

INDONESIA: WATER CONSULTANCIES

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The Project

The projects involved irrigation development in Indonesia over the period 1971-82. In all six cases, UK based consultant firms were contracted to assist in various aspects of water resources development. Three of the assignments were concerned exclusively with groundwater development in East and Central Java; the other three were more broadly based, involving technical assistance at provincial and in one case, headquarters level for planning a range of (mostly surface-water) irrigation projects. The total cost to ODA was around £6.1 million (at historic prices), of which 70% were accounted for by person-months and the remainder by equipment.

The Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken by a four-man team consisting of Dr B E Cracknell (Head of Evaluation Department, ODA), J R Best (Agricultural Economist, AERDC, Reading University), Dr A L Hall, (Sociologist, AERDC, Reading University), Dr R Herbert (Hydrogeologist, Institute of Geological Sciences).

The Main Findings

- The consultancies connected with groundwater development played a crucial role in the process of importing what was to Indonesia a new technology, and raising the competence of the authorities to use ground-water as a resource for agricultural development. They were greatly valued by their Indonesian counterparts at all levels.
- Concentrating a sizeable proportion of ODA's relatively small aid budget for Indonesia on the water sector was a highly effective strategy. It enhanced the reputation in Indonesia of UK water engineering skills and UK equipment, and enabled UK firms to compete successfully for non ODA-funded contracts thus bringing substantial commercial benefits for the UK.
- Technically, the work of the consultants was of a very high standard. However, the team found that ODA hydrogeological Advisers had not been consulted sufficiently during the groundwater projects with the result that not enough attention had been paid to low cost technology projects. Deep tube well projects had been installed without adequate attention being given to the alternative of shallow wells. In several of the main catchment areas, many small wells had been successfully sunk by farmers indicating that this was a viable technical and economic option which should have been exploited more fully as part of the

project.

- Insufficient attention had been paid to the sociological problems of groundwater development and in some instances these threatened to offset the very considerable technical achievements.

Lessons

- Longer term contracts of around 3 to 4 years (instead of the present 1.5 to 2 years) may be more suitable for future such consultancies in Indonesia. Major consultancies should not be terminated abruptly - some small continuing presence would be useful, e.g. to set up proper monitoring systems, and to provide special help as and when needed.
- An improved regular reporting procedure for consultants should be introduced aimed at giving early warning on any difficulties encountered.
- The programme of training to be given by consultancies should be more clearly spelt out; where training is an important element the consultancy team should include someone with formal training in teaching techniques. On-the-job training is particularly important.
- Specialised equipment, e.g. drills require particular attention at the procurement stage, including as a rule trial assembly.
- The Social Development Adviser should advise on sociological aspects of the ongoing projects in Indonesia.

The Projects and Evaluation Committee agreed that a Working Group should be established to consider the preparation of a Policy Guidance Note on Consultancies.