

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Ronald A. Rogers, AD/DP

DATE: June 9, 1976

FROM : ^{Scott} Richard B. Scott, DP

SUBJECT: Some Key Issues of Planning for Phase II of the Helmand Drainage Project; Information, Socio-Economic Research and Organization of the Hand-Labor Force

SUMMARY: To date, the Drainage Project has been in the hands of the HAVA Technical Division and has thus not adequately focused on other important non-engineering aspects of the project: Farmer information and training, socio-economic research and hand-labor recruitment and organization. In any future phase of the project, these aspects must and can be adequately addressed without straining the resources of HAVA and with additional USAID emphasis, which is required. The project must be expanded bureaucratically to include other related branches of HAVA to date excluded, i. e., the Agriculture Division and the Planning and Statistics Department (a staff office). In each case, the project elements noted should be addressed by the establishment of small project-oriented units with the specifically defined project responsibility of accomplishing the tasks. The personnel should be full time and chosen with the idea of future development potential. USAID should assign personnel these specific tasks to train for, aid and monitor the activity. END SUMMARY.

There are several key elements in the implementation of Phase I of the Helmand Drainage Project that have not been adequately addressed. In this memo I will attempt to outline these elements, the sorts of problems and assumptions associated with them, their role in the total project and then outline methods or approaches I think can be used to better address these elements if Phase II is implemented.



The elements considered here are: (1) information activities to tell the farmer/beneficiaries about the project and how it is to affect their lives; (2) research activities on socio-economic baseline data of project beneficiaries; and (3) activities associated with the organization of laborers who are to dig the on-farm drains. Within HAVA all these activities have either been handled as a side issue, no major commitment of key personnel, with limited seriousness or ignored. Each of these elements are basic to the total project and their importance should be stressed by USAID. New organizational units should be established within the present HAVA structure to address these elements directly. Individuals within HAVA and USAID/SCS should have the specific responsibility to work with each of these elements.

While some of the details presented have been written before, the point is that there must be a continuous search for the best methods of implementation and to insure that at least some method of implementation is attempted. All three of these elements relate directly to the social context of the Drainage Project and require serious consideration by both USAID and HAVA.

In some cases, it will appear that USAID is well ahead of HAVA in terms of the importance placed on these elements. In some cases, HAVA appears to have no interest in addressing the issues at all. This should not be used as a justification not to address the issues in (if) Phase II. Virtually every aspect of these various issues is related to the intent of our new foreign aid law (how better to get at the rural poor beneficiaries) and, thus, should be tied into the project as a requirement insisted upon by USAID in the same way that engineering standards and specifications have been insisted upon by CDE, although HAVA-HCC have not always stressed the necessity.

While some of the details outlined in this memo may be to some degree unacceptable to some within the organizations involved, for whatever reason, and will likely require some bureaucratic innovations in terms of thinking and relationship between individuals and sections, as far as I am aware require no changes in rules or regulations and none are in conflict with the values and orientations of the socio-cultural context. In most cases, the associated cultural values being addressed are the ideals of the Islamic rural scene; i. e., equality and respect for all humans.

This memo should be used as a planning document and should not be simply scanned but read as carefully as it was written. The three issues considered are key issues of the project.

I. Information Program: This aspect has been given considerable attention in past memos but to date has received no attention on the ground. For example, the recent settlers in the first block of land in central Shamalan to have on-farm drains, across from Gourgi seed farm, have seen the two draglines at work on their main drains and have talked to survey crews crossing their land but there has been no systematic effort to educate the farmers into the aims of any aspect of the project. But this is no new pattern of inaction, as noted in my March 14, 1976 Memo "A Sense of Urgency," and will be the subject of a new, separate report based on interviews with the farmers.

A modern large-scale irrigation scheme requires a complex system of division of labor between all those involved in its operation (farmers and government) if the results of the large government and foreign investment are to be maximized and the system maintained through time. In part, the drainage problems of today are associated with the general lack of major drain maintenance since their construction. If the division of labor is to be reality, the farmers must be a part of the total system of operations. At minimum, the farmers should at least be aware of what is being done to their immediate water/drainage system. A second level of involvement would be to tell the farmers what these changes can mean to their farm production and train them into the proper use of the system, an innovation.

Under USAID pressure and guidance, HAVA should be required to establish a system of information and follow-up training directly related to the drainage project. The farmers should be systematically informed of tentative plans and designs, formal agreement reached among a specified high percentage of those directly affected, and agreement to maintain the new constructions before any work is started and before AID approval of project design. Farmer understanding and agreement must be part of the total project plan.

This information/training aspect of the Drainage Project will not be properly addressed as long as it remains completely under the Technical Division of HAVA. The Technical Division does not have the personnel, experience nor

inclination to attempt to address the issue. The Drainage Project must be spread within HAVA to include the relevant sections necessary to implement a total project. In this case, the Agriculture Extension Service should be brought into the project whose assigned task it is to explain and train farmers into new agricultural techniques, which includes proper use of the irrigation system.

As outlined in more detail in a previous memo, "A Sense of Urgency," the construction of drains alone does not insure proper or timely use or maximize benefits realized from the expenditure. Training in the process of of leaching, soil conservation, and good water use and drainage practices is required. The Extension Service is the most logical actor in this training effort.

Since the technical knowledge about drainage and soil changes is not presently within the Extension Service, nor probably within HAVA, an active field advisor/trainer should be a USAID/SCS personnel input. This is already planned, I understand, but requires continuous re-statement it seems. The tentative job description has been outlined in a previous memo to the files, "An Outline of Duties of TDY Educator/Water Management Technician and the Work Context" of February 28, 1976.

Recommendation: A separate training unit within HAVA Agriculture Extension should be established to deal with these information/training aspects of our drainage project. At present, 2-3 men should be assigned to this unit with this specific and limited responsibility. One should perhaps have some seniority and certainly experience in the general activity. All should be relatively young, trained in agriculture and have the ability to learn, communicate with farmers, and then teach. Several of the interviewers borrowed from the HAVA Ag. Division for the 1975 Farm Economic Survey would be ideal. USAID/SCS should assign an advisor full time to this task. Together, this group would contact and train the local resident extension agents in areas where on-farm drain construction is planned. Then the total unit would approach the farmer.

II. Socio Economic Research and Monitoring: Baseline data should be gathered on all proposed project areas before they are actually decided upon as areas where the on-farm drain work is to be accomplished. Socio-economic status should be one of the elements involved in the choice of beneficiaries.

Recommendation: There needs to be an established, recognized unit within HAVA with this specific project-oriented responsibility, and it should be independent of the Technical Division to insure some neutrality of results. Such a research unit should probably be located within the Planning and Statistics section, which is a staff organization, although present personnel are probably not adequate to handle the task. The present head of this statistical section should not be in charge of the unit. This unit should have as its principle responsibility this research/monitoring activity for the Drainage Project. It could be a relatively small permanent unit (2-3 full time persons), but with standing authority to borrow select personnel (trained interviewers) from the other Divisions to complete research tasks as required. This was the procedure used for recruiting interviewers for the 1975 FES.

The monitoring activity relative to any given project area could be done by the permanent staff. This would involve such things as follow-up on the Extension Service information program, noted above, to insure that the farmers understand the aims of the project and the nature of their agreement. They should also monitor farmer attitudes as the project develops, to note changes and to suggest remedial action from the relevant line divisions (i. e. , Technical and Agriculture).

It should not be assumed that HAVA presently has all the skills necessary to pursue this activity but they come fairly close. The problems associated with establishing such a unit would be primarily organizational and having clearly stated expectations on job description. Probably the best way to do this is through working directly with the unit on at least part-time basis. Myself or someone with similar field experience could perhaps accomplish this.

III. On-Farm Drain Labor Organization: To accomplish the level of work on farm drains being considered in all planning papers, an effective system for recruiting, organizing and monitoring an expanded labor force is required. Experiments with day-labor have indicated the levels of work which can be expected from the rural laborers. The experiments also indicated the problems of supervision and payroll that must be faced by any future project. During the experimental period, piece-work construction was suggested but never attempted. Later attempts were made to let a major contract for some

of the work. Public announcements were made and bids were received but the bids were approaching double the cost of moving earth using day-labor. During the harvest season, just started, the labor force dropped from over 150 to about 70 men. The problems of organizing a hand-labor force of several thousand men are many and complex, and without HAVA 's enthusiastic and complete support, the task will not be possible.

As noted in previous memos and the subject of one in the immediate future, there have been indications from the start of the project of a HAVA lack of major interest in constructing on-farm drains (only about 3 kms. of such drains have been completed to date), and indications of a lack of major interest in using hand-labor on any large scale. The two items are very closely related. Since the farm drains are the core elements of the drainage project as planned, a full awareness of this possibility must be stressed before USAID goes deeper into other details of the project, i. e., heavy equipment, details that HAVA sees as more applicable to their usual work style.

Every attempt should be made by USAID to see that HAVA, in fact, gives the hand-labor method every chance of success rather than accept indifferent handling, and shifting excuses, as a serious attempt. This means serious guidance efforts in the fields of labor organization and methods of supervision.

Mr. Shad Niamatullah, the Chief of HAVA Administration Division, and responsible for all HAVA contracting and spending, has indicated that piece-work contracts with small groups are administratively acceptable. The Technical Division has suggested that this was not the case. If the amount of the agreement is less than 50,000 afs. (and all piece-work for small groups would be less), then public announcements and bids are not necessary. The only limitation stated was that each worker should receive his equal share of the total agreed-upon amount and that he sign a receipt much like the payroll arrangement. Such an arrangement would reduce the amount of daily supervision necessary, aside from technical supervision of ditch specifications, and probably simplify payment. All groups would not likely require payment on the same day.

Recommendation: USAID should insist upon a unit being established within the Technical Division, assigned with the specific responsibility to work with and establish an effective system for the organization and management of the

construction workers as a full time activity. The unit should be headed by a relatively senior staff member of proven ability with whom USAID can communicate and work. He should have experience in such work. Mr. Asef, while a key figure in the soils lab, has the required qualifications, demonstrated ability and, at least in the past, desire to accomplish the work in the most effective manner. No one else in that organization has to date reflected such key characteristics relative to this task. Mr. Asef should be the recommendation. To begin, there should be 4-5 other staff members, young, intelligent and energetic, (Mr. Baqi, for example). The assignment of marginally functional individuals to the task (as was the case with some previously assigned field supervisors) should be interpreted for what it is, i. e. , less than full interest in the success of this part of the project. These points should be clearly stated in HAVA and a strong restatement made of USAID interest in the use of hand labor.

In short, there are clear indications of a lack of HAVA interest in the use of large numbers of hand laborers in the drainage project, and great interest in machine work, following past patterns. While we do not want to push HAVA into something which is against their better interests, there are written agreements and new directions which USAID is obligated to pursue. We must, at least, give the hand labor activity a real try. This can only be done if capable individuals in both USAID/SCS and HAVA are assigned on a full time basis the task to solve the hand-labor organizational block. Without this sort of real focus, we must expect the present fuzzy situation to continue.

As in the past, I am available for discussion of any of the points raised and more than willing to aid in the organization of any of the units outlined. Further, I would be anxious to work with, aid, and/or monitor any or all of the resulting field activities.

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