

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT AND INMAS PROJECT MANAGEMENT
The Outline of an Operational Plan

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This is a synopsis of a larger work presently under way at IIMI linking key areas of the program for Integrated Management of Major Irrigation Settlements (INMAS) project management -- planning, organizing, staffing, control and correction, in a viable operational plan. INMAS was launched by the Irrigation Management Division (IMD) of the Ministry of Lands and Land Development in 1984. It has 35 major irrigation projects under it in 17 dry zone districts. Our findings are based upon field research conducted in one such project -- Dewahuwa, in the north central province during Maha 1986/87 and Yala 1987.

It is envisaged that data and analysis will point towards key performance indicators for diagnosing the management system and for formulating tools for monitoring and evaluating managerial performance. Secondly, these data and findings will become a learning exercise for decision making modelling, in particular scheduling of tasks from a range of optimal choices. Here, we will examine the organization design of INMAS project management vis-a-vis its mission or the rationale for its creation; the operational strategy; the key unit and task areas and highlight what has emerged from our research¹ as the key components of an operational plan (Figure 1).

MISSION

It is our understanding that the rationale for INMAS project management was to increase agricultural productivity by emphasizing the effective management of what was now perceived as the scarce resource -- water. This was to complement the existing programs for agricultural input and extension. Water management towards increased productivity is then its primary mission.

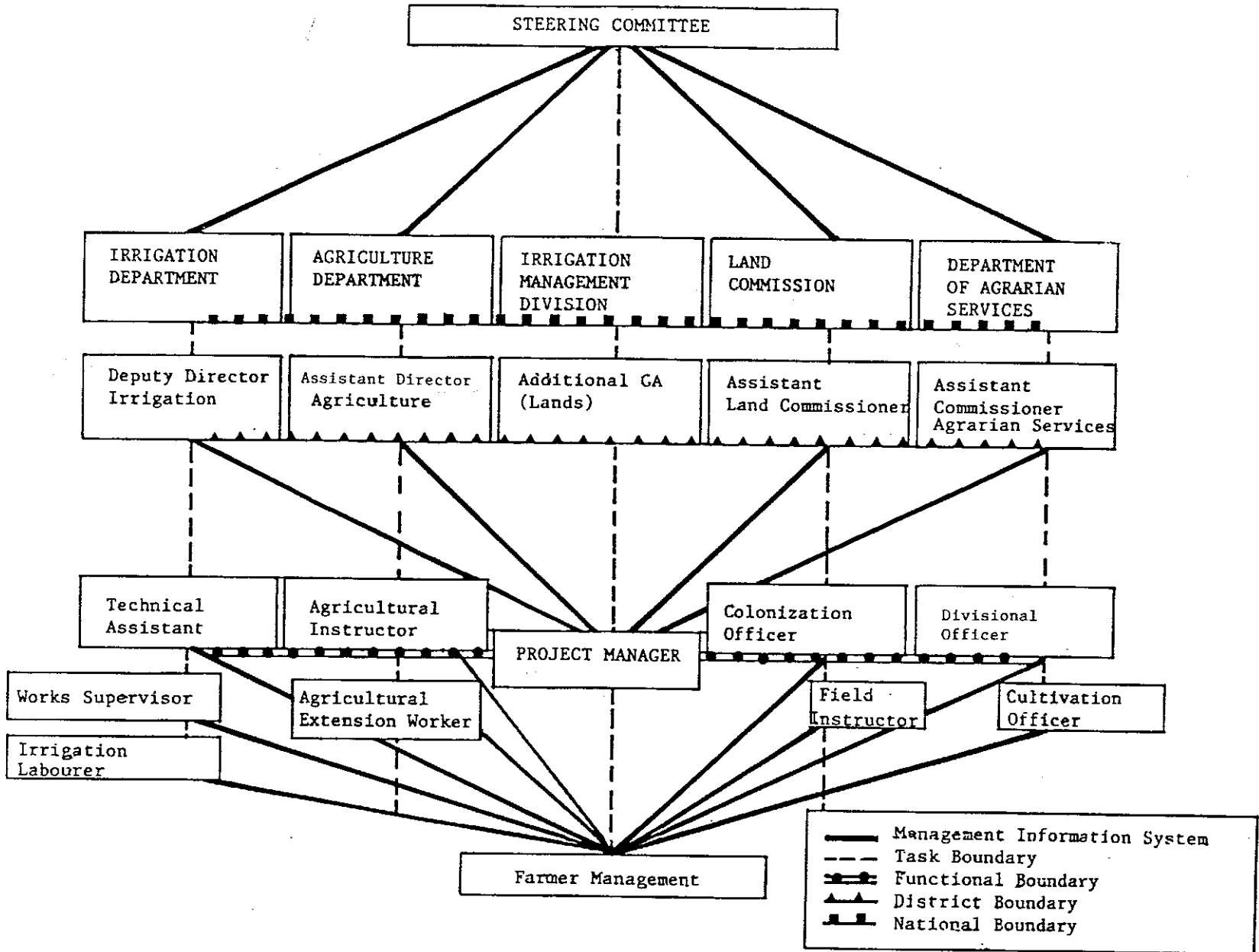
OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

The Irrigation Management Division (IMD) of the Ministry of Lands and Land Development through its INMAS Program has actively advocated and encouraged the implementation of participative² management (popularly known

¹What we witnessed at Dewahuwa during our field observations is indeed experimentation with what is still an evolving managerial effort. We observed the project manager implementing directives from IMD, at times implementing suggestions from farmers, and himself initiating innovations towards the realization of the management mission. In our expanded report we hope to document this in detail.

²In management science participative management implies an approach which depends on the participation of all parties concerned in decision making which will contribute to improved management. The underlying

Figure 1. INMAS-TIME MANAGEMENT AND THE MANAGERIAL GRID



as participatory management) vis-a-vis farmer participation. The INMAS experiment also accepts matrix organization focused on the project manager (PM) and his fellow officers in the project who are in addition members of a task unit (line agency) and thereby serve two bosses.

KEY TASKS

Our findings point to four key tasks that must be fulfilled through this operational strategy in order to realize the irrigation management mission. These are: (1) off season maintenance of primary, secondary and tertiary irrigation canals and structures; (2) the implementation of the water budget during the cultivation season; (3) the collection of operation and maintenance (O&M) fees from farmers; and (4) action in response to damage caused to irrigation structures and/or defaulting payment of O&M fees.

KEY TASK UNITS

The project is a functional unit under the PM. Task units represented within it are the departments of agrarian services, agriculture, irrigation and the land commissioner's. From this seemingly simple scenario, Dewahuwa project unravels into a picture of considerable complexity. The PM in order to implement his program must integrate multiple and often conflicting boundaries. There is no correlation between the size of his project and the complexity of his task. The farmers in addition to being the BENEFICIARIES of the management effort are themselves MANAGERS of a task activity -- water management at the secondary and tertiary levels of the irrigation system, the responsibility at the primary system is with the Department of Irrigation(ID). The PM, in addition to his other tasks, must interface between them.

TASK UNITS -- THE CORE, CENTER AND PERIPHERY

CORE: Department of Irrigation and Farmer Management

CENTRE: Lands and Agrarian Services

PERIPHERY: Department of Agriculture (and credit and marketing)

The rationale for placing key tasks under the above categories is not the significance or the lack thereof of the key tasks themselves but rather the significance we have placed on each from the perspective of the mission and strategy of the management technique. Then, the rationale for placing

management psychology is that as a person participates, makes suggestions, and his views are given importance, he feels important and his self respect is enhanced. When this happens and the members of a group participate in its activities, the group derives the benefit of their combined skill, knowledge, and experience (synergy). Conflict is minimized and the task is performed with maximum efficiency.

the ID and the farmer component of management as core is clear. While recognizing the importance of credit and marketing, from the perspective of time management we propose to consider them here as peripheral functions. Agriculture has twin components -- supply of input and extension. These tasks must be distinguished, and monitored and evaluated as such. Inputs belong in the same order as credit and marketing while extension falls in the realm of strengthening farmer capacity for self management. Tasks that are in the periphery are occasional or time specific; for example, agricultural input and credit are key issues at the beginning of the cultivation season while marketing becomes relevant towards the end and extension on an intermittent basis. Moreover, here, the PM has some flexibility in managing the time input of his staff, a luxury he does not have in managing core and central tasks. At the level of the functional unit of the project, ALL tasks are central to the successful operation of the agricultural program and the key to this success is the facility with which the project manager can manage the human resources at his disposal. Here we will outline what we consider are five key managerial tasks which the PM must contend with in his day to day performance:

I. TEAM BUILDING

Team building towards participative management within a matrix organization is pivotal to the success of the mission of INMAS project management. However, this effort should not be focused exclusively on the participative efforts of the farmers. Participation is really a three pronged process -- at the farmer level, the officer level in the project, and at the interface between these. At Dewahuwa the PM himself still spends a large part of his time organizing the farmers to become part of a self sustaining organization. The farmers are themselves not a professionally organized entity nor yet a force to be reckoned with so that they are not yet able to strengthen the hand of the PM vis-a-vis the other agencies performing essential tasks within the project. This we believe is largely due to the start up point of the management exercise -- management by committee which focused on the field channel groups organized into tract committees rather than initially creating a broad based organization of the farmers in the project.

In addition to drafting by-laws, convening meetings, initiating membership drives, etc. the PM must train individual farmers to organize themselves as a group of beneficiaries, and then train them as a team of managers who have the competence and experience to interface with their counterparts from the agencies, in particular the ID. This is a task which the PM cannot undertake single handedly in addition to his other functions. We suggest an assistant project manager (in all projects) who will concentrate solely on this aspect is merited. He could take over this task from the PM and link up with the agricultural instructor in the latter's efforts at extension and other activities undertaken presently under the label of "farmer training." His task should also include training in organization development (OD), and thereby enhance the capacity of farmer organizations for self management.

II. MANAGEMENT BY COMMITTEE

This we believe is the strong point of INMAS project management. It has been used until now as the principal mechanism for "participatory management." In Dewahuwa we find regularly held meetings of the tract committees (fortnightly) and project committee (monthly). As we have observed them, this is a forum where issues are discussed fairly and thoroughly. A problem encountered here is absenteeism among both officers and even more among the farmer representatives. We have observed the strategy of the PM to monitor attendance of officers and his appeals for the voluntary presence of the farmers.

From the side of the farmer representatives we have heard the complaint "too many meetings take time away from cultivation; meetings are a waste of time, decisions are not followed up and there is no enforceability." But given the issues raised, we believe that fortnightly meetings of the tract committees is not too much. Further, given the not yet adequately evolved organization of farmers as a lobbying power, the PM's efforts to monitor the attendance of the officers needs an additional mechanism which would enable him to exercise management control over his officers who are serving two masters and are not in fact required to serve full time in the project. This will answer the second complaint by the farmers.

We also raise the question whether the attendance of farmer representatives in the project committee is counter productive from the perspective of participative management. If the presence of all key task officers within the project is assured at tract committee meetings, the limited farmer presence on the project committee is redundant. This would reduce meeting fatigue on the side of the farmers (who also participate in other meetings oriented towards training and extension). Perhaps a better alternative is a meeting between a project committee consisting of officials and the controlling body of the farmer organization arranged during significant phases of the cultivation season, e.g. the presentation and discussion of the project budget. Alternatively, the project committee could be retained simply as a forum of discussion of issues of concern to farmers with a new committee composed of project officials taking over the function of monitoring the progress of the program and the performance of the officers.

From the perspective of the PM and his officers, the project committee meeting is the only opportunity to meet as a group and discuss agenda and strategy -- it is assumed that key issues and concerns are discussed already in other forums and this is the venue for establishing the game plan for the agency component of management. The pay off in making this meeting the operational ground for matrix management is greater than the dividends that could be anticipated as another exercise in officer farmer dialogue. In other words, we advocate the project committee to be constituted solely of officers and used as a training ground for team building among themselves. Divided as they are according to line agency affiliation, without legal or financial bond to the project, and with time commitments to tasks outside the project, the challenge of team building and participative management is as great here as with the farmers.

The meetings of the tract committees have been a valuable forum for building rapport and exchanging information between farmers and officers. Furthermore, they have been a valuable forum for training the farmers in the timely start of Maha, and land preparation with rainfall and thereby making possible a Yala in a project which at one time had a single cultivation season. They have also provided farmers with a forum for training in rudimentary management practices. We also observed the PM actively incorporating socio-cultural bases of authority and influence in mobilizing support for the farmer organization. Participative management may mean one of two things -- participation via consultation (which is happening in the case of the farmer representatives in Dewahuwa) and participation through enhanced capacity for making and carrying out decisions (which seems the logical next step, the absence of which seems to be causing some farmer frustration). Participation is not an end in itself. In industry its major objective is work satisfaction and productivity and at times these may be at odds. In addition, in INMAS project management participation is a learning exercise for farmer and agency alike and must be viewed as a delicate balance between these two components based on the criteria of economy and competence.

III. TIME MANAGEMENT: THE LINK BETWEEN MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVE (MBO) AND MANAGEMENT BY RESULTS (MBR).

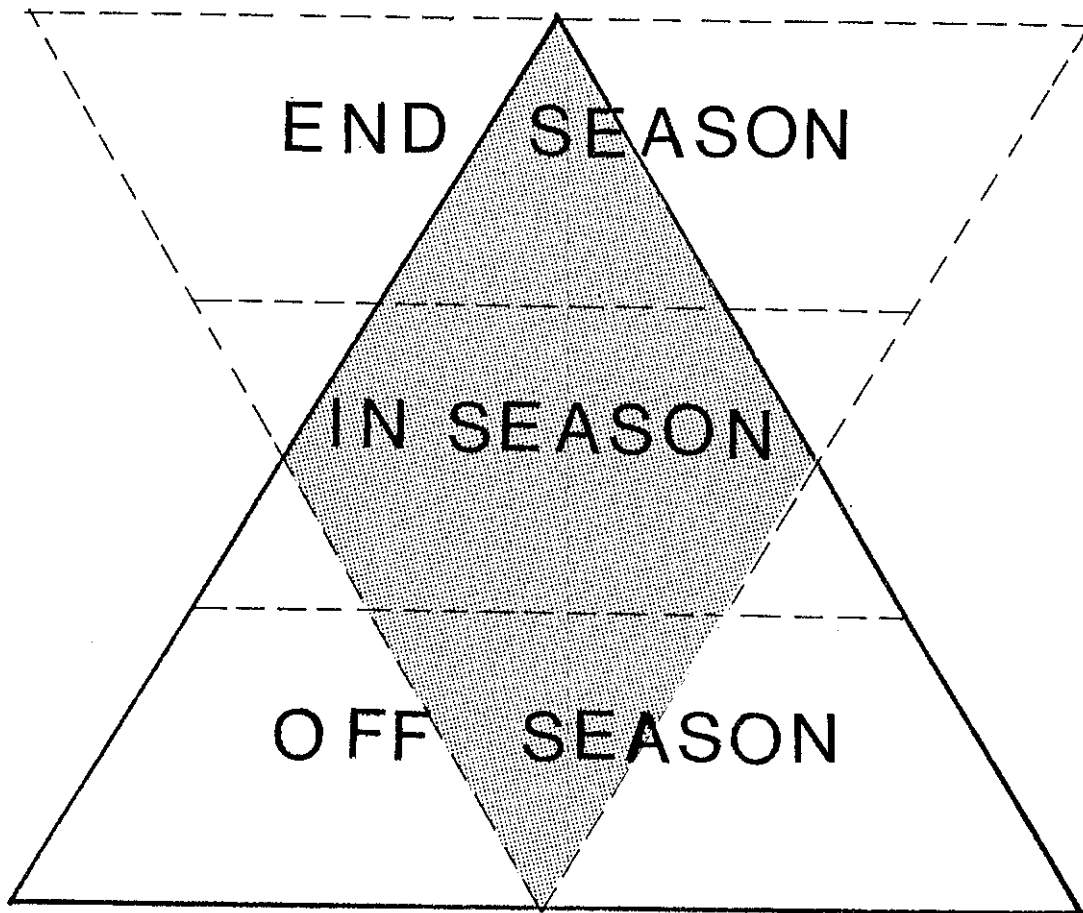
In Dewahuwa the key task activities in the project are performed by officers who are typically not full time. For example, the ID's technical assistant (TA) has 60% of his time allocated to the project. This time allocation is based on the size of the project which has less than the normal 5000 acres covered by a TA.



The persona of the INMAS project manager has no independent existence. It is interlinked with and dependent for finance and personnel upon the line agencies and for legal authority and sanction upon the routine district administration. In an ideal typical construction of the role of the INMAS project manager, his power and authority depends on his ability to mobilize the backing of the farmers and his persuasive abilities and fund of goodwill vis-a-vis officials from other agencies.

We believe that by using the meeting of the project committee as the forum, the PM can maximize the 60% time available by carving it out first into three broad spheres -- off season; in season; and end season. This can be further broken into concrete tasks with set time frames. Our findings indicate that while in fact the TA as in this example may spend 60% of his time in aggregate in the project, the demands of system operation during the three phases of the cultivation season is illustrated in the form of an apex while the reality of time allocation is closer to the inverse apex (Figure 2).

If objectives and time frames are discussed and agreed upon, this could be followed by an evaluation of results and a suitable incentive system. Then, INMAS project management has the potential to be a good example of human resource management through a mix of management by objective and management

Figure 2. TIME MANAGEMENT



	Time Required
	Time Given



Effective Time

by results. However in order to achieve this, it must be placed first on a sound management basis whereby the objectives of INMAS are integrated with a performance appraisal system and a reward system interdependently instead of each narrowly defined or contradictory as is now. Moreover, such an integrated approach to human resource management can enhance organization performance by addressing the problems discussed under team building and committee style management. This can be achieved within the present framework and understandings backed by the simple organizational changes such as those outlined here.

IV. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS)

Beyond the boundaries of the project, effective project management requires a MIS system linking the task activities of the line agency within the project to the line agency supervisors at the district/range level. Again taking the ID as the example, there presently exists a mechanism known as the weekly/daily returns on the water budget submitted by the TA to his Deputy Director with which the latter monitor's water use. A MIS system to monitor performance of the management vis-a-vis task activities of ID personnel in the project could possibly be built around this. A similar MIS system focusing on agriculture, lands, and agrarian services³ is feasible.

V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PM

This is as crucial as the other key areas of management control which we have explored. At the present time such performance monitoring and evaluation of the PM is limited to controls used for planning and programming operations rather than performance appraisal. In the interest of morale building and sustainability of the managerial effort, IMD must evaluate the performance of the PM, as he must evaluate the performance of his project team through clearly established management criteria over and beyond production targets but obviously linked to such targets. These could be periodically evaluated throughout the cultivation season with incentives for high performance linked not simply to production criteria but to the realization of IMD management goals, by making a distinction between self started managerial experiments in this direction, operationalization of IMD directives, implementation of farmer suggestions, and criteria of success and failure. The reward system in this case could be both material and non-

³The task of agrarian services within this project has been the focus of some difference of opinion. As a project classified as a large scheme, the department of agrarian services sees its task as confined to maintaining and updating the roster of farmers in the project and providing them with the farmer identification cards. It contends that it has no water management functions in the tertiary levels of the irrigation system. The PM on the other hand contends that the often quoted section 55 of the Agrarian Services Act stipulating the functions of the cultivation officer in irrigation maintenance in minor irrigation works does not prohibit the performance of these tasks in major irrigation schemes.

material. It is conceivable that the farmer component of management, in its role as beneficiary, could be incorporated into such a monitoring process.

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