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Irrigation Association

Engineering Sciences

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THE IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

Irrigation problems can be quite complex. Improper water distribution along the watercourse, seepage, and inadequate drainage are common problems faced by farmers in irrigated agriculture which cannot be solved by the efforts of each farmer individually.

Contributing to the complexity of the farmers' problems is the multifaceted irrigation system itself, with its delivery, application and drainage subsystems. In addition, irrigation is affected by a large number of social and physical factors, and these vary with each irrigation site.

The first requirement for solving complex irrigation problems is cooperation among the farmers who use the system. One way to develop and insure this cooperation is to create a network of Irrigation Associations.

This booklet seeks to show why it is important for farmers on a *mesqa* or canal to work together by means of a recognized organization--an organization designed for the single purpose of serving their needs as the country's smallest irrigational unit.

The booklet will examine what an Irrigation Association is and how it is organized. It will point out possible activities for an Irrigation Association, and give recommendations for organizing such an Association in your area.

Reasons for needing an Irrigation Association may vary from country to country, or even from canal to canal, but the benefits a working Association brings can be appreciated by farmers and irrigation officials everywhere.

POOR



IMPROVED



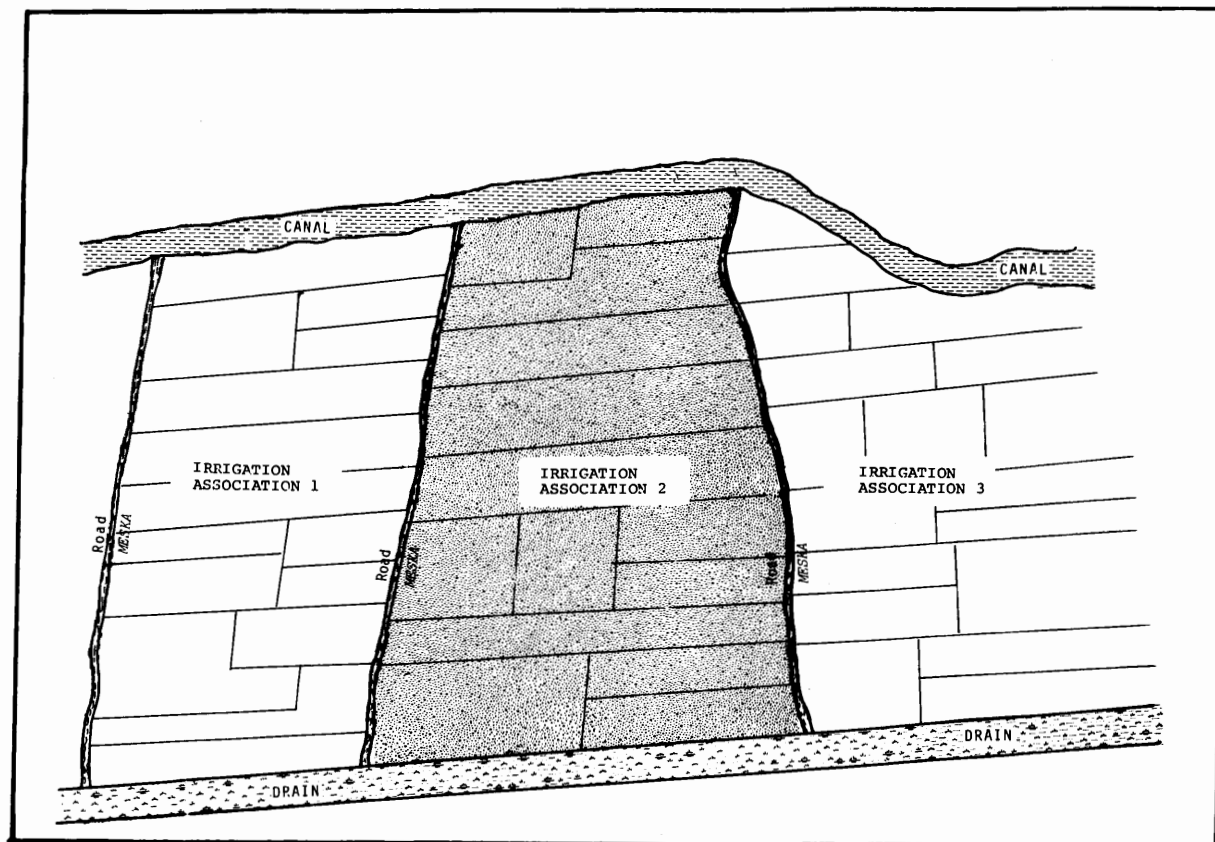
The solution of irrigation problems often requires cooperation among farmers served by the same watercourse. Farmers in an Irrigation Association work together to restore ruined canal banks and to clean and straighten ditches.

DEFINITION OF AN IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION

An Irrigation Association is a group of farmers, all served by a common source of water, who join together voluntarily to allocate, distribute and manage water in the most efficient and equitable manner.

The Association has specific leaders, a set of rules from which to act, and a means to perform its various activities.

In Egypt, the Irrigation Association can be formed by farmers served by a single *meska*, from canal to drain, and can include from 10 to 40 farmers.



The Irrigation Association is a local voluntary organization designed to serve all the farmers on a meska from the canal outlet. It includes the ditches to the fields, the tailwater runoff system and the drainage system.

BENEFITS

Irrigation Associations benefit their members in several ways:

- insuring a more equal distribution of water
- providing a means to maintain canals and *meskas* better
- providing a conduit for assistance from advisers
- providing a conduit for exchange of information between farmers and irrigation officials

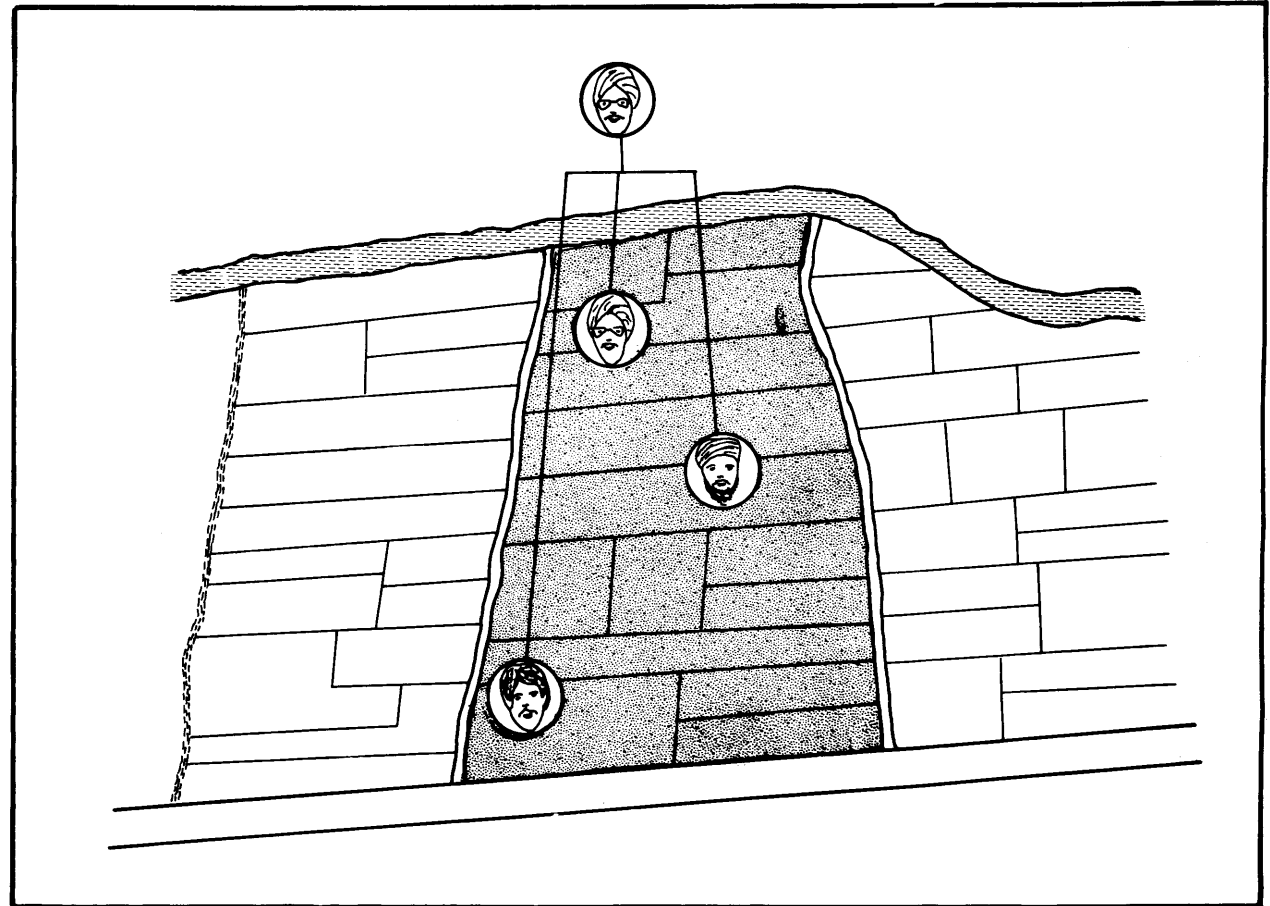


One benefit of an Irrigation Association is more effective communication between advisers and farmers. An adviser can talk with the Association's leader and the information will be passed on through the formal communication channels established by the Association.

ORGANIZING AN ASSOCIATION

All of the farmers in a given area meet together to choose their representatives. They may select one or two from the head, the middle and the tail of the *meska*. The farmers who are chosen then become the go-betweens for the whole group in dealing with advisers and district engineers.

The Irrigation Association then meets to establish its own rules, such as the most equitable and efficient irrigation schedule, how and when to clean the *meska* or drain, and when and where to hold educational demonstrations.





A group of farmers meets to choose leaders for their Irrigation Association.

Association leaders are important members of their farming community. They speak with farmers on their *meska* about irrigation scheduling, and relay information on the opening and closing of gates. They help to organize the cleaning and maintenance of drains and *meskas*. Leaders also carry farmers' ideas and feelings about farming problems back to advisers. They work with advisers in administering the Irrigation Association and

see that the Association abides by its own rules to achieve its goals.

Each Irrigation Association must establish its own rules for the duties of its leader, the responsibilities of each member and the procedures for making decisions. Members must also decide how to communicate their ideas within the Association, and how to convey them to advisers from outside.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION

The Irrigation Association has the ability to assist farmers in performing activities which are more difficult, or even impossible, for them to do individually. It has the following responsibilities to its members:

- To insure equitable distribution of water by means of a fair water scheduling plan.
- To organize its members for the cleaning and maintenance of drains and *meskas*.
- To pool the farmers' resources for larger projects.
- To act as a communication channel between farmers and irrigation officials.
- To organize its members for better use of advisers and extension education on irrigation problems.
- To establish a means for farmers to make decisions concerning problems of irrigation.



Water may be in short supply at the tail end of a canal, but an Irrigation Association can insure efficient water scheduling that provides enough water to the entire meska.

ACTIVITIES

The Irrigation Association is a single-purpose organization designed to cope with irrigation problems which require the efforts of a group of farmers.

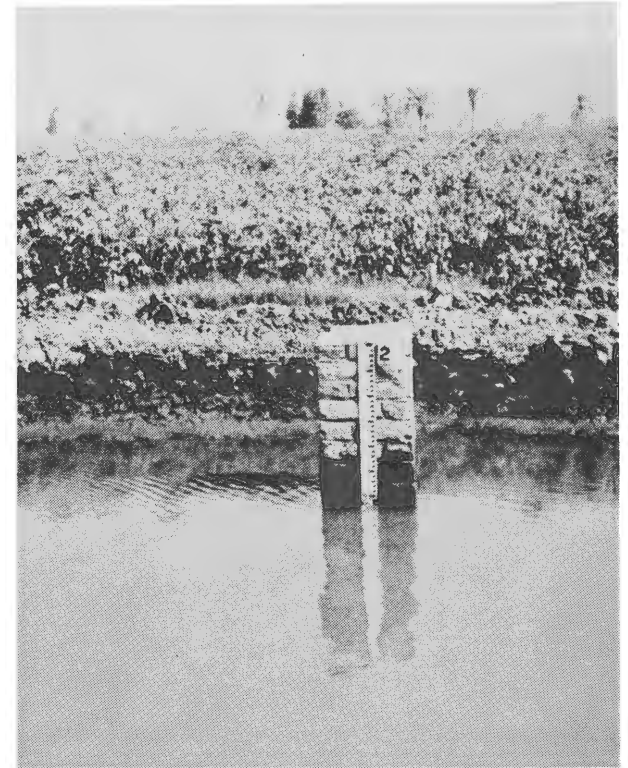
I. WATER SCHEDULING

Farmers come together in the Association to set up a water schedule which will be fair to everyone on the *meska*--farmers at the tail as well as those at the head.

Effective water scheduling requires a knowledge of how much water should be applied to specific crops in a particular area. The Irrigation Association can get this information from advisers, so that the new schedule will be beneficial to all.



Advisers use flumes and staff gauges to measure the level of water in distribution canals. Using this information, Irrigation Associations can schedule irrigations to the advantage of all.



II. CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Poor distribution and water loss in a *meska* is often because of weeds, silt, and thin banks. These conditions arise when individual farmers do not clean their *meskas* and drains regularly.

To have an efficient irrigation system, farmers must have an organized maintenance program. This is one of the main tasks of an Irrigation Association.

ALONE



TOGETHER



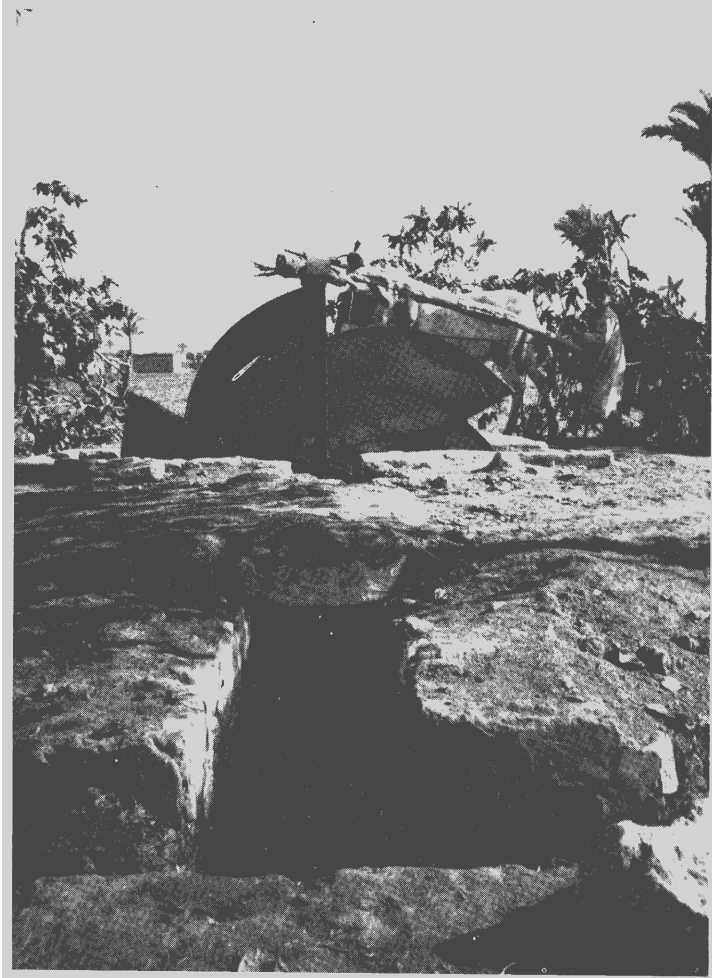
Cleaning and maintenance can be more effective when farmers are organized to work together.



*This meska was cleaned and straightened
through the efforts of the Irrigation
Association.*

III. IRRIGATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Many improvements of an irrigation system are too expensive or require too much labor for a farmer to do alone. Farmers who pool their resources, however, can accomplish large projects and acquire new technology which will benefit the entire *meska*.



An Irrigation Association can purchase pumps to replace sakias, saving its members hours of work and insuring an improved water supply to the fields.

THE IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION AND THE COMPLETE PICTURE

Although Irrigation Associations are concerned solely with problems of irrigation, their organizations can serve as channels for information about other agricultural subjects which affect irrigation.

The furrow system, for instance, may have to be modified to conform with new ideas on irrigation, or the amount of water applied may vary depending on the crop.

The Irrigation Association will be able to monitor the plant, soil and crop relationship and apply the information it receives from advisers and officials to help the farmers on their individual farms.



Irrigation Association leaders tell government advisers their own views. This gives the individual farmer a voice in the making of national irrigation policy.



The Irrigation Association is also a channel for extension education to the farmer. It arranges for demonstrations by advisers for the benefit of those farmers who wish to attend.

CONCLUSION

If you are interested in better yields from your area, brought about by

- fair and efficient water scheduling
- watercourse cleaning and maintenance
- better communication between farmers and advisers

Then, you should think about starting your own Irrigation Association.



THE IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION

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