

# Declaration of Tehran on Participatory Irrigation Management

2-5 May, Tehran, Iran

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), and the International Network on Participatory Irrigation Management (INPIM), under their mandates to hold Regional Conferences and the International Seminars, respectively, jointly held the 4th Asian Regional Conference and the 10th International Seminar on "Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)" during May 2-5, 2007 in Tehran, Iran. This joint international event was organized and hosted by the Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (IRNCID) - one of the active ICID's National Chapters, and the INPIM. Over 900 experts, professionals, policy makers, planners, researchers, managers, donors, development partners and representatives from national, regional and international organizations from 40 countries participated in the event.

This global event provided an important forum to stakeholders for reporting and discussing issues, challenges and options for agricultural water management, specifically focusing on participatory approaches to irrigation management, sharing knowledge, experiences, lessons and promoting best practices and innovative ideas on PIM. The forum presented over 110 papers - covering a wide range of PIM aspects from a variety of situations - on the following three sub-themes :

1. Review of participatory measures in Irrigation - that focused on success stories and experiences with implemented and proposed PIM frameworks and models,
2. Required grounds and facilities for PIM - that discussed organizational reforms, legal frameworks and norms, socio-cultural and political grounds, and
3. Support system for PIM sustainability - that critically looked into required policies and strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and capacity building and training needs.

In the agricultural water sector, the importance of participatory approach to irrigation management is now widely recognized by governments, donors, agencies and other stakeholders. While PIM as a concept and approach has been in vogue for over two decades with varying degrees of successes, the fascinating and challenging debates on emerging PIM issues continue. As irrigation reforms progress, issues continue to emerge, alternative PIM models and frameworks continue to be experimented in diverse local environments, and PIM approaches continue to be evolved and refined. Importantly, as water becomes scarce and faces intense sectoral competition in most settings in the world, there is an increasing need to better use and manage each single drop of water. And the PIM approach to irrigation management assumes greater than ever significance in such settings. In view of this, more than 60 countries have embarked upon PIM reforms aimed at improving irrigation management and making irrigation systems sustainable. These countries represent some 80 percent of global irrigated area.

## The Event Declaration

Taking note of discussions, deliberations and recommendations of the stakeholders, the Event :

1. Reaffirms the critical importance of irrigation for enhancing productivity, employment, farm incomes and food security - promoting agricultural and economic growth and reducing poverty. It is recognized that the positive impacts of irrigation can be substantially increased through interventions that address issues related to inequities in land and water distribution, water allocation within and across sectors, maintenance and management of irrigation infrastructure, access to improved production technologies and agricultural support measures - with greater emphasis on pro-poor approach to such interventions.
2. Recognizes that there are enormous challenges and complex set of issues facing irrigation sector - from basin level to watercourse and field levels - but so are the opportunities. The forum emphasizes the need for reengaging in the sector and calls for increased investments from both public and private sources not only for expanding irrigation, where needed, but also

for reforming and modernizing existing irrigation systems - with focus on right kind of investments with sound institutions that deliver larger benefits to the poor.

3. Recognizes that PIM is now a widely accepted approach and its implementation is a worldwide phenomenon; there is a general consensus on the need for further promoting, strengthening and expanding PIM reforms in irrigation sector across countries; and in many countries PIM is becoming a central component of irrigation/water policies.
4. Highlights that PIM approach delivers a number of positive outcomes and impacts for stakeholders, including the following: (a) empowers farmers, (b) leads to better system maintenance and service, (c) reduces cost of irrigation to the government, (d) improves productivity and profitability of agriculture and water use, and (e) leads to innovations in irrigation management and agriculture in general. However, the magnitude of such outcomes and impacts and the degree of PIM reform success and sustainability have varied across settings and have depended on a number of factors such as clarity and strength of institutional and legal framework, higher level political will and local level leadership, financial and technical resources, access to support services, incentive system, capacity building and training etc. Understanding these and other facilitating or constraining factors (institutional, financial, socio-economic, agricultural and hydrological) is important for further strengthening and expanding PIM reforms.
5. Suggests that efforts being made in promoting PIM reforms should be continued and further strengthened, greater emphasis is needed on ensuring equity in sharing benefits of PIM reforms and sustainability of such benefits - under the pro-poor framework. The stakeholders call for broadening the framework of PIM from simple 'transfer' to an instrument of 'restructuring' the water sector for improving its performance, ensuring equitable water access and allowing transition to a sustainable and integrated management and use of water resources. It is suggested that PIM approach can provide an important mechanism and venue for tackling water resources management issues.
6. Emphasizes the need for greater attention during post-intervention phase of PIM reforms, especially on the following areas:
  - (a) Support Services (long term support in consultation with farmers/ users while avoiding increasing dependency).
  - (b) Monitoring and Evaluation (multi-perspective and participatory approach with emphasis on a third party/private sector based on a set of robust indicators).
  - (c) Capacity Development (substantial and prolonged capacity development at the level of policy environment, institutional strengthening and individual development).
  - (d) System of Incentives to promote performance and innovation.
  - (e) Financial Strength (WUAs resource mobilization and revenue generation capacity).
7. Points out that so far PIM reforms have focused on 'downstream' side of reforms, that is, on establishing and strengthening WUAs, and only little attention has been paid to 'upstream side', that is, on reforming public irrigation agencies. For success of PIM reforms, reforming public irrigation agency is as important as establishing WUAs. There is a need to clearly define new roles and responsibilities of the public irrigation agency, and its capacity needs to be developed to enable it to adapt to its new roles.
8. Encourage action research on PIM reforms through pilot testing within a framework for learning and scaling up. Pilot experiments may be necessary to clarify modalities and generate support for innovation and for creating a common vision for developing a national strategy. Pilot activities for PIM should be continued even when PIM reforms are under full implementation, because they can tackle additional aspects of reforms requiring experimentation, especially for "second generation" issues, such as WUA federations, innovations in irrigation financing, charging and cost recovery, multi-functionality of WUAs, technology transfer through WUAs, asset management in transferred schemes, agency personnel changes, and development of private sector support services.
9. Re-iterates the importance of building capacity, promoting collaborations and partnerships across stakeholders at various levels; and promoting the exchange of information, knowledge, best practices and lessons learned on PIM reforms.
10. Calls upon national governments, local, regional and international donors, development banks and partners to take facilitating role in promoting PIM reforms, help mobilize financial and

technical resources from public and private sources, and provide required assistance to relevant organizations involved in promoting and strengthening PIM reforms.

11. Thanks the Government of I.R. of Iran, ICID, INPIM, IRNCID, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture for their contributions and support in organizing the event; and other partners (including WB, FAO, IWMI) for this support for the event.