DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA: CONTEXT AND STRATEGY
A SYNTHESIS OF LESSONS FROM SIX AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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by

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FOREWORD

Good program management is essential to successful and sustained development programs in developing countries. Problems of poor management are often cited as responsible for program failure. The management factor in development programs is, however, less well appreciated and understood as are the project interventions that serve to strengthen management capabilities. AID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination has undertaken a series of studies to gain a better understanding of these management problems and to assess the impact of some of the interventions that have been tried.

The study began in September 1984 when CDIE organized a workshop on development management in Africa. In attendance at that workshop were senior AID personnel, contractors, and university professors knowledgeable about Africa who have written on development management issues. Many in this group at the workshop participated in the field studies of six agricultural development projects in Africa. The product of the workshop was a report that isolated issues and approved a scope of work to guide the field teams.

After returning to the United States, the six field teams attended a wrap-up seminar in May 1985 to review their work and to seek general findings and lessons. Several synthesis reports were written incorporating the results of the field studies and the deliberations of the wrap-up seminar. This present report is one of the syntheses. Dr. Irving Rosenthal has been the CDIE coordinator for this series.

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Authorship of a paper, like management, is often ascribed to an individual even though it reflects the contributions of many. Among those whose comments, criticisms, and clarifications were most instrumental in shaping this paper are Tony Barclay, Russell Betts, Don Bowles, Gerald Britan, Coralie Bryant, James Cotter, Chris Hermann, Michael Horowitz, Kenneth Kornher, David Leonard, Laura McPherson, Norman Nicholson, Haven North, Craig Olson, Dennis Rondinelli, Irving Rosenthal, Matt Seymour, Margaret Shaw, Nena Vreeland, and Marion Warren. Editorial contributions by Linda Robinson and word processing assistance by Carol Kulski and Cereta Dudley are also appreciated.

This paper evolved through various iterations as it reflected the shifting emphasis on lessons learned. The original scope of work for this entire effort was written by Irving Rosenthal, the Sector Coordinator for Development Management in the Center for Development Information and Evaluation of the Agency for International Development (AID). "Promoting Performance in Agricultural Projects" and "Olympians and Mortals in African Development" were titles of earlier drafts of this present paper. Comments on the first version by participants in the Workshop on Development Management in Africa in April 1985 helped focus the draft. Pat Fleuret and Merlyn Kettering contributed significantly at this stage. A review committee within AID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation of the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, was especially helpful at later stages, as was internal review at Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).

The field trip to Lesotho was a most engaging experience thanks to the efforts of Marion Warren, Bob Walter, and Sam Montsi (the other team members) and the staff of USAID, the contractor, and the Government of Lesotho. Their dedication and insights are most appreciated.

The paper and field work were supported by AID through contract no. PDC-1406-I-23-1097-00 with DAI. Although support and assistance from these organizations and individuals are acknowledged, responsibility for all conclusions and opinions, as well as any errors of omission or commission, remains that of the author alone.

> Development managers are mere mortals in a world where the Olympian decisions are made in the presidential palaces and finance ministries and party headquarters.{1}
>
> Jerry Wolgin
Economist,
Africa Bureau,
U.S. Agency for
International
Development

> The first thing which we must recognize is that effective management . . . is the most critical factor in the development process of any country.{2}
>
> Philip Ndegwa
Governor,
Central Bank of Kenya

{1} Jerry Wolgin, "Development Management Amid Economic Crisis" (Paper presented to the Workshop on Development Management in Africa, Easton, Md., September 1984), p. 10.

{2} Philip Ndegwa, Africa's Development Crisis (Nairobi: Heineman Educational Books, 1985), pp. 127-128.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Wolgin and Ndegwa citations above represent very different interpretations of the importance of management relative to policy reform strategies for addressing Africa's economic crisis. This paper, however, argues the following:

The policy/management apposition is overly simplistic. Management practices can constrain or expand policy opportunities and results just as policies can help or inhibit management.

Project performance results from the interaction between strategy and context.

The solution to the crisis lies less with the importation of cures (whether policy or management) than with understanding the local context and building appropriate responses to that context.

To support these arguments, however, three points must be discussed. The first is the evolution of perspectives on the relative importance of development policy and management. The second is the place of this study in that evolution. The third is the perceptual barriers that will have to be overcome for this study to achieve operational results. Each point is addressed below.

1.1 Views of the Problem

Since the publication of the World Bank's "Berg Report"{3} in 1981, a predominant view of the source of Africa's crisis has emphasized the impact of inappropriate economic policies. As policy-oriented perspectives have gained currency in the development community, the need for policy reform has grown from an insight to a blanket prescription. Indeed, a mechanical view of the benefits that will result from policies such as getting the prices right or revaluing currency has obscured the reasons behind these policies as well as the nature of the terrain the reformers must cross.{4} Structural adjustment programs often specify the policy reforms to be accomplished without specifying how to achieve them. That is, the management dimension of policy reform is typically left out of structural adjustment programs.

The World Bank's 1984 follow-on to the Berg Report ostensibly stresses the need for management capacity and appropriate technical assistance as the second of its four emphases.{5} However, the authors of this report still view the management problem largely in macro terms. The chapters on managing and supporting policy reform view the issue as one of donor coordination, macro management of the economy, and debt servicing. Thus, even though the importance of management is acknowledged, the prescribed way out of the crisis avoids direct confrontation with management processes. To the authors of the report, convincing the Olympians to adopt preferred economic policies remains more important than supporting the management efforts of lowly mortals.

Other writers, however, were concurrently recognizing that the management of development efforts was an important element in explaining successes as well as failures.{6} Management was not the only determinant of results, but its relative importance was great enough for the World Bank's World Development Report, 1983 to dwell on the theme of management in development. Even so, there was dissatisfaction with the report's treatment of management.{7} Until the dimensions of development management could be more clearly articulated and refined, neither policy reform nor management assistance was likely to be conducted more effectively. Although this applies to all geographic regions, the intensity of Africa's current crisis makes it most salient there. However, the views on how to solve Africa's development management problems differ.

Two opposing views define the historical grounds of this debate. One view is that Western methods and theories, wherever applied, will yield results similar to those obtained from their application in industrial settings.{8} The other view is that each area of the world is permeated with unique historical and cultural characteristics that inhibit the success of imported theories or methods.{9} Two recent studies have taken initial steps toward resolving the impasse between these two positions.
{9}See Moris, Managing Induced Rural Development.

The first study{10} examined journal articles focusing on organization and management in the developing world to determine how many supported the first position and how many the second. They also explored the reasons for the division of opinion.

The major finding of this study was that, when Western theories and methods were determined to be appropriate, the focus was on internal issues closely tied to the organization's production technology. When Western theories and techniques were found to be inappropriate, the emphasis was on processes that extended into the project organization's environment.

The authors of this survey of academic literature concluded that,

> In general, each time the environment is involved, the theory developed for Western settings does not apply, because it assumes contingencies that may not be valid for developing countries. In these situations, utilization must be preceded by a situational analysis to identify the relevant contingencies and their inter-relationships.

A study of 24 rural development projects came to a similar conclusion.{11} This study argued that Western management theories and methods were appropriate for building roads, bridges, and clinics or delivering goods and services. But the need to induce local responses to those services and the mandate that development projects stimulate self-sustaining dynamics created an intense interaction between project organizations and local environments. As a result of these interactions, the imported perspectives often lost their predictive power.

Using an analytic model based on project objectives and linkage processes, the authors of this study concluded that

> Orthodox management science does offer sound guidance for delivering goods and services . . . . But generating local action and sustaining benefit flows are objectives that fall outside the domain of formalistic Western management theory . . . . Universalistic management science is a useful starting point for the first linkage in the model, but the contextual mappers may possess the key tools required to forge the second and third linkages.

Both academic literature and field studies, then, support the importance of context in development management. A clear picture of development management requires an environment that is lighted and focused, not one in which an imported theory casts its own dark shadow and blurs the background of the subject.

{3} World Bank, Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1981).

{4} Robert Bates, Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

{5} World Bank, Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Program of Action (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1984).

{6} See, for example, Coralie Bryant and Louise White, Managing Development in the Third World (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982); Merilee Grindle, ed., Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); George Honadle and Rudi Klauss, eds., International Development Administration: Implementation Analysis for Development Projects (New York: Praeger, 1979); Jon R. Moris, Managing Induced Rural Development (Bloomington, Ind.: Institute for International Development, 1981); Elliott Morss and David Gow, eds., Implementing Rural Development Projects (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985); Dennis A. Rondinelli, Development Projects as Policy Experiments (New York: Methuen, 1983).

{7} D.J. Murray, "The World Bank's Perspective on How To Improve Administration," Public Administration and Development 3, 4 (1983):291-297.

{8} David K. Leonard, Reaching the Peasant Farmer: Organization Theory and Practice in Kenya (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

{9} See Moris, Managing Induced Rural Development.

{10} Moses Kiggundu, Jan Jorgensen, and Taieb Hafsi, "Administrative Theory and Practice in Developing Countries: A Synthesis," Administrative Science Quarterly 28 (1983): 6684.

{11} George Honadle and Jerry Van Sant, Implementation for Sustainability: Lessons from Integrated Rural Development (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1985).

1.2 Responding to the Need

Responding to the need for a sharpened understanding of how to fit organization and management approaches to African circumstances, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) in 1984 commissioned a series of case studies of the management dimension of six agricultural projects in Africa. The studies were jointly sponsored by AID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation in the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, and the Bureau for Africa. The effort was under the direction of Irving Rosenthal, Sector Coordinator for Development Management.

The study process began in September 1984 with a workshop, held in Easton, Maryland, designed to prepare the teams to undertake the field studies. Fieldwork, which began in October 1984 and ended in late March 1985, entailed visits to Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, and Zaire. In late April 1985, a workshop was held to reassemble the field teams and compare case findings.{12}

Studies were concerned with three main areas:{13}

1. Contextual factors related to management, including the impact on the project of local physical, environmental, political, and cultural factors, as well as worldwide economic and political conditions

2. Management strategy, including organization, structure, and institutional arrangements encompassing both formally established and informally constituted working relationships among affected organizations and people; resource control encompassing financial, commodity, and logistics management; and the approach to getting things done in an effective and efficient manner

3. Management enhancement strategy, involving attempts to change administrative processes, such as ways of carrying out development programs in the local setting, and efforts to increase consideration of human resources management and behavioral factors, such as the skills, performance, and management capacity of the people who are part of, or who will benefit from, the project

The first area emphasizes the impact of the local environment on the project. The second area concerns how the project was designed and managed to encounter and change that environment. The third area relates to activities that strengthen the management and institutional capacity of those who will inherit the project after donor funding ends.

This paper synthesizes the findings of the case studies and highlights lessons that emerged from them. But for those lessons to be taken seriously, the perceptual barriers to an acceptance of the importance of organization and management in the development process must first be overcome.

{12} Merlyn Kettering, Synthesis of Lessons and Guidelines for Development Management in Africa, Development Program Management Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, July 1985.

{13} The original scope of work specified five categories of information: contextual factors related to management, organizational structure and institutionalization, administrative process changes, resource input management, and human resources management and behavioral considerations. Discussion at the workshop held in Easton, Maryland, however, emphasized the two types of strategy, whereas the papers presented emphasized different aspects of African contexts. Keeping the details of each of the five categories, I have rearranged them into three: context and the two strategies.

1.3 Overcoming Perceptual Barriers

Any discussion of the management of development programs has four handicaps:

1. It runs the risk of stating what nonmanagement specialists consider to be obvious.

2. It must include the dimension of leadership, which to many people simply means getting the right managers to run things.

3. It invariably leads to messy sets of causes of and solutions to problems instead of clear individual ones, making the discussion seem fuzzy, nonprescriptive, and loaded with qualifiers.

4. The effect of management decisions and behavior often seems fleeting and difficult to see, adding to the fuzziness and keeping management out of the realm of expert knowledge and in the realm of common sense.

The practical problem that arises from these perceptual barriers is that good management is taken for granted. It is assumed that what must be done is universally obvious and that if problems occur they can be overcome by a change in personnel or some training. But this simplistic approach seldom works. Attempts to transfer experience from one setting to another without adjusting for differences among the settings can lead to the failure of the intuitively obvious because it is empirically dubious.

To deal with this difficulty, this paper follows a progression from context to strategy to performance to lessons. This progression is used to reveal and specify the complex, inconsistent, or counterintuitive elements of successful development management. Moreover, it suggests a process for tailoring general knowledge to fit specific circumstances.

2. THE PROJECTS AND THEIR SETTINGS

The projects reviewed here are distributed throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Three are in Anglophone countries, and there are in Francophone countries. One is in East Africa, one is in southern Africa, and four are in West Africa. A brief description of each project follows.

2.1 Projects Reviewed

The project descriptions that follow are intended to give the reader a sense of the major activities undertaken and provide a grounding for the later discussion. These descriptions are not expected to replace or summarize the individual case studies. This paper deals with crosscutting themes rather than project-specific issues and recommendations. Readers wishing more details should consult the cases studies, which are listed in Appendix A.

The Egerton College Expansion Project in Kenya (1980-1984) aimed at upgrading a training institute for extension agents. Faculty were sent to the United States to obtain advanced degrees while technical assistance staff took their places. Simultaneously, a quadrangle consisting of a library and two other buildings was built on the Egerton campus. Later, a fourth building was added under the project.

The Land Conservation and Range Development Project in Lesotho aims at reversing severe soil erosion and range deterioration while improving the economic opportunities available through the productive use of livestock. The project uses a two-pronged approach to the problem. First, conservation and range management training and staffing divisions within the Ministry of Agriculture provide an organizational base for addressing the problem at a national level. Second, a pilot area range management association is used to test policy implementation and field approaches for later replication throughout the country. The project, which began in 1981 and will end in 1987, is one in a series of three linked projects; the first began in 1976 and the third is expected to begin implementation in 1986.

In Liberia, a sequence of two projects, the Agriculture Sector Analysis and Planning Project and the Agriculture Development Program, focus on upgrading the Ministry of Agriculture capacity to conduct sector analyses and use the data for planning purposes. The project is placed within the Ministry of Agriculture at the national level. Training and technical assistance form the core of the Monrovia-based projects. The first project began in 1980 and the second will be completed in 1986.

The Niamey Department Development Project in Niger uses various line agencies, at the subnational level, to develop and extend technical packages to increase food production. In addition to raising production, the project is expected to improve existing Government technical service agencies and the linkages among them. Project funding is used to augment ongoing efforts of the line agencies. Implementation began in 1982 and will be completed in 1987.

The Bakel Small Irrigated Perimeters Project in Senegal is attempting to diversify agricultural production and reduce the risk of drought in this Sahelian country. The project is implemented through a subnational parastatal organization focusing on riverine areas. Training of farmer groups plays a major role in the effort, and a gradual transfer of parastatal responsibilities to a local-level organization is planned. The project began in 1981 and is expected to end in 1986.

The North Shaba Rural Development Project in Zaire is located in the northern part of what was formerly Katanga Province. This project aims at increasing maize production by introducing new technologies, strengthening local organizations, and improving the grain marketing system. The project was initially implemented through a semiautonomous project management unit, but responsibility is now being transferred to private sector and village organizations. The project began in 1977 and will be completed in 1986.

Thus, the activities of the six projects cover a wide range: agricultural college upgrading, land conservation and range development, sector planning, irrigation, maize production, and integrated rural development. Organizationally, they are equally diverse, using parastatals, subnational line agencies, a national line agency, a national line agency with a geographically isolated field area, and a self-contained project management unit as implementation mechanisms. This variety poses the question of what contextual factors promoted such a wide range of responses.

2.2 A Contextual Map

A focus on context requires an organizing scheme that delimits the boundaries of significant surroundings. Unfortunately, the state-of-the-art has not arrived at a commonly accepted contextual map. Contingency theories of management agree that appropriate practices depend on circumstances, but the theories do not agree on what circumstances are important.{14} Moreover, many expositions classify environments so abstractly that, at first glance, the classifications are difficult to use in developing country settings.{15}

A classic study{16} suggests a key factor for defining a relevant environmental dimension for management purposes -- how goals of an organization (project) relate to the goals of significant organizations and institutions in the same environment. This perspective is compatible with the conclusions of the studies of project implementation and the analysis of journal articles noted above. It is also consistent with other work examining the political context of leadership and management decision-making in both Western and non-Western settings.{17}

When this perspective is made specific, it suggests at least two major classes of contextual factors that must be examined. The first class relates project objectives to the organizations and individuals that stand to gain or lose from the successful achievement of project objectives: the project stakeholders. The second class identifies institutional and other elements that affect relationships between projects and their stakeholders. Both sets of contextual factors are discussed below.

{14} See, for example, Don Hellriegel and John W. Slocum, Jr., Management: A Contingency Approach (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1974); and Fremont Kast and James Rosenzweig, Contingency Views of Organization and Management (Chicago: SRA, 1973).

{15} F.E. Emery and E.L. Trist, "The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments," Human Relations 18 (1965): 21-32.

{16} Ibid.

{17} See, for example, F.G. Baily, Strategems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969); Norman Uphoff and Warren Ilchman, The Political Economy of Change (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Marc Lindenberg and Benjamin Crosby, Managing Development: The Political Dimension (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1981); and Richard Heaver, Bureaucratic Politics and Incentives for Rural Development, World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 537 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1982).

2.3 Objectives and Stakeholders

The impetus behind the project offers some insight into the initial set of stakeholders, and a brief look at the projects suggests very different purposes behind them. The project in Senegal, for example, was requested by a sophisticated group of villagers, whereas the project in Zaire was based largely on the national Government's interest in the project area. In Lesotho, national-level recognition of the severity of the soil erosion and range degredation problem was complemented by the support of an influential chief in the project area. The project in Liberia was ostensibly more the idea of the donor than the Government. Thus, examining the origins of the projects indicates the involvement of one set of stakeholders -- those who initially saw that they would benefit if the objectives were achieved.

Thus, one way to view the contexts of the six projects is to begin with project objectives and then to examine who stands to gain or lose from project operations. The construction of Table 1 accommodates this approach. The six projects are listed on the vertical axis of the chart. Along the horizontal axis, the first two items are the objectives each project addresses and the stakeholders who stand to gain or lose as a result of project success or failure.

In some cases, such as in Kenya, the risk bearers are nonexistent or peripheral. In other cases, such as in Liberia, the same people may benefit in some way and lose in other ways, and they may also be central to project operations. Moreover, the degree of risk appears to be higher in Lesotho, Liberia, Senegal, and Zaire than in the other two projects.

The nature of the stakeholders and the risk level they encounter can affect policies in the project environment, while policies and other factors can also determine the risk that these stakeholders will take.

2.4 Institutional and Other Constraints

The horizontal axis of Table 1 also shows relevant aspects of the social and policy settings and other factors that affect project activities and thus influence the strategy for organizing and managing each project. Different contexts will require different approaches.

In some cases, such as in Lesotho, policies are intentionally ambiguous because of the risks being borne by one group of stakeholders. National policymakers feared a loss of local support if needed regulations were clearly stated and vigorously enforced. In most cases, however, the interaction is mutually reinforcing. In Zaire, for example, the different groups of stakeholders are likely to see one group's gain as another's loss, and thus the conflict level is apt to be high. In Kenya, this is much less the case.

Five of the six field study teams were favorably impressed by the quality of the local personnel. This, in combination with other findings, has implications for appropriate training approaches in Africa. These implications will be discussed later (see Section 4.5).

Among other contextual factors are characteristics specific to the project area or institution but not common to other settings within that country. Four of the projects were able to identify and build on favorable circumstances that, although they might make replicability difficult, made the management task easier than it would have been elsewhere in the country. When administrative, ecological, and ethnic boundaries all coincide, the management task is simplified. And when the chief who presides over the area supports the project, it is surely time to go to work, just as the project in Lesotho did.

A major conclusion about the six contexts relates to the centrality of project objectives to the social setting. Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, and Zaire all had projects aimed at changing basic behavior. The projects focused on basic values, such as in Liberia, or basic behavior patterns, with Zaire the most extreme example of this emphasis. Kenya restricted its emphasis to an expansion of existing patterns of behavior, without attempting basic change. These factors are displayed in Table 1, which can be used to begin an assessment of the different organization and management strategies used to help achieve project objectives within the different contexts.

Table 1
(not available)

To see all tables and charts, please order a microfiche or paper copy of Document No. PN-AAL-076

3. PROJECT STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE

Given the diverse problems addressed by the projects and the various contexts within which they were placed, two questions arise:

1. What strategies were used to accommodate to these different situations?

2. How well did those strategies work?

Each question is addressed below.

3.1 Management Strategies

Before differences and similarities in project management strategies can be identified, the components of a management strategy must be identified. The case studies, the literature, and the original scope of work support the use of four components for this analysis:

1. Goals and benefits

2. Organization and process

3. Resource management

4. Time horizon

Goals and benefits refers to the choice of trying to mobilize people around clear and simple goals versus multiple goals and multiple benefits. The success of each approach depends on the circumstances.

Organization and process relates to the host institution in which the project is placed and the linkages to significant actors or beneficiaries whose cooperation is necessary for the project to succeed. More than one organization may be needed simultaneously, or there may be a shift from one to another during implementation.

Resource management refers to the approach to financial management, procurement, and logistics. Decisions about who does what and how funds are controlled make up the major dimensions of this component.

The time horizon component introduces the way in which sustainability considerations are built into the strategy. Contradictions may arise between the needs for short-term service delivery and long-run viability.

Table 2 compares these dimensions of the six project management strategies. In some instances, management strategy components are derived from specific contextual factors. For example, five of the six projects adopted multiple or vague goals to accommodate multiple stakeholders as part of the management strategy. Kenya was the outlier.

Organizationally, two projects used parastatals as their base, one was housed in a subnational government body, one used an autonomous management unit to bypass pre-existing structures, one was based in a national office of a line ministry, and one adopted a two-tiered approach using a ministry at the national level and a semi-independent unit at the field level. Thus, there was a wide range of responses to the different settings, each reflecting an attempt to avoid or strengthen a stakeholder group.

Although the organizational components varied considerably, the approaches to resource control were similar. Procurement and administration of dollar funds remained largely in the hands of

USAID Missions and contractors. The imposition of external record systems on local organizations was largely avoided. (For example, the principal at Egerton College could track funds, but his system was not one that an American accountant could follow.)

Dealing with time horizons takes a variety of approaches. In Liberia, the organizational implications of project success and the provision of incentives to support the continuation of project-introduced innovations are central, even though they were not included in the original project design. The project in Lesotho focused on the establishment of a beneficiary organization to inherit project functions at the field level. The project in Zaire emphasized the dissolution of the management unit and the assumption of its functions by public and private entities. A similar approach was used in Senegal. The project in Niger shifted its focus from production to institution building.

Although there were some commonalities, the strategies attempted to accommodate each project to the particular circumstances of its environment, including stakeholder dynamics, opportunities in the project areas, and the relationships between pre-existing organizations and clientele groups. This last factor offers a partial explanation for the decisions to bypass a ministry in Zaire and to use existing technical services in Niger.

The combination of strategy components was different for each project. In Kenya, simple goals, organizational autonomy, divided resource control, and an immediate focus on training and buildings characterized the approach. The Lesotho project strategy, however, was very different except for resource control; it was characterized by multiple objectives, multiple organizational components including informal linkages, and a long-run focus.

Table 2. Project Management Strategies
(not available)

In Liberia, broad goals, simple organization, close monitoring, and a long-run awareness offered a different combination of strategy components. The Niger project offered still another mix: multiple objectives, multiple implementing agencies, close monitoring, and a long-run emphasis.

The Senegal project had multiple objectives, put implementing authority in a subnational body while using village groups for implementation, took a less active role in resource management, and moved from an immediate to an extended time perspective. The Zaire strategy encompassed multiple objectives, an organizational bypass, and a shift of time horizon. Thus, different local contexts produced different mixes of management strategy components in each project.

Attempts to fit the project into the local organizational setting, either as an integral part of an ongoing operation or as a separate entity with no appropriate host institution, derived mainly from management concerns -- the need to get things done. But another set of concerns also had to be resolved within their specific context -- concerns about strengthening the capacity of local people to manage new initiatives after the end of project funding. The Ndegwa citation at the beginning of this paper focuses on this issue: the ability to manage people and resources must be indigenized if a project is to contribute to lasting success.

3.2 Management Enhancement Strategies

For many people, management enhancement, or capacity building, is equated with training. But this linkage misses the variety of management enhancement possibilities. Certainly, training is an important element of management capacity building, but there are other elements as well.

Another element is technical assistance. The substantive emphasis of the technical assistance staff and their roles in the project directly influence enhancement activity. If technical, but not management, support is offered, the effects may be different than if both are provided. Similarly, when technical assistance staff do a job rather than helping someone else do it, the outcome is not the same. Thus, the technical assistance component of a management enhancement strategy must be considered.

A third element is leadership and participation;{18} that is, who is guiding and participating in implementation and whose capacity to carry on is being developed? This element is linked to technical assistance and training, but it emphasizes the focus of those efforts. If the leadership strategy is not clarified, it is hard to know whether the training and technical assistance elements are directed at the most appropriate positions and people. Participatory approaches that incorporate multiple decision-makers and actors will have different requirements than directive approaches.

These three elements of management capacity building -- training, technical assistance, and leadership and participation -- have a human emphasis; that is, they focus directly on people. But individuals alone do not define management. Management takes place within organizational settings, and two aspects of those settings greatly affect the ability of managers to manage.

The first aspect is policy. Policies make a difference and thus cannot be ignored. Economic policies can affect the rewards and risks attached to alternative actions; they can support, inhibit, or be neutral to management efforts. Enhancing management performance may require lightening or removing the burdens imposed by inappropriate policies, or it may require establishing new communication channels or operating processes to develop and implement policies.

The second aspect is structure. Without discretion, control of resources, communication links, and legitimacy, it is difficult for a manager to lead. The right skills imparted to a person in the wrong position may have no effect on performance. Moreover, participatory decision-making processes will require structures that accommodate group interaction rather than foster individual isolation.

Table 3 groups these five components of a management enhancement strategy under two major headings -- human emphasis and organizational emphasis -- to compare the approaches implicit in the six projects. This framework allows a more complete assessment of complementarities, contradictions, and gaps than one that focuses on training tactics as the totality of the management enhancement approach.

Table 3. Project Management Enhancement Strategies
(not available)

The six projects varied considerably in their approaches to management enhancement. Some emphasized policy, whereas others ignored it. Some gave only technical training, whereas others mixed technical and managerial training. Some emphasized capacity building in government staff, some stressed capacity building within beneficiary groups, and others did both. For some, managerial experience and participation in decision-making were the foundation of the strategy; for others, it was training alone. Zaire was the most experience-oriented example, Kenya the most training oriented. The other four projects were between these two extremes.

The project in Kenya focused on the human dimension and ignored the organizational one. The Liberia project initially did the same, but as the importance of the organizational factors became overwhelming, a change in emphasis occurred. Most of the projects included both dimensions, but the human dimension was emphasized, as is apparent in the following summaries of management enhancement strategies.

Kenya focused on the human dimension by giving individuals technical training and ignored institutional aspects. Lesotho mixed technical and managerial training with a strong emphasis on leadership and participation while directing efforts toward policy and structure constraints. Liberia began with an emphasis on technical training but shifted the focus to organizational structure as the constraints on skill use became apparent.

Niger's approach was more incremental and augmentative, like Kenya's, with an emphasis on the human dimension. Senegal, in contrast, joined policy, organization, leadership, participation, and training into an integrated set of components with only technical assistance becoming confused. In Zaire, the human dimension was dominated by technical assistance, leadership, and participation whereas the organizational dimension loomed larger as implementation progressed.

It is not yet possible to draw conclusions about the relative quality of any strategy. The test of a strategy is its performance within the various contexts for which it was designed. This is true of both management and management enhancement strategies.

{18} See David K. Leonard, "The Political Realities of African Management," paper delivered to the Workshop on Development Management in Africa, Easton, Md., September 1984; and Philip Boyle et al., "On the Analysis of Organizational Culture in Development Project Planning," paper delivered to the Workshop on Development Management in Africa, Easton, Md., September 1984.

3.3 Project Performance

In most of the projects, it is too early to assess the long-term impact of the various management approaches, but it is possible to identify certain short-term outcomes. This section assesses the use of the different approaches in different settings against five performance categories. Two of the categories are drawn from the original scope of the review, two are based on findings highlighted in the field studies, and one is a catchall category.

The first category is resource management, for which actual performance is mixed. On the one hand, these projects did not have major problems in the flow of funds or budget overruns. On the other hand, one-half of them were severely criticized for lack of bookkeeping and accounting procedures, and two were scored average or mediocre. Only one project performed well in this area, and even that had minor performance problems and was characterized by an informal and secret record-keeping system for local budget contributions.

The second category, training, played a large role in five of the project strategies. Performance in this category was outstanding. All of the projects met their targets, even though the training given by one project was inadequate for its task. Two projects exceeded their targets by using a combination of tight supervision of the schedule and surplus funds generated by the dollar's strength.

The third performance category is adaptation. This category was added as a result of a consistent pattern noted in the case studies. All identified some changes in use of resources, shifts in emphasis, or evolving organizational linkages reflecting important management decisions about the changes needed to address new circumstances or discoveries affecting project success or failure.

Thus, adaptation refers to the exercise of discretion and flexibility in meeting new challenges and responding to changing circumstances that require project redesign during implementation. Adaptations reflect the degree to which the project adopts a learning, or process, approach as opposed to rigid adherence to a predetermined design or blueprint.{19} Adaptation is included here both because it has been commonly associated with success and because case studies of these six agricultural projects strongly indicate that it was an important contributor to substantive accomplishment. The question is, what form did adaptation take in each project?

All six projects showed evidence of some major or minor midcourse shifts. In some cases, the shift was critical, such as the policy link in Lesotho or the focus on organization in Liberia. The project in Senegal was even faulted for an overadherence to some inappropriate objectives set at the design stage. Three of the field studies concluded that flexibility to readjust targets, organization, and procedures was necessary so that the imperfect knowledge of designers and their inability to take advantage of new circumstances would not handicap implementers.

Sustainability, the fourth category, refers to the prospects for initiatives begun under the project that were to continue after the end of donor funding. Sustainability refers not to the perpetuation of an organization but to the continuation of services, new behavior, and benefit flows.{20} This category was included because most case studies emphasized that, despite the high success these projects showed in achieving short-run objectives, their chances for long-run viability were uncertain.

The reason for this concern varied. In Kenya, the ability to assume recurrent costs was the issue; in Lesotho, Senegal, and Zaire, it was the capacity of local organizations to carry on; in Niger, there was doubt about the validity of the project-promoted technology; in Liberia, local commitment to the project mission was questionable. Most of the field teams recognized the importance of these issues and analyzed them separately in their case studies.

The final category, other targets and benefits, deals with two types of outcomes that go beyond the previous categories: (1) substantive problems addressed by the projects and (2) unplanned effects.

Table 4 assesses the projects in relation to these five aspects of performance.

Summarizing the performance of these projects leads to the following four conclusions:

1. Intermediate targets such as training, construction, and agricultural production were largely achieved.

2. Some form of adaptation occurred with all the projects, and four of the six made major shifts in focus or operations. (The projects in Kenya and Senegal were the exceptions.)

Table 4. Assessment of Project Performance
(not available)

3. Resource management had a mixed record, with three projects doing well and three managing resources poorly.

4. There are serious doubts about the sustainability of some dimensions of all the projects.

Performance also appears to be related to the congruity of context and strategy. The Egerton College strategy of simplicity, autonomy, and a training focus worked in a setting in which there was little organized stakeholder risk or opposition. But simple objectives and avoidance of the institutional dimension of management enhancement would most likely have led to a quick collapse of the projects in Lesotho, Liberia, and Zaire, where potential opposition might readily have been mobilized had not broad, flexible clusters of goals and benefits existed. The same can be said, but with less certainty, for the projects in Niger and Senegal.

For the management strategy, the stakeholder profile largely determines the appropriateness of various approaches to goals and benefits, organization and process, and time horizon. These strategy components are the links between the project and its environment. However, resource management (in terms of dollar funding) is more internal to the project and less dependent on environmental influence. In fact, performance within this component is only tenuously related to performance within any of the other components. A successful management strategy, however, is critically dependent on congruity with the project stakeholder configuration.

For the management enhancement strategy, the institutional elements of context suggest key factors that will be encountered and should be incorporated into the approach. With the exception of the project in Kenya, either policy or structure, or a combination of both, was shown to be essential for the sustainability of the management enhancement strategy. The context determines the relative importance of particular dimensions, but failure to go beyond the human dimension greatly lowers the probability of lasting impact. Even in Kenya, inattention to recurrent costs and new management needs introduce some doubt about long-run improvements. The policies, incentives, and social dynamics that constitute the institutional context will be influential in determining the effectiveness of alternative management enhancement strategies.

Thus, the link between context and strategy has influenced the performance of these six agricultural projects. The task is to derive some crosscutting lessons from these findings.

{19} Charles Sweet and Peter Weisel, "Process Versus Blueprint Models for Designing Rural Development Projects," in Honadle and Klauss, International Development Administration; and David Korten, "Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach," Public Administration Review 40, 5 (1980): 480-511.

{20} See George Honadle, Fishing for Sustainability: The Role of Capacity Building in Development Administration, IRD Working Paper No. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1981).

4. LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE

The lessons derived from the preceding analysis of project experience are to assist with the design, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of future efforts. But certain limitations inherent in this exercise should be recognized. The analysis is based on examinations of just six agricultural projects in six African countries. The fieldwork portion of each study was done in approximately 1 month. Thus, both the sample size and the time frame limit the general conclusions that can be drawn from the patterns emerging from the exercise.

Concentration on the management dimension provided both advantages and disadvantages. The narrow focus and the prior preparation helped field teams organize the effort and work through the peripheral aspects of the observations. However, given the exercise's limitations, it is still possible to discern patterns and relationships within this body of information that can be used as guidelines for further inquiry and experimentation.

4.1 Goals and Benefits

Goal clarification is central to classical management theory; that is, agreement on clear objectives is a prerequisite for successful management. Thus, clear priorities and elimination of conflict over goals are both necessary and virtuous. According to this view, specified objectives and the resources to attain them constitute good strategy.

This approach sometimes appears to be an important asset to a project. For example, the Egerton College Project in Kenya involved the expansion of an agricultural college. Buildings were built and people were trained. Straightforward and noncontradictory objectives using proven technologies in an autonomous organization with a committed leadership and a growing economy account for the success of the project and for its low level of implementation problems. But other field experiences yielded far different conclusions about the role of objectives in strategy design. Multiple, conflicting, or shifting goals do not always impede success. In some settings, they may contribute directly to it.

The Zaire case study asserted that after 9 years of implementation "there is still no agreement on whether [the project] was a maize or food production project or whether it was a multisectoral rural development project designed to improve farmer income." Given the project's geographic isolation and the extreme social competition both within the area and between the project area and metropolitan centers, creating a positive experience was bound to require cooperation among numerous public and private and local and national actors. Each set of critical actors needed to assess its interest in the project.

Different goals and purposes were interjected during the life of the project. Although from an external perspective this confused the process, the result allowed both local actors and actors with very different agenda to continue to cooperate (or at least not to refuse to cooperate) despite their differing interpretations of project objectives and thus to maintain implementation momentum.

But it was not just acceptance of different interpretations that kept people involved. They gained short-run advantages by helping the project, even if these were not the initial project objectives. The initial objectives included the following:

-- Bank credit to small grain merchants and cooperatives to purchase trucks and spare parts as well as grain

-- Small farmer production credit

-- Business training for grain merchants

-- Assistance to the national cereals office to train agents, license merchants, and purchase or rent equipment

Although these objectives were not all achieved, the exchanges between the project and stakeholders concerning fuel, haulage, seed distribution, and other resources did serve to gain support for the project from competing groups. Thus, cooperation with the project gave a wide range of actors a stake in its operations and success. Multiple goals generated multiple supporters because the goals encompassed multiple benefits.

Two case studies, in Senegal and Zaire, introduced the concept of "multiple benefits" when they mentioned that "success breeds success." Three more, in Lesotho, Liberia, and Niger, also considered the concept without using the term. That is, some early benefit flows can create an aura of effectiveness that generates support for future project-related efforts. When this aura does not surround a project early in implementation, it may be in danger of being labeled a failure, and the process of securing support becomes more costly and difficult. Quick and tangible results such as dip tanks, roads, clinics, fertilizer, or transportation can win immediate friends and influence future performance.

Although these benefits may be peripheral to the technical objectives of the original project design, they are crucial for its success. In some cases they may co-opt potentially strong peripheral opposition to upcoming activities, whereas in other cases they may elicit support from intended beneficiaries who will later be asked to make behavioral changes or sacrifices.

An example of this occurred in the Land Conservation and Range Management Project in Lesotho. A long-term objective was to stop the severe erosion that is devastating the country. To realize this goal, the way rangelands are used must change, and this requires basic changes in how decisions are made about the use of this resource. The primary beneficiaries of the project, those who graze their cattle, goats, and sheep in the immediate project area, will thus be asked to give up their autonomy in deciding where and when they will use different ranges. Instead of households deciding, a grazers association will do so.

Project management personnel realized that the transfer of decision-making authority from households to the grazing association would take time and require education and capacity building. To help buy this time, the project provided beneficiaries with some immediately useful services. Dip tanks, shearing sheds, and veterinary services are providing immediate benefits and helping to diminish people's resistance to surrendering their autonomy. The educational process of the grazing association is made easier by multiple benefits.

In such situations, early, visible benefits are important. If credibility is not established quickly, the chances for long-run success decline. During implementation, the formal technical objectives in project documents are not the main objectives propelling many of the major actors. Thus, management process involves balancing and mixing these other agenda to produce actions that are not directly contrary to, although not always totally supportive of, the technical objectives. Delaying the implementation of particular components, pursuing peripheral issues, and otherwise satisfying potential opponents may be necessary. Bolstering the positions of actors whose agenda are supportive may be the most important management activity, and designing a project with multiple objectives may assist that effort.

When project designers ignore or minimize the complexity of a developing country's social and organizational settings, they endanger the project. Development is a multilevel, multidimensional process requiring involvement, acquiescence, support, or active commitment from those in competition for limited resources. This competition often manifests itself in the implementation process; success often depends on sufficient project flexibility to accommodate this competition.

Therefore, a central design issue is identification of the role of objectives in management strategy. Do certain technologies and autonomous organizational settings support the use of single objectives, or will the need for the involvement of many different actors favor a design that provides them with multiple benefits? Different projects and settings will require different strategies. The key is the agreement between approach and setting, including the array of stakeholders and the risks they will incur.

4.2 Reducing Stakeholder Risk

Closely linked to the role of goals and benefits in implementation dynamics is the need to reduce the risks to key stakeholders so that they cooperate. Five of the six projects contained elements of this process. A separately identifiable project unit or identity was sometimes used as a potential scapegoat in the event of poor performance. Highly visible technical assistance teams, such as those in Zaire and Lesotho, also played this role.

In Lesotho, local decision-makers were able to distance themselves from politically unpopular, but technically necessary decisions by attributing them to the project. The short-run strategy was to use multiple benefits and a scapegoat to initiate some fundamental changes in the use of local resources. Although it was not without its difficulties, the approach was working.

Political reform entails risk. Some national political leaders agreed with the need for change, but they also feared its possible repercussions. They needed a success story to help justify and support new policies. Thus, there was a double bind -- the project needed a new national policy to work but the politicians needed a successful working project before they could safely promote new policy.

Three elements were used to deal with this delicate situation. The first was a mixed benefit package that co-opted some of the potential opposition to the new policy and thus protected the politicians. The second was the visibility and autonomy of the project, which allowed it to become the scapegoat if things did not work. The third was the use of informal mechanisms for policy analysis and communication. This technique defused the apparent risk by screening the policy evolution process. Action by managerial mortals determined the options open to the Olympian policymakers.

The more socially and politically central the changes addressed by a project, the greater the need for risk reduction. The distribution of power in the local setting will affect risk, both actual and perceived. Important projects in high-risk settings are likely to require an emphasis on informal decision-making processes, the long-term presence of a scapegoat component, and a recognizable project identity. Just as the need for multiple goals and mixed benefits encouraged nonlinear thinking, so the disruptive nature of much policy reform and institutional development requires a broad understanding of risk reduction and management roles. This entails far more than simply getting things done without regard to the process or the cost to various participants or bystanders. Often, this perception involves assessing the tradeoffs between giving immediate benefits to diminish the danger of future risk and asking for current sacrifices with the potential for future gain. In either case, time horizons that compete for management attention require attention.

4.3 Time Horizon

Emphasizing the need for immediate benefits highlights one difficulty inherent in development. What is needed for short-term performance can stand in the way of long-run objectives. Direct performance of project activities by project staff and technical assistance teams can impede the efforts of local citizens and civil servants to initiate the activities that the project is trying to stimulate and to continue them after the project is completed.

All six cases were high-performance projects. They were judged to have achieved a high proportion of their objectives; training, construction, and service delivery targets were met or were exceeded. And yet all six case studies questioned the sustainability and ultimate impact of the projects.

Delivering goods and services on time and as specified requires a preoccupation with direct action by the project staff. This situation often leads to concentration of authority in a relatively autonomous body such as a parastatal or project management unit and to a management style that ignores requests to support initiatives originating within beneficiary groups for fear they will interfere with the prescribed service delivery schedule.

The use of an autonomous unit in the project in Zaire, for example, had helped bypass an ineffective Ministry of Agriculture and complete construction. But as the project nears completion, the issue of recurrent maintenance, staffing, and funding of project-initiated activities becomes crucial. Short-run solutions can impede the transition to sustained development.

A similar situation exists in Lesotho. Project and technical assistance staff in one project component have achieved some immediate results in working with a grazers association by taking a strong and open role in decision-making. This approach reduced the pressure on the local officers of the association and facilitated some controversial decisions regarding livestock movements. However, this project crutch is limited to providing a financial subsidy for the association; long-run viability will require a different approach. Training the association to run its own affairs, make its own decisions, and cover its own costs must replace the current technical assistance style of doing it for them.

Although the six projects showed some evidence of early performance, all eventually encountered questions of postproject viability, local capacity, and incentives for future action by beneficiaries, counterparts, and bystanders. Without permanent institutions equipped to carry on, future prospects look bleak.

The difficulty with direct action by project personnel is that, although it may be necessary in the early years, it can entrench an operating style that later becomes counterproductive. Thus, short-term performance success cannot be equated with sustained success. Nonetheless, immediate production is needed to mobilize support and move the project toward its ultimate goals. Thus, both short- and long-term achievements are necessary. Designers and managers must balance performance and capacity-building requirements in a way that takes short-term needs into account while emphasizing the long run in project management and resource commitment.

Taking a long-run perspective requires more than managers with vision, however. If project budgets emphasize immediate physical output, evaluators measure it, and the project lacks flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, managers will have difficulty focusing on the long run. Project design and supporting actors must support the emphasis on sustainability. Otherwise, the focus will be on immediate targets, such as resource control.

4.4 Resource Management

Of the six projects reviewed, none had exemplary financial management practices. Three had such poor financial management practices that interim evaluations recommended their termination. Financial management in the other three was acceptable, although one interim evaluation was concerned that if the capability of the beneficiary group to sustain project activities was not strengthened, long-run impact would not be achieved.

These projects attained high intermediate performance without the use of sophisticated financial tracking and control systems by the host country implementing organization -- an attribute widely believed necessary for performance. This suggests that, within the contexts of these projects, local use of imported techniques is far less important than previously assumed.

However, one contextual factor may qualify this finding. These projects began after the economic shocks emanating from the fuel price increases of the early 1970s. Thus, the foreign exchange components of the project budgets were planned in the expectation of high inflation and costs. The recent strength of the dollar, however, has served to generate excess foreign exchange funds and lower the pressure on this aspect of management activity.

At least three of the case studies found that loose, yet seemingly effective, informal financial management practices characterized local behavior. Not imposing outside procedures on host country project managers appeared to be essential to successful performance.

It is important to note that in five of the six projects, procurement responsibility resided in the technical assistance contractor or AID staff. In the sixth project, assignment of responsibility was not clear, and poor procurement caused a minor setback that marred the project record.

The acceptance of indigenous managerial styles and locally approved procedures for using local funds was decisive. If possible, resource management procedures should not hinder effective managerial leadership.

4.5 Managerial Leadership

Leadership is important for success. The experience of these six projects suggests the following three key aspects of managerial leadership:

1. A focus on interactions between a project and other organizations

2. The use of informal communication and decision-making processes

3. A sense of teamwork and compensation that shifts responsibilities among different actors

To nonmanagement specialists, a manager is often described as a person who supervises others, gets them to work hard, and makes sure that they comply with the organization's procedures. But this internally focused orientation may not be the distinguishing characteristic of those who guide successful development efforts.

In these projects, effective managers were those who smoothed the interactions between the project and other organizations influencing the project's operational ability. If local court support was needed to enforce range regulations, as in Lesotho, building good relations with the judges could prove decisive. Similarly, when the cooperation of another ministry was critical, as in Zaire, management time was devoted to obtaining that cooperation.

Policy directives, such as those dealing with crop prices or range regulations, also can help or hinder implementation by affecting participation by beneficiaries and action by staff. In Lesotho, a link to policymakers and access to information about policy were crucial for success. The original project design called for an adviser to the minister to attend to this issue. The ministry deleted this element from the project that was finally approved and implemented. However, management recognized the vital role of this position and continued to negotiate for its reinstatement after implementation had begun. The result was the inclusion of an adviser at a lower level in the ministry. This adviser worked on human resources issues and informally undertook policy-related studies, translations, and information dissemination activities. Management initiative in pursuing this issue led to improved project performance as a result of a key link to the local setting.

When opportunities appear, they often must be seized quickly or they are lost. In Senegal, leadership turnover combined with simultaneous pressure from both donors and beneficiaries enabled a manager to make some basic changes in project operations, which would have been difficult without outside support. The manager saw the opportunity and took it. The result was the regeneration of a deteriorating project. Using and strengthening external linkages formed a major part of implementation activity.

A second key aspect noted in all of the case studies is the importance of informal processes for accomplishing tasks. Communication channels, meeting places, financial decisions and records, policy recommendations, and economic transactions outside prescribed organizational channels and hierarchies dominated activity in all projects.

Both managers who accomplished tasks and observers who understood events around them recognized and used informal systems. Sometimes informal, bureaucratic practices mirrored village ways of operating; at other times, they did not.

Experience with informal management included using parallel markets to stretch project budgets, social gatherings and ethnic alliances to reduce opposition to decisions, political bartering with project resources to obtain support, and confidential studies of policies that hindered project objectives and processes to determine what kind of action could be taken. However, to take these approaches, managers had to be sensitive to the opportunities offered by informal dynamics.

Projects are temporary -- artificial creations deposited into environments marked by resource scarcity and preexisting rules for moderating the battles for these new resources. These rules often cannot be publicized without making them ineffective. In Zaire, for example, trading project fuel in return for construction materials was an effective way of ensuring timely construction of the project, but publicizing the transaction would have triggered a series of events that would embarrass cooperators and bring activity to a stand-still. Good managers recognize this characteristic of informal processes and keep them out of official reports and processes.

Thus, identifying these rules and the key people within informal networks becomes an important activity of managers. What works is not always what is officially sanctioned. Moreover, what worked before may not be appropriate in new circumstances or with new people. Strategy implementation is a never-ending battle against the forces of decay. But those who lead the charge can also shift its direction. In a team situation, one player can pick up the banner at the point where another has slipped. This introduces the third key aspect of effective leadership -- teamwork and compensation.

No single element mentioned above can guarantee success; instead, it is the interplay and balance among them that lead to the observed results. In the case study projects, good performance often resulted from a number of elements working in concert. In Senegal, staff turnover, pressure from farmers for more participation, pressure from AID to deliver goods and services, and the relative autonomy of the parastatal host institution combined to present an opportunity to a newly arrived manager to turn around a failing effort. Later, AID followed a hands-off policy in Senegal, which was appropriate at that point. But if the initiative had not been taken at the opportune time, the result might have been poor performance.

This characterization of management as a balancing act goes beyond the relationships among the actors in the process. It also encompasses goals, procedures, and organization. The need to deliver short-term benefits versus the need to build management capacities to ensure long-term project sustainability provides one example of the balancing of goals. Similarly, a host institution that is appropriate at the beginning of implementation may not be suitable toward the end. This was the case in Zaire. However, appropriate solutions may not always be sequential. In the Lesotho project, two different kinds of host institutions existed concurrently; the project worked through the ministry in one component and operated autonomously in another.

As individual staff members or leaders move from one position to another, the value and nature of particular organizational relationships change. For example, with a weak manager as director of the parastatal in Senegal, AID followed one approach to project organization, but when an effective individual took over the position, more autonomy was permitted the national organization.

No realistic review of management can ignore the pivotal role played by key individuals. At the same time, building a project strategy on the leadership of a single person is risky. Moreover, long-run success requires the institutionalization of new behavior patterns. This means moving beyond reliance on one individual and interpreting options in terms of that person to thinking and acting on the basis of the continuity of similar actions by different people.

The problem here is similar to that faced in trying to balance short- and long-run objectives. In the beginning, an active leader may be critical to project performance. Eventually, however, dependence on this leadership may hinder the assumption of project functions by regular staff members. A change in approach must occur -- active leadership by a charismatic leader must yield to his support of the regular bureaucracy. Few people, leaders, or staff are comfortable during this transition.

4.6 Training and Technical Assistance

Training is often considered to mean providing the counterparts of the technical assistance staff with the educational qualifications and technical skills that will allow them to return home and take over from the technical experts. But five of the case studies cast doubt on the accuracy of this view.

A common problem is that trainees often do not return to project-related technical positions. The scarcity of trained personnel in host countries often means that the trainees move rapidly up the civil service ladder to management positions. Thus, they do not fill the slots designated for them.

Given this propensity, the project in Lesotho included management training along with technical certification. Although this approach did not provide exceptional benefits to the project, those receiving the training found it very useful. In addition, an informal link to someone outside the project in an influential division within the host ministry proved to be a boon. Recognizing the mobility of skilled personnel within an organization is more realistic than assuming that project technical functions occupy the highest priority for either the individuals or the organizations that employ them.

The organizational dimension is key. Five of the case studies judged favorably the quality of personnel in the projects and the organizations supporting them. The problems were less with the skills of the individuals than with the difficulty of applying those skills within the organizational settings. Management enhancement efforts that only recognize the need for skills miss the target. These cases demonstrate that the policy and structural aspects of the organizational dimension are important.

Narrow views of who should be trained also lead to missed opportunities. In Lesotho, much non-civil servant training was needed to strengthen initial attempts at beneficiary participation. In Niger, multilevel training was needed in a beneficiary organization, but only the officers were given training.

There is also political value in on-site, multiorganizational training. Interorganizational relations can be improved through shared training experiences. When training is viewed as a tool for strengthening organizations rather than a conduit for imparting skills to individuals, it is more likely to improve performance and results. Multilevel, work-group-oriented efforts dealing with real problems can enhance local management capacity.{21}

The views regarding training also are true of technical assistance. Different styles at different organizational levels or within different project components may be needed, as was the case in Lesotho. Or the evolution of different approaches may need to occur sequentially, as in Zaire and Liberia. Eventually a transition from an active role to a support role will be needed.{22} The issue is not to bring expertise from the outside to do something correctly (the "right" policy); rather, it is to establish an ongoing local capacity to make and implement effective decisions. Successful development management leads to institutional development: mentor relationships, shared responsibility, scapegoat roles, and skills in mobilizing local resources characterized technical assistance styles that supported the enhancement of local capacities.

These six key elements -- goals and benefits, stakeholder risk, time horizon, resource control, leadership, and training and technical assistance -- and the lessons derived from them represent the major management concerns emerging from the case studies. The implications of these lessons are explored in the concluding section.

{21} George Honadle and John Hannah, "Management Performance for Rural Development: Packaged Training or Capacity Building?," Public Administration and Development 2, 4 (1982):295-307.

{22} See Jennifer Ann Bremer, "Building Institutional Capacity for Policy Analysis: An Alternative Approach To Sustainability," Public Administration and Development 4, 1 (1984):1-13; George Honadle, David Gow, and Jerry Silverman, "Technical Assistance Alternatives for Rural Development: Beyond the Bypass Model," Canadian Journal of Development Studies 4, 2 (1983):222-240.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings and lessons presented in this paper lead to the realization that development managers -- those mere mortals -- influence the decisions made by the policymakers -- those august Olympians -- and the impact that these decisions have. The experience of six agricultural development projects in Africa indicates that management is an important element in development performance. The ways in which management affects project performance are sometimes, but not always, straightforward and obvious. At first glance, effective strategies are often counterintuitive, and performance usually results from interactions among multiple aspects of context and strategy -- not from simple, single factors.

Agricultural projects provided the empirical basis for these conclusions, but the insights that emerge transcend agricultural projects. They are especially relevant to policy reform and human resources development programs because they focus not on the programs alone but on the interactions between the programs and their contexts.

5.1 Context

Different contexts will require different management strategies. It is particularly important to identify those who stand to lose and those who stand to gain from project success or failure and the risk level for each stakeholder.

Simple, clear-cut objectives are helpful to managers in situations in which organizational autonomy and no key losers exist. However, in settings in which risks are high and potential losers are key actors in the implementation process or are influential bystanders, the manager's job is made easier when there are multiple objectives supported by project components that deliver benefits to the affected parties.

Sociopolitical factors, interorganizational relationships, and policy settings are all important. General solutions to local problems may or may not be appropriate, but the implementation of any solution must take local circumstances into account if it is to succeed.{23} This is intuitively obvious, but the multiple objectives and complex projects that may be necessary to contend with local circumstances successfully are not so obvious. Multiple objectives and project components may be particularly necessary for projects involved in policy reform because of the resistance that is raised to the management of such efforts.

{23} The argument here is not that the wheel must be reinvented for every setting. This is certainly not the case -- there are patterns of relationships. Suburban commuting, grand prix racing, and off-the-road driving all place different performance demands on tires. Similarly, different Third World settings require different approaches, and some of those approaches will contain complex counterintuitive elements.

5.2 Management Strategies

Successful management strategies can incorporate, under different circumstances, either clear, simple goals or multiple, complex goals. Effective strategies are those that are tailored to the project's objectives and the local setting, especially the array of stakeholders surrounding the project. The case studies support this conclusion as a pattern explaining success.

Successful management also follows a second pattern: informal practices and communication channels are associated with most examples of success. Informal dynamics are adaptation mechanisms, and attempts at policy reform ignore this at their peril. Management practices can raise or lower the riskiness of reform efforts.

Design flexibility also assists the management effort. A project's original objectives, organization, or components often prove incapable of adapting to new knowledge or situations. Adaptation, however, is characteristic of success. Olympians may need to be informed by, and learn from, the experience of mortals.

The creation of new autonomous organizations to bypass existing but inappropriate administrative machinery can help to achieve short-run performance. But this approach often encounters difficulty in the attempt to achieve long-run sustainability. Moreover, projects that are successful at meeting immediate service-delivery targets are not necessarily self-sustaining.

This situation can introduce a dilemma: the need for quick benefits to placate key stakeholders may require one approach, whereas the need to build capabilities in local institutions may require another. Different organizational approaches for different components or an evolving series of organizational changes are both options that have been used with some success.

Rigorous local financial management practices are less important for project performance than is commonly assumed. This was particularly the case in projects for which dollar funding was enhanced by the increasing strength of the dollar during project implementation. Auditors and evaluators should be sensitive to the situational nature of effective resource control and should not equate the importation of sophisticated tracking methods with development success. Enhancing local capacity is more important than compliance with imposed procedures.

5.3 Management Enhancement Strategies

Management enhancement is often equated with training, but training is only one component of management enhancement. Technical assistance, beneficiary participation, and leadership are also part of human enhancement strategies. In addition, two elements of enhancement strategy focus on organizations rather than individuals. They are policy and structural changes.

The six case studies indicate the importance of economic policy and organizational structure. In fact, the case studies found fewer problems with the human dimension than with the organizational one. The use of skills was constrained by the settings in which they were to be applied. Liberia and Zaire were the most vivid examples of this situation, but it is common throughout the case studies and the continent.{24}

Although African countries are commonly perceived to suffer from deficiencies in skilled personnel, the six projects show a different situation. Fifteen years ago, large-scale participant training may have been the appropriate response. Today, however, although training is still important, bad policies and poor organizational arrangements appear to be the key constraints. This suggests the need for assigning a higher priority to organization and management assistance, policy reform, and action-oriented training applied in mutually supportive ways. From this perspective, policy reform and training become dimensions of a management enhancement strategy, and policy change becomes one of the multiple objectives to be obtained through a management process.

{24} Among the many analyses of how organizational and institutional factors inhibit skill use in Africa, the following offer arguments particularly related to the conclusions of this paper: Chikwendu C. Ukaegbu, "Are Nigerian Scientists and Engineers Effectively Utilized? Issues on the Development of Scientific and Technical Labor for National Development," World Development 13, 4 (1985):499-512; Goran Hyden, No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective (London: Heineman, 1983); Robert Price, Society and Bureaucracy in Contemporary Ghana (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Steve Wiggins, The Management of Rural Development Projects in Developing Countries (University of Reading, Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, Development Study No. 27, 1985); and David Gould, Bureaucratic Corruption and Underdevelopment in the Third World: The Case of Zaire (New York: Pergamon, 1980).

5.4 Implications

Some of the conclusions of this paper were intuitively obvious before the case studies, but others were not. Whether obvious or counterintuitive, few are easily accomplished. None will occur simply as a result of new policy directions or by assuming good management. Management is a constant battle, and one actor must be ready to pick up the challenge as another tires. In projects that foster a team spirit, the chances for success improve. This conclusion is applicable to the process of policy reform as much as to agricultural development efforts.

The ways context, management strategies, management enhancement strategies, and project performance interact have practical implications. Some are pertinent for action -- project design, management, and evaluation. Others are pertinent for future research.

Design implications include the following:

-- Social and administrative soundness analyses should include stakeholder profiles to determine appropriate management strategies for projects.

-- Management enhancement strategies should go beyond training and remove constraints on effective performance.

-- Consideration of the need for multiple objectives and quick benefits should influence implementation planning and sequencing.

-- Flexibility should be built into project design.

For management, key implications are as follows:

-- Reduction of stakeholder risk should be emphasized.

-- Informal communication and decision-making approaches should be explored.

-- The balance between production and capacity building should be weighed.

-- A potential need for project scapegoats should be anticipated.

-- Promoting a team approach will improve chances for project success.

-- Long-run and postproject sustainability should be overarching concerns.

For evaluation, the implications include the following:

-- Helping managers to articulate strategies, identify shifting circumstances, and adopt new tactics should be a major concern.

-- Identification and appreciation of informal processes will be needed.

-- Overemphasis on resource control is to be avoided.

Implications for further research include the following:

- -- The focus should be on the context-strategy fit rather than on intervention attributes as independent variables.

- -- A refined typology of contexts is needed to advance the state-of-the-art.

These points are summarized in the matrix presented in Table 5.

The six case studies and this synthesis paper have attempted to identify important dimensions of the context of development management in Africa and the ways that context and strategy interact in a project, but much remains to be done. More refined typologies of context and project fit are needed, and realistic typologies will not spring full grown from the theories or experiences of any single discipline. Development management goes beyond the simple delivery of goods and services to encompass local capacity building and institutional development. To bring the environment into focus, political, economic, and anthropological perspectives will be needed. Watching from Mt. Olympus will not be enough.

The experience reported here does not dismiss the importance of Olympian decisions or decision-makers, but it does provide valuable evidence of the importance of the mortal manager and the development administration specialist. It further suggests that management strategies are important and often contain counterintuitive elements, that the strategies should be based on knowledge of local settings, and that complementary strategies are needed to enhance local management capabilities. When these factors are not taken into account, unnecessary barriers are placed in the path of development management in Africa.

Table 5. Considerations for Development Assistance in Africa
(not available)

APPENDIX A

LIST OF CASE STUDIES

1. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the Land Conservation and Range Development Project in Lesotho. By Marion Warren, George Honadle, Sam Montsi, and Bob Walter. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 31. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.

2. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the Bakel Small Irrigated Perimeters Project in Senegal. By Matt Seymour, Laura McPherson, and David Harmon. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 34. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.

3. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the Niamey Department Development Project in Niger. By Thomas M. Painter with Roger Poulin, David Harmon, and Douglas Barnett. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 36. Washington, D.C: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.

4. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the North Shaba Rural Development Project in Zaire. By Irving Rosenthal, Leroy Jackson, Ruth Mara, and Laura McPherson. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 32. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.

5. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the Egerton College Expansion Project in Kenya. By Norman K. Nicholson, Donald Bowles, Ndungu Gathinji, and Elinor Ostrom. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 35. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.

6. Development Management in Africa: The Case of the Agriculture Analysis and Planning Project in Liberia. By Chris Hermann, Margaret Shaw, and John Hannah. AID Evaluation Special Study No. 37. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, December 1985.