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Ambitious Scheme that Seeks to Boost Agriculture through Irrigation

Q: What prompted the formation of TIP?

A: A study conducted in 1987 on traditional irrigation in Tanzania showed that 80 per cent of the irrigated land was still farmer managed and located in the traditional irrigated areas. The study also showed that more than 50 per cent of the government involvement in irrigation was mainly focused on the remaining 20 percent, which was belonging to the government or private large scale farmers. Concerning the origins of crop supply to the central Kariakoo market in Dar-es-salaam it showed that more than 90 per cent of vegetable supplies came from isolated traditional irrigated areas in Korogwe, Iringa, Lushoto, Kilimanjaro and Meru in Arusha Region. The rapid surveys at the regional markets of Moshi, tanga and Morogoro showed the same results. It was noted that production of crops in indigenous irrigated areas was decreasing continuously due to newly energy technical environmental and social problems. The demand for water and irrigated land was growing, it showed, but in many areas streams and rivers were drying in volume and many common springs had dried up. These factors led to the formation of TIP in 1987.

Q: What are the objectives of TIP?

A: Improvement of land and water management in traditional irrigated areas in Tanzania, through sustainable catchment development in which irrigation can prosper by integrating institutional support, environmental protection and improvement of irrigation infrastructure.

Q: How was the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) involved?

A: SNV started the implementation of the Traditional Irrigation and Environmental Development Organization (TIP) in July 1988 based on the results of the study conducted in 1987. TIP's first phase was started in three northern eastern districts of Lushoto, Same and Mwanza. Later in 1989, the programme was introduced in Iringa and Kilosa Districts. For each district involved, SNV provided an irrigation engineer for technical assistance and in Dar-es-Salaam, SNV established a co-ordination office for the overall programme.

Q: Since its formation in 1989, TIP is in its third phase. What are the main achievements of the project?

A: Several positive elements have been observed including increased responsibility of the respective district and WUGs especially through economic bias approach and tail-to-mouth concept. Privatization of irrigation services has been so far realized and over 300 well-trained para-professionals have been trained. Traditional irrigation skills have been promoted to over 27,000 farmers in seven districts in the country. During the period, the number of WUGs established by farmers has reached 166 out of which 15 are legally registered. Traditional irrigated area improved so far is 7,660 hectares, which is 10 per cent of the traditional irrigated area in 7 districts. TIP has managed through its skills to the farmers to conserve 4,600 hectares and planted about a million trees with over 60 per cent survival rate.

Q: TIP has been working mainly with Water User Groups (WUGs). Can you point out the benefits these groups get?

A: As I have explained before, TIPs major role is to provide technical and material support towards strengthening institutional and organizational capacity of WUGs and ensuring sustainability of programme of the said groups. The achievements realized so far by the groups are what they get. In addition to this, WUGs get training on how to develop participatory implementation approaches, training on management and planning to support them in developing information systems and data collection for their day-to-day decisions. Skills on savings and credit systems are included. Concrete training and advice on group formation and registration have been well given to these groups.

Q: What are the main problems in the implementation of the project?

A: The ideas of changing TIP as a programme to a national NGO needs with a careful transformation process to ensure that capitalization on the achievements and experiences of the past are well consolidated. To create effective local ownership and sustainability is a long-term issue. It requires strong networking with the Government and other related actors. Sometimes TIP has experienced an excessive bureaucracy in water right possession, land use issues, water management and unnecessary competitions with other related organizations rather than complimentary actions. To change a supply driven human character to demand driven has taken long to be accepted by farmers.

Q: What is the objective of changing TIP to an NGO?

A: The main reasons lie on management, policymaking and accounting sustainability. In this regard, it was agreed in formulating TIP phase III that TIP requires to have its own autonomy with mandate to capitalize, consolidate and provide services on demand driven systems preferable on cost recovery approach. The issue of open market needs to be promoted and guided. These factors cannot be realized under the project concept.

Q: Which is the most successful district in implementation?

A: All districts have done a good job. TIP as an integrated programme has evenly dispersed to all seven districts in more or less achievements. Each has something better to share with others.

Q: What were the criteria used to choose the districts?

A: Although there were economic potentials in the areas, still farming risks were quite high, resources were poorly conserved, low availability of food crops, low cash income and poor employment opportunities were the main criteria used to select the districts.

Q: Why did you work with the districts and not regions or divisions?

A: The basic philosophy of TIP is district based partnership, where decision making process can be legally and in participatory way taken. It is the best level where farmers can determine their activities, the kind of assistance, the scale and the pace of implementation of intervention. Later after creating important capacities, the low level becomes easy to be legally supported and consolidated. The district can effectively act on behalf of farmers and the real bottom up, on farmer request, step-by-step and based on mutual conditions between programme and beneficiaries can be created.

Q: Recently you decided to work with the northern part of Tanzania only. Why?

A: It is an effective role of changing TIP programme towards a service-oriented organization in the country. TIP will become a national advisory center for irrigation technical matters, institutionalization and organizational development training and support, empowerment of water user groups and water user associations and capacity building of partner organizations.

Q: SNV is slowly pulling out of TIP activities; do you think the NGO will stand on its own?

A: TIP as an NGO aims at taking over the business supported by SNV for over ten years with a view to continue and sustain the achievements there of without derogating the objective of the organization. At present SNV remains the only settler of TIP, aims at playing its present status of funds solicitor in collaboration with the organization itself. In this regard, relationship between SNV and the new TIP will be further improved and maintained, not under the single donor status but under a multi-donor-funded organization. It is not the aim of TIP to stand on its own but in a better collaborating manner.