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Shamalan Project Section of "Draft Audit Report - Functional Review of Capital Development Loan Projects, Afghanistan"

I was interested to read this draft report since it relates to a project I watched, at the field level, for a period of about two years, but I was not contacted by the auditors in recent times as a source of information. The report tends to gloss over the real issues of the problems of the project and fails to make key recommendations to assure that the errors will not be repeated. There are one or two errors in fact presented in the report.

It should be pointed out that while the BuRec feasibility report stated that "land, water and climate" in the Shamalan were favorable to increased production, there was almost no mention, perhaps two paragraphs, of the people who live there. They were to be removed and cared for by the GOA during development. Recommendation: In future feasibility studies this people aspect must be a first consideration. Second, the implementation of the people aspects of the project should not be left solely up to the Government. If we assume the GOA needs technical support for the engineering aspects of such a project (defined on pp. 26-28), how can we expect them to take necessary action on the people aspects of a project which are many more times as complicated.

On p. 25, the statement that the 42 Kilometer lateral canal (technically a lateral, not a canal, and certainly not both) was ... "to divert irrigation water from the existing Shamalan canal to nearly thirty-two thousand acres of arable land in the Shamalan area" is slightly misleading and certainly inaccurate. This acreage was approximately the total amount of irrigable land in the Shamalan but not watered by the new lateral. A great proportion of the land watered by the traditional system of laterals off the old canal would continue to be watered by them.

On page 28, the statement that "the farmers were not sufficiently informed about the advantages of the project..." is certainly an understatement, if not untrue. Beginning in April 1971, I continually reminded the Mission that I had yet to meet a farmer in my field surveys in the area who had been officially informed of any aspect of the project, although rumors were widespread. We had been officially "assured", however, in March 1971 that "...landowners in the area are well acquainted with the objectives of the project..." Recommendation: In the field survey monitoring of project progress and problems is a must in the future and when accomplished the results should not be ignored.

On pp. 28-29, in the discussions of the implementation of the land leveling aspects of the project, as well as possibly the completion of the planned lateral construction itself, a spade must be called a spade. Because the people aspects of the project were grossly mismanaged or ignored, documented in a series of memos, the project could not go forward. Lateral right-of-way was frequently not cleared before construction began and has rarely been paid for. Crop damage was generally ignored, except in a limited number of cases. The one attempt to level land in one limited area at the north end of the Shamalan was blocked by the farmers, a number of whom had not yet received compensation for land lost to the lateral right-of-way. Finally, in Aynak, the lateral was diverted out across the desert because a local khān finally drew the line when the lateral was to pass through his village. He did not agree. Continuation of the lateral now depends to a great extent on getting right-of-way agreements as the planned lateral is to re-emerge into the center of the planted areas. Apparently there has been some consolidation of opposition against the work, something farmers farther north were unable to muster.

The main point I think should be made is the great need for field level social science observations in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of projects. This is generally not done and the Shamalan is an illustration of the results of this lack.

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