**Concept Note**

**Consultative Group for Irrigation Management in Changed Times**

**Context**

Surface irrigation systems were seen as an answer to solve the problems of food security in India and were seen as the “temples of modern India”. Till the 60’s a major portion (about 50%-60%) of the net irrigated area in the country was irrigated by these surface irrigation schemes. However, it soon became clear that managing the systems with a depleting army of irrigation officers was not easy. Thus, farmer’s participation in Irrigation Management was introduced in India in 1970’s. In 1972, Irrigation commission expressed its concern about the under utilization of water in irrigation commands. In response, a Command Area Development Programme (CADP) was launched by GOI in 1974. The objective of this programme was to bridge quickly the gap between irrigation potential created and its utilization, by ensuring more efficient operation of irrigation system and accelerating the construction of field channels, field drains etc. (It is ironical that even after 40 years, we were discussing the same problem in the XIIth Five Plan Committee on Major and Medium irrigation schemes, 2012-17)

Recognizing the need for sound legal framework for PIM in the country, the Ministry of Water Resources brought out a model Act in 1998 to be adopted by state legislatures for enacting new Irrigation Act or amending the existing Irrigation Acts for facilitating PIM. Participatory Irrigation Management in India has traversed a long way since it was first introduced in the mid-nineties. At present about 15 state governments have enacted the PIM Act or made amendments in Irrigation Acts. More than 85,000 WUAs covering about 15 Mha have been formed, however there is no reliable data on their performance.

There is robust empirical evidence to show that wherever PIM has been effectively implemented, utilization of irrigation waters increases significantly. Equally important is the fact that PIM improves equitable access to water by all farmers and leads to sustainable operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems. When managed by WUAs, the farmers actively contribute towards the physical rehabilitation of the system, carry out operation and maintenance, undertake crop planning, ensure equitable water distribution and resolve conflicts amicably. There are many successful examples in the country such as the Waghad in Maharashtra, Satak,Man and Jobat in Madhya Pradesh, Paliganj in Bihar, Dharoi, Issar and Hathuka in Gujarat and Shri Ram Sagar Project in Andhra Pradesh.

**Challenges for promoting PIM**

Despite robust evidence of its advantages, as indicated above, there are significant challenges in (a) sustaining the gains wherever it is implemented successfully and (b) in scaling up PIM to irrigation projects where it is not currently implemented even though there is an Act in place. Some of the major challenges seen in many states to varying degrees are - no clear water allocation rights and autonomy given to WUAs, - inadequate restoration of the dilapidated physical system prior to PIM, - no accountability of either the elected representatives or state WRD to effectively implement the PIM Act, - no incentive to the WRD staff to implement PIM - no serious efforts to build the capacities of the WRD staff to appreciate process of formation and the role of WUAs, - inadequate resources for community mobilization process, - a financial structure of irrigation fees, O&M grant and other incentives that are inconsistent with goals of financial and operational sustainability and - almost no integration/collaboration with other Government departments such as soil and water conservation, agriculture, groundwater, cooperation.

**Recent Developments**

The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) launched recently has adopted an integrated approach to water management. One of the key objectives of PMKSY is to provide water in each field through reduction in the gap between irrigation potential created and utilised, command area development and enhancing the water use efficiency and management. However, as brought out by the paper by IWMI, given the financial limitations, it needs to prioritize the areas of intervention.

The Ministry of Water Resources in December 2014 had drafted a Model PIM Act and invited feedback from various stakeholders. Under the leadership of Shri V.B.Patel, DSC, AKRSPI and GIDR had provided detailed feedback on the same. Thereafter the IndiaNPIM (a Network of PIM practitioners) conducted a series of regional workshops across the country with WUAs, Government functionaries and NGOs. Based on the feedback received in these workshops, they revised the draft Bill. A meeting was called recently to further refine and finalise the same in which DSC was also invited.

The Samaj Pragati Sahyog has recently launched a Water Practitioners Network (WPN) wherein different aspects of water management including PIM are included. The WPN aims to share best practices and also influence policy. The SPS in collaboration with the Shiv Nadar University has also launched a two year and short term course on Water Science and Policy wherein a four week course of PIM is included.

Several initiatives in the field including those by DSC have shown that PIM alone does not lead to better water use efficiency. There is need for intervening in supply and demand side management through interventions on enhancing soil health, sustainable agriculture and groundwater management. The surface irrigation systems need be seen as a part of the larger eco system impacted by and impacting the surface water bodies and groundwater. Thus, an integrated water balance and water budgeting approach needs to be adopted in the catchment and command area.

The Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Govt of India, Dr. Amarjit Singh is quite forward looking and positive. He is looking for new ideas on how to overcome some of the challenges for scaling up PIM. Similarly there are several champions at the state level such as Dr Sanjay Belsare, Under Secretary, Govt. of Maharashtra who are keen to scale up PIM under the PMKSY.

The current approach to PIM is a “one size fits all” approach without considering the groundwater, land use pattern or the socio-economic scenario and aspirations of rural communities. The focus of PIM seems to be largely on water distribution and not water management. It is therefore not universally applicable and more suitable in water scarce areas rather than water surplus areas. Thus, there is need to introspect and brainstorm on a new/modified/alternative approach to PIM for managing our irrigation systems. An approach that requires relatively less time, which can be scaled up, which is sustainable and which is acceptable to the farmers, the irrigation bureaucracy and elected representatives.

**Key issues for discussion**

1. **Status and Management Strategies for catchment and command areas**
   1. Catchment area
   2. Command area
   3. Surface water bodies
   4. **G**roundwater
2. **Participatory Approaches to irrigation management**
   1. Demographic profile
   2. Use of technology
   3. Level of participation
   4. PRIs
   5. Owner and tenant farmers
   6. Act and Regulatory Authority
3. **Issues and Challenges in Operation and Maintenance of Irrigation Systems**
   1. Current nature of funding
   2. Role of CSRs
   3. Implementation strategy
   4. Machinery and labour
   5. Water logging and drainage
4. **Way forward**
   1. Water rights and water allocation
   2. National Policy
   3. Scheme / Programme
   4. Strategy for implementation
   5. Accountability andIncentives for WRD

**Date :** 20th July, 2017, Thursday

**Time:** 10 am to 6 pm

**Venue:** GIDR, S.G. Highway, Ahmedabad

**SCHEDULE**

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| **Time** | **Session** | **Topic** | **Panel Members** |
| 10.00 am to 10.30 am | I | Opening Remarks | Dr R Parthasarthy  Mr. Sachin Oza  Mr Vijay Mahajan |
| 10.30 am to 12.00 pm | II | Status and Management Strategies for catchment and command areas | Dr.Tushaar Shah and Representative from SSNNL. |
| 12.00 pm to 1.30 pm | III | Participatory Approaches to irrigation management | Mr Apoorva Oza, Mr O.T.Gulati and Mr Y.D.Sharma |
| 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm |  | Lunch |  |
| 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm | IV | Issues and Challenges in Operation and Maintenance of Irrigation Systems | Mr V.B.Patel and Representative from Water Resources Dept. |
| 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm | V | Way Forward | Mr. Vijay Mahajan, Dr Tushaar Shah and Dr R Parthasarthy |
| 5.30 pm |  | Tea |  |