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Integrated Rural Development:

Nine Critical Implementation Problems

IRD Research Note No. 1

A Description of the Problems and How They are Being Studied Under the Organization and Administration of Integrated Rural Development Project (936-5300) supported by the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration, Development Support Bureau, Agency for International Development.

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PREFACE

In 1973, Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), undertook a study for AID on how to implement the New Directions mandate. 1/ DAI was then asked to design twelve projects in accordance with these findings. Following this, DAI undertook a study of how these projects fared as they moved through the AID review/approval process. 2/ One of the more important findings of that study was that projects were designed to get through the review/approval process of AID (and other major donors), rather than focusing attention on the problems of project implementation.

Since 1975, DAI has provided long-term technical assistance to integrated rural development projects. This direct project experience has provided numerous lessons on the real problems of project implementation--more lessons than any work has to this point. Our current contract with AID's Office of Rural Development and Development Administration of the Development Support Bureau nicely complements our oversees implementation experience. While the latter provides a solid "reality check" for our research, the research provides the opportunity to reflect on our own field efforts, and how they might be improved.

This reflection has been undertaken by several IRD project core staff members in addition to the authors, in particular Jerry VanSant of Reserach Triangle Institute; Tony Barclay, George Honadle, Paul Crawford, and Tom Armor, all of DAI.

1/ Elliott R. Morss, John K. Hatch, Donald R. Mickelwait and Charles F. Sweet, Strategies for Small Farmer Development, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976.

2/ Donald R. Mickelwait, Elliott R. Morss and Charles F. Sweet, New Directions in Development: A Study of U.S. AID, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Under a contract to the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration, Development Support Bureau, Agency for International Development (AID), DAI is providing technical assistance to AID-supported integrated rural development projects. This contract calls, in part, for DAI to undertake some action oriented research of the implementation problems of these projects. This has meant the identification to involve identifying, describing, analyzing and offering constructive suggestions for alleviating implementation problems that are both frequently encountered and significant.

Research Methodology

Early on, it was recognized that a traditional research methodology could not be employed. First, the resources available under the contract did not allow us much time to identify what problems to study. Second, most of our field work must necessarily go to assist projects in dealing with their problems. And third, the technical expertise required in each field setting differs, and this presents serious problems in getting and keeping all team members abreast of our research interests and findings.

After a few field trips, another fact became apparent. The problems we encountered in the field, while being derived from the same small set of basic root casuses, had progressed to a point where very specific and customized recommendations offered the only hope for alleviating them. In fact, we were offering curative medicine. In contrast, the work that we will undertake is intended as preventive medicine. That is, it is intended for the policy maker and the person planning to take a field position on an IRD project, it is intended to alert both the policy maker and the project staffer to the problems they are likely to encounter and what might be done in advance to alleviate them.

Selecting Critical Implementation Problems

Corporate experience, the literature, and the knowledge of individual team members were used to select the implementation problems to be studied. We were fortunate here in that DAI manages expatriate teams responsible for assisting four developing nations in implementing integrated rural development projects.[1/] Lists of implementation problems were generated and discussed extensively. Ultimately, it was decided to focus on the following subjects:

- Participation and decentralization;
- Information systems;

1/ DAI is involved in project implementation in Indonesia, Sudan, Tanzania and Zaire.

- Political, economic and environmental constraints;
- Managing and structuring technical assistance;
- Organizational placement and linkages;
- Timing;
- Counterpart shortages;
- Differing agendas; and
- Sustaining project benefits.

In the case of the first two and the last subject, the real problem involves making these concepts operational in real world settings. The other six subjects constitute a list of things that nearly always crop up as problems during the project implementation stage.

Research Approach

In addition to reviewing the literature, AID and World Bank projects, and studying DAI's own implementation experiences, DAI will convene a meeting of former IRD project managers. The purpose of this meeting will be to get specific examples of the problems that were encountered along with what steps were taken to alleviate them.

In addition, we are expecting to collect concrete information on these problems from our field trips. However, in light of the tight schedules and other requirements of the field teams, the following procedures have been adopted:

- The field team assembles in Washington at which time three or four problem areas are selected for intensive study; criteria for selection include: the purpose of the field visit, the nature of the project, and the interests and expertise of the field team.

- Upon return from the field, the team will submit brief reports on each problem area studied; and

- The primary purpose of base field data collection efforts is to provide concrete anecdotal evidence of our problem set and what might be done to alleviate them.

The data collection work described above will serve as the basis of a book of essays on the nine implementation problems that have been identified. More detailed preliminary information on each problem and the proposed research strategy is presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

PARTICIPATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

Problem Definition

Participation and decentralization are two concepts that are very popular in development today, but there is no clear understanding of what they should mean and even less of how to realize them within the context of IRD projects.

The popularity of both concepts stem from findings that rural development projects, conceived in capital cities and implemented in a top-down manner, have not proven successful.1/ As a counter to these findings, it has been recommended that the rural populations who are the intended beneficiaries of these projects participate, both in the sense of being involved in decisionmaking and in the sense of making resource committments to the project. It has also been recommended that government control over resources be devolved to lower levels of government.

While it is generally felt that greater participation and decentralization would promote development, it is not

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1/ See Elliott R. Morss and others, op. cit.

clear how to implement these concepts in an IRD project setting. In fact, IRD projects have been characterized by a lack of participation, manifested in the following ways:

- Unwillingness of project staff to allow potential beneficiaries to participate meaningfully in project activities;
- Reluctance or refusal of potential beneficiaries to participate; and
- Participation by only the more economically powerful who succeed in manipulating project resources and activities for their own ends.

While work on the problem of how to implement the participation concept is at least underway, 2/ a detailed consideration is only now being focused on how the decentralization concept might be implemented. 3/

2/ For example, see John M. Cohen and Norman T. Uphoff, "Participation's Place in Rural Development: Seeking Clarity through Specificity." World Development 8 (1980): 213-215. See also David D. Gow and others, Local Organizations and Rural Development: A Comparative Reappraisal. (2 vols.) Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1979.

3/ In particular, a team at the University of California, Berkeley, is studying the subject for the Development Support Bureau of AID. See also Donald R. Mickelwait and others, Monitoring and Evaluating Decentralization: The Basic Village Services Program in Egypt. Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1980.

Reasons for the Problem

Political Implications

It should be obvious that participation and decentralization initiatives are bound to have significant political implications. Broader participation is likely to change the use and allocation of resources among social groups; indeed, this is often why participation is advocated.4/ Decentralization will both offset power relations within government as well as affecting the distribution of resources among social groupings.5/

Given the serious political implications of increased participation and decentralization, it is not surprising that host country governments are usually reluctant to move speedily to implement these initiatives. It is also not surprising that host country governments would watch the attempts of others to implement these initiatives rather carefully.

4/ Norman T. Uphoff, John M. Cohen, and Arthur A. Goldsmith, Feasibility and Application of Rural Development Participation: A State-of-the Art Paper. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Rural Development Committee, 1979. p. 284.

5/ Robert K. Chambers, Managing Rural Development: Ideas and Experience from East Africa. Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1974. p. 113.

Lack of knowledge

While serious political constraints do exist, it is also true that very little is really known on how to implement participation and decentralization initiatives. While project staff might know what they are trying to achieve with a participation initiative, it will frequently entail an entirely new way of thinking and acting on the part of intended beneficiaries. By the same token, lower level government officials, who have traditionally been mandated to advocate development projects designed by national level ministries, will often have to learn an entirely new set of skills if they are to effectively involve themselves with villagers in the design and implementation of projects.

Reluctance or refusal of beneficiaries to participate

Various reasons have been put forward. Economic policies can play a role--particularly those concerned with pricing, marketing, taxation, and tariffs--which may severely curtail participation in income-generating projects. Factors in the project area may also be important: ecological, historical, and cultural. Finally, inappropriate project initiatives may actively discourage participation: inappropriate technical packages, failure to take small farmer risk considerations seriously, lack of information about the project, unwillingness to take small farmer needs and perceptions seriously.

Other constraints to decentralization

Lower level government workers might be reluctant to step out of their traditional role because of time and resource support considerations. It takes a lot more time to work up project ideas with villagers than it does to tell them of a development project they will receive from a line ministry. In addition, they might not have the transport to visit many villages.

Recognizing the link between participation and decentralization

One of the findings coming out of DAI's experience with IRD project implementation attempts in Indonesia, Tanzania, and Zaire is that decentralization and participation initiatives should proceed together in a specific time-phased fashion.

In most developing countries, the government is seen as the provider of development resources. Given this, there is no point in villagers developing project ideas until local government officials are prepared to work with them to procure the necessary development resources from the government. At the same time, there is no point in getting decentralization efforts far ahead of participation efforts for, in this case, the result will be that lower level government officials will end up designing and implementing all the projects.

Research Strategy

The most important need is to generate detailed documentation on participation and decentralization initiatives. As regards participation initiatives, the following set of questions should be addressed:

- What kinds of participation has the project encouraged, e.g., involvement in decision-making, resource commitment, accountability, and the like?
- Who has participated?
- What mechanisms have been introduced to promote this participation?
- How effective has the participation initiative been, and why?

More fundamental questions need to be addressed concerning decentralization initiatives:

- What was the concrete intent of the development initiative?
- What methods have been, or could be, used to measure the extent of the decentralization effort?
- Has decentralization actually occured?
- What positive and negative effects have resulted from the initiative?

In addition to addressing these sets of questions, it is important to know:

- Did decentralization and participation initiatives proceed together?
- Did positive or negative effects result from the coordination or lack of coordination of these initiatives?

Answers to these questions will be generated by the following:

- Reviewing the literature;
- Mining previous DAI experience with participation;
- Commissioning papers on participation/decentralization in DAI's projects in Zaire, Tanzania, and Indonesia; and
- Data collection on field trips.

CHAPTER THREE

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Problem Definition

Information activities are the "operational keystone" of the much-vaunted "process approach" to IRD. Without an effective two-way information flow, such an approach is impossible. Most of the recently designed IRD projects provide for formal information systems. The arguement is that these will make a difference to project performance, particularly in terms of an improved planning process and the more effective implementation of development activities. The evidence to date indicates that formal information systems are not used -- thereby perhaps jeopardizing the chances of project success.

The process leading to non-use usually takes the following form:

- An expensive contractor is hired to design a system that was never used;
- Project managers assign their information/monitoring/evaluation staffs to other activities;
- Large data collection efforts are undertaken, but no use is made of the data collected; and
- For the project approval cycle, the annexes to already fat project papers are of no use in implementation.

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Reasons for the Problem[1/]

Threat to management

It would be naive to ignore the fact that a formal, functioning information system can be seen as a threat by project management. Information is power and can be used for both good and bad ends. For example, this threat will be greater if the information system emphasizes the type of evaluation which "grades" the overall success of the project or provides outsiders with evidence to "second-guess" the decisions of project managers. By the same token, an important element in the effective utilization of an information system is the willingness of project management to learn from its mistakes. An information system should show not only what is going right--but also what is going wrong and what can be done to alleviate the problems.

A related problem is the lack of complementarity between the information requested by a donor and that required by the host country government. Donor requests for information may be seen as a threat. Alternatively, such requests may be seen as unnecessary. Hence the information is gathered in a

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1/ Much of the material summarized here is presented in considerably more detail in Donald R. Mickelwait and others, Information for Decisionmaking in Rural Development, 2 vols. Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1978.

perfunctory manner, packaged, and sent to the donor -- and never used in the redesign and ongoing improvement of the project. This criticism has been levelled at the Rasuwa/Nuwakot IRD Project in Nepal, funded by the World Bank.[2/]

Management inability to anticipate information needs

Management and other key project personnel often find it difficult to specify in advance what information they need for planning, monitoring, and evaluating project activities. This task is then delegated to so-called "information experts." This is frequently the beginning of the end since such experts often do not take into consideration the different information needs of the various groups involved in the project. If such an information system is ever actually implemented, the odds are that the information generated will be irrelevant or useless for decision making.

Excessive cost and complexity

When a consultant is brought in to design an information system, he usually has no involvement in, or responsibility for, its implementation. In addition, this person would be in trouble contractually if he did not produce a lengthy document

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2/ David D. Gow, "An Information System for the Rural Area Development -- Rapti Zone Project." IRD Project Field Trip Report, Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1980, p. 20.

describing an elaborate system. This often results in a design which emphasizes quantity and complexity over quality and simplicity. The desire to justify his contribution as "important," while at the same time being conceptually innovative, often results in designs which are costly, complex, and very formalized.

Impotence of semi-autonomous information units

In theory, information is power. In practice, it becomes power only when it is readily available to those with sufficient influence to use it. When those responsible for producing information belong to some semi-autonomous unit which is not an integral part of the ongoing project, the chances are that their findings will not be taken seriously.

For example, in the Rasuwa/Nuwakot IRD Project in Nepal, there is a Socio-Economic Unit (SEU) attached to the Project Coordinator's Office (PCO) which is responsible for collecting a range of information for planning, implementation, and evaluation activities. As of 1980, this unit was responsible solely to the expatriate adviser attached to the PCO. The Project staff were asked about the extent to which they were acquainted with the SEU reports and found them useful in their work. Although most had seen some of the studies, there was no indication that they were used at the project level for any purpose whatsoever.

Insufficient attention to ongoing information systems

In project documents, the impression is sometimes given that little ever happened in the project area until the project under review was designed to bring the "benefits of development" to the area. In reality, such is rarely the case. There are usually concrete examples of development activities to be found: wells, potable water systems, health posts, footbridges, primary schools, and the like. Such activities did not just "happen." Invariably, each local area has a "system" for information use in decision making, though it may be relatively informal and unstructured, and its outward manifestations may be difficult to discern. Despite the lack of rigor and sophistication, a system of this kind can often be incorporated into the project and used to supply the project manager with a basis for sensible decisions. In short, it appears that too little time is given by project designers to the informal, low-cost information systems already in place.

Intoxication of crisis management

Some project managers spend much of their time and derive great enjoyment from crisis management. Such situations present a challenge and demand considerable expenditures of time, energy, and ingenuity. To the extent that project managers get their "jollies" from such crises, any attempt to reduce their occurrence --for example, by providing relevant information that permits one to anticipate crises --would be greeted

with disdain. This phenomenon may also depend on the stage reached in the project cycle and is much more likely to happen during initial start-up before the "movers and shakers" are replaced by the "systematizers." By definition, the latter are unlikely to be enthusiastic proponents of crisis management.

Absence of a detailed implementation plan

The absence of a detailed plan for the introduction and use of a proposed information system--most importantly, the absence of a realistic budget of monetary costs and project staff time demands--has been a major contributor to the non-use problem.

Alleviating the Problem

DAI has built a significant part of its reputation on designing formal information systems. Out best thinking, at present, on how to go about creating a viable information system includes the following recommendations:

- Project staff should know what formal and informal data are already available and the extent to which they are used in decision making;
- They should know what other influences are at work in decision making;
- They should determine the different information needs of the various groups involved in the project and the extent to which they are met; and

- They should undertake the gathering of new data only when they know what it is to be used for, who is going to be willing to use it, and how much it will cost to collect, analyze, and disseminate.

Research Strategy

The suggested reasons for the non-use of formal information systems need to be further documented--though some are already better documented than others. Two in particular need further documentation. First, we want to know more about ongoing (in-use) information activities:

- To what extent were they even considered in the original project design?
- To what extent have they been incorporated as formal information activities of the project?
- Which has proved more effective -- informal information systems or the formalized ones suggested in the project design paper?

Second, we would like to know more about the implementation plan:

- Was a detailed implementation plan for the information system included in the project design?
- Did the plan include timing and budget considerations?
- What parts of it, if any, were actually used?

Finally, we want to know more about actual information use--to discover how decisions are made, paying particular

attention to both formal and informal sources of information. Specific questions could include the following:

- What do project managers do when they need to get information quickly?
- What information is regarded as reliable?
- Whose information is acted upon?
- What is done with the information produced by the formal information system?

Answers to these questions will be generated by the following:

- Review of documentation on prvious IRD experiences;
- Commissioned papers on the information systems in Shaba and Arusha;
- Inclusion of an expert on information use on at least one of our field trips;
- Mining the previous DAI experience in designing and implementing information systems; and
- Data collection on field trips.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

Problem Definition

For many IRD projects, political, economic and environmental factors place serious constraints on the chances for attaining project objectives. While these constraints themselves are often beyond the control of project managers, recognition of them and appropriate adjustment of strategies often would ease the problem, but it frequently does not happen.

Political Considerations

For most donor-assisted IRD projects, there is either an implicit or explicit statement of who the intended beneficiaries are. The beneficiary group might be defined in terms of income, geographic area, ethnic groups, etc. Project intentions might be at variance with prevailing political considerations. Under the New Directions mandate--and this also holds for the World Bank--projects are intended to benefit the rural poor. Yet this particular group is not necessarily the first priority of many Third World governments. In order to obtain funding, such governments may merely pay lip service to this demand and redirect such resources to other, more important groups, selected according to ethnic, economic, or geographic criteria. Such selection may well be the result of political considerations--in that such resources benefit

some more than others and are utilized in the name of the state. Consequently, the objectives of a project may be at odds with prevailing political considerations.

Economic Policies

Economic policies may also play an important constraining role. Historically, many developing countries have suffered from a lack of balance and integration in their economy, between the subsistence and the cash sectors. Overemphasis on food or export crops, overvaluation of national currencies, along with wage/price controls have often caused IRD implementation problems.

Environmental Factors

A recent DAI study demonstrated that a favorable physical environment will increase the possibility of project success where agriculture is one of the key components.[1/] Such an environment tends to attract intervention in the form of development resources. In the case of an unfavorable physical environment, a project may be able to attract and provide scarce resources which would otherwise be unavailable.

1/ David D. Gow, and others, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 199-200.

In addition, it is in precisely such an environment that the rural poor are most likely to be found. Increasingly, donors are being asked to work in such ecologically marginal areas--where the potential for improving welfare may be slight. Such environmental circumstances serious limit development possibilities, both in terms of socioeconomic rate of return and in terms of the time it will take to realize these benefits.

Reasons for the problem

The reluctance, or sometimes down-right refusal, of project designers and implementers to address these major constraints seems to stem from the following considerations:

- They often like to follow the path of least resistance, avoid being accused of "political meddling" and maintain that their decisions are technically based;
- They may suffer from ignorance that to a much greater extent than in the United States, the process of implementing development policies is a focus of political competition and participation in many Third World countries.2/
- They may be unable to modify or adapt to local realities; and
- They operate under the belief that certain constraints should be taken as given, regardless of how seriously they reduce chances of project success.

2/ Merilee S. Grindle, "Policy Content and Context in Implementation." Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World, Merilee S. Grindle, ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 15.

Alleviating the Problem

Since this problem of major constraints is insufficiently recognized and poorly understood, the state of the art for dealing with it is not well developed. Although there is a substantial literature on dealing with many of the broader economic constraints discussed earlier, it has limited application to project management concerns. Three possible responses to these major constraints have been suggested:

- Accept them and design projects accordingly;
- Attempt to influence them prior to project implementation; and
- Gather data documenting their effect on project performance and use this information to influence policy or to alter the project design.3/

Little documentation exists to indicate to what extent these responses have been employed and, if so, with what effect. In general, while these major constraints have been the subject of inquiry, how to deal with them operationally is still in its infancy. This is especially true in terms of constraints recognized only after projects are underway. By addressing this latter point, IRD project research can make its most useful contribution.

3/ George Honadle and others, Integrated Rural Development: Making It Work? Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1980.

Research Strategy

It is not within the scope of the research to perform retrospective policy analyses or feasibility studies. This does not, however, preclude an IRD team from informing themselves on important policy issues and major constraints relevant to particular projects. In inquiring about major constraints, therefore, the following questions should be asked, as appropriate:

- Which of the constraints described above present clear and evident barriers to project success?
- What strategies have been developed to deal with identified constraints --including efforts to eliminate as well as to work around them?
- How effective have these efforts been?

or

- Have constraints been, for the most part, ignored?
- If so, why and with what effect?
- Are certain management styles more able to adjust to these constraints than others?

Answers to these questions will be generated by the following:

- Review of documentation on previous IRD experiences;
- Review of documentation on ongoing IRD experiences --particularly for information on "designated" constraints;

- Review of documentation on our own implementation--particularly the internal evaluations;
- Review of the recent literature; and
- Data collection on field trips.

To the extent that we can document the importance of these constraints, why they are often ignored until too late, and how project management can respond to them more effectively, we shall make a significant contribution to the state of the art of IRD. At the same time, we should be able to specify what kinds of constraints most often create difficulties in project implementation.

CHAPTER FIVE

MANAGING AND STRUCTURING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Problem Definition

Generous amounts of technical assistance (TA), both short- and long-term, are usually built into donor-funded IRD projects. Increasingly, such projects are usually large, multifunctional, and designed to address a web of interrelated problems. In operational terms, such projects demand strong leadership, sophisticated planning skills, efficient logistical and procurement systems, and a wide range of technical specialties. The fact that these ingredients tend to be scarcest in the settings where IRD projects are launched is the underlying rationale for TA. The process of managing and structuring such assistance when a multidisciplinary team is involved is a complex but often ignored issue.1/ As a consequence of the above, inappropriate TA is frequently provided to projects and the TA that is provided is frequently not well-used.

Although the factors affecting TA effectiveness are many, including several treated elsewhere in this paper, the key operational problem is how to most effectively structure and manage this TA. This problem is manifested by the following:

1/ Donald R. Mickelwait, George H. Honadle, and A. H. Barclay, Jr., "Rethinking Technical Assistance: The Case for a Management Team Strategy." Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1980, pp 1-2 (submitted for publication in Finance and Development).

- Conflicts between the TA team, the donor agency, the host country government, and the contractor's home office (if one is involved); and
- Inadequate and irrelevant TA outputs.

Reasons for the Problem

An overriding reason for the problems is that to date, little attention has been given to how TA should be structured and managed. At the very minimum, attention needs to be focused on the following four realities:

- The size and nature of the existing TA talent pool severely restricts long-term strategies;
- The types and amounts of short-term assistance needed during implementation are often underestimated during design, and available assistance is rarely used effectively;
- Project designs do not adequately consider changing TA needs during the life cycle of complex projects; and
- Many TA teams do not function with a common approach and mutually supportive activities.

Long-Term Talent Pool

There is a common misperception that there are large numbers of good technical personnel available for long-term assignments overseas on IRD projects. In fact, there are not. First, the good people are in great demand. Second, even if they are available they may not wish to spend the greater part of their working lives in some isolated part of the world. Despite these

facts, AID and other donors call for highly qualified technicians to take long-term assignments overseas. For example, the qualifications for a project manager in Yemen included the following: an M.A. in development administration; a high degree of analytic, planning, management, and administrative skills; ten years experience in program management; four years experience in the Third World; and the capacity to learn and speak Arabic.2/

Short-Term Assistance

There is a need for improvement in the way short-termers are utilized. Often the short-term specialist is seen as a threat by long-term project personnel. Some long-termers, who live with the project all the time, may feel that they are doing their best under difficult conditions and that outsiders, coming for a short term, cannot offer them anything they do not already know. Other long-terms may feel that they are not performing up to par and that the short-termer may make them look bad. Given such perspectives, it is important for the project staff to feel a real need for short-term assistance before it is dispatched.

Another factor limiting the effective utilization of short-termers is the importance attached to leaving a "product"--in this case a report. While this is important, it is sometimes

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2/ United States Agency for International Development (Yemen), Local Resources for Development, RFP No. 90011, September 19, 1979, pp. 8-9.

overemphasized to the point where it severely limits the ongoing dialogue between short-termers and project staff--both host country personnel and expatriates.

Project Life Cycle

Rarely, if ever, do the terms of reference for TA personnel reflect changing staff needs as the project life cycle unfolds, yet staff needs will change dramatically. For example, at the time of project start-up there may be a need for "movers and shakers"--people who know how the donor bureauracracy operates and can get things done quickly. In time, as the project begins to run more smoothly, such people will have made themselves redundant and will need to be replaced by the "systematizers"--those who can standardize the norms and operating procedures for successful project management.

As a project evolves, experience may indicate that the terms of reference for a specific position were inappropriate; that really what was needed is a different type of TA. Likewise, the need for more TA may emerge as unforeseen problems and deficiencies in actual implementation emerge.

The Need for a Common Approach

Often a team has no prevailing development approach which provides a unifying theme for undertaking an IRD project. In general terms, there are four basic strategies for providing TA. These options are:

- The individual (personal contract) strategy;
- The academic strategy;
- The bodyshop strategy; and
- The management team strategy.

With the individual strategy, the funding agency makes contracts with specific individuals. With the academic strategy, the contract is made with a university which may, or may not, place some of its own staff in the field--otherwise it hires outsiders. In the bodyshop strategy, a private company puts together a team of individuals who may be complete strangers to each other, dispatches them to the field, and leaves them very much to their own devices. In the management team strategy, the one pursued by DAI, the team consists of people hired for the specific project but is usually headed by a staff professional. In addition, the home office provides logistical and administrative support and is actively involved in the problems of field team management.

Only with this last strategy--and perhaps with the academic strategy--is there a likelihood that the team will share a common approach to "doing development." Without this approach, the potential for working at cross-purposes increases greatly as does the possibility for undermining the basic objectives of the project.

Alleviating the Problem

Long-term Talent Pool

A partial solution to this problem would be for those writing job specifications to give a little more attention to the realities of the TA supply/demand situation. As regards anthropologists, there is indeed a plentiful supply but, in the case of agronomists, the matter is quite different. One possibility presents itself: that the project be structured in such a way that short-term TA could substitute for long-term. It is far easier to find technicians to go out on short-term assignments than on longer-term ones. Further, it is usually not necessary to be as concerned about a short-termer's ability to work within a developing country culture as is the case with a long-term person. Pushed to its logical conclusion, this possibility argues for a long-term TA team composed of manager/generalists who like living and working in the rural areas of the Third World backed up by large amounts of high-powered, short-term technical expertise.

Short-Term TA

There are various ways in which this can be better utilized. First, it is instructive to make a distinction between developing a plan of action and managing it. A specialist will often be needed for the former whereas someone with a different mix of skills and less specialized training is suitable for the management role. It should be noted that this two-pronged need to

first develop a plan of action and then to manage it is a common occurrence in IRD projects. Given that good specialists are in short supply, ways can and should be devised to take greater advantage of the short-term assistance they are willing to offer in developing the plan of action.

Second, short-terms may also play a useful "compassing" role for IRD managers. It is easy for an IRD project to "get off the track" because of the multiplicity of problems encountered. "Off the track" may be defined as either:

- Moving away from stated objectives for justifiable reasons; or
- Sticking to stated objectives when reality calls for some changes.

An experienced short-term development professional can play a useful role through short-term visits in which he does little more than ask the "big questions":

- Is the project obtaining its objectives on schedule?
- If not, why not?
- What can be done to turn things around?

Finally, short-termers must be encouraged to communicate more effectively with the TA team and their counterparts. Through dialogue, outsiders and project personnel can both learn and teach. A requirement that a report be produced provides the short-termer with a rationale for a minimum of direct dialogue

with host country personnel. Solutions might run from the extreme that the short-termers not be allowed to sit behind a desk during their stay to far less emphasis on the paper input than is currently the case. Alternatively, the requirement might be that short-termers should prepare and present their findings in paper form a week or so before their departure. Such a procedure would make time for dialogue and followup on their ideas.

Changing Needs

This is the most difficult to alleviate since TA teams are usually locked into a contract with the funding agency which makes such personnel changes very difficult to effect. Ideally, there should be some sort of contingency fund for such eventualities. Alternatively, there should be some flexibility in the contract to allow for the termination of a long-term position when the job is completed before the stipulated time. Such funds could then be used to hire someone for a new position on either a short- or long-term basis. However, with more experience in this aspect of implementation, it may be possible to stipulate what these changing needs are likely to be at the time of submitting a proposal and to budget accordingly.

Common Approach

To create a common approach, it is important that all staff members have a clear understanding of the project, the philosophy underlying it, and how all the actors and activities fit together.

Meetings of the project staff very early on to discuss the project design may help.

Research Strategy

We are interested in learning more about how project managers have dealt with the four problems outlined earlier:

- The long-term TA pool;
- Better utilization of short-term TA;
- Changing TA needs; and
- Need for a common approach.

To date, we have a considerable body of knowledge on DAI's management team strategy and our own TA teams but little else. Additional information can be generated in the following ways:

- Review of previous IRD experiences;
- Short papers on Shaba and Arusha; and
- Field data collections.

CHAPTER SIX

ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT AND LINKAGES

Problem Definition

A basic question to be answered during the design of an IRD project is the level at which integration should occur. IRD efforts range from the lowest level, e.g., mutisectoral training for village-level paraprofessionals, to the highest, e.g., a cabinet-level coordinating committee for IRD.

Organizational placement involves the determination of both the level of intervention and the institutional host for the IRD effort. It is important because it determines who the subsequent decision makers in the IRD project will be, how many of them there are, and what they decide upon. It affects a project's success by determining budgetary procedures, and thus incentives, management control, and the complexity of the decisionmaking process. In the past, the organizational loci of IRD projects have led to serious problems during project implementation.

In essence, organizational placement determines the pattern of organizational linkages between various participating agencies in an IRD project. An organizational linkage is any activity undertaken during implementation requiring the coordination of two or more agencies. The success of the participating agencies at carrying out this coordination is the crux of the organizational linkage question.

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There is no neat formula to provide simple answers to the problems of organizational placement and linkages:

> There are no unique organizational structures good for all conditions and structures must be designed to fit the given task environment.1/

In short, the state of our knowledge is such that we cannot categorically state which organizational placement strategy is most appropriate, given certain conditions. All such strategies have their problems. However, by examining these problems, we should be able to specify in more detail which particular strategy is more likely to work than others.

In passing, it should be mentioned that there is a growing group of IRD detractors. They claim that the very essence of IRD projects is to provide integrated activities, and that this is inappropriate for many countries where such integration is currently not essential or possible:

> At worst, IRD appears to represent a false turning. The concept of Rural Development was, and remains, useful in its recognition of the multifaceted nature of a process of change. This process, nonetheless, is made up of a number of discrete activities. Sometimes these activities need to take place simultaneously; sometimes in sequence. IRD, by seeking to integrate a large number of activities which often only require some degree of coordination, is attempting to direct a process which cannot, and should not, be closely managed. As a result, it is hardly surprising that charges of unnecessary duplication of functions and lack of clear purpose are made against

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1/ Lawrence and Lorsch, Organization and Its Environment, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967.

> both IRD ministries and project agencies. IRD may not only represent a costly misallocation of resources; it may also be responsible for adding to those problems of managing and organising agricultural development which it set out to solve. 2/

Reasons for the Problem

No placement strategy is going to be perfect. Each will involve, to a greater or lesser degree, interorganizational conflicts and problems of coordination among the various actors involved in project implementation. The preferred placement strategy will be one which, over the long term, is most successful at:

- Reaching beneficiaries with the goods and services to be delivered;
- Fostering local response; and
- Achieving self-sustaining improvements in beneficiary welfare.

An IRD project will often provide roads, hospitals, extension services, and credit to selected groups within a community, region, or country. Therefore, host-country politics may determine the final organizational placement. This political process may not result in the adoption of the preferred placement strategy (based on the criteria above). Not only are the conflicts of interest within the host country government important. Each

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2/ "Integrated Rural Development Briefing Paper," Overseas Development Institute, No. 4, December 1979, p. 4.

of the various actors in an IRD project will have his own "agenda" and will want to control the flow of funds and resources entailed in the project. For example, a donor agency, in order to ensure its control over a project's resources and policy, may specify that an autonomous management unit be created. Alternatively, a regional authority or line agency may fight to maintain control over the flow of resources to its traditional "clients."

Likewise, the selection of a placement strategy may simply depend upon institutional factors, including simply the origin of the project itself. If much of the groundwork for an IRD project has been done by the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, that agency will certainly play an important role in project implementation. It may not, however, be the ideal agency to carry the project through to fruition. Further, an IRD project may simply be the pawn in a larger game of domestic politics, the vehicle for an intended revitalization of a regional organization, for example, or merely a bone thrown to an important power bloc.

In summary, organizational placement strategies are not necessary chosen with the aim of reaching potential beneficiaries with goods and services, encouraging local response, and fostering self-sustaining improvements in welfare. Many other considerations will enter into the placement decision. Moreover, the approach preferred by the various actors will vary

due to their differing perceptions of the situation, the problems to be faced, and even the objectives themselves.

Alleviating the Problem

Organizational placement is usually determined by political and institutional factors. However, a clear specification of the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy, given alternative situations, together with an evaluation of past experience, could serve to influence the organizational placement decision-making process.

The following four basic intervention strategies have been identified:

- Using a lead-line agency with cooperative agreements between it and other sectoral agencies (e.g., the Philippines' Libmanan/Cabusao integrated area development project);
- Working at a program level through a sub-national government unit such as a region or province (e.g., Indonesia's provincial development program);
- Operating through an integrated development agency which is a permanent organization deriving its authority from a president's office (e.g., Mexico's PIDER); or
- Establishing an autonomous but temporary project management unit (PMU) to deliver integrated services within a specified but limited geographic area (e.g., Liberia's Lofa County agricultural development project).

There are numerous tradeoffs involved in the choice of placement strategy. For example, limited area development

efforts have the advantage of providing a delimited catchment area where impact can be more readily identified and heterogeneous conditions can be minimized. Such project approaches can avoid artificial ecological, ethnic or economic boundary divisions such as provinces, districts or regions. In fact, limited-scope, area-based projects provide a successful strategy for promoting participation and avoiding control-oreinted bureaucracies not overly sympathetic to rural poor beneficiaries.

Temporary PMUs also have the advantage of a limited life-span. Although this creates personnel management problems, it is compatible with the high level of uncertainty inherent in the development process. Since the most effective strategies and technologies are seldom known at a project's inception, it may be advantageous to use organizations that can disappear rather than continue to promote a failed strategy which has become a vested organizational ideology.

However, an argument can also be made that if integration of services is to be a more permanent feature of rural environments, then a program-level effort, grounded in established sub-national government entities, is required. Thus, the question of placement is not simple: it must be based on local circumstances as well as particular priorities and can be seen as a step in a strategy of sequential placements. And it follows that eventual choice will largely determine the immediate set of interorganizational dynamics and coordination problems besetting

managers. In practice, however, field situations are often mixtures and permotations of these four placement options.

As was perviously stated, no organizational placement strategy is going to be perfect. Conflicts and inadequate coordination will be the rule, rather than the exception. Therefore, it is necessary to look at what can be done and has been done in addressing the weaknesses of the organizational strategy that is chosen. A poor institutional choice, when its weaknesses are addressed, may be more successful in the long run than an initially good placement in which the problems are ignored. Furthermore, during implementation it may be very difficult to change the organizational placement structure. Therefore, working with what one has may be the only option.

Consequently, a second major focus of this research will be on the formal and informal organizational mechanisms that can be used in an IRD project to encourage coordination and reduce conflict among the various actors involved in its implementation. These mechanisms will involve:

- Information sharing;
- Joint decision making; and
- Resource sharing.

Table 1 attempts to identify some of these organizational mechanisms.

TABLE 1

ORGANIZATIONAL MECHANISMS TO INCREASE COORDINATION

	STAFF LEVEL	BENEFICIARY LEVEL
FORMAL MECHANISMS	• Interagency coordinating or advisory committees • Liaison office at port or central ministry • Interagency task force • Binding cooperative agreements • Loaning of personnel between agencies • Cost sharing • Joint training and orientation courses for agency personnel • Copies of reports sent to heads of other agencies • Fixed reimbursement agreements • Single report format used by two or more cooperating agencies • Existence of an independent monitoring and evaluation entity • Merging of agencies • Creation of an incentive system (financial, promotional, professional) to encourage working on joint projects	• Beneficiary participation in decision making and/or monitoring of the project • Formal staff participation in beneficiary organization meetings • Orientation courses for beneficiaries • Requiring contribution by beneficiaries to project costs, e.g., labor, money, materials, etc. • Periodic public meetings of staff with the community
INFORMAL MECHANISMS	• Lending of resources (personnel, transport, etc.) by one agency to another on an informal basis • Use of informal information systems by decision makers • Encouragement of informal communication between agency staff (through inter-agency sports competition, weekend staff retreats, occasional seminars, etc.) • Having participant agency offices in the same location • Periodic meetings of agency decision makers on an informal basis • Staff participation in agency decision making • Use of a supportive management style by supervisors • Use of a bargaining strategy with external actors, rather than reliance on preset rules	• Availability of staff in an office accessible to the beneficiaries (open on market days, for example) • Encouragement of agency personnel participation in beneficiary organizations (civic, social, religious, etc.) • Posting of project objectives, target dates, etc., where they can be viewed by beneficiaries • Conducting business and writing reports in the beneficiary dialect.

Research Strategy

With respect to organization placement, the overall objective of the research strategy will be to answer the following questions:

- Which particular placement strategy was chosen?
- Why was it chosen?
- How well did it work?
- What was responsible for its success or failure?
- What coordination problems arose and how were they dealt with?

With respect to organizational mechanisms to foster coordination, the following questions will be relevant:

- What formal and informal organizational mechanisms aimed at facilitating coordination are used in IRD projects?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of these various mechanisms?
- Under what conditions do these mechanisms work best?

Answers to these questions will be generated by the following:

- Review of documentation on previous IRD experiences;
- DAI's own ongoing implementation projects; and
- Research oriented workshops and consultations with professionals studying organizational placement; and
- Data collection on field trips.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TIMING

Problem Definition

There are several ways in which timing issues interfere with the effective implementation of IRD projects. These issues will be discussed individually under the following major headings:

- Excessive time between project identification and startup;
- Inaccurate time estimates; and
- Inappropriate phasing of project-related activities

Excessive Time from Project Identification to Startup

Documentation and manifestation of problem

Recent studies suggest that a time lapse of 20-24 months between project identification and startup is typical for AID.1/ Such time lapses cause the following problems:

1/ See Donald R. Mickelwait and others, New Directions in Development: A Study of U.S. AID, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979; chapter 3 and Booz, Allen and Hamilton, Study of Selected Aspects of the Project Assistance Cycles, U.S. AID/otr-C-1689, October 1978.

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- Enthusiasm for the project diminishes;
- Host country officials at both national and local levels involved in project preparation move on;
- Relevant donor officials are also replaced;
- Political, economic and other conditions change in ways that should generate a change in project design;
- Expatriates lined up to provide long-term technical assistance take other assignments;
- Potential project beneficiaries become impatient and skeptical.

Reasons for the Problem

For causes of such time lapses, one must look to the project documentation/review/approval process. Anyone familiar with this process is aware of several things:

- Far more project documentation is assembled than is ever used;
- Arguments between AID/W and missions over specifics of project design often continue for long periods of time with no apparent mechanisms for resolution.2/

It can be hypothesized that both of these activities are manifestations of well-known bureaucratic behavior patterns. The excessive documentation reflects a belief that large amounts

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2/ See Mickelwait and others, op. cit.

of paperwork will legitimatize any project and protect one from outside criticism. More crudely, it reflects a well-known cover-one's-ass mentality. The seemingly unending back-and-forth arguments are reflective of a bureaucracy that lacks a well-defined decision making process.3/

In 1979, the AID administrator delegated project approval authority to mission directors for projects costing up to $10 million. Many mission directors have been reluctant to exercise this authority. It can be hypothesized that this reluctance is a manifestation of the desire to be held jointly responsible with AID/Washington for whatever projects are undertaken.

Further time delays occur in recruiting expatriates to assume field positions. Whether these slots are filled through the recruitment of individuals or by the selections of a contractor, far more time is taken than would appear to be necessary.

Alleviation of the problem

This problem can be resolved or, at least, alleviated by taking steps to reduce the time between project identification

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3/ For documentation on these bureaucratic pathologies, see Elliott R. Morss and Robert F. Rich, Government Information Management: A Counter-Report to the Commission on Federal Paperwork, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980.

and startup. As is suggested above, there would appear to be ways to speed up this process, providing there was a will to do so.

Research Strategy

A number of studies documenting the time excesses have already been mentioned. A first step would be to summarize the findings of these studies.

The next step would be to document how these time delays lead to problems of the sort listed above. This could easily be done in discussions with AID officials in Washington.

To document that excess paperwork was generated, a study should be undertaken of what information was actually used in the project review/approval process. Again, this study could be done in Washington. Documentation on inefficient decision processes has already been assembled.

Little work has been done to document the excessive amount of time taken between project approval and the placing of expatriate teams in the field. Once again, this could be documented in Washington. However, the problems this caused in project implementation could best be documented through discussions with field missions.

5/ See Mickelwiat and others, op. cit.

Inaccurate Time Estimates

Documentation and manifestation of problem

It is usually the case that timing estimates made during project design and later during implementation are woefully inaccurate--usually on the side of grossly underestimating how much time each implementation stage will take. It is more the rule than the exception that:

- It takes longer to get outside personnel and host country personnel in place than anticipated;
- It takes longer for them to develop good working relationships than anticipated (often, as no time is allowed for this "feeling-out" period);
- Delays occur that have not been programmed in the delivery of supplies from the outside;
- As a result of the above, the delivery of goods and services goes forth in a somewhat haphazard fashion that at times violates the underlying project rationale (that is, the provision of goods and services prior to the commitment of local resources);
- The hoped-for local initiatives do not occur as scheduled; and
- The project team is rarely around long enough to observe or work towards the development benefits of the project becoming self-sustaining.

Reasons for the Problem

What is the reason for all of these bad time-phasing estimates? A partially valid answer is that inadequate research has been devoted to these timing issues. This is,

however, only a partially valid answer. The bias or tendency toward underestimation is so persistent and obvious to development practitioners that one has to conclude other forces are at work.

The most obvious source of this bias stems from the political milieu in which AID (and other foreign donors) operate. As has been well-documented elsewhere, Congress and the executive branch have a limited time horizon in terms of willingness to wait for program impact, and a common way of dealing with it is to phase projects accordingly, regardless of the reality of such phasing plans.6/ Pressure for quick results is just as great in recipient nations and this, too, contributes to overly optimistic time horizons.

In addition to political considerations, it is probable that part of the problem, particularly as it related to later stages in the implementation cycle, stems from a problem with "New Directions" projects that is not yet fully recognized: it will take longer to achieve development results when the targets are the poorer, less progressive elements of society. Putting it somewhat more pessimistically, probably more time

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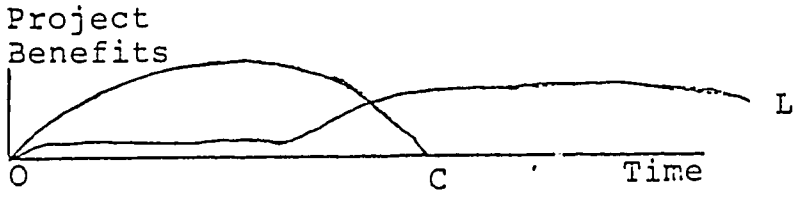
6/ Aaron Wildalvsky, The Politics of the Budgetary Process, New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1969.

should be allowed than has been true in the past for testing the workability of projects with "New Directions" objectives.

More broadly, there are various reasons to have a reasonably clear picture of the probable "gestation period" of projects, from resource availability through to the provision of self-sustaining development benefits. Policy-makers should have some sense of how long they should have to wait to move from one project stage to the next. More concretely, a critical policy question concerns how long after project startup should be allowed before expecting to see development benefits. A clear understanding of a probable gestation period is important both for project design and project evaluation purposes. Consider the latter issue. In figure 1, project benefits are portrayed vertically, while time is measured on the horizontal axis.

Figure 1



It is reasonable to hypothesize that for most projects there are two "benefit profiles." The first, measured in figure 1 by OC, results directly from foreign assistance (money, personnel, or equipment) being provided to the project area.

These transfer benefits will cease when foreign assistance ceases (at time C in the figure). Lasting benefits are likely to follow a different time profile. As line OI in figure 1 suggests, they are not likely to even start to manifest themselves until considerable time after the foreign assistance has commenced and probably not reach "full bloom" until several years after foreign assistance has ended.

Clearly, different "benefit profiles" or gestation periods exist than the one protrayed in figure 1, but the important point is that whatever the profiles are, the point at which a project is evaluated will make an important difference on how the project appears to be doing. It is possible for experienced development professionals to anticipate with a reasonable degree of accuracy what the profiles will look like and base their evaluations on them (provided they do not need hard documentation for their conclusions).7/

Alleviating the problem

Political considerations aside, there is a clear need for a better understanding of how long it normally takes to move a project through its various stages to the ultimate generation

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7/ It has recently been estimated that, as a general rule, 18-22 months after outputs have been delivered is the earliest legitimate time to start measuring impact (Practical Concepts, Inc., "The Feasibility and Desirability of Ex-Post Evaluation in The Agency for International Development," draft report, September 1979).

of self-sustaining benefits. And indeed, it does not seem quite fair to charge AID and other donor officials with "putting their heads in the sand" or "engaging in wishful thinking" on these timing issues until some well-documented evidence is presented that suggests their timing estimates are way off the mark.8/

Research strategy

A "random sample" of completed AID projects will be drawn. Using information in AID/Washington files, estimates could be made of how long it takes, on average, to reach various project milestones. Such a study will serve as a valuable guideline to future time estimation work. It is likely that in the process of doing this study, various ways by which time delays could be reduced will appear.

Inapporpriate Phasing of Project Activities

Documentation and manifestation of problem

It is important that project activities follow certain time sequence patterns. Certain sequences are commonsensical. For example, it makes no sense to bring in personnel prior to

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8/ Several years ago, Development Alternatives, Inc., proposed that such a study be undertaken by AID. For details on the methodology to be employed, see "A Proposal to Study the Time Profile of Benefits to Small Farmers," submitted to the Office of Technical Assistance, February 1975.

the availability of living quarters; nor is there any point in increasing agricultural production until the capacity to market additional produce is available.

Some time phasing considerations have emanated from research on development. For example, some would hypothesize that farmers should learn to help themselves and that outside assistance should only be used to overcome remaining bottlenecks. Granted this, project delivery of goods and services should await the organization of small farmers to help themselves and resource commitments by them.

"New Directions" projects put a heavy reliance on a local resource commitment--frequently in the form of labor--in working towards the attainment of project objectives. The time phasing plans of projects frequently do not allow for the fact that at certain times of the year, e.g., at harvest, there is little productive labor available. If full utilization is to be made of available local labor, activities must be phased in a manner that is consonant with local production cycles.9/

At the macro level, there are also some timing issues that merit consideration. There is increasing evidence to suggest

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9/ This issue is the subject of work now underway at the University of Sussex under the direction of Robert Chambers.

that development activities--and in particular those that focus on health and nutrition--contribute significantly to population growth, at least in the short run.10/ To avoid such undesirable consequences, it would appear appropriate to phase family planning and other economic and educational activities that appear to slow population growth prior to the introduction of health and nutrition programs.

It can be hypothesized that the mix and time-sequencing of expatriate personnel should be radically altered from what is most commonly done now. That is, instead of having a core of technical experts assigned on a long-term basis to project locales, greater use should be made of short-term technical expertise. It can also be hypothesized that the makeup of the long-term team should change as the project moves through its life cycle.11/

Another issue has to do with the appropriate time-phasing of evaluation activities. Very little work has been done on

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10/ See state of arts papers on rural development and fertility being produced by Research Triangle Institute and the South East Consortium for International Development under an ongoing contract with AID's Office of Rural Development and Development Administration; see also Elliott R. Morss, "Measurable Development Results of the Last Century: Do They Have Policy Implications?" Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1979. pp. 26-29. Ms.

11/ This point is discussed further in chapter five, Managing and Structuring Technical Assistance.

when it is appropriate to do formative and summative evaluations of projects.

Beyond evaluation and project design needs in general, a better understanding of gestation periods is required for better phasing of the withdrawal of external resources from the project. While it is accepted that much foreign assistance is, and will continue to be, beneficial strictly because of the resour transfer effects, efforts should be made to improve upon what happens when resources are withdrawn. Conditions will probably improve if the time of withdrawal is made more realistic in terms of there being a reasonable chance that project benefits will become self-sustaining and if some thinking is given up front on how to effect the resources reduction in the least painful manner.

Reasons for problem

An important reason timing issues have created implementation problems is that they have not been given much research attention. With the focus of the "New Directions" mandate on targeting development to the rural poor, there is probably more need than ever before to give attention to the timing problems, and this is yet to be done.

In addition, certain bureaucratic and political impediments have stood in the way of sensible time-sequenced

activities. For example, section 611(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act has been interpreted to mean that full and complete plans of all project activities must be prepared prior to the disbursement of project funds. Such a provision is inappropriate from a timing standpoint in light of the general concensus that project development should be evolutionary with some project activities identified after project startup.

Alleviating the problem

There is a great need for a better understanding of how time sequencing of project activities can help or hinder a project. Right now, it is important that development practitioners be sensitized to the importance of these time-phasing issues.

Research Strategy

As has been mentioned earlier, there has been little research done on these issues. Top priority will therefore initially go to documenting the existence of these problems. It is probable that examples of all the inappropriate phasing examples mentioned above could be drawn from a review of AID/W's project evaluation files, DAI's own field experience, and discussion with former IRD project managers.

CHAPTER EIGHT

COUNTERPART SHORTAGES

Problem Definition

IRD projects almost never have a satisfactory complement of host counterparts to work with the short- and long-term expatriate teams. Satisfactory complements are usually called for in the project design paper, but serious shortages occur during implementation when the specified slots are not filled.

The result of these shortages is that the project must proceed more slowly than had been planned or the expatriate team takes on far more responsibilities for implementation than had been projected. Either option is costly. If the project pace is slowed host country politicians, donor agencies, and potential beneficiaries are frustrated. If expatriates take up the slack, the critical capacity building and technology transfer aspects of the project are significantly reduced, thereby greatly increasing the chances that project benefits will not become self-sustaining when the donor assistance is withdrawn.

Reasons for the Problem

Many developing nations simply do not have adequately trained manpower to fill the project slots. If the qualified manpower is available in-country, the government may not have the recurrent budget monies to pay their salaries and provide the necessary supporting services.

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The problem of having inadequate resources confronts developing nations in nearly all negotiations with foriegn aid donors. The latter nearly always demand some sort of host country commitment as a precondition for foreign aid. Because the governments of developing countries are primarily interested in the resource transfers resulting from foreign aid, they will usually promise to provide the resources called for and only later renegotiate these commitments. This strategy usually proves successful, for once the foreign aid has been approved by the donor agency, it is rarely cut back because of host country counterpart or other resource shortages.

Past donor reactions to these shortages have usually been limited to escalating demands for host country personnel. These reactions have rarely been productive. If they have succeeded, it has usually meant the withdrawal of skilled manpower from other jobs where they are desperately needed; if they have failed the only result has been a worsening in the relations between host country officials and the donor agencies.

Alleviating the Problem

As a start towards alleviating this problem it is essential that foreign donors be aware that counterpart shortages are likely to develop, and that appropriate changes in the project design be made. Appropriate changes might include such things as intensified on-the-job training and an increased use of para-professionals.

Research Strategy

The first priority is to document the counterpart shortages and the problems they have created. Following this, investigations should be undertaken to determine what, if anything, has been done to cope with these shortages.

The needed documentation can be collected through:

- Data collection on field trips;
- Review of DAI's experience; and
- Discussions with past IRD project managers.

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFERING AGENDAS

Problem Definition

The key players, both institutions and individuals, at every stage of the project cycle--identification, design, implementation and evaluation--are likely to have differing purposes or agendas in mind. These differing agendas, which neither singly nor collectively place the highest priority on achieving project goals, have led to serious project implementation problems.

Reasons for the Problem

Individual and institutional agendas depend on the incentive structure of each. The literature presents fairly convincing evidence that most organizations--both public and private--put primary emphasis on increasing their size, power, and control, and that their internal incentive systems are formulated in accordance with these motivations.1/ Individuals develop agendas based on both professional and personal incentive sets. A few examples will illustrate how those forces can lead to problems in various phases of IRD projects.

1/ See Elliott R. Morss and Robert F. Rich, op. cit., chapter 2.

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U.S. foreign assistance is intended to promote U.S. political and security interests overseas. Since this is the primary consideration, it is easy to understand the frustrations generated by hearing that development takes a long time, and that it will take at least five or six years before any meaningful impact occurs. This pressure for quick results is reflected in project design papers where quick results are promised. By promising quick results, project design papers get through the review/approval process. This means, however, that the resulting overly optimistic project design papers can not serve as the basis for realistic implementation plans.

Projects are usually identified and designed by AID missions and national-level agencies of developing nations. As Soesiladi has pointed out, national level authorities are frequently more interested in the resource transfer component of projects (especially, the foreign exchange component) and the organizational location of the project than in the project design itself.2/ Soesiladi also suggests that national authorities assume that AID assistance necessarily includes technical assistance, whether or not it is needed. At these stages of the project cycle, AID officials are primarily

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2/ Soesiladi, "Technical Assistance for IRD: A Counterpart's Perspective," Washington, D. C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1981. Ms.

interested in "packaging" the projects for its own review/approval process. These packaging requirements are detailed and complex, with the result that AID ends up doing most of the paperwork. Congressional restrictions and/or AID staff interpretations thereof, impose severe restrictions on how project papers are written, with the result that they can rarely serve as the basis for a realistic project implementation plan. And finally, lower level government authorities, who will play critical roles in project implementation, frequently do not have any substantive involvement in project idetntification and design activities.

In sum, a bit of reflection on the motivations and consequent agendas of the important players in the project identification and design stages suggest that the seeds for subsequent project implementation problems have already been planted. There is nobody who places top priority on well-designed projects, due in part to the fact that nobody involved in these stages is held in any way accountable for project failure. In addition, the requirements of the AID review/approval process discourages any attempt at a realistic implementation plan. This is an important history to remember in attempting to identify the reasons for project implementation problems.

Differing agendas among those implementing a project can also lead to serious problems. Consider first the typically important players in the implementation of an IRD project. Frequently, a number of national-level line ministries are exprected to make significant contributions. Each of these ministries is interested in expanding its power and authority. If a ministry is asked to play a secondary role, it is unlikely that this ministry will put a high priority on these activities because it has other activities to perform where it is the principal actor. Often too, regional and local governments see these projects primarily as a means to increase their power and authority in relation to the national authorities. These are not circumstances in which to expect much information sharing and collaboration.

Typically, AID missions are more concerned with developing new projects than in implementing projects that have been already approved. As regards the latter, the safest stance for AID missions is to insist upon a literal compliance with the activities outlined in the project paper; there is little incentive for missions to bear the responsibility for project revisions, even when these revisions are eminently reasonable in light of existing circumstances.

Frequently, too, the expatriate technical assistance teams find there are fewer counterparts available than called

for in the project paper. For these technicians, who derive considerable professional and personal satisfaction from performing in their technical roles, it is far easier to undertake activities independently from an overworked and understaffed counterpart team than to engage in the more time-consuming effort of working with counterparts.

Pressures for quick project results often come from local political leaders. These pressures only enforce the expatriate tendencies to work on their own. Given existing incentive structures, expatriate technicians are more likely to be concerned about criticisms that results are slow in coming while they are in-country than they are to be concerned about criticisms that they did not engage in capacity building after they have left the country.

There are several reasons why counterparts might place highest priority on being transferred off of a rural development project assignment back to the capital city. Beyond general quality of life considerations, education facilities are likely to be better and one can more easily stay abreast of opportunities for promotion while residing in the capital city. In addition, government workers are likely to have better professional and logistical support in the capital city. Project staff morale is clearly affected by the efforts of some staff members to transfer; to the extent they

are successful in obtaining transfers, project delays will result while new staff is recruited and brought up to speed.

Expatriates may also have personal or professional considerations that contribute to project problems. For example, the university professor who only has time to spend a month or so every so often in the project area and prefers writing articles to a more direct involvement in project activities can create serious problems.

Differing agendas can also contribute to implementation problems during evaluation activities. A major incentive of evaluators is to comply with all aspects of their scopes of work. Often, these work orders call for far more than can be done in the time available. In this situation, the evaluation team has little option but to spend nearly all of its time in the collection of information.

The staff of the IRD projects both dislikes and fears evaluations. They take time, and they are found to be critical of at least some project activities. To the extent that the evaluation team sees the project staff as an information source, things can become fairly dysfunctional.

The above list is intended to illustrate how differing agendas of the major players in IRD projects can lead to implementation problems. The following section will include some suggestions on how these problems might be alleviated.

Research Strategy

First, concrete examples of how differing agendas contributed directly and significantly to project implementation problems need to be collected, illustrations that show:

- Differing agendas do exist;
- The means why they exist; and
- How they create or contribute to implementation problems.

Methodologically, it is recommended that the field teams record anecdotes that verify these points. Be as concrete as possible. Names will be deleted once we have decided which anecdotes to use. It is also hoped that we can get some information on this subject from past project managers.

Beyond documenting differing agendas as a source of implementation problems, an effort should be made to say something about how to alleviate these problems. Work to date suggests that incentive systems dictate human behavior. The question then becomes, "How might incentive systems be changed to modify behavior in a positive fashion?" Once again, examples of what has been tried, drawn from our field visits and past project managers, is needed.

It should be noted that while monetary incentives are important, there is evidence that nonmaterial incentives are also important. Here, we are talking about such things as job recognition, job support, and participatory decisionmaking. The task would be to document where such approaches have worked, have not worked, and why.

CHAPTER TEN

SUSTAINING PROJECT BENEFITS

Problem Definition

The "bottom line" problem of IRD projects is that intended benefits are not sustained (if ever attained) when foreign aid monies are withdrawn. The dearth of good impact studies means that the existence of this problem has not been well-documented; however, past DAI work suggests that the lack of sustainability is more often the rule than the exception.[1/]

Reasons for the Problem

There are many reasons why project benefits are not sustained. Among the most important:

- Sustainability was not a consideration in the project design;
- Promised host country resources were not forthcoming, either because the resource level required was unreasonable or because the host government chose not to provide them;
- Proposed technologies were not appropriate;
- Local population did not make necessary behavior changes;
- Organizational capacity was inadequate to sustain benefits;

1/ Elliott R. Morss and others, op. cit.; and A. H. Barclay, Jr., and others, "The Development Impact of Private Voluntary Organizations: Kenya and Niger," 1979. Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1979.

- Insufficient time allowed to realize sustainability; and
- Project staff did not devote adequate attention to the sustainability issue, in part because time pressures to deliver goods and services to target populations dominated all other considerations.

Alleviating the Problem

Ultimately, this problem will not be resolved until:

- Incentives for realistic project design are introduced; and
- Incentive structures for people responsible for project implementation are changed to reward efforts to make project benefits self-sustaining.

Research Strategy

It is beyond the resources of this project to carry out impact studies to document the fact that IRD projects rarely leave behind mechanisms or whatever else is necessary to sustain project benefits. Instead, this point will be made by reference to the literature.

A sample of project design papers will be reviewed to determine the extent to which self-sustaining benefits were a serious consideration or whether only lip-service to the concept was offered.

In the field, it would be valuable if IRD project staffs could be sensitized to the problem. Specifically, it would be useful if the IRD project could develop and work through an

exercise to determine whether project benefits were likely to be sustained. The exercise might take the following form.

Step 1

Define what elements are critical for rural development benefits to become self-sustaining. A preliminary list might include the following considerations:

- Types and values of benefits as perceived by both direct and indirect project beneficiaries (to determine what it is that "ought" to be sustained);
- Resource requirements for project operations, including personnel (who is needed and can they be induced to stay), technical assistance, funds for materials and equipment;
- Resource levels which need to be assumed by the government and local residents as foreign assistance is withdrawn. The willingness and ability of the government and local community to assume this required level;
- Commitment of project beneficiaries to the behavioral change being encouraged by the project. This element includes risk considerations associated with behavioral change;
- Degree and type of political support (both national and local); and
- Local level organizational arrangements that have the capability of sustaining project activities, for instance the effectiveness of local cooperatives.

Step 2

Make a projection of where the various project activities or components will be X years hence:

- Look at the rate of increase in the capability of cooperatives to effectively assume development responsibilities and estimate the level of capabilitiy in X years (Will co-ops be self-sustaining?);

- Look at the rate of farmer adoption of new practices and income increases and estimate if these changes represent a commitment to change that is likely to be continued;

- Look at the structure of subsidies--of which technical assistance may represent a major element--and estimate what it will take to keep the local staff in the area after project funds cease: and

- Look at the rate of increase of resources committed to project activities, both from the national government and local residents, and whether the level/type will be sufficient in X years.

This type of assessment, carried out during project implementation, would give valuable guidance to project staff concerning the potential for benefit continuation. For example, it would provide insights regarding the type and magnitude of government support necessary for project activity continuation, and whether that level of support is likely to be forthcoming. It would shed light on whether local organizational structures--given the time and pain normally necessary to develop their capabilities--is an institutional form that should be promoted. Also, it would give some indication as to whether the central government--due to limited resources or lack of commitment--is a poor risk for sustaining local development.

Another component of this work would entail asking past project managers about their concern for self-sustaining project

benefits and what actions they took to realize their goal. Discussions with these managers should elicit examples of how other pressures on them worked against attainment of the self-sustaining goal.