INSPIRE
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR IRRIGATION EXCELLENCE

INSPIRE Launch Webinar

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

Proceedings Report

Thank you for joining us for the virtual launch of the International Network of Service Providers for Irrigation Excellence (INSPIRE). INSPIRE is a platform for the exchange of knowledge exchange on the future of service delivery among managers of irrigation and drainage (I&D) systems. This platform targets irrigation service providers who want to engage in a learning organization, participate in the global debate on service provision, and build a like-minded vision to pursue long-term change. The discussion during the launch introduced INSPIRE and the objectives, scope, and approach of the platform.

Event Highlights

Felix Reinders, President of ICID, opened up the launch by highlighting the overarching need for a platform for managers of irrigation systems to have the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences, innovation, and best practices in improving the quality of I&D services. He emphasized the importance of water management institutions, water users, and service providers to engage with each other on the platform to deliver sustainable irrigation and drainage services. The event was chaired by Ijsbrand H. de Jong from the World Bank and the discussion was moderated by Jelle Beekma from Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Bakhodir Mirzaev from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

Why Service Delivery, Why INSPIRE?

Pieter Waalewijn, Global Lead for the Water in Agriculture Global Solutions Group (WiA GSG) of the World Bank, expanded on the vision for INSPIRE as a platform for irrigation managers to focus on overcoming service delivery challenges and creating inclusive service provision in the irrigation and drainage sector. His presentation covered the following points:

- The objective of the platform is to improve necessary service delivery functions in the irrigation and drainage sector and provide the institutional level support needed to deliver on the expectations of farmers concerning reliable service.
- The network is intended to connect service providers in a system that is innovative, resilient, market-oriented, and inclusive. The primary function is service to customers, followed by various organizational and governance functions. The book on Governance in Irrigation and Drainage expands on these functions and the different stakeholders' perspectives.
- INSPIRE will serve as a platform for forward-looking irrigation managers, who are at different levels of maturity, but are characterized by their ambition to innovate, are accountable for their services, and understand the context within which I&D systems operate. Future activities for the forum could include twinning partnerships and spotlighting private sector solutions.

INSPIRE is supported by the following partners who presented their role in facilitating the network.

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)

- Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

Experiences and Tips from Other Associations

Jose Luis Inglese, a water specialist and affiliated with multiple international water associations including Latin American Association of Water and Sanitation Operators (ALOAS), provided guidelines and advice for building a strong and influential professional association. These included:

- In their nascent stages, professional associations should each align with a more prominent organization with similar goals to help them mature. For instance, ADERASA (Latin American Association of Water and Sanitation Regulators) aligned itself with the World Bank.
- One of the primary tasks of the association is to secure finances, which should be generated from a diverse array of external organizations to help the association remain independent.
- INSPIRE should outline its desired goals. Similar associations such as ADERASA established goals of achieving an adequate water supply and sewerage tariffs.
- INSPIRE should leverage the opportunities stemming from the current crisis of climate change and the pandemic to shape its agenda.
- INSPIRE should be an association between people as a technical association that builds soft linkages of friendship among its members.

Presentations by Service Providers

The presentations reflected a diverse landscape of global irrigation service providers and addressed two focal questions:

I. Why did each service provider decide to prioritize irrigation service delivery?

II. What specific actions are they taking to improve the quality of their services?

Here are some of their stories:

- Carl Walters Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Australia.

  In Australia, during the Millennium drought, the changing availability of water use for irrigation prompted a focus on service delivery. The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) needed water users and farmers to become more efficient with their water use while also doubling agricultural production. Moving beyond updating public systems, the GB CMA focused on flow measurement and sharing of resources, efficient and effective use, technological improvements in the physical and system management for rivers, supply systems, and farms. Farmers were guided to use the appropriate technology for growing more with less water.

- Etienne Dressayre, BRL Ingerierie, France.

  BRL, a water service provider for agriculture in the south of France, prioritized service delivery due to the professionalization of the farming system and the need to secure predictable water service. The development of drip irrigation and intensive crop production, along with a decline in profit margins in agriculture pushed for a need to reduce costs and a desire for a more professional service delivery. BRL established some priority actions to improve the quality of irrigation services by developing a new standard of contracts with the farmers that were adaptable to the needs of each client. They also introduced several measures such as coupling traditional resources with non-conventional resources.

- Shubhankar Biswas, Madhya Pradesh Water Resources Department, India.
  The primary reason for prioritizing service delivery in irrigation for the government of Madhya Pradesh in India was because of the spatial variation of the availability of water, which included issues regarding storage and demand for irrigation water. The Water Resource Department's (WRD)focus on service delivery was driven by the government's vision of providing access to irrigation services for every field. The increase in irrigation services contributed to increases in farmers' income, which led farmers to appreciate the system. The WRD has learned that sufficient budgetary provisions and timely maintenance of irrigation infrastructure are crucial to improving the quality of service delivery. Moreover, measurement of water delivery and system diagnostics are important to ensure quality of delivery and have started to bring in the private sector through the development of a DBO (design, build, and operate) to help improve the performance of irrigation service delivery.

- Paolo Mannini, Canale Emilia Romagnolo, Italy.

  Service delivery in the Emilia Romagna canal is driven by the overarching priorities on water quality, irrigation research, and lowering the cost of water. The primary objectives are improving inlet water quality, reducing bad quality water input, and monitoring water quality. Irrigation research is used to help farmers understand the pertinent information for proper and economically-sound use of irrigation systems, thereby reducing waste. Another objective is reducing irrigation costs for water through cost recovery and providing energy through self-production of photovoltaic energy.

- Grisell Medina Laguna, CONAGUA, Mexico.

  CONAGUA shared the Mexican experience of translating policy into action. In 1992, a national water law came into effect, under which the control of irrigation districts was transferred to the users. Ninety-nine percent of these irrigation districts are now managed, operated, and maintained by users. CONAGUA provides concessions to water and infrastructure through River Basin Organizations. The concessionaires of the hydraulic infrastructure are supported through a national subsidy program, where the government contributes 50 percent to the concessionaires.

- Ahmed El Bouari, Ministry of Agriculture in Morocco & AMENSOUSS, Morocco.

  Ahmed outlined their strategy of improving service delivery by introducing public-private partnership (PPP) schemes to share investment financing and risk. The El Guardian project is an example of such a successful PPP scheme. The reason for their success in achieving transparent, efficient, and equitable irrigation service was the creation of a balanced service contract between the private partners and the farmers. The model is based on balanced risk sharing in order to minimize the service provider's risk.

- Mary Jean Gabriel, Director, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform, South Africa.

  In South Africa, the water policies were drafted to address the inequalities of the colonial past. Their focus on irrigation was to reallocate services that were previously provided to only 9 percent of the population to around 87 percent, with a focus on previously disadvantaged groups, women, and youth. Many government initiatives were instituted to revitalize old irrigation systems, develop new irrigation schemes, and expand drainage. A focus of the Department of Agriculture was to establish effective liaisons and cooperation between all of the stakeholders in irrigation, introduce financial support for research, and expand a pool of experts to develop sustainable irrigated agriculture.

Panel Discussion and Way Forward

The audience asked the panel of service providers various questions These questions centered on the use of subsidies and their role in making the sector more competitive, the conjunctive use of ground and surface water, introduction of demand-based service provision, and the water, energy, and food nexus.