

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATORY IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT (PIM): A CASE STUDY OF MAHAWELI SYSTEM H

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The Mahaweli Restructuring and Rehabilitation Project (MRRP) funded by the World Bank in June 1998 emphasised Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) to increase the agricultural productivity and sustainability of System H. The Distributary Channel Farmer Organizations (DCFOs) have a vital role to play in the realization of these objectives. Since the MRRP is nearing completion, there has been a growing concern regarding the performance of the PIM. This study focussed on the performance assessment of PIM in the Mahaweli System H. Madatugama and Eppawella blocks were selected purposively for the study. Data on irrigation, crop production, cost and returns, and farmers' perception on PIM etc. were collected by a survey of 75 randomly selected transferred and non-transferred DCFOs. Secondary information was also collected from the Mahaweli System H. Performance indicators on irrigation, crop production, financial and management impacts were computed. The overall performance of DCFOs was measured by using a weighted composite performance index (WCPI).

The data analysis shows significant (36%) higher value of water productivity in transferred DCFOs compared to non-transferred DCFOs, particularly in Eppawella block. There was significant influence of water management and cropping plans on water productivity. There was reduction in water use per hectare (water duty) in transferred DCFOs (0.87 m) compared to non-transferred DCFOs (1.60 m) in both blocks. PIM also has abandoned Bethma cultivation and increased land use intensity from 1.5 to 1.8 in both blocks. Due to the introduction of bulk water allocation under the PIM, farmers have increased cultivation of cash crops during Yala. However, there was marginal increase in agricultural productivity. Farmers' perception on the quality of services on adequacy, timeliness, fairness of water distribution and the incidence of irrigation related conflict among farmers indicated improvement under PIM. It was more positive in Madatugama than Eppawella block. DCFOs' Irrigation Service Fee (ISF) collection is 94% and 88% in Madatugama and Eppawella blocks respectively. ISF has increased cost to farmers but their income has increased very marginally. Madatugama block DCFOs demonstrated the ability to operate and maintain the system satisfactorily, through increased savings, recruiting required staff and other related services.

WCPI analysis shows that in both the studied blocks, more than 50% of the transferred DCFOs were performing less than the average level. This raises concerns about the performance of the PIM. This suggests that more training and monitoring as well as additional time are needed especially for the weak DCFOs.

Financial assistance from the University of Peradeniya (RG/2000/04/Ag) is acknowledged.