MINUTES OF THE 6TH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR IRRIGATION & DRAINAGE: ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC-IRPID)
06 October 2022 : 14.00 – 15.45 Hours
Adelaide, Australia

Members Present: (1) VP Dr. Tsugihiro Watanabe, Chairman, PCTA & Co-Theme Leader, Strategy Theme-Schemes (Japan), Chair; (2) Dr. Ms. Narges Zohrabi, Head, Ahwaz Regional Node of IRPID-IRN (Iran); (3) Ms. Gao Hong, Vice Secretary, CNCID & Representative of Beijing Regional Node of IRPID (China) represented by Ms. Li Ruoxi; (4) Dr. Bahrom Gaforzoda, Head, Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Node (Tajikistan); (5) Dr. Alok Sikka, IWMI Representative and (6) Mr. Ashwin B. Pandya, Secretary General, ICID.

Observers: (1) VPH Dr. Ding Kunlun (China); (2) VPH Dr. Mohamed Wahba (Egypt); (3) VPH Dr. Marco Arcieri (Italy); (4) Ms.Nana Horii Ishikawa (Japan) (5) Mr. Kenji Yasoda (Japan); (6) Mr. Keisuke Inokuchi (Japan); (7) Mr. Shouno Toshiaki (Japan) and (8) Mr. Rauf Yuldashev (Tajikistan).

Terms of Reference (ToR):

The Advisory Committee is responsible for developing a Framework Action Plan for the program, guided by the concept document as was presented at the 61st IEC in Yogyakarta in 2010 and keep overall coordination among the Nodes duly supporting their autonomy and maintaining flexibility in fulfilling their roles. These can be categorised as follows:

(a) Develop the Strategy duly describing the strategic objectives and a Framework Action Plan for the program.
(b) Review and monitor the implementation of the program to ensure the quality of outputs and their effectiveness; and
(c) Mobilize and allocate extra-budgetary resources through joint activities.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 1: Brief introduction by SG, ICID

1. SG provided a brief introduction and overview of the IRPID Scheme to the Committee members since the launch of the revised scheme in Chiang Mai, Thailand during the 67th IEC meeting in November 2016 in view of the ICID Vision 2030, with the Advisory Committee coordinating the research activities. Under the revised IRPID Scheme, the Regional Nodes (RNs) are to be established, and the functioning RNs are to provide their inputs to the Committee for its consideration and guidance. He provided a brief update on the RNs established and RNs under formation. He suggested that IRPID RNs may promote the capacity building activities which cannot generate quick project-oriented outcomes.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 2: Inputs from Beijing Regional Node

2. On behalf of the Beijing Regional Node, its representative Ms. Li Ruoxi provided a brief report on the activities undertaken by the Beijing RN since December 2021.

3. Ms. Ruoxi informed the Committee that the activities of the Beijing Node were disrupted by the COVID-related restrictions on large-scale gatherings and international travel. Hence, the Beijing RN restricted its activities to online mode only. For instance, the Beijing RN assisted the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources and the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery to organize the routine annual technical exchange on irrigation and drainage in December 2021. More than 500 representatives from governments, research institutes, and irrigation schemes attended the event. Topics covered were policy and planning, irrigation scheme management, and the application of innovative technologies, etc.

4. Another effort made by the Beijing RN was to support the Chinese experts to attend ICID webinars. Relevant announcements were translated and circulated among Chinese members of ICID WGs, universities, and research institutes. The average attendance was around 30 per event. Apart from contributing through attendance, Beijing RN was also able to co-organize webinars. For instance, Prof. Kang Yaohu served as the keynote speaker of ICID Webinar on Advanced Micro Irrigation Technology with Precision Water and Salt Management, while Dr. Ding Kunlun delivered lectures in the Webinar Series on Rainwater Harvesting jointly organized by FAO, ICARDA, and ICID.

5. Looking forward, the Beijing RN is quite optimistic about the relaxing of the COVID-related restrictions and resuming its normal activities as soon as the situation improves, so as to fulfill its mission with better capacity.
6. The Advisory Committee appreciated the activities undertaken by the Beijing RN. The Committee expected that the activities undertaken by RNs and their functioning will guide the RNs, which are in the formative stage.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 3: Inputs from Ahwaz Regional Node

7. The Head of the Ahwaz Regional Node, Dr. Ms. Narges Zohrabi presented the report on the activities undertaken so far by the Ahwaz RN and its future plans. Dr. Zohrabi provided a brief introduction, including the vision, mission, and action plans drawn up by Ahwaz RN to achieve its mandate. At present, eight countries, viz. Russia, Korea, Iraq, Egypt, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Georgia are members of the Ahwaz RN, and the meetings were organized periodically to encourage the member countries to have joint research and collaborative programs in the areas of common concern.

8. The main activities undertaken by the Ahwaz RN during the last year included (a) “The Russian-Iran Protocol”, (b) “First Joint Collaboration between FAO, ICID & IRPID-IRN” and (c) the publication of the Persian version of the FAO White Paper “Water Accounting for Water Governance and Sustainable Development”, which will enhance the Farsi literature concerning water accounting concepts. This will benefit not only the Iranian audience, but considerable Farsi speakers in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and other member countries.

9. Under “The Russian-Iran Protocol”, Russia and Iran expressed their willingness to have bilateral research collaborations which resulted in several visits and skype meetings leading to the signing of three collaboration protocols – Protocol I, II, and III. The implementing agencies for the Protocols will be the Deputy Soil and Water and Deputy of Research (affiliated with the Iranian Ministry of Agricultural Jihad) and Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA) (affiliated with the Ministry of Energy) on the part of Iran and the All-Russian Scientific Research Institute for Hydraulic Engineering and Land Reclamation on the part of Russia.

10. She also presented the future plan, which includes (i) the organization of three webinars and one workshop, (ii) the third Management Board meeting of RN during the 14th International Drainage Workshop in Tajikistan, and (ii) the introduction of the new website of the RN in near future. Ahwaz RN looks forward to enhancing international cooperation with other national/international institutions to conduct research in order to generate more interest supported by international donors in carrying out its planned activities.

11. The Advisory Committee noted the activities undertaken by the Ahwaz RN and expressed its appreciation for the functioning of the Ahwaz RN.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 4: Inputs from Central Asian-Caucasus Regional Node

12. On behalf of the Head/Representative of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Node, Mr. Rauf Yuldeshev of TAJNCID provided an update about the establishment of the RN in Central Asian and Caucasus (CAC) Region and activities undertaken so far and its future plans.

13. He gave a brief overview of the water resources sector in Tajikistan and various activities undertaken by Tajikistan being the initiator of the resolutions in the UN General Assembly which resulted in the declaration of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life” (2005-2015), International Year of Water Cooperation (2013) and the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018-2028) in order to improve the global water situation. He provided in detail about the various activities by TAJNCID in the field of land reclamation and irrigation, problems encountered and the water sector reform program for the period 2016-2022. He informed about the events organized by TAJNCID within their framework and study tours and field meetings conducted during the period which contributed towards the development of regional cooperation among the water management organizations of the Countries in the regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus. He also highlighted the cooperation of TAJNCID with CNCID and the hosting of the 14th International Drainage Workshop by TAJNCID in 2024 at Dushanbe.

14. The Advisory Committee noted the report presented by the representative of the CAC RN and expected that the RN will be benefitted immensely from the various initiatives and activities organized by TAJNCID.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 5: Evolving Collaborative Research Mechanism among the Regional Nodes

15. The Advisory Committee reviewed the existing collaborative research mechanism among the RNs and requested all RNs and NCs to encourage the research institutions in their countries involved in AWM to join the network by projecting key information of their research activities for wider dissemination and fulfilling the objective of research mechanism among RNs. Based on the positive achievements of the RNs in Beijing and Ahwaz, the Advisory Committee suggested that it is essential to continue to support the activities and further revitalize their activities. To this end, it is necessary to clarify the organization and structure of the RNs in operation.
16. The Advisory Committee noted that only seven research institutes have been registered so far in the IrriSEARCH (https://icid-ciid.org/inner_page/62) portal, an important tool initiated in 2017 towards fulfilling the objectives of IRPID. The research institutes/organizations once registered in IrriSEARCH, will be provided with User IDs, so that they will be able to upload the information on the IRPID page themselves.

17. The Advisory Committee felt that the portal needs to be revitalized in order to achieve its objective of bringing together all agriculture water management (AWM) research activities from various NCs on a single forum to help others learn from their experiences and asked the Central Office to take necessary steps in this regard.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 6: Dissemination Mechanism on Exchange of Research Findings

18. The Advisory Committee noted that a dedicated page on ICID website for IRPID (https://icid-ciid.org/inner_page/77) has been created with an aim to encourage the exchanges of research findings on an intra-node basis and inter-node basis, besides disseminating IRPID activities through ICID News update and ICID News. The Advisory Committee requested the existing functional RNs to upload their activities on this dedicated page for the benefit of all, as it will act as an important tool for the exchange of research findings between the RNs for the benefit of their network countries. SG assured the CO assistance in uploading the information if the RNs face any difficulty in this regard.

19. The Advisory Committee observed that the activities of the RN should basically be centered on "research", but the importance and possibility of covering related activities such as "human resource development" should be considered.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 7: Establishment of Additional Regional Nodes

20. The Advisory Committee noted that the NCs have been requested to establish additional RNs, by circulating the IRPID Scheme in force, in regions, where the RNs are yet to be formed, keeping in view that new RNs should be recognized on the basis of their willingness to be able to pursue the research activities from their own resources. Accordingly, the RNs should be proposed voluntarily, based on identified needs. It is necessary to set some guiding principles in defining the scope of RNs both in terms of their geographical location and region-specific needs.

21. The Advisory Committee was informed that efforts are being made towards the establishment of a Mediterranean RN coordinated by VPH Dr. Marco Arcieri, ITAL-ICID, with the support of institutions like the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), and the second one in Africa region by VPH Dr. Mohamed Wahba, Chair, AFRWG with the support of NCs of Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, etc. A few NCs like Hungary have evinced their interest in participating in the activities of Mediterranean RN.

22. The Advisory Committee advocated that based on reviewing the experiences, achievements, and challenges of the preceding RNs, new RNs of IRPID may be established and developed.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 8: Leveraging National Funding to finance RNs

23. The Advisory Committee noted that one of the objectives of the IRPID is to support the NCs to receive adequate funding from their own governments. In the earlier meetings of the Advisory Committee, the members were unanimous in their opinion that the NCs, through the outcomes of the RNs, sharing the best and new technologies, making use of various ICID communication channels, such as web pages, ICID News and Irrigation and Drainage Journal, were in the best position to leverage the research and development outcomes for their direct implementation in the field. Thus, they should be able to leverage their national funding sources through international collaboration.

24. However, it is recognized that in many cases, the NCs may not be able to raise resources for international activities. In such cases, it was suggested the Program may approach international funding mechanisms that support AWM activities. However, in order to attract such funding for the IRPID program, there is a need to have a good track record of successful outcomes.

25. The Committee concluded that in order to vitalize the activities of the RNs further, an increase in the number of member countries in the RN and cooperation with international organizations play significant roles, and for which required strategies to obtain funds need to be developed.

AC-IRPID Minutes Item 9: Any Other Business