

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Charles W. Johnson - DP

FROM : Richard B. Scott - DP (Lashkar Gah)

DATE: Feb. 28, 1976

SUBJECT: The Need for a Farmer Compensation Scheme for Lost Crops and Land as a Direct Result of the Helmand Drainage Project

There is need for a system to compensate farmers for crop damage and land lost as a direct result of the Drainage Project. I hasten to add that this does not refer to farmers' land that will greatly and directly benefit from the drain construction, but to those farmers who are unfortunate enough to have land in the path of major drain construction which acts as an outlet for others' drain water. The example presented here is the work done on the extension of Drain 2 in Zargun Kale in Nad-i-Ali. It is used only as an example of a precedent being set at the beginning of the project and one which should not be repeated. A system of compensation should be established for such cases and added to normal project costs of which USAID is paying a large share. USAID should be directly involved in such a system to insure payment.

Drain 2 extension is one kilometer long and is constructed over the top of a previously existing drain. The new cut is approximately one meter deeper than the original. The ditch is about 7 meters wide and the spoils are about another 5 - 6 meters on each side of the ditch. The old drain was constructed by hand under the Food-for Work program in about 1972. The present drain is being constructed by HACU with dragline and bulldozer, which adds to the level of crop and field damage. That is, in this case, the use of heavy equipment - while relatively quick - has one side effect of damaging large areas of adjacent farm land.

There are two types of damage occurring to the farmers' fields: (1) damage and loss of this year's crop, (2) permanent loss of farm land.

The advantages to the landowners in the immediate area of the new drain will be increased when compared to the old drain if and when on-farm drains are constructed in the area. The old drain was not deep enough to function as an interceptor for the on-farm drains required. If on-farm drains are constructed, the benefits will be comparable to those of the landowners in the first kilometer of on-farm drain construction, but the damage and loss will remain greater. If on-farm drains are not constructed in this area, this drain will not benefit the

farmers greatly different from the old drain which was in reasonable condition, although probably uncleaned during the duration of its short life. The work on this drain affects the land holdings of eight farmers and the crops of seven. One farmer left his fields unplanted.

Looking north up the new drain, there are spoils of the excavation covering at least 5 meters of farm land on each side. There is a 4 meter wide road being leveled on the top of each of these mounds. This strip of land is permanently lost as the result of the project, plus this year's crop. That is the limit of the loss for those farmers lucky enough to be on the left side of the drain ... 4 farmers.

On the right side of the drain there is a road/trail made by the bulldozer and construction vehicles the length of the drain. There are two or three spots considerably wider than this where the equipment guards' trailer was parked, project vehicle parking and more ripped-up areas where the bulldozer turned around in the fields. A conservative estimate would be the equivalent of another 4-meter wide strip of crops lost this year. But part of this strip will be permanently lost, perhaps two meters, to the necessary construction of an irrigation ditch. The old ditchcan, at some points along the construction, just be seen between the drain cut and the spoils.

What does this mean to the individual farmer along this drain? The usual land holding along the drain is of a standard size, 27 jeribs, 12.92 acres or 5.23 hectares. The plots are 200 meters wide and 260 meters long. On the left side of the drain, this means the permanent loss of about 1300 m², .67 jerib or .32 acres, or about 2.5 percent of his land, plus this year's crop on that land. On the right side of the drain, it means the loss of this year's crop on a bit less than double the above amount (1.2 jeribs or 4.4 percent of farm land) and permanent loss of .94 jerib, .45 acre or about 3.5 percent of a farmer's land.

If these farmers were to gain great advantage in crop yields from this work, as those in the on-farm drain areas will, the loss might be justified. But they will not realize such benefits. As the project expands, more similar examples can be expected. Presently, apparently, farmer opposition to these aspects is minimal or nil. Part of the reason for this lack of reaction may be a sense of impotence vis-a-vis the project because it is a big construction of the Government - they are settlers and apparently do not yet have title to the land, and no one with major political power is directly affected. It is also apparently part of a project of drainage resulting from petitions of the area's farmers for drainage help and is to the advantage of neighbors to the north. If they do not have a strong feeling of loss, they should.

If this example were to be the last case, it might be ignored but it very likely is not. In some areas like Shamalan where the farmers are not settlers and have stronger rights to their land, and where the plots of land are irregular in shape, not allowing drain construction to follow property lines, the requirement for a system of compensation is even greater and the farmer reactions can be expected to surface. First, a system of information and agreement outlined in a previous memo is necessary, along with some arrangement for farmer compensation for crop and land loss. Such a system of compensation may also make the pressures on HACU greater to insure more careful consideration of construction equipment land use and damage.

Again, this example is setting a precedent that should not be repeated. This aspect of the project should be discussed at all levels of project management in HAVA, starting at the top. It should be built into the letters of understanding and monitored very carefully. In the past this has not been a HAVA strong point. As far as I am aware, no farmers on the Shamalan S-10.7 lateral ever received compensation for that right-of-way, although such payment was in the project plans. These projects are strongly identified by the farmers as American projects. Such events in the lives of the farmers reflect badly on the U. S. involvement.

cc:

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