

# Resilience or Inertia?

A quick skim of the literature

“Improving Irrigation Service Delivery in India”  
Stakeholder Consultation (National Hydrology Project)  
New Delhi, Feb 15 2018



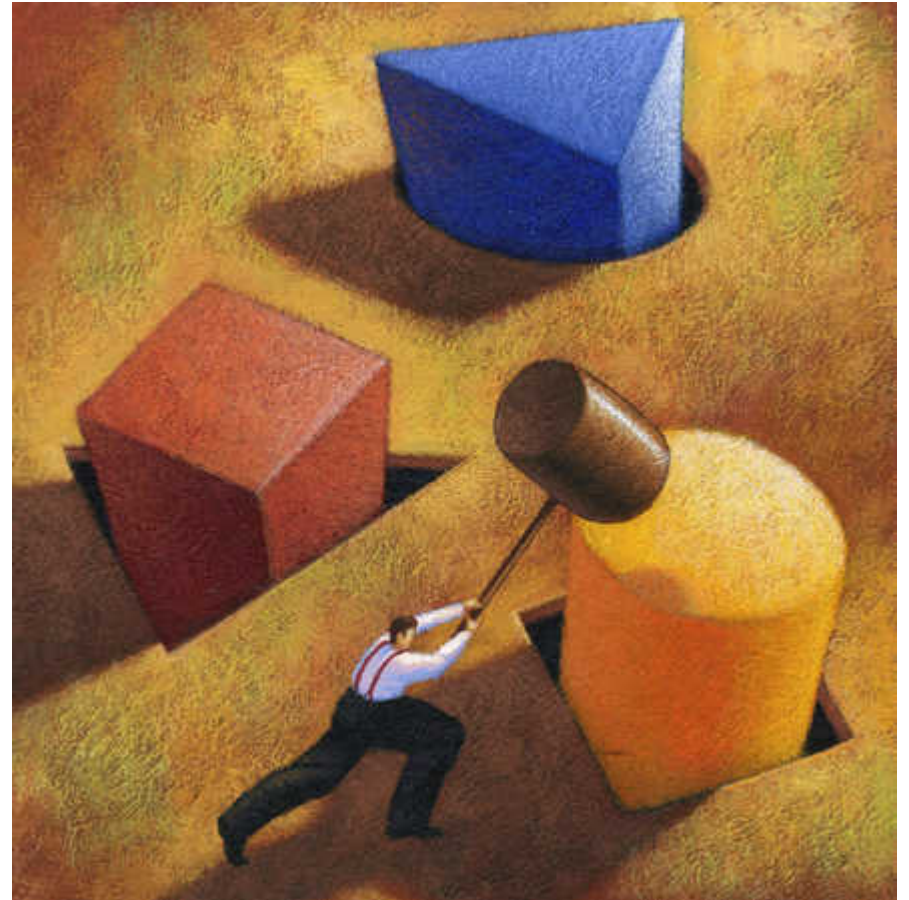
# Construction agency as service provider: Is there need for an alternative?

“Given the emerging limits to further development in major and medium irrigation (MMI), we urgently need to move away from a narrowly engineering-construction-centric approach .....

*Report of the Committee on Restructuring the CWC and CGWB  
(2016)*

“The uni-functional (‘build’) and uni-disciplinary (‘engineering’) bureaucracy adopted the command-and-control philosophy of the early decades of independence, seeing users as subjects rather than partners or clients. The Indian state water apparatus still shows little interest in the key issues of the management stage—participation, incentives, water entitlements, transparency, entry of the private sector, competition, accountability, financing, and environmental quality.”

*Briscoe and Malik (2006)*



# Citizen and State or Client and Provider?

“Only the rare engineer supports PIM. Most consider it a fad that should wear itself out in time ... with fear for the loss of gratuitous incomes should farmers begin to function independent of the irrigation department.”

*David Mosse (2003)*

The next step therefore does not lie in knowing how to organize farmers' organizations ... but how to overhaul the administrative system so that the state irrigation departments and farmers can be bound into productive relations. PIM cannot become a reality nor can it become self-sustaining without the restructuring of state irrigation departments....

*David Mosse (2003)*



# Asset Creation: A Persistent Preference

Continuous decline in system performance calls for immediate preventive maintenance to avoid costly future maintenance and loss of forgone production.

*RS Julaniya, Manish Singh, MG Choubey and Shubhankar Biswas (2016)*

There is an enormous backlog of deferred maintenance. The implicit philosophy has been aptly described as 'Build-Neglect-Rebuild'.

*John Briscoe and RPS Malik (2006)*

If we look at the situation ten years ago, around 2000, while the new welfare state had kept alive the colonial tradition of big time canal construction, the management of canal irrigation had become pathetic in terms of all the criteria on which it excelled a century ago.

*Tushaar Shah (2011)*



# The question of fees

This is also closely linked to the fact that in many States the Irrigation Service Fee (ISF) to be collected from farmers has been abolished or is as low as 2-8 percent of dues. In this way, the accountability loop between farmers and irrigation departments is broken.

*Report of the Committee on Restructuring the CWC and CGWB (2016)*

Around 2006, India's Central Water Commission (CWC) reported that the water fee realized by all major and medium irrigation projects was all of 8.8 % of the 'working expenses' during 1993–7 and the ratio had declined further to 6.2 % during 1998–2002 (CWC 2006) compared to 2.5 to 3 times of water expenses around 1900.

*Tushaar Shah (2011)*



# Changing the Relationship

The gap between tariff and value of irrigation and water supply services has fueled endemic corruption. Staffing levels are 10 times international norms, and most public funds are now spent feeding the administrative machinery, not maintaining the stock of infrastructure or providing services.

*John Briscoe and RPS Malik (2006)*

This can happen only by building a strong relationship of mutuality between the irrigation department and farmers through aggressive recovery of the irrigation service fee (ISF). In this sense, MP's irrigation reforms are incomplete.

*Tushaar Shah, Gourav Mishra, Pankaj Kela,  
Pennan Chinnasamy (2016)*

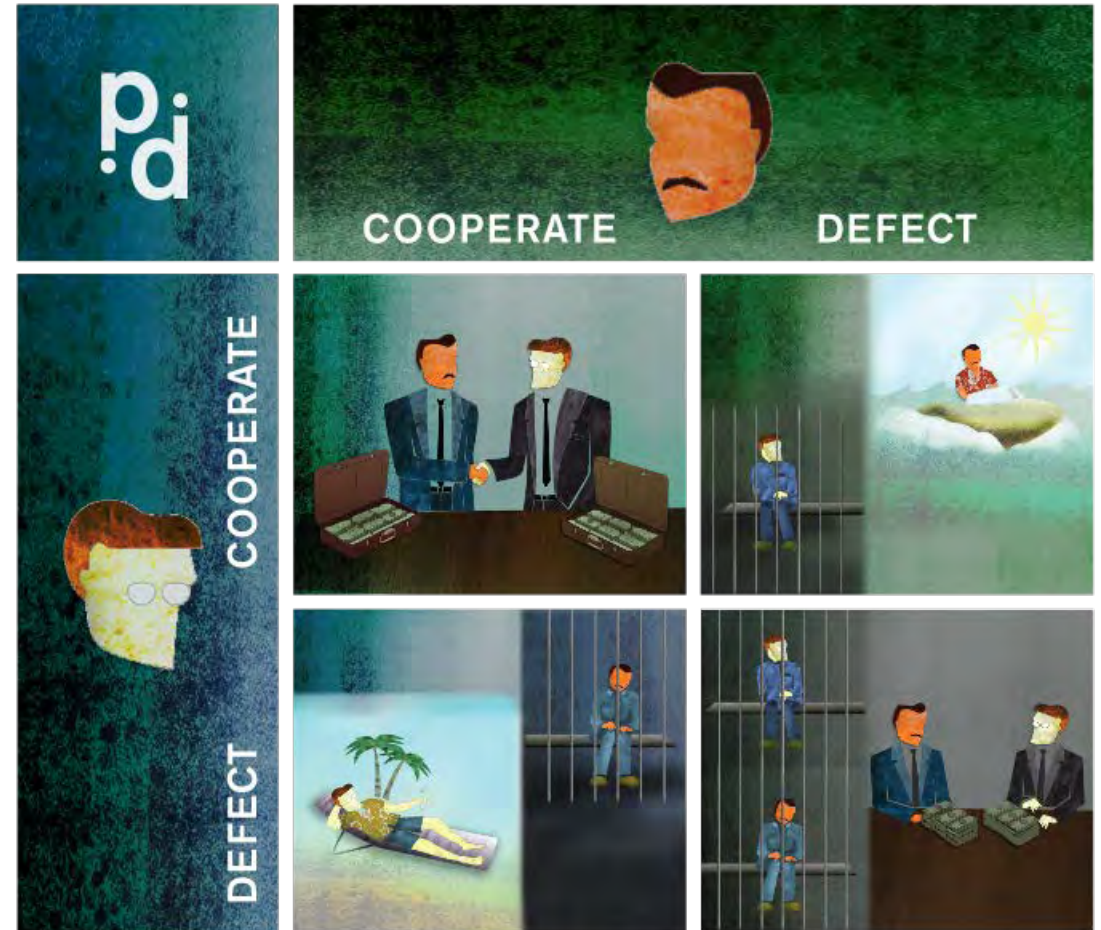


# What would it take to restore & build trust?

The performance of canal irrigation systems depends partly on trust by farmers in the good faith and abilities of irrigation officials. In India, this trust is typically lacking.

There is instead a Prisoners' Dilemma-type "syndrome of anarchy" under the canals in which farmers lack the confidence that if they refrain from taking water out of turn they will get water on time. Officials lack the confidence that if they work conscientiously to deliver the water on time, farmers will refrain from rule-breaking.

*Robert Wade (1988)*



“There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government; that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works.”

*Karl Marx, The British Rule in India. New-York Herald Tribune 1853.*

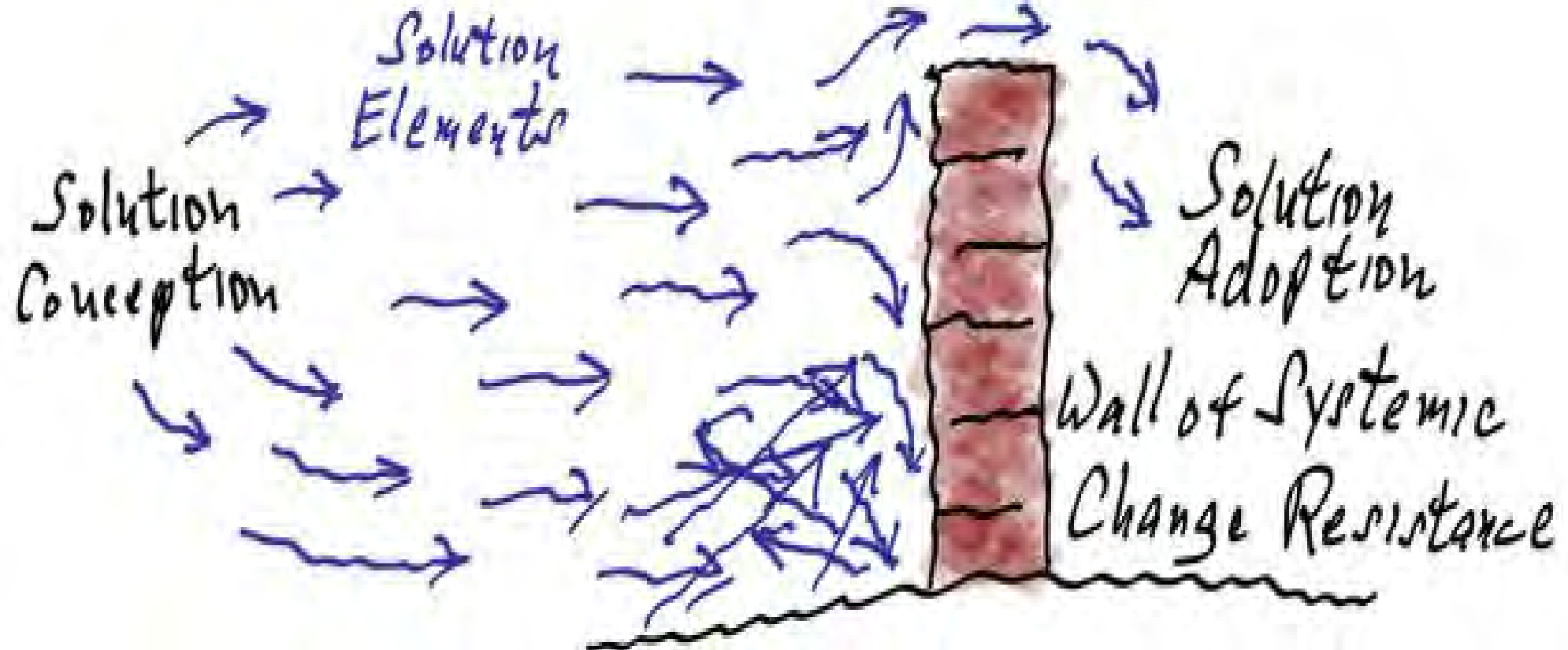
It seems likely that long before elective political institutions became important irrigation staff not uncommonly used their power over water and contracts to multiply their own income and that of their bureaucratic superiors.....However, it is likely that elective institutions have amplified the pressures towards corruption and made it more systematic.”

*Robert Wade 1982*



Questions  
for discussion:

1. Is there need for change?
2. Is there space for change?
3. Identifying feasible solutions?



# References

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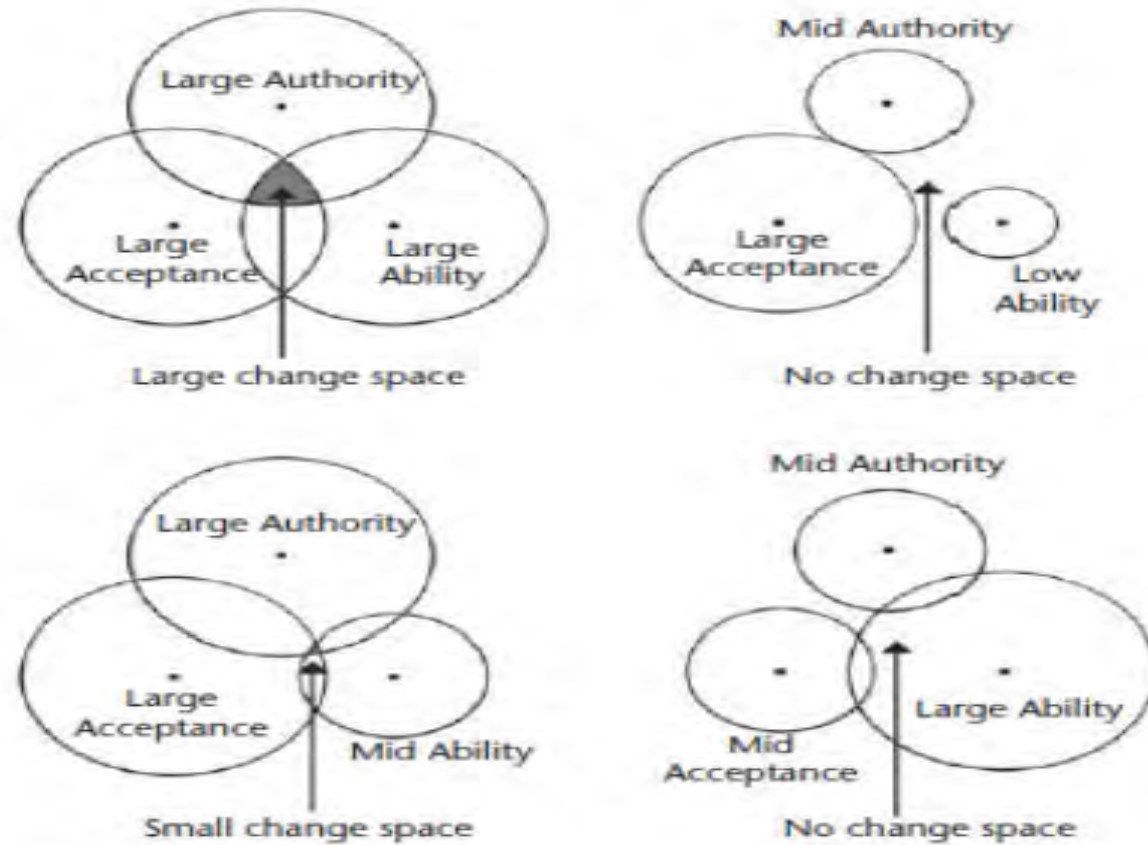
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Annex

# Change Space



Source: Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock (2017)