

Water: a priority for life



a quarter of a century of caring

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THE IRC GOVERNING BOARD

From the start of its establishment as an International Foundation in January 1981, IRC has benefited from the guidance and advice of the Governing Board. The following people have served on the Governing Board for varying periods during the last 14 years.

Mr P Santema	1981-1984	Mr G Ringnalda	1986-1989
Mr PJ Verkerk	1981-1985	Dr RC Harkema	1986-1989
Mr DJ de Geer	1981-1984	Dr Ping-Cheung Loh	1986-1987
Mr P Bourne	1981	Mr AH Rotival	1987-1991
Mr H Gajentaan	1981-1984	Mr C Carnemark	1987-1991
Dr KG Wit	1981-1982	Mr MA Acheson	1987-1989
Mr JM Kalbermatten	1981-1983	Mr GW Ardon	1988-to date
Dr MG Beyer	1981-1989	Mr J Zaadhof	1989
Dr P Lowes	1981-1987	Mr P Feith	1989-1990
Mr LPJ Mazairac	1982-1986	Dr D Warner	1989-to date
Mr S Unakul	1982-1985	Dr J Christmas	1989-1993
Mr J Freedman	1983-1985	Mr IM de Jong	1990-to date
Mr H Scheltema	1984-1994	Mr F Hartvelt	1991-to date
Prof WJ Kakebeeke	1984-to date	Mr D Howarth	1991-1992
Mr H Wagenmakers	1984-1986	Mr K Kuiper	1991-to date
Mr J Haijkens	1985-1988	Mr J Blaxall	1992-1994
Dr L Obeng	1985-1986	Mr G Gosh	1993-to date
Mr OA Sperandio	1985-1987		

WATER: a priority for life

**a quarter of a century of caring
for water supply and sanitation**

compiled and written
by
Brian Appleton

on the occasion of the 25th anniversary
of IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre
The Hague

October 1994

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*Mr. Brian Appleton, who
compiled and wrote this booklet,
delves deep into IRC's archives
and helped IRC's staff to unlock
their memories of times past.*

Illustrations: unless otherwise indicated, all illustrations are from IRC archives.

Cover photo: Holland Hoogte/Emile Luijck, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



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FOREWORD

This booklet tells a story of success. By any measure, the achievements of the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre over the last 25 years are a credit to all those who have been involved in its development since the Centre was established on the initiative of the World Health Organization and the Dutch Government in 1968.

When I was invited in 1984 to take over as Chairman of the IRC Governing Board, I was not entirely certain what I was taking on. It wasn't the chairing of an international group of people that gave me pause for thought; I had done plenty of that. But community water supply and sanitation was a specialized field in which I had had only limited exposure.

Reassurance came quickly. It was immediately obvious that Hans van Damme had assembled a proficient and dedicated team of professional and support staff. That team already had a fine track record and was starting to build an international reputation. For me, as Chairman, there was another big plus. From the time it became a foundation in 1981, IRC had arranged that its Governing Board would include the leading water and sanitation professionals from UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Health Organization.

In my view, that perceptive policy decision has been fundamental in maintaining IRC's continued influence in the world of water and sanitation. You will read in this booklet about the contributions individual board members have made. I thank them all for their support and expert advice and for the way that they have enabled IRC to respond rapidly to emerging issues.

With the guidance of the Board, IRC has established a unique approach to development assistance, firmly focused on building confidence and capability in its partners in



Hugo Scheltema

Former Netherlands Ambassador Hugo Scheltema has been Chairman of IRC's Governing Board since June 1984. He retires at the end of 1994. During his ten years' stewardship, the Board and IRC have benefited enormously from his calm diplomacy and wide experience of international affairs. In addition, Hugo Scheltema's conspicuous charm and good humour have made the IRC Board dinners unmissable events in the calendars of its busy members.

developing countries: not just helping people to help themselves, but equipping them to help others. The support that IRC provides through its information and documentation services, its training and briefing and its research and field work is built on partnership and equality – rare but important ingredients for all successful human relationships.

In ten years, I have seen IRC strengthen its links with the United Nations agencies, the bilaterals and so many colleagues in developing countries, and become a lead agency for information and communication planning in the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. It has been a very enjoyable experience to have been part of that development, and I hope to bask in the reflected glory for many years to come. I withdraw from the front line confident that IRC's next 25 years will be just as successful as its first 25.

Meanwhile, enjoy this cameo view of a generation of change for the better.

Hugo Scheltema



PREFACE



Hans van Damme



Loekie Broersma

1. *UN Environment Conference, 1972*
2. *Habitat, 1976*
3. *UN Water Resources Conference, 1977*
4. *Safe Water 2000, 1990*
5. *International Conference on Water and Environment, 1992*
6. *UN Conference on Environment and Development (The Earth Summit), 1992*
7. *Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation, 1994*

A 25th anniversary is a perfect excuse for nostalgic reflection. In collecting together the material for this brief history of IRC's first 25 years, we have continually been reminded of the treasured contacts we have made with so many friends in all parts of the world, and with former colleagues within IRC.

It has been especially revealing to compare the different stages of IRC's evolution with the way that the concepts and approaches of the water supply and sanitation sector as a whole have changed in the last 25 years. They have been exciting times, during which the inspiration of some inventive and charismatic individuals has been turned into concerted global action and brought renewed hope for hundreds of millions of the world's poorest people.

As well as prompting pleasant reminiscences, delving into memories and archives has helped us to highlight some interesting trends in IRC's development. Hopefully, these will be of use in our future planning. They may also offer lessons – good and bad – for others seeking to establish an identity and a specialist role in the international field.

The generation of professionals who have steered the water and sanitation sector through the landmark events in Stockholm¹, Vancouver², Mar del Plata³, New Delhi⁴, Dublin⁵, Rio de Janeiro⁶ and Noordwijk⁷ have much to be proud of. Because of their efforts, sometimes against the tide of established opinion in their own agencies, the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) will be seen as a momentous contribution to change. The challenge for the next generation is to bring about that change, and the great spirit of collaboration that

has developed alongside it, as a launchpad for action programmes which will bring safe and sustainable water and sanitation services to the unserved millions.

For IRC it has been a privilege to play a small but growing part in the sector's evolution over the last 25 years. In 1994, we can look back with some satisfaction on the way that IRC has contributed to the transfer of knowledge to and among an increasing number of partners in developing countries. We can point to particular programmes like slow sand filtration, information exchange, piped supplies for small communities, hygiene education, the roles of women, community management, and many other social aspects of water and sanitation development, where IRC has influenced sector thinking and stimulated successful initiatives in partner countries.

It feels good now to find IRC playing an influential role in global discussions on many of the key issues of the day, like information management, communication, and social mobilization. It is important, though, to see that role in the perspective of IRC's primary focus, which is to help developing country partners to gain and share knowledge in the field of community water supply and sanitation.

That focus will continue, as the sector moves into a new era, integrating its programmes into the post-Rio strategies for water resources management and environmental protection, while seeking to maintain the priority for bringing vital basic services to those in greatest need. IRC has built its philosophy and approaches on the principle of putting people first in development support. The principle must remain paramount, as the horizons broaden.

CONTENTS



This booklet traces a quarter of a century of changes in the water supply and sanitation sector and against that background IRC's progress and achievements over that period. In doing so, it will no doubt stir the memories of those who have participated in the changes. It may also perhaps serve as a helpful reminder for those facing the challenges of the next 25 years that the collective efforts of comparatively few like-minded people can have a major impact on seemingly intractable problems.

In 25 years, IRC has received support and advice from a great number of agencies and individuals. We have to thank particularly the Netherlands Government and the World Health Organization, whose combined initiative in 1968 led to the establishment of the International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply, as it was then called. Continuous subsidies from the Netherlands Government have provided the stimulus for IRC's growth and diversification, and we are grateful to the many agencies who have provided vital support for individual programmes.

Our thanks go too to the members of IRC's Governing Board who have contributed so much to the Centre's progress during the last quarter of a century. This brief record of IRC's first 25 years is dedicated to them, and to the 141 men and women who have been our colleagues as IRC staff members for varying lengths of time during that period.

Hans van Damme, 1972 - to date

Loekie Broersma, 1968 - 1981; 1991 -to date

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“... the collective efforts of comparatively few like-minded people can have a major impact on seemingly intractable problems.”



As part of IRC's 25th anniversary celebrations, children from many parts of the world took part in the Blue Wave Ceremony staged by the Globetree Foundation on 19 March 1994 in Noordwijk, immediately preceding the Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation. IRC's birthday had earlier been commemorated in style by staff, families and guests who enjoyed a celebratory dinner at the Circus Theatre in Scheveningen followed by a memorable performance of Phantom of the Opera.

IRC IN 1994

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

The IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre was 25 years old on 19 December 1993. In those 25 years, IRC has grown from a small unit in the Netherlands National Institute for Drinking Water Supply into a respected international institution with a special role in development cooperation. In the water and sanitation sector, the Centre is now recognized as a promoter of innovation and change and an effective bridge between those possessing valuable knowledge and experience and those seeking that knowledge and experience.

In fulfilling that role, IRC holds fast to one key principle: that transfer of knowledge should be carried out in such a way that it enhances the capability of all partners to solve their own problems (providing the fishing rod rather than the fish to the hungry man is the Chinese proverb's perceptive illustration of this key principle). In IRC's case, it means continually stimulating and supporting national staff as project leaders and as the generators of project outputs. IRC's programme officers support demonstration projects and workshops in many parts of the developing world and help with the documentation and dissemination of findings.

The projects include evaluation of technological options for improving community water supply and sanitation services – handpumps, standposts, treatment methods and piping systems are among the technical topics that have been studied. Increasingly though, IRC's programmes focus on the behavioural and organizational aspects necessary to make development projects successful and sustainable. Under these headings, projects include study of gender

issues, hygiene education, community management implications and, always, the collection, analysis and management of information.

Without exception, the activities are directed and managed by national staff. IRC's services include reference and referral, recording of experiences, help in mobilizing funds, and support for the organization of meetings or the preparation of technical reports and other publications.

In 25 years, IRC has participated in projects in 41 developing countries, but its influence spreads much further. The monthly IRC Newsletter, now retitled *Water Newsletter*, published in English and French, has a total circulation list of 6,300 in more than 200 countries. The first of its kind in the field, when it came out in December, 1970, it is now a primary source of information on water and sanitation activities for sector professionals and field workers.

Information is at the core of IRC's activities and the Centre is now leading concerted global efforts on information management and on communication towards partnership, as part of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative



IRC's office is close to the centre of The Hague.

Council's Rabat Action Programme (RAP). The RAP seeks to support developing country efforts to accelerate access to sustainable water and sanitation services, by developing and promoting the use of guidelines and tools. IRC's designation as lead agency for the RAP's information-related activities is one measure of the Centre's progress from its small beginnings in December 1968.

As an observer since 1986 on the Inter-Agency Steering Committee initially formed to coordinate activities in support of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990), IRC has an ear and a voice in global discussions of emerging issues – helping the Centre to develop programmes which best respond to identified needs.

That process is significantly enhanced by the presence on IRC's Governing Board of water and sanitation sector specialists from UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO and the Collaborative Council. Over the years, the Board has guided IRC's service-oriented approach and ensured that the Centre can offer a specialized service to donors and developing country agencies, acting as an effective bridge between policy and implementation.

This booklet shows, in a highly abbreviated and simplified way, how IRC's evolution has mirrored changes in the thinking of water and sanitation sector professionals through the last quarter of a century. It shows too how IRC's principle of participatory learning has enabled the Centre to lead sector thinking in a number of important areas.

From its earliest days, IRC's programmes have been directed towards the development of practical solutions which can be demonstrated and applied **in the field**.



Assistance from IRC has helped CINARA in Colombia to become an outstanding national resource centre and one of the world leaders in slow sand filtration and pretreatment technology research.

One of the Centre's first projects, begun in 1973, was a study of the suitability of slow sand filtration (SSF) as a water treatment technology in developing countries. Today, engineers in Colombia and India are acknowledged experts on SSF. They have produced state-of-the-art guidance on ways of adapting the technology to the needs of developing countries.

Further research on pretreatment technologies is being driven by the national staff and is taking SSF technology into exciting new fields. It is a classic example of the way that research steered by users leads to both practical results and an enhanced capacity among the users for self-help and appropriate technology transfer.

In Colombia, CINARA (Centro Inter-Regional de Abastacimiento y Remoción de Agua), created in 1987 as a direct result of the SSF project, is now a flourishing national resource centre, extending its influence to other Latin American countries.

The process is being repeated as a result of IRC-assisted field activities in Malawi and Zambia. Here, innovative approaches in the design and management of piped supplies



“IRC's principle of participatory learning has enabled the Centre to lead sector thinking in a number of important areas.”

for small communities have been tested and developed. The results are influencing national programmes in the two countries and have been shared with neighbouring countries in southern Africa.

Under the general heading of INFO-IMPACT, a range of IRC-supported programmes have helped to strengthen the collection, analysis, management and application of information in such countries as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Kenya, and the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa. Again, the objective has always been to help national staff to develop self-sufficiency and a capacity to help others.

Through its support for these and many other field activities, IRC has established a special role for itself in water and sanitation sector development. The role is fortified through a range of linked support activities, which help to make IRC the first port of call for sector specialists seeking up-to-date information on the main issues of the day.

The support services include:

Information and Documentation: IRC's Documentation Unit has one of the world's biggest collections of literature on low-cost water supply and sanitation. In 1993, the unit responded to more than 600 general information requests and 275 specific subject queries.

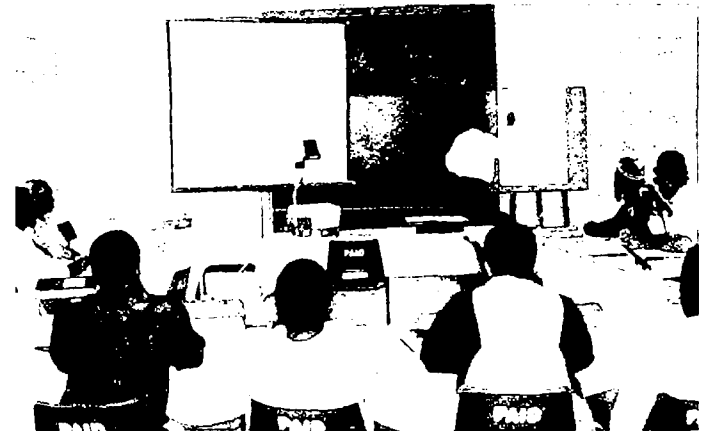
Desk Research and Publications: The majority of IRC's publication activities involve desk research on major sector issues. This work, conducted in collaboration with developing country partners, forms the basis for a growing list of IRC publications. In 1993, more than 5,000 publications were distributed all over the world, on topics which included: *Community management, Health and hygiene,*

Gender issues, Operation and maintenance, Action-learning, and Information management.

Training and Briefing Programmes. Another way of sharing expertise and information resources is through tailor-made training courses and briefing programmes. Some 120 people took part in these activities in 1993. They came from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Advisory Support. IRC's primary focus on the participatory approach in evaluation and monitoring makes the centre a valuable member of advisory missions. Seven such missions were undertaken in 1993 in addition to IRC's continuing role as policy advisor on Dutch-supported projects in India, Pakistan and Yemen.

"IRC (is) the first port of call for sector specialists seeking up-to-date information on the main issues of the day."



A Management for Sustainability course was added to IRC's repertoire in 1989. Here, it is being run in Cameroon in collaboration with the Pan-African Institute for Development (PAID). Equal partnership of national project staff is a basic principle of IRC activities.

THE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SECTOR AND IRC

a quarter of a century in retrospect

1969 - 1973



THE SECTOR SETTING

The late 1960s saw an awakening of interest among development specialists in the impact that inadequate water supplies were having on socioeconomic development in the Third World.

The World Health Organization, celebrating its own 20th anniversary in 1968, revealed that a mere 12% of the rural population of developing countries had access to safe water. Water and waste were recognized as key health issues and WHO pushed for research to find ways of improving coverage for the rural poor.

Through its Community Water Supply (CWS) programme, which had been under way since 1959, WHO urged that specific targets for improved water supplies should be included in the second UN Development Decade (1971-1980). This urging was intensified in the preparations for the 1972 World Environment Conference in Stockholm.

For urban areas, the target was 100% coverage by 1980 – 60% through house connections and 40% via public stand-posts. In the rural areas, the aim was to raise the proportion of rural dwellers with access to safe water from 12% to 25%.

At this stage, technology was seen as the key to progress. Recognizing that the high technology options being implemented in industrialized countries were not appropriate in the developing world, water specialists sought to focus the research agenda on development of low-cost technologies.

With health improvement as the common goal, WHO took the lead in promoting the new approach.

A research and development component was included in the CWS programme. Its aim was “[to engage] the assistance of research, teaching and other institutions in the solution of practical problems related to the development and improvement of water supplies in those countries where lack of funds and shortage of trained staff form ever-growing obstacles.”

The change coincided with another innovation at WHO – the use of *Collaborating Institutions* as a means of coordinating research and development. In 1968, WHO proposed to designate two networks of collaborating institutions – one for community water supply and one for waste disposal – each

“... the aim was to raise the proportion of rural dwellers with access to safe water from 12% to 25%.”

In 1972, the World Health Organization was the implementing agency on this water drilling project in Santa'a (photo: WHO)





1969-1973 IRC's FORMATIVE YEARS

DEFINING THE ROLE



Professor Krul, pictured here in discussion with Hans van Damme in the KIWA laboratory, helped to convince the World Health Organization that the Netherlands would be the right home for the International Reference Centre on Community Water Supply.

The Netherlands Government responded to WHO's initiative with a proposal to establish a programme within the National Institute for Drinking Water Supply (RID). So it was that, on 19 December 1968, an agreement was signed under which the *International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply* became the hub of a network of some 32 National WHO Collaborating Institutions in both developed and developing countries.

The Centre's agenda was fixed at a meeting in Dubrovnik in October 1970. The collaborating centres identified research priorities for both developed and developing countries. This mixed focus continued throughout IRC's first five years. The fifth annual report still includes the objective of: "stimulating and coordinating improved water supply systems for both industrialized and developing countries."

In fulfilling that role, IRC had access to RID's considerable resources and to those of the national water research association, KIWA, which had already established a worldwide reputation for R&D in water supply technologies.

In 1971, IRC's first technical publication addressed an issue which had been of concern primarily in the industrialized countries, but which was seen as increasingly relevant in the developing world. *Plastic Pipe in Drinking Water Distribution Practice* was widely requested after being announced in the IRC Newsletter – an early positive indication that the Newsletter was reaching an interested audience.

It was a meeting at the National Institute for Public Health in Bilthoven in April 1973 which helped to refocus IRC's objectives. Directors of 31 of the Collaborating Institutions reviewed the work of the network and produced a list of priority projects for which concerted action should be initiated. Though the list retained some projects of principal interest to industrialized countries, the balance had clearly swung since Dubrovnik towards the needs of the developing world.

Among the projects then seen as most in need of collaborative action were:

- Health aspects of water reuse - a far-sighted proposal still attracting attention 21 years later.
- Slow sand filtration in developing countries - a project which was to become a major long-term activity for IRC and a springboard for a number of later initiatives on user-driven research and community participation.



Collaborating Institutions Directors met in Bilthoven in April 1973, to determine priority projects.



- Review and application of successful low-cost technologies – a wide-ranging topic which prompted work on handpumps and water distribution systems, and publication of research findings on simple water purification and disinfection techniques and new initiatives funded by the US Agency for International Development to collect and transfer knowledge of low-cost technologies.
- Development and implementation of systematic training programmes in community water supply based on assessment of manpower and training needs in developing countries - this subsequently become a major area of attention for both IRC and WHO.

FIRST RECRUITS

For a while, IRC had no staff of its own. It was a programme, not a unit, and was brought to life by the energetic work of RID Director Teun Verheul. From June 1970, Theo Martijn, a RID civil engineer, acted as Manager on a part-time basis.

KIWA's public relations officer, Jan Lieffering, helped to publicise the early activities of the collaborating institutions network. He it was who put together the first IRC Newsletter in December 1970.

Work in those days was assigned to appropriate RID specialists, among them a youthful hydrogeologist called Hans van Damme, whose IRC duties included responsibility for information and documentation. In those early days, only one person could be said to be working full-time on IRC work - a young secretary Miss Loekie van der Sar

(Mrs Loekie Broersma since 1972) has the earliest career connections with IRC.

To cope with growing expectations from its creators, IRC had to have its own permanent staff and a budget for them to travel to gather contacts and information and to lay the foundations for future activities.

That process began in 1971 and one of the first recruits, Kien Tjiook, has played a key part in developing IRC's technical research role throughout the last 25 years. The first coordinator of the slow sand filtration project, Kien Tjiook was also one of the first water supply specialists in the world to adopt the principle of community participation as a vital component of development activities.



*Kien Tjiook
(1971 - to date)*

A more permanent staffing structure was established in 1972. Pier Santema, who took over as Director of RID in that year, had a key influence on the IRC's development for the next decade. In the same year, Hans van Damme became IRC's first full-time Manager and almost his first task was to introduce the Centre at the congress of the International Water Supply Association (IWSA) in New York. That was followed by extensive trips to Africa, Asia and Latin America, spreading the word about IRC's goals and establishing the contacts to build an effective programme.

At the end of its first five years, IRC had a permanent staff of just four, but that was soon to change.

"IRC had to have its own permanent staff and a budget for them to travel . . ."

1969 - 1973 THE PUBLISHED WORD

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

In its first five years, IRC published a total of six Technical Papers (TPs) and six Bulletins. The TP titles clearly show the domination of technical issues in these early years:

TP1 (1971)

Plastic Pipe in Drinking Water Supply Practice

TP2 (1972)

The Suitability of Iodine and Iodine Compounds as Disinfectants for Small Water Supplies

TP3 (1973 also in French)

The Purification of Water on a Small Scale

TP4 (1973)

Health Aspects Relating to the Use of uPVC pipes for Community Water Supply

TP5 (1973)

Health Aspects Relating to the Use of Poly-Electrolytes in Water Treatment for Community Water Supply

TP6 (1973)

The Potential Pollution Index as a Tool for River Water Quality Management

NEWSLETTER QUOTES

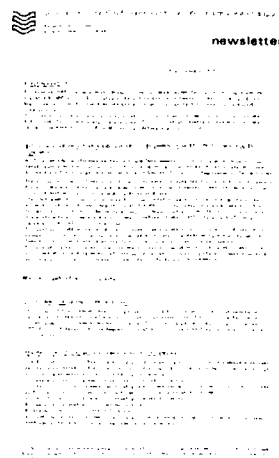
The IRC Newsletter began publication in December 1970. Here are some of the items which made the news in the first four years.

"The Central Public Health Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur, India, has developed a simple kit for estimation of residual chlorine in water. The CPHERI will be holding a training course in Water and Waste Analysis (8 weeks duration) . . ."

Newsletter No. 1, December 1970

"A maximum allowable concentration of 2.5 mg/l humic substances in drinking water has been suggested for the new edition of Czechoslovak drinking water standards, based on results gained in the Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Prague . . ."

Newsletter No. 6, May 1971



"The Director of Water Supplies in Hong Kong has announced the construction of a desalination project, by which the colony will have one of the largest desalters in the world by 1974 . . ."

Newsletter No. 13, January 1972

"Local filter materials for rural drinking water supply were investigated at the department of Environmental Engineering of the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok. In a 2-stage filtration, shredded coconut husk fibre was used in the roughing filter . . ."

Newsletter No. 20, August 1972

"Under an Agency for International Development (AID) research contract, the Battelle Memorial Institute of Columbus, Ohio, has developed a hand-operated water pump for manufacture and use in developing countries . . ."

Newsletter No. 28, April 1973

1974 - 1978

THE SECTOR SETTING

Following the early initiatives by WHO, the commitment and skills of a charismatic group of individuals brought the international spotlight onto the urgent needs for improved water and sanitation in rural areas of the developing world.

Under the chairmanship of Myer Cohen of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the *Ad Hoc Working Group on Rural Potable Water Supply and Sanitation* brought together professionals from UNDP (Bill Mashler and Jim Berna), the World Bank (Harold Shipman), WHO (Berndt Dieterich), and UNICEF (Martin Beyer). This initial collaboration, which had been prompted by a paper prepared by Dr Ian Burton for IDRC at the request of the OECD Planning Group on Science and Technology, expanded quickly as colleagues from UNEP, FAO and the UN joined the Ad Hoc Group.

Drawing inspiration from the iconoclastic book *Drawers of Water* by Gilbert White, David Bradley and Anne White, which had been published in 1972, this group deserves enormous credit for its twin achievements: new attitudes and approaches in the UN specialised agencies; and international prominence for previously neglected sector needs.

Two landmark events reinforced the messages of the Ad Hoc Working Group. At the 1976 UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat), Barbara Ward led a group of famous women through the streets of Vancouver carrying buckets of water on their heads. This vivid demonstration of the plight of the rural poor helped to stimulate the Habitat resolution in favour of targets for countries to achieve

measurable improvements in the provision of safe water supply and hygienic waste disposal “by a certain date”.

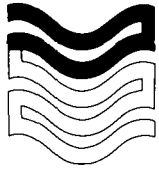
This resolution was converted into the “water and sanitation for all” slogan which became the message of the 1980s following the designation of those years as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade at the UN Water Resources Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in March 1977. Mar del Plata was the first UN Conference devoted solely to water resources. Its long and detailed preparations led to some inspirational resolutions and recommendations, many of which are equally relevant today. It was also the place at which it suddenly became acceptable to promote international action on such “profane” issues as the design of handpumps.

Among the important new concepts which emerged in the Mar del Plata Action Plan was the notion of complementarity between water and sanitation as prime ingredients of health improvement strategies. This led to the first integrated programmes involving water, sanitation and hygiene education.

*The Vancouver walk drew media attention to water problems of the rural poor.
(photo: UN/Y.Nagata).*



“it suddenly became acceptable to promote international action on such ‘profane’ issues as the design of handpumps.”



1974-1978 A FOCUS ON RURAL WATER SUPPLY

MEASURING UP TO THE TASKS

The rapid pace of sector activities meant a growing need for research and for information exchange. Increasingly, IRC was now initiating its own research activities, as networking among collaborating institutions gave way to a wider networking function among those active in water and sanitation activities in developing countries.

There is an important lesson here: the apparent attractions of networking are only realised in practice when the networking institutions have clear common interests. In IRC's experience, networks build up when there are practical results to be shared; they are not, in themselves, a means of generating those results.

In 1974, the Ad Hoc Working group proposed an international collaborative programme, as part of which IRC would become the international centre in a network of regional and national centres, collaborating in information exchange, training and research. Though the global programme did not come to fruition, it did provide the seed for the POETRI initiative described later. The Netherlands Government boosted IRC's budget in 1974, permitting an immediate increase in staff and enabling IRC to initiate its own activities in developing countries. In 1974 too, IRC's host institution RID moved from its cramped accommodation in the centre of the Hague to larger offices in Voorburg on the outskirts of the city.

Demand still outstripped resources and IRC's status as part of a government institution was an obstacle to some bilateral agencies which might otherwise have supported projects. The benefits of foundation status were becoming apparent, though it was to be 1980 before IRC actually achieved it,



For the first time in the water supply and sanitation sector, down-to-earth issues such as wells and pumps came into international discussion.

strongly supported by the then Director General for the Environment Wim Reij.

The first field project to get under way was *Slow Sand Filtration for Developing Countries*, envisaged in 1973 as a two-phase programme over three years. In the same year, IRC initiated an inventory of public standpost supplies on behalf of the World Bank. The first in-depth assessment of handpumps was undertaken with co-sponsorship from WHO and UNEP and led to a joint IRC/UNEP publication – the first of many co-publishing arrangements. These three projects constituted the beginning of a comprehensive coverage of water supply issues.

Soon afterwards, Health effects of water reuse were discussed at an expert meeting; the Public Standpost Water Supplies (PSWS) project moved to a demonstration phase; in collaboration with WHO, IRC developed guidelines on training materials and delivery systems appropriate for developing countries; and initiatives were set in motion on the choice and implementation of appropriate technologies.

Immediately prior to the 1977 UN Water Conference, IRC organized a symposium in Amsterdam, which highlighted the sector needs in relation to policy and planning, manpower development, technology and motivation, and laid

the basis for recommendations on information exchange and finance at the UN Water Conference. Following the resolutions at Mar del Plata, IRC was quick off the mark with projects responding to the demand for better community participation and for the exchange of technical information.

It was in 1977 too that the Centre began the information project that was to provide food for debate among sector specialists for another four years. POETRI (Programme on the Exchange and Transfer of Information) also started a trend for acronyms that has since seen information programmes with labels like PIP, TIE, MIS, CESI (WHO), INFO-IMPACT, and ITN.

For those attracted by the acronym concept, one word of warning: TRANSLATION. Don't expect all the ingenious word plays to appeal to conference interpreters. Translating POETRI into Spanish is about as effective as translating Shakespeare into Esperanto.

THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The developing country focus agreed at Bilthoven meant that IRC, still a department of the Dutch home civil service, needed a new brand of people with broad experience in developing countries.

Between 1974 and 1978, as staff numbers grew from 4 to 17, the recruitment process brought to IRC individuals who were to have a huge influence on the centre's development:

Jan Haijkens was the inspiration behind IRC's manpower development and training programmes, including large-scale projects in Indonesia. He was to become Deputy Manager in 1979.

Enric Hessing led IRC activities in Community Education and Participation and was the instigator of demonstration projects as a major element of programmes.

Ebbo Hofkes became well known on the international circuit as the Centre's front man on technology issues. Many IRC publications bear his name.

Karel Hoogendoorn, IRC's first Head of Information Services, was the prime mover in the early development of the POETRI initiative.

Paul Kerkhoven worked initially on the slow sand filtration project and then gave added impetus to POETRI.

It was in 1977 that IRC first acquired the services of a woman whose contributions both to IRC and to the water supply and sanitation sector have been immense.

Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma has not only produced definitive IRC publications and raised the Centre's profile and status in her specialist areas of community participation and the role of women. She has provided advice and direction on many other IRC projects and become a respected world authority in her field.



Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma, third from right (1977- to date), pictured at one of the early IRC workshops on community participation, which she instigated.

Working as a consultant, **Alastair White** helped to lay the basis for IRC's work in community participation.



*Enric Hessing
(1975-1986)*



*Jan Haijkens
(1976 - 1981)*



*Paul Kerkhoven
(1976-1981))*



*Ebbo Hofkes
(1976-1987)*

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

The second five years saw a further six Technical Papers, and six more Bulletins. IRC staff also authored or co-authored some 16 papers on different aspects of the Centre's work. The Technical Paper titles show a shifting trend towards developing country issues.

TP7 (1975)
Health Effects Relating to Direct and Indirect Re-use of Waste Water for Human Consumption

TP8 (1976)
Prediction Methodology for Suitable Water and Waste Water Processes

TP9 (1976)
Analysis of Organic Compounds in Water to Support Health Effect Studies

TP10 (1977 also in French and Spanish)
Hand Pumps for Use in Drinking Water Supplies in Developing Countries

TP11 (1978 also in French and Spanish)
Slow Sand Filtration for Community Water Supply in Developing Countries: a Design and Construction Manual

TP12 (1978)
Participation and Education in Community Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes

NEWSLETTER QUOTES

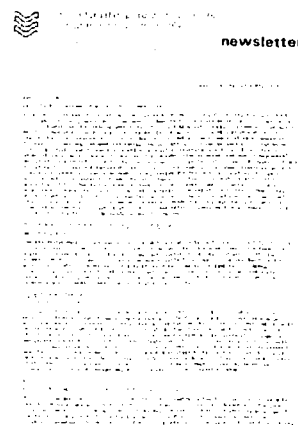
Newsletter coverage begins to reflect both the concentration on activities relevant to community water supply problems in developing countries, and the influence of international collaboration.

“Dr Talib and coworkers of the Public Health Department, Pahang, Malaysia report experiments of well chlorination with a perforated plastic bag containing a 1:1 mixture of chloride of lime (bleaching powder) and coarse sand which is lowered into a well in a coconut shell . . .”

Newsletter No. 41, May 1974

“A special Technical Panel on Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation for Rural Areas met in Geneva from 7-16 October at the initiative of seven sponsoring international agencies to develop a medium-term programme for technology transfer and applied research in this field . . .”

Newsletter No. 48, December 1974



“If plenty of water from a mountain spring or stream is available, can the water needs for a mosque, school or small community at an elevated location be met, when no electricity or gasoline engine for driving a pump is there? The answer is yes, by using a hydraulic ram. . .”

Newsletter No. 54, June 1975

“Under the auspices of UNEP and WHO, the IRC will be holding an international workshop on hand pumps. . . to review a comprehensive treatise on hand pumps for water supply use in developing countries prepared under a contractual arrangement with IRC by Dr. FE McJunkin. . .”

Newsletter No. 65, May 1976

“The successes and failures of community development schemes over the past few decades have highlighted the fact that lasting results can only be achieved with the active participation of the community itself. . . In south-central Cameroon, the participative approach was successfully used to organize village health committees. . .”

Newsletter No. 83, December 1977

1979 - 1983

THE SECTOR SETTING

The proclamation of the 1980s as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade put the sector into overdrive. UN agencies joined governments of donor and recipient countries to commit themselves to the ambitious goals of “water and sanitation for all by 1990”.

The key qualifying phrase “. . . if possible” escaped most of the ensuing publicity, as UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim declared the objective “eminently achievable” and WHO Director-General Halfdan Mahler expressed his conviction that “the number of water taps per 1,000 population will be an infinitely more meaningful health indicator than the number of hospital beds”.

Among the 39 speeches at the General Assembly launch of the Decade was one by the then Netherlands’ UN Ambassador Hugo Scheltema, speaking on behalf of Western Europe and other states. Little did he know then how involved he was to become in the issues of the Decade some four years later.

The “Gang of Four” (UNDP, WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank) worked hard to build on the momentum created by



Low technology solutions such as handpumps became the focus of research attention during the early years of the IDWSSD.

UNDP Administrator Bradford Morse was one of the agency heads who made fulsome commitments to the aims of the IDWSSD at the General Assembly launch in November 1980 (photo: UN).



the Decade launch, led by two more of the sector’s memorable protagonists. UNDP Deputy Administrator, G Arthur Brown was a highly effective chairman of the inter-agency Steering Committee established to monitor IDWSSD progress; and, at the time of the Jimmy Carter Administration, Peter Bourne took on a new role, that of UNDP/WHO Decade Coordinator, and travelled the world promoting IDWSSD initiatives by developing country governments and donor agencies.

The Action Plan of Mar del Plata was converted into a series of initiatives which included rapid assessments of the status of water supply and sanitation coverage and planning in more than 100 developing countries carried out through the World Bank/WHO Collaborative Programme, establishment of National Action Committees for the IDWSSD in more than 70 countries, and designation of UNDP Resident Representatives as focal points for cooperative action (an issue which remained controversial throughout the Decade).

“The Action Plan of Mar del Plata was converted into a series of initiatives which included rapid assessments of the status of water supply and sanitation coverage and planning in more than 100 developing countries . . .”





1979-1983 INTO THE IDWSSD

A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE



Pier Santema, second from left, chairing the first meeting of the newly constituted Governing Board.

The IDWSSD led to a frenzy of activity. Demands for IRC's services were rising fast and foundation status became an increasingly important route to the extra resources needed to meet those demands. The change came on 1 January 1981 through an Act of the Dutch Parliament turning the former government agency into an independent foundation. It was an early example of privatization, but, crucially, it also retained IRC's close links with the Netherlands Government. It was accompanied by a name change to the International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation.



*Peter Lowes,
Governing
Board Member
1981-1987*

On creation of the Foundation, Hans van Damme was appointed Director of IRC and the Director of the National Institute for Drinking Water Supply, Pier Santema, became Chairman of a newly constituted Governing Board. The Board had representatives from the Netherlands Environment and Foreign Affairs Ministries. It also included, and still does, the leading sector managers from UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO. That early decision has been a crucial factor in IRC's successful development.



*Martin Beyer,
Governing
Board Member
1981-1989*

The Board's influence was particularly important in the early years of the IDWSSD, when IRC benefited enormously from the experience and foresight of three Board members who were among the Decade's most influential people — John Kalbermatten of the World Bank, Martin Beyer of UNICEF and Peter Lowes, who took over in 1981 from Peter Bourne as UNDP/WHO Coordinator for the IDWSSD. With the Board's advice and backing, IRC was able to strengthen its independent role and establish an identity as one of the few agencies specializing

Information, training and community involvement are integral features of IRC's field activities, as in this project evaluation in Tanzania



in support for water supply and sanitation activities and linking field work with information and training support.

The increasing emphasis in IRC's activities of an integrated approach to sector development parallels the thinking of the Board members. Within IRC, the approach stimulated a regular exchange of information and expertise among the project staff, so that technical projects fed and were fed by the multi-country programmes on manpower development and on community education and participation.

During this period too, IRC developed POETRI into a concrete proposal to support institutions in developing countries to collect, process and distribute technical information. The proposal for national information centres was well received, but the initiative foundered largely through the difficulties for international support agencies in funding such activities.

Nevertheless, POETRI remains one of IRC's major contributions to sector thinking on information and communication. The subsequent International Training Network (ITN) Centres established by the UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme are the type of well-resourced focal points for sector support in training and information services envisaged in POETRI.



SPECIALIZING IN INTEGRATION

By the time that IRC reached its 15th birthday in 1983, staff numbers had risen to 29. New specialists were needed to cope with the emerging issues and IRC's internal management structure changed to match the larger size of the organization and the integrated approach to its programmes. Among the key staff joining during this exciting period in IRC's evolution were:

Krijn Peterse, the foundation's first Administrator, whose down-to-earth and practical approach made light of the changeover and enabled the technical professionals to focus on their own priorities. Krijn received able assistance from another 1981 newcomer, **Hein Bodrij**.

Jan-Teun Visscher, (1982- to date) for whom the term down-to-earth is a substantial understatement has been a prime mover in developing and fortifying IRC's creed that national staff should lead projects as senior partners, with IRC's support stimulating action-oriented learning processes and local capacity building.



Han Heijnen, (1979-1983 and 1989- to date) who during this first spell with IRC played an important part in establishing the Centre's identity as an agency with a unique partnership approach to water and sanitation sector development.

Marieke Boot, a socio-anthropologist whose dedication, specialist knowledge and quiet authority made her a highly

respected expert in the field of hygiene education and IRC a natural source of support on this vital topic.

Mike Seager, (1982-1990 and 1993-1994) whose stimulation and collaboration with partners in Malawi, Zambia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka steered IRC's piped water supplies programme to a successful conclusion, and whose talent for back-stage support was later to prove so important in the preparations for the Dutch-sponsored Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation in 1994.

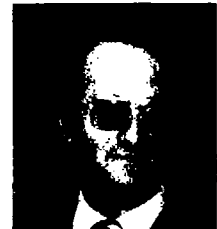


Toon van Dam, whose strong commitment and forceful promotion spread appreciation of the POETRI initiative among donors and sector agencies throughout the world.

Robert Brasseur, who strengthened IRC's support activities in human resources development and particularly the Centre's collaboration with WHO in this field.

Monica Zijdemans (1980-1984 and 1985-1987), who provided valuable assistance in so many of the support programmes.

Lia Wahab (1981- to date), who has undertaken a wide range of tasks in the secretariat and the documentation unit and is currently IRC's voice on the telephone.



*Krijn Peterse
(1981-1991)*



*Marieke Boot
(1983-1994)*



*Toon van Dam
(1989-1992)*



*Robert Brasseur
(1981-1987)*

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

In the third five years, IRC published a further nine Technical Papers, and six more Bulletins. The topics of the Technical Papers mix technology and support activities.

TP13 (1980 also in Spanish)
Public Standpost Water Supplies

TP14 (1980 also in Spanish)
Public Standpost Water Supplies, A Design Manual

TP15 (1980)
Evaluation for Village Water Supply Planning

TP16 (1981 also in French)
POETRI Reference Manual, Volume I

TP17 (1981)
Community Participation in Water Supply and Sanitation: Concepts, Strategies and Methods

TP18 (1981 also in French)
Technology of Small Water Supply Systems in Developing Countries

TP19 (1981)
Guidelines on Health Aspects of Plumbing

TP20 (1982)
Practical Solutions in Drinking Water Supply and Wastes Disposal for Developing Countries

TP21 (1983)
A Groundwater Primer

NEWSLETTER QUOTES

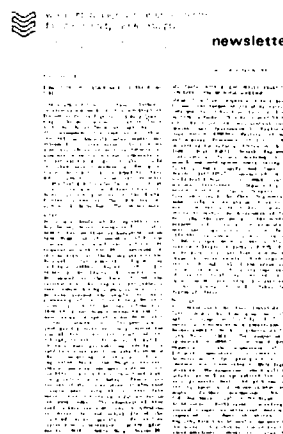
A great deal of Newsletter coverage was related to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, and particularly the activities of the UN agencies concerned.

“In Tanzania, pipelines are supposed to be laid several feet deep to prevent elephants, who can smell them, from digging them up. In one engineering report, the roof of a ground storage reservoir was designed to support the weight of two elephants.”

Newsletter No. 99, May 1979

“Up till now only 53,000 villages out of a total of 150,000 problem villages in India and 83% of the urban population have been covered with regard to water supply. With regard to sanitation, only 34% of the urban population has access to a sewerage system whereas the facilities provided in the rural zones are very insignificant”

Newsletter No. 108, March 1980



“The World Bank has emerged as the major lender in the water supply and sanitation sector. It has so far committed about \$3,000 million for projects in water supply and waste disposal. Nearly 75% of these commitments have been made in the last five years . . .”

Newsletter No. 122, June 1981

“UNICEF’s (water and sanitation equipment) procurement from all countries totalled \$32.1 million in 1980. Of this amount, about 42 per cent was for drilling equipment, 21 per cent for hand pumps and motor pumps, and about 10 per cent each was for galvanized pipes/fittings and for PVC pipes/fittings.”

Newsletter No. 134, July/Aug 1982

“The two problems with pit latrines are flies, which carry disease, and odour. The ventilated improved pit latrine, better known as the VIP latrine, is an improved version which overcomes the chief disadvantages of the conventional design. The VIP latrine was developed between 1973 and 1976 by the Blair Research Laboratories at Harare, Zimbabwe . . .”

Newsletter No. 143, May/June 1983

THE SECTOR SETTING

The IDWSSD started as a UN initiative and, from the start, there had been collaboration among the main UN agencies involved in water and sanitation sector development. The sector's high profile in the early 1980s stimulated a new form of collaboration - this time among the bilateral support agencies. Among its driving forces, special mention should be made of Werner Knipschild from BMZ, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation.

A meeting of European donors held at Koenigswinter, Germany, in 1984 focused on common concepts and approaches for Decade support activities and resulted in a commitment to share information and minimize duplication and/or competition. It was followed by a meeting in 1985 under the auspices of OECD's Development Assistance Committee, and a growing impetus to find ways of pooling experience and resources, to improve the effectiveness of sector support.

The donors agreed on six *Global Concepts* for improving the performance of the water and sanitation sector by addressing issues identified as constraints¹.

A larger group of donors met in Interlaken in 1987 and sought to develop joint programmes to address the major issues revealed in WHO's review of the Decade's first five years and to update and endorse the Global Concepts. The Interlaken Consultation proposed that a Collaborative Council of External Support Agencies (ESAs) should be established, and the Council came into being at a 1988 Consultation in The Hague.



The Collaborative Council of External Support Agencies came into being at a meeting in the Hague in 1988.

Membership was open to all multilateral and bilateral funding agencies, non-governmental organizations and relevant international research institutions (IRC was a founder member). Its first Chairman, Sandy Rotival, also at that point the UNDP/WHO Decade Coordinator, became an effective and respected ambassador for the sector, and it is to his credit that the Council's activities rapidly spread to involve all major support agencies active in water supply and sanitation.

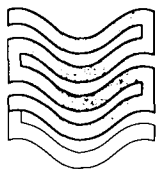
As defined at the Hague meeting, the Collaborative Council's work programme had three major components in which the Council would seek to coordinate support activities:

- **Country-level sector support**
- **Communication of information**
- **Applied Research**



1. *The six issues for which Global Concepts were agreed were:*

- *Institutional reform*
- *Cost recovery*
- *Balanced development*
- *Operation, maintenance and rehabilitation*
- *Community participation and hygiene education*
- *Coordination and cooperation*



1984-1988 BUILDING THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

THE GLOBAL ARENA



Henk Gajentaan, Board Member from 1983-1984, returned in 1994.



Willem Kakebeeke, Treasurer of the Governing Board from 1984 to date.



Ger Ardon, Secretary of the Governing Board from 1988 to date.

“the symposium led to some important conclusions on future ways of making progress in local project preparation, organization and maintenance, hygiene education, and financial management.”

On the resignation of IRC’s Governing Board Chairman Pier Santema through ill health in 1983, Henk Gajentaan, the Board member from the Foreign Affairs Ministry stepped into the breach and guided the Centre through a period of continuing growth.

IRC was then very fortunate, when former Ambassador Hugo Scheltema agreed to accept the Chairmanship in June 1984. For the next ten years, his diplomatic and organizational experience (and his personal acquaintance-ship with the heads of the principal UN agencies involved in the sector) proved invaluable in steering the Board, and IRC, along a course of increasing international involvement and influence. Hugo Scheltema it was too who guided the 1988 Hague Consultation to its decision to establish the ESA Collaborative Council – a conclusion that had appeared unlikely until diplomacy reconciled divergent factions among the committed participants.

IRC commemorated its 15th anniversary by staging an international symposium with the title *The Local Decade*.

A participatory process helps to identify the prevalence of different water-related diseases in Nepal.



The subtitle: *Men, women and agencies in water and development* provided the opportunity to explore a number of major issues which matched IRC’s prime areas of concern. Participants included many of the sector’s leading authorities on community-related issues and the symposium led to some important conclusions on future ways of making progress in local project preparation, organization and maintenance, hygiene education, and financial management.

The rapid pace of IRC’s programme expansion continued, with more sanitation studies being introduced and new activities started on renewable energy, rainwater harvesting, pretreatment systems, household water and sanitation options and hygiene education both in water supply and sanitation programmes and in schools.

IRC’s 15th anniversary had also coincided with another landmark – the Centre’s first project specifically related to the role of women. With its 775 references and bibliography of 45 selected publications, *Participation of Women in Water Supply and Sanitation: roles and realities*, published in 1985 in collaboration with the UNDP/PROWESS programme, remains a standard text on the topic.

IRC’s publications - the Technical Papers, Occasional Papers, Bulletins, and the Newsletter were by now establishing a wide and varied audience. Over the years, the publications approach has evolved to match the demands of the practitioners who make up IRC’s target audience. It is apparent from both titles and content that the trend has



Information officer Dick de Jong created a consistency of style in IRC’s growing list of publications.



Documentalists, from right to left Bettie Westerhof, Cor Dietvorst and Nigel Browne keep themselves and IRC up to date with the latest sector literature and operate a well-used and respected information retrieval system.

been from technical through social to fully integrated reports and from documents written by IRC staff or consultants through co-authorship to support for partners involved at field level in preparing their own reports.

In 1984, information dissemination was further streamlined by two new initiatives: computerization of the extensive and rapidly growing documentation unit and launch of the *Current Awareness Bulletin*, a listing of news items and contents pages from a wide range of water and sanitation-related journals.

A WELCOMING VENUE

1984 saw IRC move home for the second time in 5 years - to its present offices close to the centre of The Hague. The extra space was needed not just for the still growing staff numbers, but also to accommodate meeting participants, as the briefing programmes, training courses and workshops brought more and more visitors from all over the world.

IRC meetings were not just popular for their content. Participants invariably left with fond recollections of the friendly and supportive atmosphere created at the meetings by a vivacious and efficient support staff. It must remain a matter of conjecture how many returnees were attracted back by the technical programmes and how many by the

jovial mood which invariably emanated from the administrative team of **Nicolette Wildeboer, Anneke Groenendal, Izabel Wimmers and Hulda de Vries.**

Recruits during this period included:

Teun Bastemeijer, who contributed greatly to the development of IRC's training programmes;

Jo Smet, (1987-to date) who has strengthened IRC's work with partner communities. Jo is pictured here (far left of the photo) in a discussion with village health workers in Tanzania.



Lizette Burgers, a dynamic reinforcement of the hygiene education team;

Lauren Houttuin (1985-to date) and **Irene van Dieten**, whose combined desktop publishing and automation skills have transformed the appearance of IRC publications and the processing of documentation;

Hanneke Cusell-Schaap, familiar to many IRC visitors as the one responsible for expeditiously disbursing the DSA;

Michel van der Leest, whose title of Office Assistant seems somehow inadequate to describe the many varied tasks that he undertakes to keep the flow of papers and provisions running smoothly.

IRC's role in technical information exchange (TIE) was given a significant boost in 1988-89, when the Centre benefited from the energy and vivacity of **Eirah Gorre-Dale**, on a 12-month secondment from UNICEF.



Nicolette Wildeboer
(1985-to date)



Anneke Groenendal
(1981-to date)



Hulda de Vries
(1982-to date)



Izabel Wimmers
(1986-to date)



Teun Bastemeijer
(1985-1992)



Lizette Burgers
(1986-1993)



Michel v/d Leest
1985-to date



Irene v Dieten
1986-to date

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

The Bulletin Series was replaced in 1983 by Occasional Papers, 10 of which were published by the end of 1988. Six more Technical Papers were published in the five years:

TP22 (1985)
Participation of Women in Water Supply and Sanitation: Roles and Realities

TP23 (1987)
Renewable Energy Sources for Rural Water Supply

TP24 (1987)
Slow Sand Filtration for Community Water Supply

TP25 (1988)
Handpumps: Issues and Concepts in Rural Water Supply Programmes

TP26 (1988)
Ten Years of Experience: Community Water Supply and Sanitation Programme, Pokhara Western Development Region, Nepal

TP27 (1988)
Hygiene Education in Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes.

NEWSLETTER QUOTES

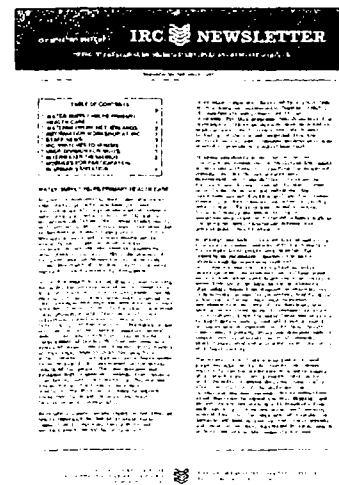
The frequency of Newsletter publication fell to four or five a year during part of this period, because there was no permanent editor. Coverage continued to highlight Decade issues.

“Create meaningful partnerships ‘together with’ the people, only then the slogan ‘Water and Sanitation for all’ can be turned into a longer lasting achievement. This message to governments and non-government agencies was voiced loud and clear by 34 experts from 14 countries participating in the ‘Local Decade’ Symposium . . .”

Newsletter No. 155, July/Sep 1984

“Slow sand filtration is one of the most effective surface water treatment methods. It is particularly suitable for rural areas in developing countries because it is one of the simplest and least expensive to construct, operate and maintain.”

Newsletter No. 159, July/Sep 1985



“The UNICEF and Swiss (SATA/Helvetas)-supported rural water supply project in Nepal has recently engaged a Nepalese woman specialist primarily to increase the participation of women in its water supply and sanitation projects.”

Newsletter No. 162, May/June 1986

“In the mid-Amazon Region of Brazil, near the city of Santarém, the introduction of wells proved to be of great importance for effective primary health care . . . Women especially saw the advantages of a water supply which would significantly reduce their daily work.”

Newsletter No. 168, March 1987

“The per capita cost of providing water and sanitation services at the start of the Decade averaged nearly US\$300. By the late 1980s, thanks to improved low-cost technologies, the cost per person has been reduced to about US\$180. In Southeast Asia, the per capita cost of providing safe water in rural areas has fallen to as little as US\$15.”

Newsletter No. 179, December 1988

1989 - 1993

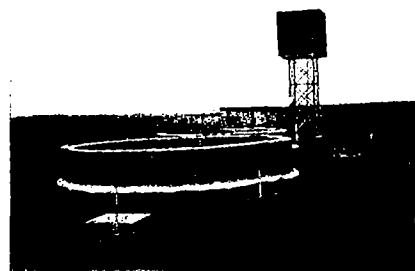
THE SECTOR SETTING

As the IDWSSD came to an end in 1990, a flurry of regional and global meetings sought to draw together the lessons of the Decade and to map out new directions for the water and sanitation sector in the 1990s. They culminated in a Global Consultation in New Delhi in September 1990. More than 600 participants assembled for *Safe Water 2000*, which was jointly sponsored by the Government of India, UNDP and the ESA Collaborative Council. The outcome was the Delhi Statement promoting the principle “*Some for all rather than more for some*” and setting out four guiding principles as the basis of future sector strategies[†].

New Delhi was also a landmark event for the ESA Collaborative Council, which there decided to change its status and to bring in sector professionals from developing country agencies as equal partners. Subsequent meetings of the newly named Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council in Oslo (1991) and Rabat (1993) have involved equal numbers of participants from developed and developing countries, and the Council’s comprehensive reports on sector issues have benefited from this balance.

The end of the IDWSSD was also the time that preparations were beginning for the Earth Summit – the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The 1992 International Conference on Water and Environment in Dublin was the bridge between New Delhi and Rio. It was also the time when the concept of integrated water resources management became widely accepted by both sector specialists and politicians as an important part of the route to sustainable development.

Marked improvements have been made, for example, in water treatment through slow sand filtration.



Chapter 18 of *Agenda 21*, the blueprint for sustainable development endorsed by world leaders in Rio, deals with the protection of freshwater resources and merges the guiding principles of New Delhi with Dublin’s principles for sustainable water resources development, among them endorsement of the concept that “water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good”.

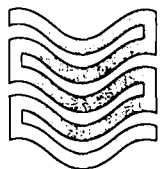
To help convert the professional and political consensus into concrete action, the Netherlands Government convened a Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation in March 1994 (coinciding with the UNCED-inspired World Water Day - 22 March), focusing on Rio follow-up.

The result of all this global activity during the last five years is an emphasis on problems created by rapid urbanization and industrialization in the developing countries and concerns about environmentally threatened water resources. Water and sanitation have to be seen as prime elements in programmes in which key issues are sustainability, integrated water resources management, capacity building, social mobilization, partnership and behavioural change.

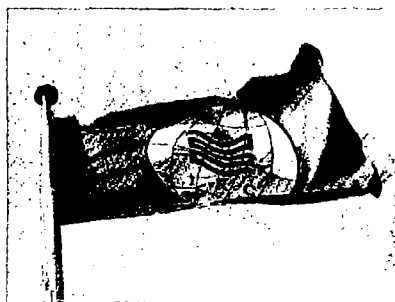


“water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good”.

- † The New Delhi Guiding Principles are:
1. Protection of the environment and safeguarding of health through integrated management of water resources and liquid and solid wastes
 2. Institutional reforms promoting an integrated approach and including changes in procedures, attitudes and behaviour and the full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions
 3. Community management of services backed by measures to strengthen local institutions in implementing and sustaining water and sanitation programmes
 4. Sound financial practices, achieved through better management of existing assets and widespread use of appropriate technologies.



1989-1993 BEYOND THE DECADE



FLYING THE FLAG: As part of its 25th anniversary celebrations, IRC commissioned its own flag. Flown for the first time at the time of the 1994 Ministerial Conference, the flag carries IRC's logo in white against a blue background and enclosed in a circle to represent the Centre's global perspective.

COMING DOWN FROM THE EARTH SUMMIT

Any fears that the end of the IDWSSD might mean a lower profile for water supply and sanitation among governments and donors were soon allayed. For IRC, and for many sector colleagues, the challenge in the immediate post-Decade period was to keep up with the many separate and linked initiatives influencing development thinking.

The Collaborative Council link was crucial and IRC's lead role in the Council's Working Groups on Information Management (IM) and on behavioural change and partnership-driven Information, Education and Communication (IEC) helped the Centre both to keep abreast of sector trends and to influence thinking in its own special areas of competence.

In the Philippines, for example, a close association with the International Training Network (ITN) Centre led to IRC providing advice on the strengthening of library and documentation services at the Manila centre and 12 associate centres, and to the distribution of sets of the Basic Library to the centres. Other country-level information management support was provided in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and Uganda.

In addition to its leadership of the two WSSCC working groups, IRC participated in four more working groups and took an active role in promoting the Council's Lusophone Initiative, to improve information exchange and management in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa.

The new themes from Delhi and Dublin were translated into IRC programmes on urban low-cost water and sanitation technologies and approaches, community-based



Installation of a hand-dug well in Cambodia is part of the Community Self-Improvement (COSI) programme in that country.

environmental management and water harvesting. The COSI (Community Self-Improvement) programme born out of an earlier IRC community participation project in Tanzania spread further, with new initiatives in Colombia and Cambodia.

The new decade also saw big changes in IRC's documentation services. Having demonstrated the attractions of CD-ROM at the New Delhi Global Consultation, IRC gave its own library users access to several external CD-ROM databases and began the task of merging information in different languages into a comprehensible and user-friendly database for the sector.

In 1990, IRC's Current Awareness Bulletin was transformed into *Highlights*, a bi-monthly selection of news items and contents pages from some 250 published sources relating to water and sanitation. The same year saw the first issue of an annual abstract journal on women's role in the sector, published in cooperation with the UNDP/World Bank PROWESS programme and, since 1994, also with UNICEF.

GROWING WITH THE JOB

The changing emphases and increase in extra-budgetary resources meant that IRC's staff numbers continued to grow at the start of the 1990s, reaching 35 in 1991 and supplemented by increasing use of specialist consultants.



*Han Heijnen
(1979-1983 and
1989-to date)*

Han Heijnen, who had spent three years at IRC before moving to Nepal and Sri Lanka with Helvetas in 1983, returned in 1989, since when he has steered the various IRC information programmes to broader horizons and established himself as a leading authority on information management in the sector.

Han's management of the Lusophone initiative has been fortified by the recruitment on a consultancy basis of **Maria Lucia Borba**.

When Eirah Gorre-Dale returned to UNICEF, IRC was fortunate to secure the services of **Stephen Parker** to begin implementation of the TIE (technical information exchange) strategy. Stephen's library skills are being put to good use too in the documentation service, which has also been reinforced with another new recruit, **Nigel Browne** and recently **Lex Kruijt**.

IRC's complement of women professionals was also substantially bolstered in this period with the recruitment of five research officers:

Mary Boesveld focused on community participation and participatory methodologies;

Eveline Bolt concentrated on training development and hygiene education;

Norah Espejo specialized in community management and in action learning techniques;

Madeleen Wegelin-Schuringa helped to strengthen the work on urban sanitation; and

Maria Sörensson added new insights, particularly to the programmes on school sanitation and participatory processes.

Following the retirement of Krijn Peterse, IRC has been fortunate to secure the services of another accomplished and effective Administrator in **Rob Jansen**, ably assisted by **Oskar Barendse**. The office management has been further enhanced by the lively and efficient work of **Jennifer Francis**.

THE MEDAL WITH SOME 30 RIBBONS

In 1991, IRC Director Hans van Damme received one of the Netherlands' highest honours. He was awarded the title *Officer of the Order of Orange of Nassau*. In accepting the honour, Hans dubbed it "the medal with 30 or so ribbons" – emphasizing that it had been awarded to him as a reflection of the efforts and achievements of *all* IRC's staff. It represented recognition at the highest level that the Centre was making an important contribution to international development support.



*Mary Boesveld
(1989 - to date)*



*Rob Jansen
(1992 - to date)*



*Eveline Bolt
(1991 - to date)*



*Norah Espejo, left (1991 - to date) and
Maria Sörensson (1992-to date)
promoting participatory techniques at the
"Daring to Share" fair in Germany, 1994*

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

The nature and variety of IRC publications has changed significantly in recent years, with a growth in co-authorship and in publications in the reference and training series. Eleven Occasional Papers were produced in this five-year period. In addition there were four Technical Papers and three major "Other Publications".

TP28 (1991)
Partners for Progress: An approach to sustainable piped water supplies

TP29 (1991 also in French)
Just Stir Gently: The way to mix hygiene education with water supply and sanitation

TP30 (1992)
Water Harvesting: A guide for planners and project managers

TP31 (1992)
From Sanitation to Development: The case of the Baldia soakpit pilot project

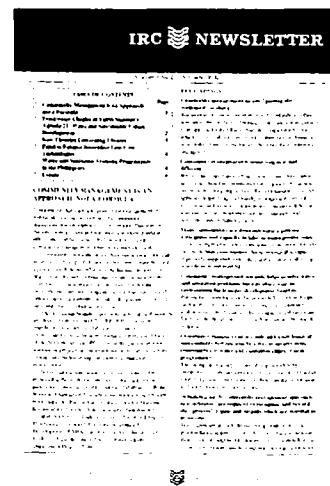
NEWSLETTER QUOTES

The main stories featured in the Newsletter related to the outcomes of major conferences, workshops and seminars, keeping readers abreast of current thinking.

"Flowing from the consultations in 1987 and 1988 a 70-strong Working Group has been formed for Resources Coverage and Cost Recovery under the aegis of WHO"
Newsletter No. 1185, Aug/Sep 1989

"Intensified efforts to accelerate the provision of water supply and sanitation services to the people of Africa resulted from a gathering of experts from 47 African countries and 30 donor agencies in Abidjan"
Newsletter No. 194, June 1990

"The importance of the provision of clean water and sanitation for children features prominently in the World declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children . . ."
Newsletter No. 197, November 1990



"For most governments and ESAs it is politically advantageous to stress expanded coverage, even if existing systems are deteriorating and not being replaced. It is therefore essential that decision makers gain full understanding of the major benefits to be obtained from good operation and maintenance performance . . ."
Newsletter No. 200, April 1991

"African countries that are prepared to actively pursue a plan for safe water supplies for all who are unserved today, at a per capita cost of US\$30 or less should get at least half of the cost via external assistance. UNICEF has agreed to work with other international agencies to mobilize half of the capital costs required, provided that governments and beneficiary communities provide the balance . . ."
Newsletter No. 206, Mar/Apr 1992

"The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have launched initiatives . . . to get developing world cities to save water. Every day these rapidly growing cities waste large amounts of water that could be used for drinking, farming or industrial production"
Newsletter No. 217, May/June 1993

TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

The water and sanitation sector is entering an exciting era. Those closest to the action regard the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade as a qualified success, but still leaving great challenges ahead. Certainly, the 1980s led to huge changes in approach and widespread acceptance of the ingredients for success. Quantitative progress too was significant, though the huge backlog of unserved people and continuing population growth proved to be insurmountable challenges.

The early 1990s have continued the momentum of the Decade and added some daunting additional challenges in the environmental and water resources management field and in urbanization.

Having pioneered collaborative frameworks and community-based approaches, in addition to what it set out to do, the water and sanitation sector now finds itself also a prospective junior partner in programmes for integrated water resources management and sustainable development.

How will the relationships developed and nurtured within the sector, have to evolve to meet the new demands? Will the concepts of partnership and local capacity building be as applicable to solving the environmental problems of the megacities as they have proved to be for community-based water and sanitation programmes? Will the integration of water and sanitation into broader programmes for sustainable management of water resources negate the people-focused approaches which are at the heart of IRC's support activities? How will widespread acceptance of the concept that water has an economic value in all its different uses

To support the Rio de Janeiro Agenda 21, the Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation in Noordwijk in March 1994, produced a political statement and an action programme for the next century.

IRC Chairman Hugo Scheltema offered IRC's further services towards "Actions for change."



influence the activities of support agencies like IRC, whose priority is to enable the poorest and most deprived communities to obtain sustainable services?

IRC's management takes a positive and confident view of the prospects for progress both for the broader sector and for IRC's role in it. The so-called new approaches have in fact evolved through a generation of experience and an increasing collaboration among professionals involved in the drinking water supply and sanitation sector, it is argued. In many ways, the sector has led the way in establishing the principles of people-focused development and local capacity building which are now also being seen as vital ingredients of all sustainable development. The integrated approach to water resources management opens up new avenues for IRC and presents a new range of potential partners in the developing countries and in the external support community.



THE TASKS AHEAD

Global endorsement in Rio de Janeiro of Agenda 21 and, in particular, Chapter 18 on the Protection of Freshwater Resources has expanded the water and sanitation agenda. The Action Programme adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Noordwijk, in March 1994, has five elements, which can be briefly summarized as:

- 1. Bringing about partnership and behavioural change**
- 2. Integrating policies on water, health and the environment**
- 3. Capacity building and institutional reform**
- 4. Mobilizing financial resources and using existing resources more effectively**
- 5. International support and collaboration**

The action programme has not come out of the blue. New Delhi, Dublin and Rio set the pattern of change, and IRC's own programme and recruitment strategy has to some extent already started to encompass the new directions.

The short course on *Management for Sustainability*, which has been run regularly since May 1989, incorporates the integrated sector approach and is being promoted as a highly relevant course for trainers from technical and social training institutes in developing countries.

One of IRC's strengths is its capacity to communicate sector concepts at the local level to the communities and agencies which are most likely to benefit from them. In this connection, future plans include a course on water and sanitation development as part of integrated district planning. Recognizing that the basis for integrated development is laid in the project preparation phase, the Centre has also started to collect information on integrated preparation of projects,

with special emphasis on participatory field investigations, gender aspects, flexibility and user choice. The integrated approach is itself being integrated into updated training courses, into the information base, and as part of the promotional materials used as part of IRC's awareness-raising.

The increasing attention being given to urban water and environmental problems is also starting to be reflected in IRC's programme. Again the focus is on putting people first and IRC's activities will be towards supporting low-income urban communities in efforts to obtain basic services at affordable costs. Initially, the centre is seeking to broaden the documentation and knowledge base and to raise awareness of successful community-based approaches.

Looking ahead, the strategy will be to strengthen and intensify the people-oriented approach, and aiming at effective partnership between all stakeholders (communities, politicians, sector professionals, and the formal and informal private sector). IRC will be seeking in particular to work with local government agencies, NGOs and middle management levels in sector agencies in activities which promote changes in approach and behaviour. Communication is a key element in the package and one in which IRC has a great deal of experience.

The experience gained in linking hygiene education, community management and gender considerations into water and sanitation programmes gives IRC a springboard for study of appropriate approaches in the wider field of integrated water resources management. Expansion into wider environmental issues, including, for example, garbage disposal, recycling and reuse will be natural extensions of the planned programmes, but at this stage it is impossible to predict the pace of this kind of expansion.

"IRC's own programme and recruitment strategy has to some extent already started to encompass the new directions."



Sandy Rotival advised the Netherlands Government during the Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation in Noordwijk in March 1994.

He was also a Member of IRC's Governing Board from 1987-1991.



Political changes in Eastern Europe and the Central Asian Republics present a further set of opportunities and challenges. IRC has begun to establish contact with sector professionals from the former Communist countries and is discussing avenues for further collaboration.

From indications already apparent following the Noordwijk consensus, it is clear that IRC can anticipate an expanding programme in the rest of the 1990s, based on what is now established as the Centre's unique package of field-centred support activities (see panel below).

THE IRC SUPPORT PACKAGE

In preparing to support developing country efforts to implement sustainable water and sanitation programmes meeting the challenges of the 21st Century, IRC will retain its people-based, field oriented focus, and its comprehensive package of services, both in developing countries and at the centre.

- **Research** steered and managed by national staff, with IRC advice and guidance, focusing not just on technological options but primarily on the social and organizational aspects and the behavioural changes needed to make projects successful and sustainable. Activities include demonstration projects with local monitoring and evaluation, and desk research to profit from others' experiences.
- **Information and documentation services** founded on a comprehensive library of official and "grey" literature on community water supply and sanitation and electronic links with other information sources.
- **Training and briefing programmes** designed on participatory principles and promoting partnership and teamwork. Courses, both in the developing countries and at home, bring together trainers and trainees from a variety of backgrounds and mix tuition with information sharing and action-oriented learning.
- **Advisory services** in which IRC's extensive experience of participatory approaches and people-focused development is made available to other support agencies through staff involvement in appraisal/evaluation missions, or through policy advice on specific support programmes.
- **Publications** documenting experiences from field and desk research in many cases brought out jointly with partner agencies and increasingly authored or co-authored by developing country professionals who have steered the relevant research programmes.
- **Awareness raising** at local, national and global levels. As a promoter and facilitator of behavioural change, IRC seeks all opportunities to advocate established sector concepts and approaches, through articles in journals, presentations at workshops and conferences, and participation in global consultations and working groups seeking to develop implementation mechanisms and programmes.

THE TEAM FOR THE JOB

The new emphases in IRC's forward planning and programming have already had their influence on the Centre's recruitment.

Among the specialists recently recruited to help plan and implement IRC's response to the new sector challenges are:

Marc Lammerink who has joined as programme officer for the community management programme, which is moving into a very intensive phase with participatory activities under way in a number of developing countries.

Heikki Wihuri earlier at the Finnish aid agency FINNIDA, is working towards establishing IRC's new links with Eastern Europe and the Central Asian Republics and is coordinating the centre's urban oriented activities.

Kathleen Shordt brings broad sector experience to the programmes for developing partnerships through

It is a reflection of the field-oriented nature of IRC's work that, when a group photograph is taken, there are almost as many people away from the office as there are present. This October 1994 picture has 23 present and 18 missing. Those in the shot are from left to right: standing: Nigel Browne, Michel v d Leest, Oskar Barendse, Marga Alferink, Tom de Veer, Stephen Parker, Bettie Westerhof, Norah Espejo, Jan Teun Visscher, Kathleen Shordt, Mallane de Jong, Rob Jansen. Second row: Loekie Broersma, Cor Dietvorst, Maria Lucia Borba, Hulda de Vries, Maria Sörenssen, Nicolette Wildeboer, Tineke Murre. Bottom row: Izabel Wimmers, Irene van Dieten, Eca Zepeda, Jennifer Francis, Lia Wahab.

Missing from the picture, to complete IRC's current complement of 41 staff are: Mary Boesveld, Eveline Bolt, François Brikké, Hans van Damme, Norah Espejo, Anneke Groenendal, Han Heijnen, Ineke van Hooff, Lauren Houttuin, Dick de Jong, Lex Kruijt, Marc Lammerink, Jo Smet, Carmen Tjon Kon Joe, Marc Vézina, Madeleen Wegelin-Schuringa, Heikki Wihuri and Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma.

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and for monitoring and evaluation.

Economist **François Brikké**, who has added an extra economic slant to a number of existing programme and operation and maintenance issues and training activities.

Ineke van Hooff, alongside her specialist subject, hygiene education, is involved in developing the briefing programmes at IRC..

Marc Vézina, who has been specially hired to strengthen the centre's training team.

Tom de Veer is a research officer who has been added to the team in support of technical programmes

New recruits among the programme support staff are **Mallane de Jong**, **Eca Zepeda** and **Marga Alferink**, whereas **Tineke Murre**, as a consultant, strengthens the hygiene education team.





THE IRC NEW GOVERNING BOARD

The guidance of the IRC Governing Board has been a major factor in the Centre's development during the last 14 years. IRC is looking forward to a similar productive working relationship with the new Board under the Chairmanship of Mr JB Hoekman.

Mr G W Ardon
Prof W J Kakebeeke
Mr H Ganjentaan
Mr J Boer
Mr F Hartvelt

Mr G Ghosh
Dr D Warner
Mr R Wirasinha
A representative of the World Bank
(expected to be nominated shortly)

FACING THE CHALLENGE

Through its programme development and recruitment policy and with continuing advice and guidance from its Governing Board, IRC is well equipped to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond. The omens are good; the commitment is confirmed; the tests are to come.

But that is another story.

