

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Ernest J. Barbour, RD

DATE: December 10, 1977

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

SUBJECT: Criteria for Selecting Work Sites for the Helmand Drainage Project

Our most recent meeting on the selection criteria for work sites for the Helmand Drainage Project ended, I think, with the idea being forwarded that the starting point for the selection process should be with a series of over-lay maps for the project areas that would block out large areas which would not be acceptable for USAID supported drainage construction for a variety of reasons, e. g., large landowners, poor soils, no drain outlet. While I believe that such maps would be very useful in site selection, if they were as accurate as the soils maps developed for the Shamalan Project in the early 70's, I do not believe such maps can be developed in a reasonable period of time and be accurate enough to meet the very specific (in terms of limited land areas) needs of the project. The quick-and-dirty approach of blocking out areas for non-work on the basis of a few individuals' accumulated generalized knowledge of the Helmand has no great appeal. It is a sloppy way to do business and subject to all sorts of individual biases, subjective influences, and opens the way to by-pass the simple but accurate work outlined for the Socio-Economic Research Unit of HAVA. I recommend that the selection criteria again be focused on as the only basis for site selection with an eye to developing the most simplified set of criteria and allowing the least amount of subjective judgement or interpretation to enter the selection process. The approach for developing the criteria has a parallel in developing interview schedules; that is, with a wide variety of people being involved in applying the criteria, the need to make personal judgements and interpretations should be reduced to a minimum.

In this memo I will outline what seem to be the basic criteria and in what order they could be arranged to help set priorities. But in a later section I argue the point of the necessity of setting priorities. This outline is an attempt to present the criteria in their most realistic (for project implementation) frame-of-reference as opposed to some less pragmatic approaches. As you will note, much of what is being presented is not new but has been presented in perhaps slightly altered forms previously. Perhaps this could be used as one of the bases for discussion in next week's meeting with Mr. Burton who has also been working on the criteria.

The Criteria and Their Order:

1. Government and Villager interest in drain development on a particular piece of land.

This criterion is the starting point for the site selection and will reflect the socio-political context of the Helmand. In many cases USAID will not be made totally aware of the situation that lead to the initial selection of a particular site for consideration. This point is project and political reality and is a realistic starting point.

It should be noted that the development of the selection criteria will aid HAVA in dealing with political situations and pressures to work in some areas that are not economically defensible.

In some cases, villager interest and knowledge of the initial project plans should be checked. While the initial site selection can generally be considered the product of the local political context, a simple field check of villager interest may prove fruitful. General villager knowledge of the initial selection and interest in better drainage should not be assumed. I do not see this paragraph and the first paragraph of this section in contradiction but in recognition of the potential for at least two different situations or starting points in site selection.

2. Developable Land as a criterion involves mainly technical considerations. It involves several elements but might be broken down, at this stage of analysis, into two parts:

(a) Soils should be classified in such a way that measures the developability of a particular area within a reasonable period of time. This would include factors as mentioned by Cummings and others, e.g., salinity/sodicity which may be a long-term reversible factor, as well as basic soil characteristics e.g., soils that can support food-crop life as opposed to gravel.

(b) Drainability is another factor to determine initial site selection. This would include the dominant selection criterion of Phase I: access to a main drain outlet. It would also relate to soils, i.e., permeability characteristics combined with impermeable sub-strata as found in Nad-i-Ali and Marja. This last factor can perhaps be simplified to an agreement between USAID and HAVA on farm-drain spacing. The spacing is determined by the technical elements noted and aimed at getting the water table to an acceptable

level. The decision to work in an area or not could be stated in terms of minimum acceptable drain spacing, i. e., the project would not work in an area requiring the drains to be spaced at closer than 50 or 60 meter intervals. The drain interval agreement should be based on economic return considerations as well as HAVA politico-economic considerations, i. e., a desire not to concentrate their resources in a limited area.

3. Status of Land is discussed in my 21 Nov. 77 memo "Criteria for Work Site Selection in the Helmand Drainage Project", and refers to project work on settled and not yet settled land. This is where the HAVA land settlement program overlaps with the Drainage Project. In the last meeting, it was agreed that in Phase II there would be no restrictions against working on not yet settled land, assuming it met the technical criteria noted above.

It is perhaps not useful to set a priority between the already settled and farmed land versus the not yet settled land. It may be enough to inform HAVA that USAID would support drain work in areas not yet settled but that not more than 50% of the land area being developed at any one time should be of this category. Certainly there are many advantages to working on the unsettled land already outlined, including the nature of the target population.

The selection of not yet settled areas would rest on the technical criteria since the work would not directly and immediately involve farmers. In these cases and some of the newly settled areas, the additional technical criteria of access to irrigation water and land leveled to the point of making it irrigable should be added. The case in point is central Darwishan, some of which was scheduled for drainage work in the Phase I Project Paper.

4. The Target Population/Land Holdings should be defined carefully so that the farmer economic status criterion does not prohibit work in most Helmand areas. USAID should not support work in areas of large land owners that can afford to develop their own land. As noted previously, 27 Feb. 77, perhaps three-fourths of the total area to be developed at a specific site should be owned by farmers who own a total of less than 40 or 50 jeribs, a figure to be decided between HAVA and USAID planners and project personnel.

This land holdings approach would reduce the data gathering activity to a minimum and get at the farmer current economic status element without attempting to gather and analyze farm income data, which could complicate the issue.

5. Levels of Crop Production in the specific development area as a criterion is discussed in my 21 Nov. 77 memo and requires no further outlining here. This sort of information is not difficult to collect and relates directly to the project activity of drainage as it affects crop production. Again, this by-passes the need for the more complicated farm income data, and this data

can be used as a baseline against which to measure the change in production after the drainage system has been installed. As noted, the acceptable levels of production for setting the priority of work could vary by project area.

6. Farmer Agreement to the project after he has been clearly informed of how the project would specifically effect his land (how many drains of what size and where) has been discussed numerous times in past memos and should be the final criterion or barrier to be passed in the process of site selection. It assumes an information program and a monitoring process, all discussed elsewhere. The agreement should be in writing. It should be read and explained to the farmer in his own language and include an agreement to maintain the ditches in a functioning condition.

In conclusion, this may appear somewhat complex but on the ground I think it could be relatively simple to apply. Certainly the technical criteria may require expansion. While in the meeting we discussed the criteria in terms of setting priorities, I believe that by setting acceptable levels of whatever element realistically, noted at various points in this memo, the priorities will be established in a broader frame. The discussion of priorities would seem to be irrelevant given realistic cutting points of work-no work criteria. USAID does not expect to develop drainage in the total project areas but only in those parts that meet the criteria.

And now for further discussion.

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