

M1 IRRIGATION AND USE OF WATER IN SRI LANKAN SETTLEMENT
SCHEMES, A REVIEW OF PRE-MAHAWELI EXPERIENCES

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Sri Lanka ranks among the few countries in the developing world which have about five decades of experience in the operation of modern settlement schemes, initiated with State investment and patronage. Settlement schemes in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka which include major irrigation schemes occupy a special position in the country's agricultural development.

This paper examines past and present irrigation and water use practices in these settlement schemes, using published data and literature on selected schemes. The paper elicits and analyses the major features of and trends in such practices.

Findings of the study indicated that these irrigation practices are rooted in the structural deficiencies of settlement projects. Some of them are man-made; some are physical. The problems have become more complex with a rapid expansion of settlement schemes. Although at present there is a growing interest in new experiments of different dimensions in relation to these problems, their success is dependent on the understanding of the structural deficiencies referred to above and the consequent action taken on that basis.