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HAVA Priority of Land Settlement and the Central Helmand Drainage Project

Summary: The purpose of this memo is to analyze a relatively wide range of information on the relationship between the Central Helmand Drainage Project, HAVA priorities, and future planning for the Valley. In summary, the USAID present goal of focusing activity on improving the existing irrigation system without expansion, and the HAVA long term goal of continuing land settlement, and thereby expanding the system, are a point of unstated conflict. Present design plans for main drain rehabilitation should take the potential settlement patterns into consideration. The Soil and Water Survey should study the planned settlement with HAVA. And with Phase II and beyond, USAID should consider a water control - farmer education element since the combination of settlement of technically ignorant farmers on new lands complicates further the drainage problems. Finally, the stated USAID goal of an improved irrigation system without expansion should not be allowed to disrupt communications with HAVA whose priorities are clear.

One of the major politically inspired priorities in the Helmand Valley is land settlement, the settlement of new lands by landless farmers. As noted in the Social Analysis Section of the Project Paper on Central Helmand Drainage this has been a government priority since the beginning of Helmand Valley development activity. It has been re-emphasized since the change of government in 1973 and resulted in impressive action over the past year. While an estimated 5-6000 farm families had been settled over the past 20 years, HAVA indicates that 3167 families have been settled over the past 10 months. Although there may be some question of the logic of settling farmers on marginal sized plots in previously unfarmed areas with minimum development support, the level of action in land settlement is impressive. We might suspect that this reflects the national political motivations more than basically humanitarian interests. The settlement activity gets coverage in the media. There may also be an element of poor planning involved. But the question for USAID is: How does this activity relate to the aims of USAID interests in the Central Helmand Drainage Project?

Stemming from the analyses by Lloyd Baren and David Levintow in 1973, if not before, the Mission has generally supported the position that USAID should no longer involve itself with the expansion of the irrigation system it has helped to develop over the past 20 years. USAID should focus on helping HAVA and the farmers to better use and maintain the present system. The rationale for the new drainage project is that the system developed is not complete without proper drainage and some areas presently being farmed could go out of production if the problem of drainage is not seriously addressed. The HAVA goal of land settlement and the USAID goal of improving the existing system are not in all respects compatible.

There are mixed feelings or orientations on the need for drain construction, especially as a construction activity alone. It has been suggested through the years by numerous observers that the drainage problem is aggravated by the mis-use of irrigation water by the farmers, a socio-cultural problem, and that "... application of technology alone (the digging of drains) will not insure successful projects. Non-technical factors (farmer education) are even more important." (Helmand Valley Development Project: Drainage and Related Problems," C.R. Malerhofer, BuRec, 1961.)

Recently when HAVA officials pointed out a drain structure designed and built by MKA in the 1950's as being inadequate to handle present drain water coming out of Nad-i-All and therefore of faulty design, the Soil Conservation Service engineers' response was that perhaps more water was being pushed into the drain than had been planned for. A similar observation had been made by Mr. Reilly of CDE on an earlier visit. The point to be made or the hypothesis to be tested is that a combination of factors have resulted in the need for at least the major drain part of the drainage project:

1. More water is passing through the system than it was designed for.
2. Because of past lack of maintenance the drain system cannot handle the levels of water it was designed for.
3. Settlement of farmers on what was originally out of project lands places an even greater strain on the already overloaded system.

The settlement of new farmers in the Valley on previously unfarmed land but within or on the fringes of project lands is a complicating element for the new project. This settlement adds to the population of farmers in need of training who are unaware of modern technology in irrigation and drainage. It also results in an even greater increase in the amounts of water to pass through the system. Both of these elements will have to eventually be faced by HAVA. The potential maximum level of drainage water that can be handled should be considered in the present design for major drain renovation.

One of the unstated aims of HAVA in starting the Shamalan Project appears to have been to get water to large tracts of unsettled government land located in the Zarist area. There were rumors of this interest early in the Shamalan project but it was never, to my knowledge, explicitly stated. There were references to the need to get water to "water short" areas in south central Shamalan where much of the land is government owned. There was some land leveling done in this area during the late '50's or early '60's which did not result in settlement because of a combination of a high water table, lack of drainage and lack of irrigation water. The purpose of the activity, however, was land settlement, a major HAVA priority. Recently a major drain was observed to be under construction through this area. See Map 1. There also was a small section of lateral under construction which eventually will be connected to the unfinished S.10 Shamalan lateral. The important point is that HAVA-HACU are involved in a major construction activity, unaided by outside funds, which was planned under the Shamalan Project and combines the two needed elements of an irrigation system: Water supply and drainage. The activity will result in land settlement.

If this analysis is correct as it relates to the Shamalan Project, it says something about HAVA-USAID relations and communications in the past and a lesson for the future. HAVA had some clear goals for the Shamalan Project which were not of apparent primary concern to BuRec and USAID, or perhaps recognized for what they were. The project design had some primary goals of land development, leveling and consolidation in the north and central long term indigenously inhabited Shamalan that were required before completion of the total lateral. The project was ended on this issue, or the apparent conflict of priorities never clearly stated. HAVA is still in the process (the construction) of reaching its goals set for the Shamalan Project.

As the priority of land settlement relates directly to the Central Helmand Drainage Project, recent visits to at least one area proposed for major drain rehabilitation, the upper reaches of Deep Drain 3 in Nad-i-All, indicate that much of the area to be effected by the work is not presently farmed. See Map 3. In essence, the hypothesis is that the work on this drain will prepare land not presently farmed for settlement.

A similar situation exists relative to Outlet Drain C in Marja (Map 4) and the Zarist Main Drain in Shamalan (Map 1). In Marja, one side of the drain is project land while the desert side is originally out-of-project land recently settled (within two years). These "out-of-project" settlers apparently are drawing irrigation water from a wasteway but discharge their drainage in the drain which probably was not designed to carry water from that amount of land. A similar situation exists on the Zarist Main Drain except that the settlers assigned to the area have not yet moved in.

The on-farm drain construction proposed for Zarist and Darweshan follow similar patterns of non-development. See Maps 1 and 2. In Zarist the on-farm drains are to be constructed in an area not yet settled as noted, previously unfarmed and salty. The drains will be a land development activity, not rehabilitation of land already being farmed. In Darweshan the on-farm drains are proposed in recently settled areas (within 1 or 2 years) but mostly as yet unfarmed.

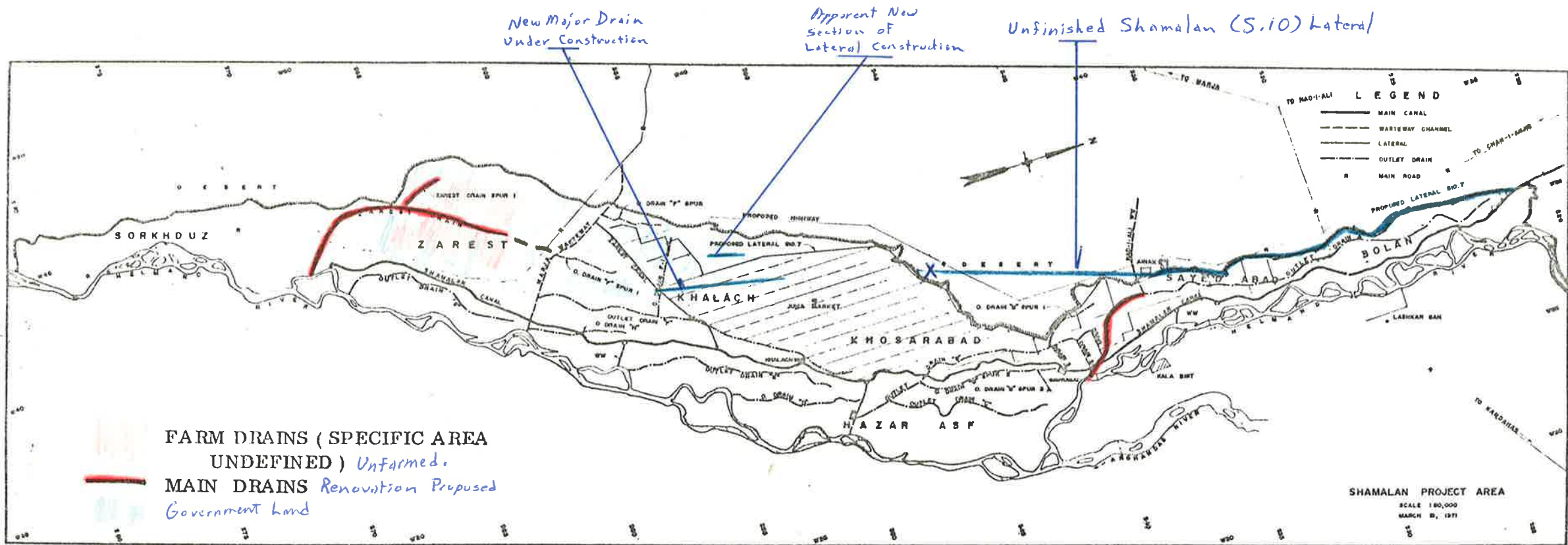
The policy of settlement is politically important for the government. The USAID Central Helmand Drainage Project is supporting this policy although it has not been so stated or, possibly, the relationship is not recognized by USAID. This has both positive and negative implications. While the activity does not support the USAID position of not being involved in the expansion of project lands, because the results are to bring more land under cultivation, it does support a long-term government priority. Technically the end results must be recognized if the new design work for major drain renovation is to be meaningful. The total land areas to be drained, i. e., brought under cultivation, must be clearly identified. While the fixed-cost-reimbursement method allows USAID not to get involved in these longer term planning problems but only pay for drains constructed, the engineering review of the design should keep these details in mind. The soil and water survey might also bring HAVA into an in-depth dialogue on these trends in developing

new lands. The issue cannot be ignored since it is directly related to the long-term end results with which USAID will always be associated.

Finally, the realization of the above described trends re-emphasizes the importance of USAID involvement in the needed activity of farmer education in water use and HAVA water control. Much of the major and on-farm drain construction activity of the project in the long term, as it results in land settlement, does not solve the problem of drainage in the Valley but rather complicates it. This HAVA priority of land settlement is a continuing reality that future USAID communications, plans and actions should take into account.

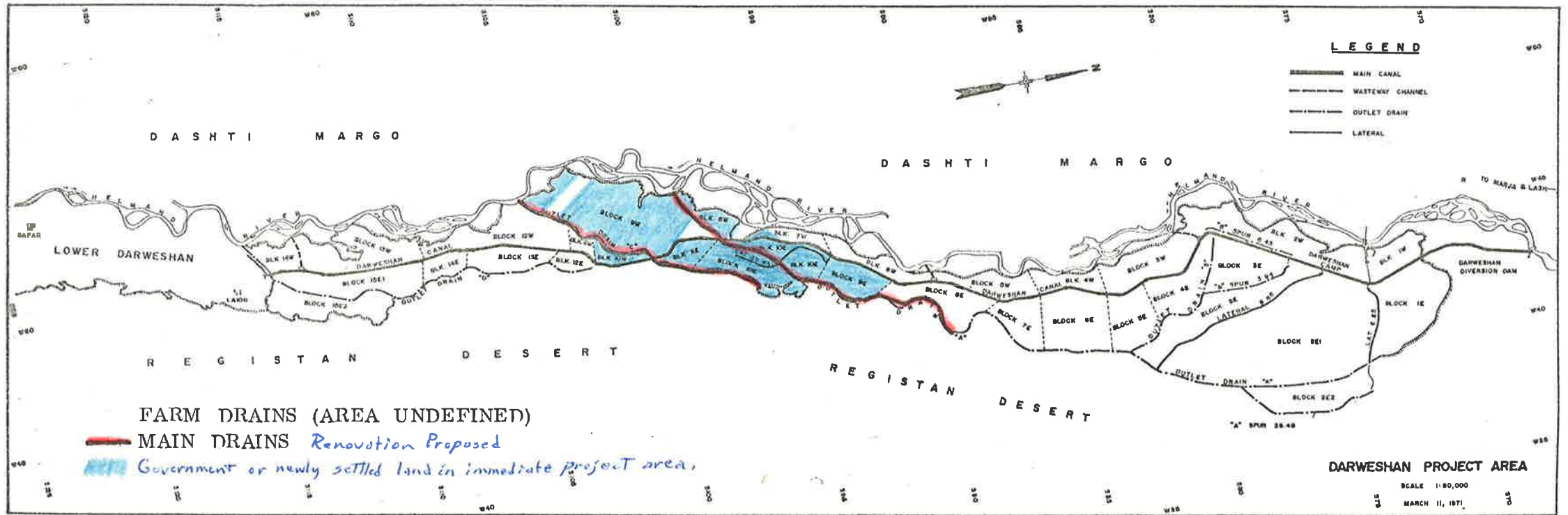
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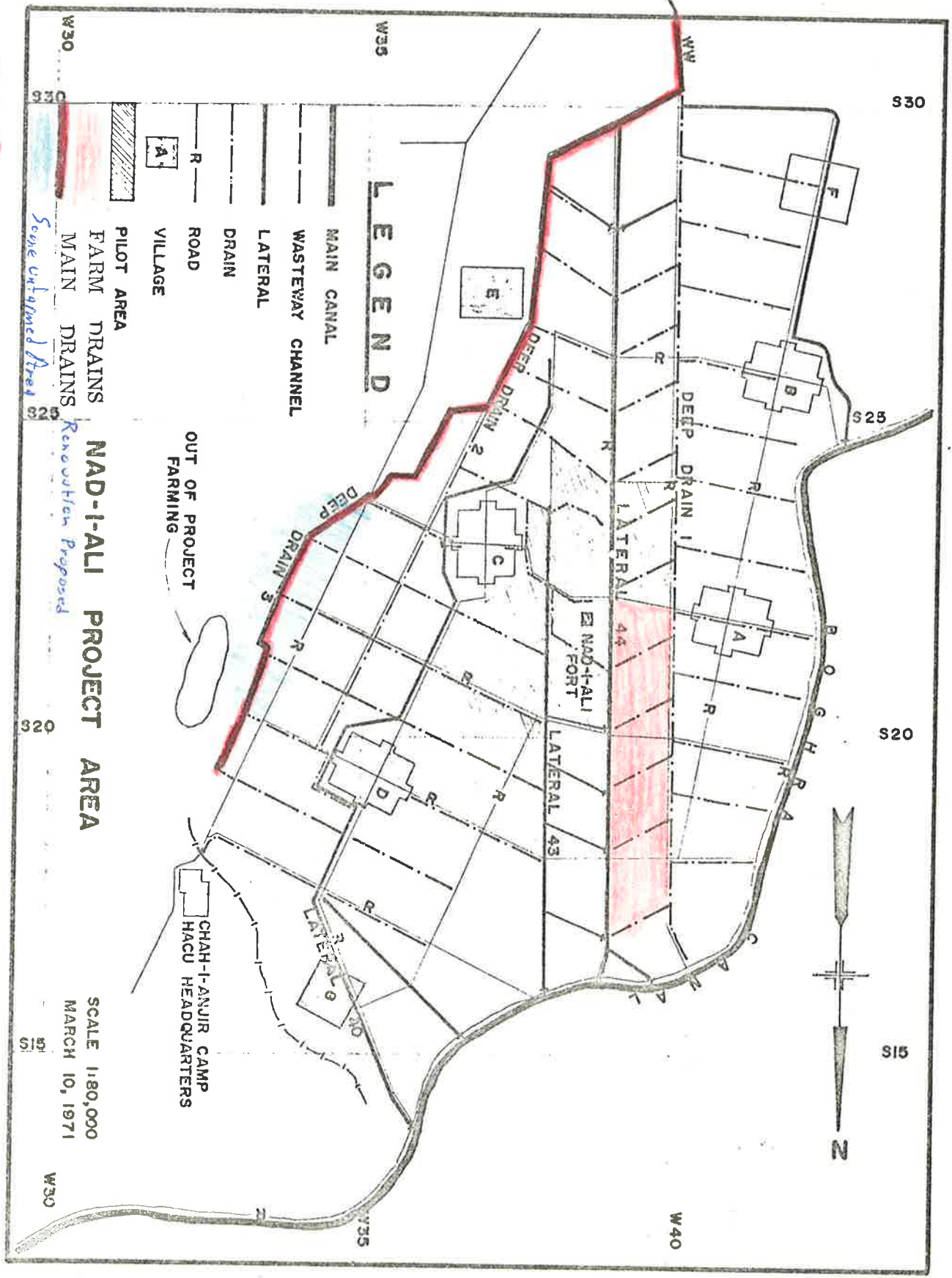
Map 1

All locations are approximate.

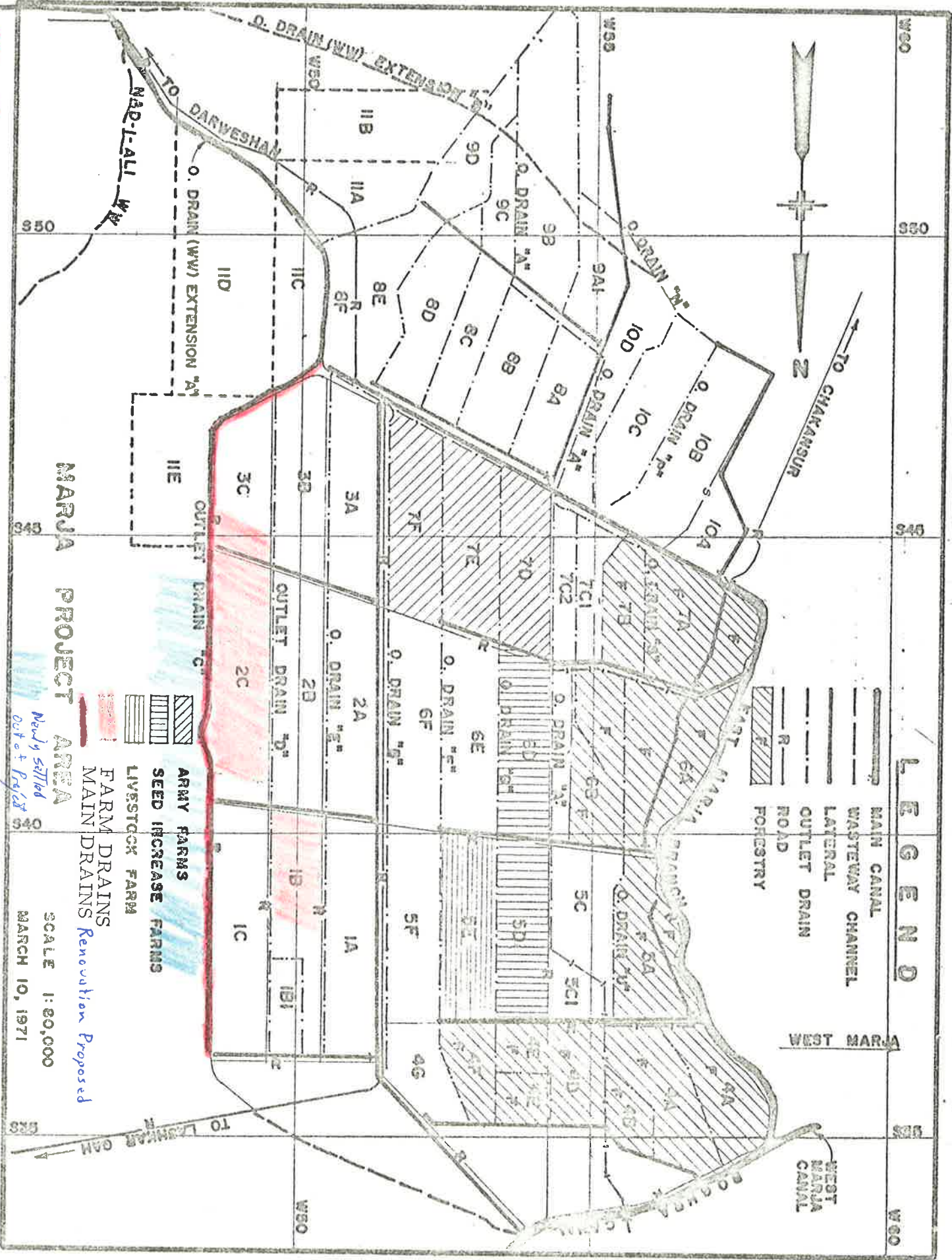


Map 2

MAP 3



Map 4



LEGEND

- MAIN CANAL
- WASTEWAY CHANNEL
- LATERAL
- OUTLET DRAIN
- ROAD
- FORESTRY

MARJA PROJECT AREA

- ARMY FARMS
- SEED INCREASE FARMS
- LIVESTOCK FARM
- FARM DRAINS
- MAIN DRAINS

Renovation Proposed

SCALE 1:20,000
MARCH 10, 1971

Newly settled
out of Project