

## Investment in Village Irrigation

Restoration of abandoned irrigation works and rehabilitation of those working schemes whose efficiency has suffered due to neglect has been for several years a major component of rural development in Sri Lanka, though the emphasis on this activity has varied. A useful indicator of a programme's importance and government interest is the amount of financial resources allocated. The following table gives government expenditure on irrigation.

Between 1950-1982, a period just over 30 years the total investment in irrigation was Rs.12,242 million, 95% of the total expenditure was on major and medium irrigation works including River Basin Development Projects. For many years the village irrigation systems in the country received marginal attention of the Government mainly due to the competing demands from the major irrigation sector which was considered more favourable for the allocation of resources.

From 1970's, the investments on village irrigation was quite substantial, and several national agencies were involved in

the task. Foreign funding has also been available. Though the investment in village irrigation has been increasing over the years, the share between the two irrigation sectors has not changed much due to the large investment in the Mahaweli Development Programme.

As shown in the tables below rehabilitation and improvements to village irrigation are undertaken through several programmes, viz;

- (a) The block votes under the Department of Agrarian Services;
- (b) The Decentralized Budget;
- (c) The village Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme;
- (d) The District Rural Integrated Development Programmes;
- (e) The Anuradhapura Dry Zone Agricultural Project;
- (f) Sharmadana Programmes, under the Rural Development Department;
- (g) The District Development Council's Programme;
- (h) and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign

### GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN IRRIGATION 1950-1982

Period	Major and Medium Schemes		Minor Village Schemes		All Schemes	
	Amount (Rs. Mn.)	Percentage	Amount (Rs. Mn.)	Percentage	Amount (Rs. Mn.)	Percentage
1950-54	256.6	94.0	609.5	5.0	273.0	100
1955-59	169.1	93.9	11.0	6.1	180.1	100
1960-64	168.9	96.3	6.4	3.7	175.3	100
1965-69	265.7	91.9	23.3	8.1	289.0	100
1970-74	455.7	86.6	70.4	13.4	526.1	100
1975-79	2016.2	91.1	196.6	8.9	2212.8	100
1980-82	8300.3	96.7	285.4	3.3	8585.7	100
Total	11632.5	95.0	609.5	5.0	12242.0	100

Source: *Adapted from a paper by Abeywickrama, N. Irrigation and Water Management Policies in Sri Lanka, 1983 (mimeo)*

### EXPENDITURE ON VILLAGE IRRIGATION 1980-1984 (Rs.Mn)

Agency	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Dept. of Agrarian Services (DAS)	22.5	19.3	31.4	28.0	34.8
District Decentralized Budget (DCB)	131.7*	45.6	22.5	28.8	9.7
Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDP)	15.3*	39.9	47.0	95.7	46.7
Village Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme (VIRP)	8.0*	2.5	20.0	84.4	95.0
District Development Councils Programme (DDC)	--	--	--	--	2.5
Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC)	0.4	1.0	1.4	2.3	3.2

(\* This includes total expenditure between 1977-1980)

Source: 1. Department of Agrarian Services  
2. Ministry of Land & Land Development  
3. Freedom from Hunger Campaign