



Number 1
March 2004

ISIIMM news

Institutional and Social Innovations in Irrigation Mediterranean Management

Overall objective - Overcoming current contradictions associated with local water management in Mediterranean catchment areas through innovative institutional solutions, based on an understanding of six key dimensions: social, institutional, agricultural, territorial, hydrological and historical

The ISIIMM project started on 1st May 2003, fruit of the common approaches and objectives of its twelve partners. Its initial stage saw project organisation and the constitution of six national teams (Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Spain, Italy and France). Its first year has been devoted to national and local case studies, drawing up a state-ments of conditions and aims for each river basin and country using a partici-patory approach and based on existing documentation plus the scientific assessment of the ISIIMM experts. The approach also assesses institutional organisation and practices.

A website on the Organisation System of Information and Research of Irrigation Societies (the OSIRIS database) has been set up. It shows the dynamics of project evolution and reflects the close collaboration and continuous exchange between ISIIMM staff (the Coordination Unit based in Montpellier) and national coordinators, river basin facilitators and scientific and development partners.

These communication and dissemina-tion activities have an important place in the project and are worked on conti-nuously, producing and distributing flyers in English, French and Arabic describing the activities and expected out-puts of the project, articles and publica-tions in the periodical press, as well as reproducing presentations made during conferences, meeting and other events. Additional voluntary initiatives have taken place in some countries, such as the establishment of National Scientific Committees (in Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt) or of an Advisory Board (Italy).

We are looking at any opportunities of common action. The ISIIMM project is now well under way and progressing at its cruising speed.

Palestine joins the ISIIMM project

Today, the twelfth partner foreseen in the original ISIIMM proposal - the Palestinian Authority - is joining the proj-ect. Its Albadan Valley (a right bank Jor-dan tributary) was chosen because of its interest in terms of water resource man-agement, water uses, agricultural and ins-titutional practices.

The Project Head, Michel SOULIÉ, recently met the representatives of inter-ested Palestinian organisations involved in the Albadan Valley water management, including Dr. A.R.TAMINI Director Gen-eral of the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG), a non-governmental organisation which has expressed the great interest in participating in the project as the Palesti-nian local partner. The PHG is already working in water management and in social development of irrigation in the Albadan valley. The PHG has already started looking for financial to meet the obligation of the ISIIMM project for local financial participation. Constructive contacts have been made with the French embassies in Jordan and Israel, which have expressed interest in the project and have promised support. An agreement with the PHG will be signed as soon as the necessary counterpart finance is found. We are glad to welcome our Palestinian colleagues to the ISIIMM project and hope that, despite the difficult political context, our collaboration and partner-ship will be successful.

Briefly, in this release

- The first results of the project: the situation in partner countries
- Forthcoming local seminars
- Four project partners organise a common training event in Egypt



The first results of the project:



WUA meeting

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Egypt

The activities of ISIIIMM-Egypt have included the completion of all data collection needed to understand the current situation in local irrigation water management in the four pilot areas Behera (two sites), Menia and Fayoum. This has been undertaken in parallel with:

- the establishment of permanent pilot area project stations, each based on establishment of close partnership relations with a local NGO,
- ensuring that the regional facilitators had proper logistical support, especially transport, which

was provided through the Centre for Rural Development Research and Studies (CRDRS).

The volume of data and the large number of local water users organizations involved has meant that the teams have had to focus on smaller areas than originally intended. These have been identified based on criteria defined by the scientific committee.

A consolidated database is being built about the current situation in the pilot areas. This seeks to present concrete data to the series of local and national seminars as a basis for discussion and to ensure common understanding for the planning of the second phase.

Contacts with local people and organisations have been established and formalised through regular contacts between regional facilitators and their local partners.

A success has been the building of a good and balanced partnership with officials of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation at national, regional and local levels. They are included in a coordinating committee established for each of

the four areas to support project activities at the local level.

A national coordinating committee is now being established following the request of other partners including the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation and some other stakeholders.

It is now planned to start a group of national and local seminars with all stakeholders to prepare and plan for the second phase activities.

This will go in parallel with investigations and field surveys by the members of the national scientific committee to get a better and deeper understanding of the peculiarities of local aspects of irrigation in the pilot sites.

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Morocco

The two case studies are representative from the current situation with water and land management in Morocco. Both offer many elements of knowledge brought together with the help of NGOs, administrations, universities and research stakeholders.

The Office du Haouz is a good example of Morocco's main water management problems. It is one of the oldest irrigation zones and many different systems are in use. The Office has built new schemes, sometimes in the same place as old ones, sometimes in new dry lands. Water is scarce, coming from three main mountain basins and from underground sources. There is strong competition for both land use and water between many economic and social groups. The dependency of Marrakech lowland irrigation on the highland basins (which also have irrigation systems) is an important issue of the resources management. This, the complexity of each collective network and the development of individual strategies to obtain underground water must be understood in order to define institutions and rules which will satisfy demand in the fairest way.

The valley of Ait Bouguemez is located in the central Atlas and water management is a key to help the inhabitants to live and develop their mountain economy through agriculture and eco-tourism. Many villages depend on shared springs and canals where water distribution is still governed by oral tradition, but after many

years of water scarcity, people are facing difficulties. The World Bank is financing canal modernisation and the creation of formal water users association. What should be the future of the valley and how will the different villages adapt to new institutions and rules and to integration of water pricing in their traditional systems? The Association for Local Development of the valley is interested in the process of modernisation, but people want to be able to participate to define the new rules for the future.

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Canal de Nfis

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Lebanon

The Agricultural Office of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Zahle and Bekaa (CCIAZ) is in charge of ISIIIMM project implementation in the "Canal 900" area of the southern Bekaa region. This is an irrigation canal managed by the Litani River Authority responsible for irrigation schemes in southern Lebanon.

The case study area is located in the 2000 ha phase 1 of the "Southern Bekaa scheme" which totals 21 500 ha of irrigation and 1500 ha of drainage. 2003 was its first year of operation.

Canal 900 is well equipped and computerized. Water Users Associations were created recently. The main problems related to canal water use are pollution and the coverage of the irrigated area, restricted to land on the left of the canal. In Lebanon, the project aims to identify and assist Water Users Associations in the Litani high basin, and to understand the interaction through the Geographical, Social, Historical, Institutional, Territorial and Hydraulic dimensions.

A number of reports have been collected concerning the water sector including its the organisations, water resources and water rights. However, one of the most important constraints is the lack of accurate data concerning some issues as well as difficult access to information. So that, this phase will be longer than expected. Today, the Lebanese team is working to establish strong relations with water users and to reinforce its cooperation with the Litani River Authority.

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the situation in partner countries



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Italy

The Italian case study is located in the Piave River basin but uses water of the Piave River for irrigation. A sub-area was selected for the sake of concreteness and to avoid hostilities in an area where the topic explored is very delicate and troublesome: conflicting water uses are a tricky and deeply-rooted issue that create tensions between the actors involved.

The pilot area has a surface of about 13 000 ha and involves five municipalities in the north-west of Treviso that are willing to adopt a new integrated water management approach involving several bodies. The Land Reclamation Board, which intends to rethink irrigation in an area that is fast developing from rural to peri-urban by substituting low-efficiency gravitational irrigation with higher efficiency systems, utilising sprinkler irrigators. In parallel, the Aqueduct and Sewerage Union needs to install both sewerage and drinking water systems. Both institutions aim at the optimisation use of the resources of the Piave River and have agreed on the benefits of a collaboration and integration of their projects. The integration concerns the use of common infrastructure where possible, which leads to a new system with economic and management synergies.

Spain

Spain has a long tradition of self-organised irrigator communities involving many farmers cultivating small plots. The examples of Jucar and Genil basins (Valencia and Grenada), make it possible to understand how users' syndicates are preparing to modernise and adapt to new context and conditions in which less water is available for agriculture.

The first part of the project has focused on the collection and organisation of information relevant to each of the case studies. The main actions planned for this stage of the project are its organisation (documentation and understanding of the watershed case studies and irrigation context), networking and participative organisation of water stakeholders and users, organisation of local seminars and participation in general meetings.

Several methodological criteria specifically related to the characteristics of Spanish case studies were identified in order to implement this work. Work has been organised in several tasks that go deeply

into the analysis of the institutional and legal framework of water management in Spain.

A compilation and review of public administrative and technical reports, of State and Regional Government plans and of technical and financial reports from water users associations have been carried out. A standard questionnaire to collect information from water users associations was elaborated and tested. The Spanish team has started to implement a Geographical Information System (GIS) and a database to integrate spatial, social, institutional and economical information (responsible is Mr. C.SANCHIS).



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France

The French teamwork is oriented towards the description and assessment two French pilot areas (Têt and Durance river basins). This work should allow the most important problems concerning water resources management to be studied in the next phases. At present, several specific working topics can be distinguished:

- Water Framework Directive implementation: Participation of the project partners in a working group of the Rhone-Mediterranean-Corsica river basin region concerning the status of irrigation canals as "artificial water bodies".
- Inventory and critical analysis of existing local

water management organisations (water users associations, regional development companies, trade-unions, local authorities...) in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The conclusions of this work should be used to make practical recommendations, such as a contribution to the elaboration of the draft law on administrative simplification of water users associations is under preparation by the Government.

- Problems of urbanization and evolution of the urban pressure: urban/rural conflict and its impact on the functioning of water users associations.
- Management of the multiple uses of canals for irrigation, water supply, fauna and flora protection...

In short

Giovanna Fortuni (previous National Coordinator) left Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei.

Roberta Camera becomes the National Coordinator and Anita Fassio assumes the responsibilities of the Piave Basin facilitator. They have been actively involved in the ISIIMM project since the beginning of November.

Roberta Camera



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The general assembly of the "French Mediterranean Region Irrigators Association" (took place at the end of January 2004. This brought together Regional and Departmental Chambers of Agriculture of the Languedoc Roussillon and PACA, as well as all interested water users associations from both regions. The recognition and defence of the Mediterranean specificities in the field of the irrigation water use is the main objective of this Association.

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