can be used for OFCs during yala seasons. The problem is that even the land suitable for OFCs will not be cultivated by farmers because of the possible damages by stray cattle.

The leading FRs of Weerawila, Pannegamuwa, Yodawewa and Debarawewa were interviewed on the results and achievements of the seasonal plan. These FRs unanimously were of the opinion that the plan introduced a better system for water allocation among sub-systems. However, they felt that the seasonal plan was more useful to the new area farmers and not to the old area farmers, because the new area farmers are able to cultivate a medu crop, utilizing water received in the reservoir during the yala season meanwhile depriving Ellegala farmers of a yala cultivation,

The officers of the Department of Irrigation working in the project did their utmost to make the seasonal plan successful. All other line agencies including the IMD supported the program, but after encountering resistance from water users and politicians, many of them got disheartened. However, all stated that rain-fed OFCs in maha would form a solution to water scarcity problems in the KOISP.

PRAs with farmers in *LB* and *RB* areas

Several PRA's were held with the farmers of the DCOs in both the LB and RB systems to explore their views and evaluate the impact of the seasonal plan. As several participants were not aware of the contents of the plan for maha 1993/94, it was required to explain the details before soliciting responses from them. The DCO leaders organized these water users for the sessions. The farmers who attended these meetings represented only those resident in the settlement area. Table 3 below reveals that the seasonal plan is not acceptable to the majority of farmers in this sample, table 4 shows the reasons.

Table 3. Water users' views on the seasonal plan

View of the farmers	Tract 1 LB area DC2,3	Tract 2 LB area DC6,7	Tract 2 LB area DC9,10	Tract 1 RB area DC5	Tract 2 RB area DC3,4,5	Tract 5 RB area DC 1,2,7
Number of farmers attended	18	13	16	14	12	20
Totally reject rain-fed OFCs in maha	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rain-fed OFCs and meda paddy crop under water short situation	No	No	Yes	No	No	NO

Source: IIMI survey, 1994

Table 4. Reasons for rejecting the plan

Reasons	Tract 1 LB area DC2,3	Tract 2 LB area DC7	Tract 2 LB area DC9,10	Tract 1 RB area DC5	Tract 2 RB area DC3,4,5	Tract 5 RB area DC 1,2,7
Number of farmers attended	18	13	16	14	12	20
Soil problems for majority of farmers in maha	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-residence and temporary residence of significant number of farmers	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Risk of heavy rains in Maha	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marketing problems	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No crop for yala	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cattle problems	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: IIMI survey, 1994

Apart from the farmers in DC6, 7 and DC 9 and 10 organizations in the LB area where they raised rain-fed OFCs, none of the farmers in other DCs recounted increased income, changes to diversified cropping or increases in cropping intensity. However, they all agreed that the time taken for land preparation has been shortened by one week. But intensive interviews with them demonstrated that this is only partly attributable to the seasonal plan. Other factors such as PMC decisions not to extend land preparation beyond the dates decided at the *kanna* meeting play a role as well.

Indicator	Tract 1 LBarea DC2,3	Tract 2 LBarea DC7	Tract 2 LB area DC9,10	Tract 1 RB area DC5	Tract 2 RB area DC3,4,5	Tract 5 RB area DC 1,2,7
Number of farmers	18	13	16	14	12	20
non-settled farmers migrated back to the settlements?	No	No	No	No	No	No
Income increased due to OFC cultivation?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Changes to diversified cropping?	No	Few	Yes	No	No	No
Land preparation period shortened by one week?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Increase in cropping intensity?	No	Yes*	Yes*	No	No	No

Source: IIMI survey, 1994

IV. Conclusions

This paper has illustrated the dynamics of seasonal water allocation processes and the conflicts over water in the KOISP, which arose when the different actors in the system started to pursue their own (short-term) objectives and causes. Through this narrative account of experiences during two maha seasons (1992/3 and 1993/4), it became clear that even with extraordinary efforts from the agencies involved, the implementation of the seasonal allocation plan was seriously hampered by reasons of misunderstanding, miscommunication and political interference.

The following important conclusions could be drawn from this case study:

1. Politicians, researchers, irrigation system managers and other government officials speak in many instances of farmers as a homogeneous group, but, as this paper shows, it is clear that farmers are not a homogeneous category. In the Kirindi Oya case, water users strive with or against their fellow farmers for their own benefits. This raises important questions about representation of farmers by farmers' representatives. FRs seem to stand either for a certain section of the farmers' community or for themselves in the struggle for water allocations.
2. Water rights should be properly defined before any allocation strategy will succeed. Ellegala farmers claim their share of water on the basis of historical rights. The new area farmers

receive water based on a priority defined for a specific season. But the seasonal plan did however attempt to follow basic principles of water rights in Sri Lanka (i.e. equity, priority of the standing crop).

3. Water users' participation in "technical issues" and in the decision-making process is required for a better understanding and acceptance of the seasonal plan. Farmers' participation in the design of the plan was virtually absent, which led to "participation by consultation" only.
4. The same holds true for the input of local level and national politicians, who were ignored during the preparations of the plan. They should have been consulted during the process to create a sense of ownership from their side and seek their "blessing" for the plan.
5. Farmers should be allowed to select their own leaders without interference in the selection process. This will reduce farm-level conflicts over leadership which provide room for bargaining in.
6. The decision-making process should be made more democratic. Seasonal and other plans prepared by technical and farm committees should be discussed at DCO and village level meetings with the members of the technical committee. They are in a position to explain the rationale behind the plans to the farmers.
7. All previous points lead to opportunities for political interventions. If all actors in the system had been extensively involved in the design of the seasonal plan and through this cognizant of its details, there would have been less scope for the different interest groups incl. politicians to play their lobby games.
8. More flexibility in developing the seasonal plan is required to incorporate water users' views and their knowledge (their views may include socio-economic constraints).
9. IIMI surveys made clear that several farmers were not aware of the existence of the plan, and that PMC decisions only "trickled down" after a substantial period of time. This indicates that enhanced communication between all parties seems to be the way to improve the process of implementation of the seasonal allocation plan.
10. The controversy about technical issues such as the availability of water between MOL and sill level, soil suitability for OFCs and the actual area under OFCs blurred the process of implementation of the plan. Again, this calls for planning based on "interactive participation", where water users participate in joint analysis and where multiple perspectives will be incorporated.
11. The introduction of OFCs (as one of the cornerstones of the seasonal plan) will only succeed if other problems are addressed as well, such as assessment of soil conditions, stray cattle, marketing problems, planting material etc.
12. If water users perceive the impacts of the seasonal plan as relatively moderate, it will be extremely difficult to develop a "critical mass" for its implementation and sustainability in the long run, and will keep the doors open for lobbying and tampering.

V. References

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Appendix I Speech of Mr. P.M.B.Cyrl, The Minister for Environmental Affairs and MP for Hambantota district

"This special committee has been called for a very special reason, a kind of a reason that I have never heard or seen anywhere in Sri Lanka. What is more valuable, water or human lives?

I am very unfortunate to have a hand in this matter. However, I have done a meritorious action. On that day (5.1.1994), the Officer in Charge of Lunugamvehera Police station said that saving the lives of those on a hunger strike is a *pinkamak* (meritorious action). I accidentally came there that day. I am very happy about the decisions of this learned engineers. It is all a just and wise decision. If a fool dies because of this wise decision, then what is the use of this wise plan? There are MPs prepared to blame the Government if something happened. It is true that plan is just and wise. There are people full of feeling. If a man full of feeling dies because of this wise decision, nobody would say that he died because of his foolishness. When I went to that place (the place where Jayasekara Lokumahthaya was on hunger strike) that man was fasting on the main canal. As the person who created this project, I did not want to see him die. It is my duty to make sacrifices to save the life of that man. Nobody would say that CRE is wise if that man died fasting.

You may ask why I, the MP for Tissamaharama talk on behalf of Tanamalwila people who are not in my constituency. That is the way of life of people in Ruhuna (people in the South). It is I who created Lunugamvehera amidst accusations and criticism. I took that decision to save the lives of people. I promised him water by 15.1.1994 and asked him to stop fasting. Now taking this decision to issue water to LB is left to you people in Magama. Water can be issued for paddy without damaging OFCs. Don't stop water issues because of OFCs. The decision to issue water to Badagiriya was taken at the Parliament. It was decided to construct a separate canal from RB to issue water to Badagiriya. Should we hang onto decisions even when people die because of such decisions? Any decision can be changed. I am worried because it is I who created this project. Take a decision to issue water for paddy without damaging OFCs."