

CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION

Dr. B.R.K. Pillai

Commissioner (CADWM), MoWR, RD & GR

A. Why CADWM Program is important?

We have come to a juncture where we can ill afford to ignore the impending water crisis. Coming to the doorstep of this crisis has not been a chance phenomenon, but an easily foreseeable setting ordained by country's uninterrupted population growth, and also its somewhat impassive and uncoordinated response to the core issues of water resources management.

The core issues can be categorized under two broad categories, namely Supply management and Demand management, though we also consistently face the third category of issues pertaining to Surplus management – i.e. floods. These core issues cannot be addressed by isolated measures, even if each such measure is having substantial conditional merits.

These isolated measures – though seemingly viable and attractive for the short-term gains – often fail because of the fragmentation of efforts between Co-basin States, lack of sectoral synergy (e.g. synergy of water policy with the land-use policy, or agriculture policy), and lack of institutional synergy (e.g. synergy between surface and groundwater development). They also suffer from insufficient and patchy financings, and give skewed results because of top-down implementations (i.e. Centre deciding what is good for all States, State deciding for all Districts, District deciding for all Blocks, and so on).

Our failure in addressing of core issues, despite formidable but isolated efforts, is most glaringly reflected in the irrigation sector. Each isolated

effort – be it in dam building, or the spread of tubewell pumping, or construction of check dams, or creation of farm ponds – has been colossal in scale. They put India in the top global rankings – third in building large dams (possibly first if you count all dams), first in groundwater development, and probably first in construction of check dams and farm ponds as well. Even then, irrigation – with its lion's share in water demand – has become the prime cause of India's water crisis, and is also affected the most by this crisis.

The supply-side and demand-side solutions for management of irrigation are not the polar opposites or binary alternatives. Neither are they isolated solutions to be applied in different areas. They in essence go hand in hand, providing a coupled solution for the same irrigated area. The CADWM program perhaps provides the best possible avenue for bringing the much needed integration between the sets of supply and demand solutions; and this is reason enough to draw utmost attention for the CADWM program.

B. What is CADWM Program?

The initial era of canal irrigation started with the assumption that last mile connectivity (below government controlled outlets) will be collectively developed and operated by group of farmers on their own. A gap in translation of this assumption led to the initiation of Command Area Development (CAD) Program in 1974-75, aiming exclusively for the development of connectivity – but not for its continued operation and maintenance. This basic philosophy did not change, though the program evolved with passing years imbibing new activities such as land-leveling, land-consolidation, drainage, reclamation-of-water-logged-areas etc. In 2004, the CAD program was restructured and renamed as Command Area Development & Water Management (CADWM) program bringing greater emphasis on Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) and seeking coverage of micro-irrigation under canal command.

Till March 2016, an investment of Rs. 7096 crore had been made by the Central Government under CADWM program, and with a matching investment coming from respective State Governments works were completed in an area of about 215 lakh hectares – steadily covering over 5 lakh hectares each year. In July 2016, with the initiation of the 99 Prioritized AIBP projects scheme, the program got restricted to about 87 projects in 17 States for the *paripassu* completion of CAD works. From 2016-17 till 2018-19, the Central Government has released Rs. 2380 crore to these States, and completion of works in about 12.30 lakh hectares is reported by them.

As most of us would know, the works planning in a command area invariably gets influenced by the pre-decided contours of canal system. Similar is the case with the overall program implementation which – through guidelines – is required to adhere with the outlines of approved Scheme. However, one size cannot fit all – hence care is being taken to bring utmost flexibility in implementation of the present CADWM Program.

In order to bring focus on the soft PIM component and to track its progress, the cost norm of the approved scheme (i.e. Rs. 40,000 per hectare) is split into two verticals – namely Structural (for Rs. 35,000 per ha) and Non-structural (for Rs. 5,000 per ha). Even these two broad norms are applied essentially for the computation of central Assistance, and States can top-up these costs with added State shares. The scope of guidelines itself is limited to cover conditions of central assistance, while the qualitative aspects of program implementation are largely guided through collective deliberations held in the Project Implementation Review Committee meetings. The CAD Cells of CWC Regional Offices and the Project Management Unit of PMKSY provide the monitoring support. The centralized CADWM-Information System provides elaborate tools of management information system, besides facilitating the process of timely release of Central Assistance.

C. How Conference can help CADWM Program?

Despite the backing of Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) for full funding closure targeting mission mode completion of projects, the program is

slipping in meeting the timelines. The current work progress – of about 4 lakh hectare each year – has fallen below the long-term average of CADWM program. One reason for this slippage can be attributed to CADWM's *spari-passu* linkage with projects that are still ongoing. But there are other limitations as well – namely: slow pace of surveys and planning, conventional designs, traditional material, age-old construction techniques, small contractual packages, and human resource capacities of Project Implementing Agencies. The CADWM conferences, now planned as series of annual events, are expected to provide the much needed technological break-through in overcoming these limitations.

Creation of a separate vertical for the non-structural intervention has enabled us to realize the inherent flaw in implementation of PIM. Even with the reported progress of about 50% in creation of WUAs, the actual utilization of funds earmarked for capacity building and strengthening of WUAs has been meager. Apart from the intended direct flow of grants to WUAs (amounting to about Rs.1800 per ha), there are ample funds (about Rs. 3200 per ha) which can be flexibly used for hiring of incremental staff, engagement of Social Facilitators/ NGOs, payments for training institutes etc. The Conference is expected to help in assimilating the complex issues of WUAs, and in developing synergy between Project Implementing Agencies and potential Service Providers.

Success and failure of CAD implementation is largely site specific as it depends on the condition of hydraulic connectivity as well as on the social and cultural setup of the farmers. Even then there are immense lessons that can be brought forward and assimilated for guiding the implementations of other ongoing projects. The learning curve from such assimilations can also help in right setting of the contours of future CADWM programs. The conference will provide the much needed platform for sharing of such valuable experiences for the assimilation of critical information.
