Presentation on the Strategy Theme "System"

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54th Meeting of the
ICID Executive Council
Montpellier, September 2003

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the recommendations of the Work Team on Objectives and Strategies put forward at the 45th meeting of the IEC in Varna in 1994, the Permanent Committee for Technical Activities (PCTA) with the approval of the IEC organised the technical activities of the ICID in four themes, these were :

- Policy
- Systems
- On-farm
- Research and Technology Dissemination

This arrangement was reviewed prior to the 53th IEC meeting in Montreal by a Task Force consisting of the Chair of PSCPOA and Chair and Deputy Chair PCTA who in consultation with the respective theme leaders recommended a reorganisation of the four themes to better balance the number of workbodies under each theme. This change was aimed to reflect the changing reality surrounding irrigation and drainage and the constant evolution of the workbodies. As a result of this reorganisation, the Theme Systems now comprises the following Working Groups :

- Working Group on Capacity Building, Training and Education (WG-CBTE)
- Working Group on Socio-Economic Impacts and Policy Issues (WG-SOCIO)
- Working Group on Development and Management of Irrigation Systems (WG-DMIS)
- WatSave Work Team (WT-WATS)
- Working Group on Drainage (WG-DRG)

This change in grouping entails a substantial shift in the disciplinary areas represented by the working groups now under the theme "Systems". Under the new arrangement, a new and more substantial relation exists between working groups focused on technical matters and working groups focused on policy and management issues. Indeed, this represents a very desirable blend that better describes the nature of irrigation and drainage today, where technical issues are never considered in isolation of sociological, economic and environmental ones : **THE SO CALLED SUSTAINABILITY TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE.**

This integration across working groups highlights three important points:

- Firstly: The importance of synergies between bio-physical, management and policy aspects of irrigation leading to technological advances and policy incentives to improve the performance of irrigation,

- Secondly: The opportunity for interaction across the three main scales of irrigation and drainage: "On-farm, Systems and Catchments" integrating important operational and resource management policies and issues. Increasingly, we have come to the realisation that irrigation must be seen within a fully integrated catchment framework that recognises the interaction of irrigation with other water and economic sectors; and,
- Thirdly: The actual need to integrate these cross cutting disciplines to achieve the goals of more water productivity, sustainability and poverty alleviation enunciated at Kyoto. In fact, it is no longer sufficient to aim for more "crop per drop", it is actually necessary to obtain more "dollars per drop" if we are to address the needs of the rural poor.

2. REVIEW CRITERIA

Theme reviews are designed to ensure that the activities of working groups under each theme remain consistent with the mandate for which they were established and more importantly that they contribute towards the overall aims of the ICID and the international agenda it supports. In this context, the criteria that I will use for this review is based on three main parameters :

- Consistency of WG activities against the WG mandate
- Relevance of the WG outputs to its client base
- Consistency against overall ICID strategies.

Working groups are established to fulfil a specific set of objectives. The scope of the mandate is sometimes quite broad and achievements against such objectives may be difficult to gauge. It is important nonetheless to review the achievements of working groups at regular intervals and progress towards achieving the goals of the WG.

The WGs are the knowledge engines within ICID. The most important task of ICID in my view is the support it can provide in gathering, generating and disseminating knowledge amongst the irrigation community; and the WGs are or should be at the forefront of this role.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF WORKING GROUP IN THIS THEME

I will now turn my attention to each of the individual Working Groups under the Theme Systems :

3.1. Working "Group on Socio-Economic Impacts and Policy issues

This has been a very prolific and productive WG. The WG is currently focusing on several important issues relevant to irrigation and drainage worldwide including:

- Guidelines on cost-benefit analysis of irrigation and drainage projects
- Pricing of irrigation services
- Economic evaluation of the social and environmental impacts of large irrigation and drainage projects
- Questionnaire on water valuation in agriculture
- Analysis of the role of women in irrigation

Working group members made a great contribution to the preparation of the Task Force 3 position paper on "Socio-economic Sustainability of Services Provided by Irrigation, Drainage Flood Control Schemes in the Water Resources Sector". We cannot overemphasise the

importance of this work given the present topicality of water pricing in the current water debate worldwide.

This paper addressed some very crucial policy and management issues for irrigation & drainage and it represents a clear example of the multidisciplinary nature of irrigation and drainage development and management. It also provides a valuable contribution to the bridging of engineering and non-technical aspects often involved in the decision making processes in irrigation and drainage.

The Symposium on Private Participation in Irrigation and Drainage held in Montreal last year concluded among other things that :

> *"It was generally accepted that there are alternative models of private sector participation in irrigation. Government and private participation may involve ownership of assets and management of the infrastructure. Asset ownership may remain wholly or partially in government hands. Regardless of the particular ownership situation management arrangements must be sustainable and compatible"*

I would like to suggest that the WG should embrace some of the key issues that have arisen in those discussions. These could include an analysis of alternatives models of private participation in irrigation investment such as privatisation and private-public partnerships.

3.2. Working Group on Development and Management of Irrigation Systems

This WG is the result of the merger and restructure of the WG-CONST and the WG-OMM back in 1998. The WG activities in this period have focused on the completion of on-going activities started by the parent WGs at the time of the merger and undertaking new activities within its current mandate. These have focussed primarily on the management aspects of irrigation and drainage systems and to a lesser extent on design and construction aspects.

The WG has been heavily involved in the ICID Benchmarking Initiative since its launch in 1999 together with the former WG on Performance of Irrigation and Drainage Systems, and more recently, the WG on Drainage. The main role of the TF was to assist and disseminate the initiative which was also supported by the World Bank, IPTRID and IWMI. The benchmarking initiative was undertaken to assist irrigation managing organisations to improve the performance of their irrigation and drainage systems. As part of this effort, this year's agenda saw the organization of the 4th Benchmarking Workshop combined with Quality Assurance.

TF 4 on Benchmarking is of the view that benchmarking is a long-term undertaking. Member countries that participate in this initiative span a wide range of management arrangements and stages of evolution. Clearly, this is a task that will extend well beyond the life of a Task Force. In this context, it was agreed by the TF members that the TF be discontinued and its activities be subsumed into the WG-DMIS in close liaison with the WG –Drainage.

The WG is of the view that management tools are only useful if they are fully incorporated into the organisations' management strategy. This is ever more challenging when we take into account the wide range of organisational arrangements to manage irrigation and drainage in our member countries ranging from privatised or corporatised water authorities to traditional government departments. There is, however, a common denominator that applies to all organizations: The pressure to improve irrigation performance will grow and will apply across the board regardless of their organisational structure.

Within the context of these future challenges, the WG has embarked in an extension of the benchmarking agenda to consider the Quality Assurance and Sustainability aspects of the provision of irrigation and drainage services and environmental management. The combination of the Benchmarking and Quality Assurance themes in this year's workshop is a reflection of these evolving priorities. As demonstrated by the outcomes of the workshop, Benchmarking and Quality Assurance are closed linked management tools that underpin the

goal of irrigation productivity and sustainability. Sustainability is an ever more important issue in the age of the globalised economy. Consumers and business in many countries are demanding evidence that the products they consume and trade are produced in agriculture and irrigation systems that are sustainable. Clearly, the development of criteria and credible mechanisms to measure and evaluate sustainability are necessary. This is an important priority that this working group should attempt to address in future.

Irrigation and drainage agencies are increasingly required to operate their service infrastructure without relying on government subsidies. The second strand of the WG's vision is the growing demand for the generation and dissemination of knowledge in the field of Infrastructure Asset Management. This strikes at the centre of the strategy that irrigation agencies must embrace to ensure that the irrigation and drainage infrastructure remains sustainable in perpetuity by establishing clear links between the level of service they provide to their customers and the price charged for these services.

3.3. Watsave Work Team

The activities of this work team have grown significantly since its inception and now comprise several key areas including:

- Watsave awards have been very successful in promoting important research aimed at reducing water consumption from irrigation, and
- Producing various documents and dissemination activities in several countries.

This Work Team that has been in existence for a relatively long period of time although the nature of the task remains as relevant and important today as it was when the WT was created in 1993. It has carried out an immensely important task since its creation, a task that becomes increasingly more important with increasing water competition in many river basins. In my view, the work team has an important role to play in achieving the land and water productivity aims of irrigation worldwide. And as its history demonstrates, the range of activities has been growing in importance since its creation and there is no reason to think that they won't continue to grow.

Our bylaws stipulate however that work teams are formed to carry out a short duration task of usually no more than 3 years. Clearly we have a dilemma that must be resolved to enable this group to deliver the products for which it has been mandated within the framework of our constitution.

It appears to me that in order to remain complaint with our bylaws and in view that the main objective of this group remains highly relevant to the future of water resource management, I would recommend that the Work Team be converted into a Working Group on Water Saving.

The current agenda of the work team envisages the development of a program to implement water saving activities within the context of Integrated Water Resources Management. I would suggest that such activities while very relevant to the working group should ensure that they are carried out in coordination with the WG on Integrated Land and Water Resources Management. Perhaps, the conceptual division between Systems and Basins used to divide the two Strategy Themes (Systems & Catchments) could also be applied to boundaries of these two working groups.

3.4. Working Group on Drainage

This WG has a long history within ICID. Its mandate has evolved over the years to include areas beyond the classical construction, operation and maintenance issues such as disposal and reuse of saline drainage water as reflected by its current mandate. The WG has had an impressive catalogue of activities ranging from an extended list of publications in progress to continuous involvement in the organization of Drainage Workshops andn various international initiatives such as the Drainage Program for the Humid Tropics and the Africa Drainage Centre. More recently, the working group has also made an important contribution

to broadening the conceptual framework for the Benchmarking initiative by providing a set of complementary benchmarking indicators for drainage.

Increasingly, the disposal of drainage effluents is becoming a major issue in many river basins where drainage effluents occur, creating potential for degradation in quality of the receiving waters as a result of increased salt loads, nutrients and biocides. I suggest this is one aspect the WG may consider embracing in future because of its importance in the context of Integrated Water Resources Management. This is also an issue of increasing importance in international trade where certification of agricultural products requires proof that they originate from sustainable systems.

One observation about the WG mandate: I believe that it is highly unlikely that the WG itself would develop simulation models. I envisage that a more appropriate role for the WG is to disseminate the use and availability of drainage simulation models and therefore recommend that the mandate be amended to reflect this reality.

3.5. Working Group on Capacity Building, Training and Education.

The working group has embarked in various activities within its work program which are highly relevant to assist irrigation and drainage authorities and farmers with the improvement of management performance by addressing the institutional capacity of these agencies. These have ranged from the formulation of training and education programs to compilation of case studies. The group however has encountered some operational difficulties in bringing many of these activities to completion, due in part to the range of tasks tackled simultaneously.

At the Montreal meeting, it was agreed that a decision would be made at this meeting regarding the continuity of the WG activities.

The WG held a very successful workshop during the current IEC meeting on the topic Capacity-Building in Irrigation and Drainage: Issues, Challenges and the Way Ahead which included presentations from Tunisia, Peru, Albania, India, Zambia and West Africa. The success of the workshop would suggest that the working group should contemplate a more focused and narrower agenda.

The working group should take a similar approach to its name and mandate. I would recommend that the Working Group be called WG on Capacity Building to reflect the broad range of activities involved in improving the institutional performance of organisations. Training and education are in fact two elements of the Capacity Building framework. I would also recommend that the working group revisit its mandate to provide a more focused operation in future in line with the previous recommendations.

4. CURRENT ISSUES and FUTURE VISION

I would like now to briefly address some current and future issues relevant to these working groups:

In reading the minutes of various WGs, it is apparent from recent WG meetings that WG Chairpersons are facing some difficulties in obtaining significant contributions from some WG members. Inability to attend meetings has often been quoted as a reason for this. While it is not always possible for WG members to attend international meetings, the ample availability of electronic communication to correspond and maintain communication within the WG has meant that this is no longer a significant handicap.

It is important to remember that WGs are the knowledge engine of ICID and the only vehicle for ICID to provide intellectual leadership and support to the irrigation community.

In closing, I believe that the success or otherwise in our endeavour to face future challenges will depend on our ability to contribute to the achievement of 3 fundamental goals:

- Increasing productivity of water and land

- Improving the provision of irrigation services to farmers in a cost-effective way
- Improving the sustainability of irrigation and drainage systems

I believe that the current agenda of the WGs within the strategy theme “systems” can go a great distance in helping irrigation and drainage achieve these goals. However, we have to be prepared to be proactive in making and implementing continuous changes to our WGs agenda to tackle the new challenges emerging every day as a result of the changing reality facing our sector.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION