

Mr. David Levintow, AD/HAVR

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Richard B. Scott, DP

New/Old Approaches to the People in the Shamalan

In a memo to Mr. A. Baron and Mr. J. Shankland of 29 May 1972, "Another Visit to the North Shamalan", I pointed out that the owner of Plot 202, Muhammadin, was the first individual to cooperate with the Shamalan Project by allowing the by-pass for the construction of the diversion structure for the new Shamalan lateral to be dug across his land. (This discussion should be followed on the attached sketch map.) I also pointed out that a triangular piece of land of about one jarib (Area A), which was produced by later construction, was largely infertile and being mismanaged in terms of water control by Muhammadin and his family. The plot of land is surrounded by the Shamalan canal, the new lateral and the desert escarpment which together allow no artificial drainage and produce a very high water table.

In a draft memo of December 1972, I outlined these problems again and, on a more general level, suggested the need to have agriculture and irrigation technicians working along with the Shamalan construction and the affected farmers from the start so they might realize some early advantages of the project. Further, they might inadvertently mismanage the new developments. More specifically I suggested USAID attempt to do something to improve Area A since the project was responsible for producing it in its present condition via refilling the by-pass with infertile soil, "eye-ball" leveling of the plot, and allowing the plot to be watered by the old Basharan ditch gate. This is the only plot using this gate (gate 1). As I pointed out, if we had not planned to include this field in the project for improvement, we should never have made it. As an engineering feat, the area is perfect. As a farm, it is a failure. Muhammadin has had one crop failure on the plot and will probably continue to unsuccessfully plant and poorly irrigate this piece of land that stands at the cross-roads and in view of the Shamalan farmer going north up the valley.

Based on my memos, Mr. Kalerim (who I had introduced to Muhammadin on a previous occasion) and others apparently made some soil and other surveys to establish the feasibility of improving that small plot of land. The results were apparently not favorable, the plot was abandoned by USAID interest, and a move was made to enlist Muhammadin's support in allowing his land to be leveled by tractor as with the Girishk Khan.

In a sense, I am responsible for involving Muhammadin in this new direction in Shamalan development by calling official attention to the problems of his one jerib plot. He and his son have cooperated with me in inquiries over a period of about 1 1/2 years. Muhammadin is not an unreasonable man but he says no in very indirect ways. He is not of the dominant Barakzai tribe of the area but he is a Nurzai who migrated in several years ago and bought land. He is socially in a marginal position. The total plot was about 54 jeribs. He lost about 6+ jeribs, he said, to the canal construction for which he has not been paid. The sons of the man who sold him the land claim that he got the land on grau. (This is a system of loan where landowner loses the use of his land to the lender for an agreed upon loan sum. He regains the use of his land on repayment of the loan which is frequently years later. Title is never lost on such arrangements.) They now say, with land values going up, that they want to repay the loan. In short, he does not have clear title, and court action, with its undercurrents of uncertain justice, is not desirable. He is vulnerable to official pressure. Muhammadin's son is very direct and outspoken in his views. Given the chance, he leaves no doubt about what he is thinking.

It is my understanding of the situation as it stands at present that in the initial contacts, Muhammadin indicated that he did not want the land leveling, that the government still owed him large amounts for the right-of-way, and probably that he did not trust the situation. This line would best be articulated by his son, who, among others, spelled out earlier the arguments against land leveling of the first 150 acres outlined in the "Crunch" memo.

Relatively early in the arrangements (or rejections), HAVA was brought on the scene by joint HAVA-HAVR meetings. Apparently HAVA has accepted the idea outlined in your recent memo to the Governor with reference to Muhammadin's land and the broader attempt to enlist the cooperation of some other Shamalan farmers in land leveling outside the project arrangements. Apparently HAVA indicated that they could get farmer agreement to cooperate and USAID agreed. Muhammadin was called into HAVA and he "agreed" to cooperate. In other memos, I have pointed out the nature of this sort of "agreement" and we have seen its results in situations where farmers as a group are in a position to present a consolidated response, e.g., the Farmer-HAVA meetings of September 1972.

Interpretation: HAVA agreement to work with us on this new direction for development in the Shamalan is likely part of the Governor's recent attempts to back away from a major confrontation with USAID; a "bone", as it were. The disagreements over the amounts of crop damage to be paid can be viewed by USAID in two ways: The high HAVA suggested amounts are an attempt to support the Governor's earlier arguments that they can no longer afford to

Implement the Shamalan Project because of increased costs; or, over-payment for crop damage is a HAVA tactic of bakahish to buy farmer cooperation since they are not able to enlist it on the basis of trust. HAVA used the same tactic before with Muhammadin when they paid him about 20,000 Afs. for an only partially lost corn crop in September 1971 when the by-pass was being dug across his land. His neighbors apparently never forgave him. I suspect both factors are at play in the situation.

The main point of this memo is that by turning to HAVA to get farmer support, we have moved back into the same situation that led us into the Shamalan crunch. HAVA does not follow patterns of farmer information and relations that are compatible with modern development which assumes farmer cooperation based on trust. The traditional methods being used are some combination of manipulation, coercion, and bakahish. We should not return to the same pattern of action with HAVA we have just witnessed to be unproductive. It is tempting to accept HAVA offers to short cut the implementation of the new direction of scattered plots leveled by handling the farmer relations but I do not think it is a productive move on our part.

Recommendations:

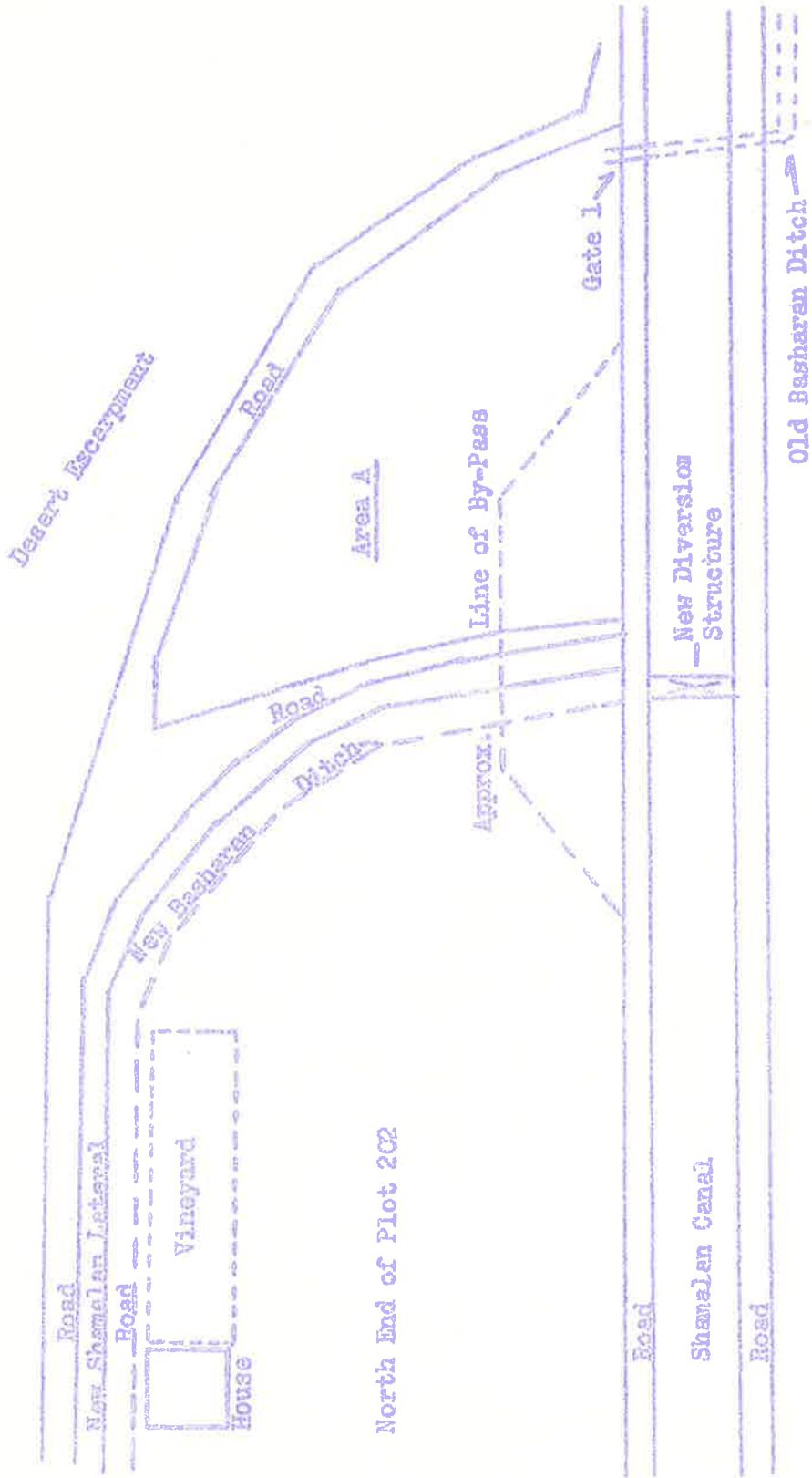
1. At all stages of development in villager relations, a USAID counterpart with his own translator should be involved.
2. Land development should not be started unless the farmer is in full agreement without reservations.
3. All farmer contact on these issues should be made in the field, not in HAVA offices.
4. All initial contacts should be made by Mr. Knierim with his driver/translator and probably counterpart. Decisions to stop or continue a project should at all stages be left to Mr. Knierim. There are always indications when farmers would prefer not to participate or are going into a project with a wrong attitude. These indications may not be direct but should be taken as rejections.
5. I should perform a monitoring trip through the area at least once a month.

The approach to the farmers in this new direction in Shamalan development, as stated, rests on farmer desire to cooperate. Allowing HAVA officials to enlist farmer support as in the past is hardly a new, nor in my view, a productive approach.

Muhammadin's Land

North Shamalan

Desert Escarpment



North End of Plot 202

Old Bashareen Ditch