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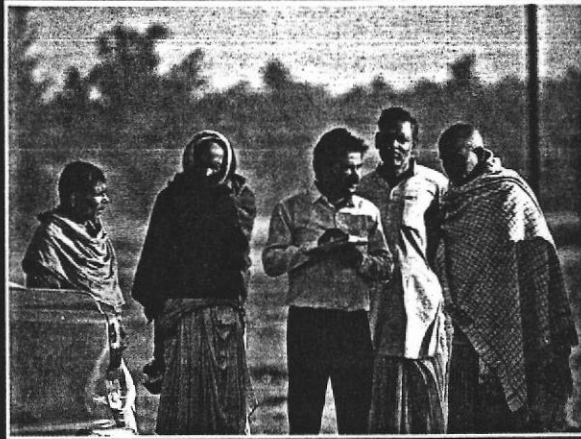
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Role of Social Organizers in Assisting Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems



Proceedings of a Regional Workshop of the
Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems Network
held at Khon Kaen, Thailand from 15 to 20 May 1989

Shaul Manor, Sanguan Patamatamkul
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Role of Social Organizers in Assisting Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems

The regional workshop on "Role of Social Organizers in Assisting Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems" brought together 29 practitioners and researchers from 9 countries in South and Southeast Asia to discuss their experiences, emphasizing the problems they encountered and their suggested solutions. Social organizers serve as intermediaries between the farmers and the agencies. The community-centered, farmer-motivated social organizers have made a significant impact on sustainable system management.

The workshop was sponsored by the Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems (FMIS) Network and organized jointly by the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI) and the Thailand Research on Irrigation Management Network (TRIMNET).

The FMIS Network is comprised of members from more than 50 countries throughout the world. The network serves an information function to disseminate research results and innovative ideas relevant to assisting farmer-managed irrigation systems. The Network also facilitates planned or ongoing research efforts through referrals or modest allocations of direct research assistance.

TRIMNET and IIMI organized the regional workshop in support of the FMIS Network objectives.

TRIMNET is a national network whose purpose is to bring the importance of irrigation management and water-related issues in Thailand to public attention. It also seeks to apply research results in practical ways.

IIMI is an independent, international nonprofit organization focusing on irrigation-management issues. IIMI's mandate is to strengthen national efforts to improve and sustain the performance of irrigation systems in developing countries through the development and dissemination of management innovations. At present, IIMI has regional and country programs operating in more than ten countries in Africa and Asia with headquarters in Sri Lanka.

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Preface

THE SUCCESSFUL AND often impressive experiences in Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems (FMIS) in many countries in Asia, have prompted the development of a number of programs in various countries, with the purpose of accelerating this process. Implementing these types of systems is generally accomplished through the fielding of "Social Organizers." Some programs are promoted by government agencies, while others are run by nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The programs are generally designed around village-based social organizers, although often the title and duties follow varying concepts. This has resulted in the need to exchange information and review the various program results thus far implemented or designed, to draw preliminary conclusions that could be of use to concerned governments and NGOs.

As far as practical, the conclusions could be used to design new programs or experiments, or to redesign ongoing projects. It was with this in mind that the idea for a workshop concentrating on various FMIS aspects was proposed. A small, regional workshop at which participants could freely mix and discuss experiences and ideas was believed to be the most appropriate forum.

The objectives of the workshop set out at the time of planning were to review some of the experiences in the participating countries and to develop policy guidelines which could assist in formulating country-specific strategies. The major objectives defined were:

- * To assess the benefits and costs of the social-organizer strategy, based on case studies.
- * To review the implementation process of the social-organizer approach (e.g., selection of social organizers, training and bureaucratic reorientation).
- * To consider alternative approaches to promoting farmers' management participation.
- * To publish the proceedings in order to foster discussion and stimulate new policies for FMIS assistance.

Not all of these subjects were addressed in the papers and in the discussions at the workshop. Notable by its absence was any discussion of costs and benefits, although other issues were well-presented and discussed and have important implications for future policies.

Ten countries from South and Southeast Asia were invited to send participants. As the delegate

from India was unable to attend, only nine were represented; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Twenty-nine people participated in the workshop, including those from IIMI and TRIMNET and resource professionals and observers. Fifteen papers were presented with one addition later submitted by the representative of India. Abridged versions of all 16 papers are contained in the proceedings with the papers appearing in alphabetical order by country.

The workshop was divided into three phases. The first dealt with the presentation of the 15 papers, which dealt with experiences of social organizers in various countries and the results of field research. The second phase consisted of field trips to two systems in the vicinity, with the goal of stimulating discussion on relevant issues. The first scheme visited was developed by the Royal Irrigation Department (RID) and successfully turned over to farmer management after intense extension activity; the second scheme visited was implemented by using a community organizer to facilitate farmer participation and to assist in the creation of a water users' group. The third phase consisted of discussions which were held in small groups on subjects raised or derived from the papers presented and from issues identified in the course of the field trips. The subjects of the discussions were:

- * Farmer participation in managing irrigation systems.
- * Supporting policies for farmer-participation programs.
- * Alternative approaches to generating farmer participation.
- * Social-organizer program implementation.
- * Flexibility and sustainability.
- * Institutionalizing the social organizer into the system.

Summaries of the discussions held in these groups appear in the proceedings.

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