

FOUNDING OF IWMI IN SRI LANKA





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The inside story of the founding of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)



By Nanda Abeywickrama

Former Secretary to the Ministry of Lands and Land Development (1978-1988), Director, International Cooperation, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) (1988-1994) and Special Advisor to the Director General, IWMI (1997-2013)

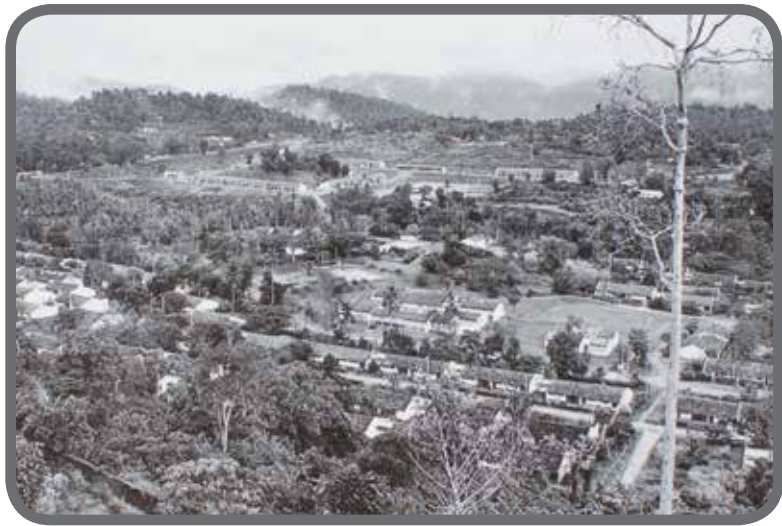
Front cover photo: Aerial view of IWMI headquarters in Pelawatte, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka.

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Aerial view of Digana Village, Kandy, where the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI) started operations.

Introduction

In 2015, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), initially founded as the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI), will be celebrating its 30th anniversary of the start of operations. Over the years, the relationship between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Institute has been cordial and productive. IIMI was the first and, perhaps, remains as the only international entity to establish its headquarters in Sri Lanka, with a mandate to manage a global operation from here. This is the personal experience the writer had of the circumstances and events that led to the establishment of this Institute.

The setting

The parliamentary general elections in 1977 was a watershed in the political landscape of Sri Lanka. The government that came into power mid-year sought a more liberalized and open economy, and hence embarked on an ambitious program of economic development. Four national projects were created: export processing, urban development, housing for people and the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Program (AMDP), and these were earmarked for priority investment. By the early 1980s, with substantial support from multilateral and bilateral donors, the government was investing heavily in irrigation development and rehabilitation of existing systems. While the AMDP was the single biggest project undertaken, several other irrigation projects, large and small, were initiated to ensure a more equitable spread of the benefits. The ministries of Agriculture, Lands and Land Development, and Mahaweli Development shared responsibility for these initiatives. The unprecedented pace of development raised concerns among professionals and even donors about how improvements in productivity could be attained and, more importantly, made sustainable.

The Ministry of Lands and Land Development, which was responsible for irrigation, land settlement and forestry, had the mandate to lead the irrigation sub-sector. There were many unresolved issues on priorities and direction, so the ministry had initiated wide-ranging discussions and dialogues on water management and farmer participation. Significant among these was a study on the ‘proposed water management in major irrigation schemes in Sri Lanka’ undertaken by the development contractor CH2M HILL for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This study made some far-reaching recommendations for improving irrigation productivity. We also sought advice from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA), which is well known for its expertise in irrigation management. Water management was one of the key areas identified for urgent attention. Several modest experimental programs were started in the early 1980s at a local level. These included the Minipe Water Management Program and Hakwatuna Oya. USAID was already in the field in the Gal Oya Valley, carrying out pioneering work in rehabilitating irrigation systems together with farmer participation, and we were on the lookout for further systematic ways of addressing these issues. At this time, there was also increasing concern among donors about the wisdom of investing further in irrigation infrastructure without concurrently putting in place mechanisms for improving management and productivity of irrigation systems. International scientists were collaborating with Sri Lankan staff, especially through the Agrarian Research and Training Institute (ARTI) (now the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute [HARTI]), to find answers to the emerging issues.

Informal meeting

It was against this backdrop that I met Dr. David Seckler (who later became IWMI’s Director General [DG]) at a USAID reception in

mid-1982. This was shortly after one of my field visits to a farmer organization program in the Minipe-Nagadeepa settlement scheme, a highly problematic irrigation system. Dr. John Flynn of USAID and David had seen a TV news item reporting my visit, and while discussing this David whispered to me that there was a proposal going around to set up an international irrigation management center. The Ford Foundation (FF) had been commissioned by the then Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (now referred to as 'CGIAR'), located in the World Bank in Washington, to work out the details. David felt that, while FF would likely evaluate several prospective host countries, Sri Lanka would be a strong contender. He suggested that I meet Dr. Roberto Lenton (who later became DG of IIMI) of FF who was going to be in Colombo shortly to attend a seminar at ARTI. David had previously worked in India for FF, and I first met him in Denver, Colorado, while on a tour organized by the State Department of the USA in the mid-1980s. This time around, David was working in Sri Lanka as a consultant to USAID to design the Water Management Synthesis Project for us, partly at my personal request for his inclusion in the team.

Not exactly planned, Roberto and I met each other at one of the receptions held by ARTI soon after, and had an initial talk which was very encouraging. Roberto, being more familiar with the huge irrigation systems and networks in the subcontinent, seemed less than impressed with the happenings in Sri Lanka. However, he was responsive to an exploratory visit. He said he could arrange for Dr. Ralph Cummings, an American university professor and a former Head of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, who had been engaged by FF to consult potential stakeholders, to visit Sri Lanka on a reconnaissance mission. I undertook to make the local arrangements for the visit, and within a few weeks dates were agreed upon with no specific commitments on either side. The idea of an international research center was still at an incipient stage. If it were to become

a reality, CGIAR had to decide on the nature of the location, taking into consideration a wide range of factors. Meanwhile, Dr. Gamini Gunasekara, a colleague of mine at the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (MASL) who had moved to ICRISAT, India, briefed me on the pros and cons of hosting an international research center in Sri Lanka.

Hosting an international organization

Hosting an international body within a sovereign nation entails certain formalities and procedures. These enable the body to function legitimately, be recognized locally and by the international community, while enabling it to operate within the laws and practices of the host country at the same time and hopefully yielding some benefits for this country as well. Such arrangements are beneficial in a number of ways: (i) enhances the profile of the host country as having an environment conducive to activities of an international nature; (ii) increases interaction with other international bodies, and promotes exchange of knowledge and greater understanding; and (iii) provides opportunities for technology transfer and employment for locals who meet the standards set by international organizations. Since gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka's only experience in dealing with foreign entities was hosting the diplomatic missions of foreign nations and agencies within the United Nations system. The procedure for this was governed by status agreements entered into on the basis of international conventions which Sri Lanka had signed or followed. Being subsidiaries of other governments or organizations, these bodies were invariably performing a representational function for their 'headquarters' which were located elsewhere; hence, a status agreement with the government was deemed adequate. Although there had been proposals from time to time for establishing international organizations in Sri Lanka, for one reason or another none had borne fruit. Older diplomats and officials often recall an aborted proposal to set up the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) office in Colombo in the early 1950s. The negotiations leading to the location of IIMI was the first serious proposal, to my knowledge, to establish the headquarters of an organization within the shores of Sri Lanka. In fact, IIMI was born in Sri Lanka as an international organization, since it did not already exist. In the absence of a precedent to go by, the ground rules had to be established from scratch. The environment conducive to such an effort had developed over the preceding years with the opening up of the economy, and the government's newfound receptivity to knowledge and ideas from all sources.

Reconnaissance visit

Thus, the exploratory visit from FF was considered to be timely. Ralph Cummings and Roberto Lenton were due to make a very short three-day visit in 1982 and, given the critical decisions that had to be made, I felt I should take a personal interest and make sure we made the most of their time in the country. I sent a briefing paper on Sri Lankan irrigation and support facilities to Roberto ahead of the visit. I invited Engineer N. G. R. (Godfrey) de Silva of MASL, who had pioneered the farmer organization program in the Minipe scheme as Deputy Director of Irrigation in Kandy, to join me in taking the visitors on a grand tour of irrigation and research activities. We had to make a good impression within a very short time frame. So, I hired an Air Force helicopter and picked these two people up from the Katunayake International Airport. On arrival from India, we whisked them off and gave them an aerial view of a cross-section of the irrigation network as well as the Mahaweli projects that were developing rapidly. They also had a close look at the Sigiriya summit from the chopper. For lunch, we landed at the Canadian-run Maduru Oya construction camp, where they were briefed about the stunning discovery that took place in the previous week: a 1,500-year old sluice gate of the ancient

Maduru Oya Dam was uncovered exactly on the new dam axis laid out by the modern-day design engineers. This revelation, I think, left a striking impression in the minds of the visitors.

We flew out quickly to see more from the air and then on to a field visit of irrigation systems in the Anuradhapura District. I had borrowed the Range Rover belonging to the Minister of Agriculture (the only one of its kind in the country at that time), as we needed a fast and comfortable off-road vehicle to cover all the ground. We visited System H and several other irrigation schemes, and met with farmers and research staff at Mahalluppallama. The night was spent at the circuit bungalow by the Kala Wewa, which had been refurbished for Queen Elizabeth's visit a few months earlier. The following morning we made more field visits on the way to Kandy, and then met with senior researchers at the Department of Agriculture in Peradeniya. Ralph Cummings was a very patient, yet meticulous, scientist; I noted that both the visitors were impressed with the range of irrigation systems within a small area of Sri Lanka and the interaction of local institutions. They were particularly impressed with the structure of the Department of Agriculture and its research capabilities, but noted the absence of an operational research culture in the irrigation sector.

By the end of the field visit, the visitors were willing to discuss, among other matters, the nature of a collaborative arrangement with the proposed future institute. This included exploring the quality of local researchers and engineers, facilities available at field locations and research centers, logistics, availability of qualified support staff, and facilities and incentives that could be provided to entice expatriate staff.

Meeting with the head of state

A few weeks later, the FF office in New Delhi sought meetings with the government. Following exploratory discussions, Ralph Cummings,

together with Dr. Lincoln Chen, Head of the FF office, paid a courtesy call on President J. R. Jayewardene and my Minister, Gamini Dissanayake, who was by then very supportive of the idea of an irrigation management institute. Ralph Cummings set out the concept of the institute and the kind of involvement expected from collaborating countries.

The President only had one question: “Have we not invested enough in irrigation?”

To which the Minister replied, “Yes, but we need to improve productivity to realize the full potential of the investments; it is like moving from seedling to vegetative propagated (VP) tea.”

The meeting was brief. The President understood the analogy and immediately authorized the Minister to proceed at his discretion.



Roberto Lenton, Nanda Abeywickrama and Minister Gamini Dissanayake (IIMI Reception, 1988).

However, FF’s mandate was to look at several potential host countries and locations, and present options to CGIAR which will help in making

a decision. There seemed to be general agreement that the location should be somewhere in Asia, given the extent, range and maturity of its irrigation systems. We learned by then that four countries in Asia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, were short-listed for consideration. This meant that we would have to compete with countries that offered many advantages over Sri Lanka.

Negotiations

There were many imponderables and hurdles to clear between the initial visit in mid-1982 and the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) in September 1983. First, the CGIAR Support Group had not made a firm decision yet to set up an institute, as there were still unresolved issues about costs, funding, objectives, and the character of the proposed institute and its sustainability. Second, there was the question of local receptivity to a 'foreign' organization that could lead to distortions and resentments. The program content and operating style were also important considerations, apart from the immunities, privileges and facilities to be granted to attract the institute and personnel. However, since we had received approval from the President, we assumed that these issues would be resolved as we proceeded.

Meanwhile, Ralph Cummings continued to make frequent visits to Sri Lanka and other potential host countries. He was good enough to keep me well briefed which helped to prepare our own terms and conditions, if Sri Lanka was to make an offer. These were times when there were no email, fax or word processing facilities. The fastest communication was by telex, so personal visits were important.

Hosting an international institute was to be a new experience for Sri Lanka. Previously, the country had been cautious about such arrangements because of the special immunities, privileges and facilities that need to be granted. We had to ensure that the benefits that

would accrue to the country would outweigh the symbolic costs of such concessions. We wanted these to be on a par with concessions allowed to similar foreign organizations and missions, but not more. Another issue was the ‘risk’ that the institute would function as an ‘enclave’, which would either discriminate against or exclude local personnel or institutions, and become a disincentive or threat to national programs and interests. On the program content, we had to ensure that the work of the institute and its presence would be relevant and beneficial to the country and our collaborating national agencies.

The feature that attracted me most to the proposed institute was that it was to be designed to conduct ‘collaborative field research’ with local agencies on ‘live irrigation systems’. It was not envisaged as an enclave-like research complex. Research would be management-focused and multi-disciplinary. These were fully



IIMI Memorandum of Agreement inauguration (September 1, 1983).
Hon. Gamini Dissanayake, Ivan Samarawickrama (Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development) and Nanda Abeywickrama (Ministry of Lands and Land Development).

congruent with our areas of interest. The headquarters would not be a ‘monster’ packed with expatriates, but house only ‘a critical mass’ to oversee operations in locations worldwide. We were warned by Sri Lankan scientists of the dangers of having a campus such as the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines. Although conducting excellent research, it was claimed, IRRI had failed to collaborate and share the technologies they were developing with the host country at that time.

The nitty gritty

Having agreed on the nature and content of the institute’s program, FF confirmed that Sri Lanka was one of the potential locations for the research center; hence we decided to proceed on a more serious note. By early 1983, I had a series of discussions with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Attorney General on the limits of concessions that the government could agree to, in principle. These would cover diplomatic and other privileges, entry visas, and duty-free facilities for the institute and staff. I collaborated closely with Dr. Rohan Perera, Legal Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in formulating the initial agreements. Conceding privileges and immunities to foreign nationals and bodies is a sensitive issue that has to be handled with care. While the government might want to limit the concessions, I had to try to match or improve on concessions offered by other competing countries. By now, Pakistan had emerged as a formidable contender. With its massive irrigation network of 35 million acres (approximately 14 million hectares) in the Indus River Basin, the largest contiguous irrigation system in the world and reputed irrigation professionals, Pakistan’s offer had to be seriously considered. Hosting the new headquarters was considered prestigious and had the personal backing of President Zia-ul-Haq.

Host country obligations

A ‘quid pro quo’ for getting host country status was for the government to provide a site and a suitable building to be used as the headquarters of an international institute, plus field offices as needed. It was not easy for our government to assure funding for the construction of such a building. Although we could identify suitable state land where it could be constructed, funding the building was becoming a potential deal-breaker. Here again, we were fortunate. The World Bank negotiated with donors for one of our pipeline irrigation projects (Major Irrigation Rehabilitation Project [MIRP]) to allocate funds from its budget for the construction of a building to be used as the headquarters, if our bid was successful. With some persuasion, two donors, Canada and Switzerland, agreed to provide grants (not loans) for the building, thus relieving the Government of Sri Lanka from the burden of financing this from local resources. Pending this, the existing facilities at Digana, near Kandy, being vacated by the Victoria project staff, were offered as an interim arrangement. With these basic agreements informally cleared by the government, we continued to negotiate with FF, who were still obliged to give due consideration to the interest shown by India, Pakistan and the Philippines.

It was at this point that other critical factors came into play. These included such diverse factors as the ease of entry into the country, customs formalities, internal travel, access to research stations and personnel, availability of competent local researchers and support staff, and availability of educational, health and recreational facilities for expatriates, as well as more subtle issues such as openness and tolerance of civil society, political stability, etc. It was clear that we had to highlight these points as Sri Lanka scored well on all

these counts. However, being a small country was a disadvantage. The Philippines already had IRRI located in Los Baños, and the Institute had excellent relations with the government. However, there was a likelihood that CGIAR would not favor siting two centers in the same country. Also, the Philippines was not the ‘center of gravity’ for the irrigation world.

Still awaiting a final offer from CGIAR, the Ministry had to get government clearance for the more sensitive issues outlined above. One particularly thorny issue was that of the terms of employment for locally recruited staff. FF wanted an exemption from local labor laws (as was the practice with most other centers). This was a major departure from government policy. After considerable discussion, however, this was agreed on the understanding that administrative safeguards would be built in to ensure proper working conditions and transparent processes in dealing with termination of employment and disciplinary matters. Following detailed discussions with the ministries concerned, the proposal was steered through the Cabinet by the negotiating minister. Dr. Rohan Perera, Legal Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, collaborated with me closely in these efforts. I had to attend several CGIAR and Donor Support Group meetings to brief them on the government’s position on each of the issues.

Pakistan’s interest

Meanwhile, Pakistan was lobbying intensively and at the highest level through Dr. Amir Mohamed. He was the chairman of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and a highly regarded agricultural scientist. However, logistic and social issues were working against them. In India, since irrigation was a state-level concern, it was not easy to get a consensus, although donors

seemed keen. Perhaps, the tension between the two countries was also a negative factor. The fact that Sri Lanka was the only liberalized economy in South Asia, at that time, was in our favor. At the Support Group meeting, which I attended in May 1983 in Paris, there were firm voices of support, but no final decision was forthcoming. Then, in July 1983, communal riots broke out in Sri Lanka. We assumed that our chances were lost forever. However, as conditions settled, we lobbied through our embassy in Washington. Our Ambassador, Ernest Corea, allayed concerns within the CGIAR system and a decision in our favor was made, along with a compromise proposal to establish a branch office in Pakistan.



Signing of the IIMI Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and Ford Foundation (September 1, 1983).

Left to right: Ralph Cummings, Lincoln Chen (Ford Foundation), Nanda Abeywickrama (Government of Sri Lanka) and Rohan Perera (Legal Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Legal process

The MoA was signed on September 1, 1983, by me, on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, with Lincoln Chen of FF, India, in the presence of Minister, Gamini Dissanayake, representatives of the donor community and selected local stakeholders. In order to implement the agreement, two further steps were necessary. The IIMI Support Group (a subgroup of CGIAR) had to approve a charter incorporating the agreements reached with the Government of Sri Lanka. That charter then had to be ratified by the Government of Sri Lanka via the Foreign Ministry with cabinet approval. This was a very formal process requiring whetting by law officers on both sides. Once agreed, it was ratified by the government. Any amendments to this charter on substantive issues required the approval of the Government of Sri Lanka. The agreement also provides for a permanent seat on the Board of Governors of IIMI for a nominee from the government. Thereafter, an Act of Parliament, incorporating the contents of the above two documents, was presented to parliament in 1984 and passed into law in early 1985. These documents are contained in the 'IIMI Governing Documents' publication.

With the passing of the enabling Act, the legal and diplomatic formalities were satisfied. Yet, for the Institute to be operational, further administrative measures were still necessary. First, a nominee from the government to be a member of the IIMI Board of Governors had to be appointed, so that Sri Lanka would be privy to all the policy and program decisions of the Institute. This provision is incorporated in the MoA as well as the Act of Parliament. The established tradition is that the Secretary to the Ministry in charge of the subject of irrigation is nominated by the government to be on the Board of Governors. I had the privilege of

being nominated by the Government of Sri Lanka as its nominee to serve on IIMI's first Board of Governors from the inception until December 1988, when I left public service to join IIMI as Director of Field Operations.

Second, a link ministry was to be nominated for the Institute to deal with the government on policy and operational matters. The ministry in charge of irrigation was nominated as the link ministry. Between September 1983 and early 1985, while the formalities with the government were proceeding, IIMI had to appoint a DG and set up offices. The process of locating a site for the building suitable for the headquarters, and leveraging funds for its design and construction, was the next obligation of the Government of Sri Lanka. This had to happen amidst an unsettled political environment caused by the resurgence of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) violence in the years that followed.

Learning process

FF's approach and the tasks we had to undertake leading up to the signing of the MoA was a learning experience for us. FF's openness and objectivity was very impressive to say the least. During the initial negotiations, the consultant from FF never came with any preconceived notions or decisions; he always came with an open mind. Following a clear set of criteria, which he went through meticulously with us, he also cross-checked with other stakeholders. The same criteria were applied to all the other competing countries. Therefore, we could be equally candid in our dealings while safeguarding the country's interests. The entire process up to the formalization was conducted in an open and transparent, yet confidential, manner as needed.



Board meeting (June 1986)

Seated: F. Ernest Shulze, Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla, Thomas Wickham (Director General), Robert K. Cunningham (Board Chair), Amir Muhammed, David E. Bell and Dean F. Peterson.

Standing: Benjamin U. Bagadion, Nanda Abeywickrama, Michael Jones, Letitia Obeng, Guy LeMoigne, Gilbert Manuellan, UNDP Representative, Kunio Takase, M. Jansen and Roberto Lenton.

The initial years after signing the MoA were also a learning experience, especially those matters relating to internal governance of the proposed institute. For example, to ensure continuity and freshness of thinking at policy level, the Board of Governors is constituted on a staggered and overlapping tenure such that one-third of the members retires each year and each member serves no more than two terms. Board members are selected through a rigorous process on the basis of recommendations from the nominating committee that sweeps the globe to identify potential candidates. Nominees are invariably persons of eminence in their respective fields, but care is taken to ensure that there is balanced representation from countries, regions and benefactors that are of importance to the Institute. This is quite

a contrast to the manner in which governments establish governing boards. Similarly, in selecting the Director General, a very elaborate search process is adopted. Initially, the Board of Governors appoints a Search Committee comprising three to four members who review the job description, selection criteria and procedure thoroughly. Once that is approved, the position is advertised internationally, and separate requests are made to reputed organizations and individuals to propose suitable candidates known to them. Members of the Search Committee jointly or severally screen the candidates and eliminate those who clearly do not make the grade or are marginal. Then, a long list is prepared for the Search Committee which has to be whittled down to a short-list after deliberation. I had the privilege of sitting on the Search Committees for recruiting the first two DGs and the experience was invaluable. Great care is taken to ensure that only the best candidates are short-listed, and personal views, though important, are not factored in; the interests of the Institute are uppermost. The Search Committee then prepares a short-list of about five candidates to be interviewed. This short-listing is necessary because the Institute has to bear the cost of travel and per diem of the selected candidates, who will travel from different parts of the world which is quite expensive. Although this type of process may be commonplace now, back in the 1980s, and before the advent of email and internet, these practices were unheard of in Sri Lanka.

IIMI Sri Lanka Consultative Committee

To conclude this write-up, mention must be made of another innovative and productive measure that was incorporated in the early years of the establishment of IIMI. That was the formation of the IIMI Sri Lanka Consultative Committee, which was designed to collaborate with IIMI in the formulation of the Institute's Sri Lanka program. This Committee, made up of researchers, practitioners and

policymakers from government agencies and academia, was designed to oversee the fusion of research and practice in IIMI's programs, and meet regularly on a structured basis to provide advice on the Institute's program priorities. Over the years, this Committee has made a significant contribution to both structuring and reviewing IWMI's program in Sri Lanka.



IIMI Sri Lanka Consultative Committee meeting, Digana, Kandy (September 12, 1987).

Chris Panabokke, D. G. Premachandra, Joe Alwis, Godfrey de Silva, Gamani Herath, Roberto Lenton, Ranjith Wanigaratne, Percy Abeywardena, Tissa Bandaragoda, Nanda Abeywickrama and T. H. Karunathilleke.

Why IWMI?

A frequently asked question is, why and how IIMI transformed to IWMI. Back in the 1980s when IIMI was conceptualized, irrigation worldwide was a thorny and worrying issue for development professionals, and an international effort to improve its performance was deemed urgent. However, in the years that followed the founding

of IIMI, it was realized that irrigation could not be treated in isolation. It had many links to river basins, and to competing uses related to larger issues of food security, health and the environment. Thus, there was a need for an integrated approach to water management. The canvas became wider, more varied and complex, which also meant that any benefits of the research would reach a wider community. This approach was found to appeal better to the stakeholders, including the donor community. Thus, the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI) made the transition in the late 1990s to be renamed the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

IWMI - Sri Lanka: An enduring relationship

At the outset, I stated that the relationship between the Government of Sri Lanka and IWMI has been cordial and productive over the past 30 years. It would be appropriate at this point to consider whether this assertion is correct and, if so, what factors contributed to this warm relationship.

At the time, the protocol for the establishment of IIMI was signed, and it was envisaged that the agreements would be valid for a period of about 25 years; yet, we have now reached the 30-year milestone, and IWMI appears to be thriving and determined to stay on.

To my mind, two major factors, among many others, contributed to this situation.

(i) The deep and palpable commitment of the IIMI/IWMI leadership and its management to develop a healthy non-intrusive, apolitical relationship with the host country and the government, and to function as an independent, yet neutral, research organization in its chosen field. IIMI's collaborative research agenda in Sri Lanka was conceptualized and developed with broad-based consultations with local professionals and agencies, which made the outcomes noncontroversial and widely accepted. The results of IWMI's research has found acceptance for

adoption and replication. Furthermore, for the best part of IWMI being based in Sri Lanka, the country was beset with unsettled political and security conditions, which would have prompted any international organization to look for alternate locations. However, the IWMI Board of Governors and the management made an objective assessment of the situation whenever there was an issue, took a wider view, and steadfastly resolved to stay on and ride the storm. The Government of Sri Lanka, for its part, has reciprocated by appreciating the professional and international status of IWMI, and promoting a spirit of mutual cooperation and non-interference in the internal affairs of the Institute. In addition, IWMI has consistently adopted management and personnel policies that were fair and equitable, and promoted a healthy working environment for its staff, both national and expatriate.

(ii) Arising from the above policies, IWMI was rewarded with a highly dedicated and competent set of national staff, who have contributed to the growth of IWMI as a respected international organization over the years, and have improved their knowledge and skills and moved on to progressively responsible positions, including regional and international staff positions. The fact that many of the national staff who joined IIMI at the outset still serve the Institute after 25 to 30 years speaks volumes for the working environment and the quality of work, not to mention the patience and understanding adopted by both parties. IWMI's Board of Governors and the management consistently held the view that the Institute's strength and future will always be its human resources; this stance has paid dividends for the Institute as well as its programs.

In conclusion, I am convinced that the decisions made by the sponsors of IIMI, on the one hand, and by the Government of Sri Lanka, on the other hand, way back in 1983, has resulted in an organization and an institutional relationship of mutual benefit to the government and people of the country, and also for the water-dependent community at large. I trust this relationship will endure and grow in strength.

IIMI/IWMI Directors General



Ralph W. Cummings,
Acting DG, IIMI,
September 1983-
June 1984



Thomas Wickham,
DG, IIMI,
November 1983-
June 1987



Roberto Lenton,
DG, IIMI,
June 1987-
December 1994



Randolph Barker,
Interim DG, IIMI,
January 1995-
August 1995



David Seckler,
DG, IIMI/IWMI,
September 1995-
August 2000



Frank Rijsberman,
DG, IWMI,
August 2000-
June 2007



David Molden,
Acting DG,
IWMI,
June 2007-
October 2007



Colin Chartres,
DG, IWMI,
October 2007-
October 2012



Jeremy Bird,
DG, IWMI,
October 2012-
Present

IIMI/IWMI Board Chairs



Robert K. Cunningham
September 1983-
December 1987



David E. Bell
January 1988-
December 1991



M. S. Swaminathan
January 1992-
December 1994



Leslie D. Swindale
January 1995-
December 1996



Zafar Altaf
January
1997-December
1999

IIMI/IWMI Board Chairs (Continued)



Klaas Jan Beek
January 2000-
December 2002



Remo Gautschi
January 2003-
December 2005



Nobumasa Hatcho
January 2006-
December 2008



John Skerritt
January 2009-
December 2012



Donald Blackmore
January 2013-
Present

With IIMI/IWMI for 30 years



Upali
Karunanayake
15/10/1984



Shanthi
Weerasekera
02/01/1985



Nihal Silva
01/05/1985



Chanchala
Kariyawasam
02/06/1985



Sunil Seneviratne
18/09/1985



Gamini Halvitige
23/12/1985

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