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The planning and management of integrated rural development in drylands: early lessons from Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands programmes

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SUMMARY

In Kenya a new generation of area-based, multisectoral rural development programmes has been started, targetted on the country's extensive arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL). By mid 1983, six such programmes were operational, each supported by a foreign donor and implemented by the Government of Kenya. Six years after the detailed planning of the first programme began, the record looks patchy. District level planning and co-ordination hold promise, and some programme activities are going well. However, problems of slow and cumbersome planning and mobilization, a lack of community involvement in planning, too few technical successes, and remote prospects for institutionalizing the programmes if and when expatriate support is withdrawn are apparent. Behind these problems lie a number of basic obstacles, including the structure and orientation of the government's lack of support for the drylands among politicians, and the technical difficulties of raising dryland production. Faced with these obstacles, the ASAL programmes look set to run into continuing problems. Overcoming them will depend on both the success of recent government moves to deconcentrate, and patient support from both the government and the donors. Historically the prospects for such support are poor.

INTRODUCTION

Growing awareness in the 1960s that rural development involves intervention in a multi-faceted system led to development programmes designed to improve multiple elements of the system simultaneously. Such programmes came to be known as integrated rural developments programmes (IRDps). Given the technical complexity of planning IRDps and the scarcity of skilled planners to carry out the exercise, most IRDps were confined to subnational units and these became area-based development programmes. By the early 1970s virtually every developing country had one or more IRDP, often with funding assistance from one or other aid donor.

Evaluations, a good example being Lele's assessment of African development projects (Lele, 1975), have identified a number of problems with the planning and implementation of IRDps, of which two deserve special mention. First, with their concentration of skilled managerial and technical manpower—often with

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expatriates occupying the senior posts—and of funds on a limited area, the programmes could not hope to be replicated on a wider scale. Honour was often satisfied by dubbing them 'pilot' or 'experimental' programmes.

Second, they ignored the managerial capacity of local administrations, being concerned primarily with technical matters—the possible at the expense of the feasible. The ascendancy of the technical over the managerial was enshrined in the common practice of setting up semi-autonomous agencies for individual IRDps, free of the encumbrances of normal governmental operating rules and practice. Although this facilitated programme operation in the short-run, it made it nearly impossible to institutionalize IRDps within existing development efforts in the long run.

As the deficiencies became apparent, and as IRDps ran into a welter of unforeseeable second-generation problems of rural development, developing countries and aid donors became disenchanted with integrated rural development. One by one programmes were ended, and attention was switched to new concerns such as basic needs, decentralization, local community participation and the management of rural development.

IRD IN KENYA

Kenya's experience with integrated rural development was more benign than some. From 1971 to 1977 the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) operated in six Divisions (sub-District units with populations between 20,000 and 75,000) spread throughout the country, in five of which area programmes were sponsored by Britain, FAO, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States. SRDP was specifically designed as an experimental programme with a low-key approach. Unlike many other African integrated programmes, SRDP tried to keep within established administrative structures, making marginal improvements to rural management at the local level (Chambers, 1974; Morgan, 1979) which were meant to be institutionalized.

SRDP experiences were mixed, varying greatly between each of the six programme areas, and between the activities pursued in any given area. The Programme attracted much attention (see the evaluations by IDS, 1975; Holtham and Hazlewood, 1976; Lele, 1975) and on balance received favourable comment, although alloyed by justifiable criticism of weaknesses (Chambers, 1983, Chap. 2).

Nevertheless, SRDP was abandoned in 1977 as donors withdrew their support and the Government of Kenya (GK) decided against continuing to fund the programme. The donors, it appears, became tired of SRDP, despondent at the gap between the original conception and the messy reality in the field, and frustrated by the evident half-hearted support of GK for SRDP. Indeed, the single most critical failure of the programme was its inability to establish widespread support in Nairobi. SRDP fell foul of many senior civil servants because of its genesis within one Ministry, its close connection with the mistrusted academics of the University of Nairobi, and its high expatriate profile (Holtham and Hazlewood, 1976).

Notwithstanding the disillusionment with IRDps in both Kenya and the rest of the world, the attraction of area-based development persists, because:

(a) In complex and heterogeneous rural environments, working at subnational levels promises to reduce geographical variation and allows planners to build valid models of, or at least to make reasonable assumptions about, local rural economies and societies.
(b) Current interests in decentralization and local community participation go hand in hand with planning and implementation at the local and regional levels.
(c) Although the administrative costs and difficulties of mounting multi-sectoral development programmes with their attendant high demand for co-ordination are widely recognized (World Bank, 1983, Chap. 9), rural economies and societies are still seen as complicated systems in which single-sector interventions are likely to be ineffective or counter-productive.
(d) Funds and political support for fresh initiatives and experiments can usually be found if they are limited to small areas.

Hence it is unsurprising that in Kenya a new generation of rural development programmes which are multi-sectoral, area-based and donor-assisted—IRDps by any other name—have begun.

KENYA'S ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS PROGRAMMES

From Independence in 1963 through to the mid-1970s, Kenyan development focused first and foremost on the 20 per cent of the country where rainfall is both sufficient for crop cultivation and reliable. The remaining 80 per cent of the country suffered relative neglect. However since the mid-1970s greater attention has been given to the drylands for a number of reasons.

First, in the words of Vice President Mwai Kibaki, 'the era of easy options is over'. The possibilities of further rapid productive gains in the wet highlands which followed the adoption of coffee and tea cultivation from 1952 onwards have been largely exhausted, and the search for renewed sources of national economic growth has spread to the vast drylands of Kenya.

Secondly, the mid-1970s saw concern by both GK and its donor partners over the distribution of the fruits of development. 'More aid to the poorest', to use Britain's Overseas Development Administration's phrase, became enshrined in Kenyan development policy. The theme of the 1979-1983 Development Plan is poverty alleviation (Government of Kenya, 1979a). Not only are many of the target groups of poor identified in the Plan—for example, pastoralists—resident in the drylands, but also the vast majority of the 20 per cent or so of Kenyans living in the drylands belong to one or other of the target groups. Hence poverty alleviation in Kenya must also embrace dryland development.

Thirdly, Kenyan interest in the drylands was influenced by, and in turn contributed to, growing international concern with dryland development as evidenced in the establishment of research centres such as the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dryland Agriculture and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics and in the holding of the United Nations Conference on Desertification in 1977. The arid and semi-arid lands became fashionable for senior advisers and policy-makers the world over.

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USAID funded a comprehensive study of Kenya's marginal lands which was published in 1978. It was followed by an official GK policy paper (Government of Kenya, 1979b) on the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL), defined as those areas with between 200 and 850 mm of rainfall a year on average. The ASAL policy declares the strategy to be the improvement of the welfare of the populace by:

(i) developing productive potential;
(ii) creating income-earning opportunities; and
(iii) providing basic needs.

For the promotion of activities in the drylands, the document proposed the formation of an Interministerial Committee of Permanent Secretaries from the interested Ministries meeting twice a year. As secretariat to this committee, a Programme Co-ordination Committee (PCC) was to be convened with members drawn from the senior ranks of the line Ministries concerned. These would be known as ASAL linkmen. The PCC was to meet every two months, chaired by a senior officer from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, now Ministry of Finance and Planning. In turn, the PCC would be serviced by a Core Technical Committee (CTC) handling the everyday business of planning and co-ordination of the ASAL effort.

Encouraging donors to assist with ASAL development programmes was an important point in the policy paper. Donor response was enthusiastic with the World Bank (IDA), the European Economic Commission (EEC), Britain, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States all quickly expressing their support. Subsequently the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Denmark and Switzerland have joined the ASAL team of donors. At the start of SRDP an attempt had been made to get donors to contribute to a central pool for all SRDP areas. Donors baulked at this, and the pool was abandoned in favour of each donor sponsoring a particular area—a factor which led to diversity between areas as individual donors insisted on favoured activities, administrative arrangements, and degrees of involvement. For the ASAL no such attempt was made, and from the start aid donors were invited to select part of the drylands for sponsorship. The initial allocation became as shown in Table 1.

Table 2 summarizes the basic features of the programmes, with the exception of Elgeyo Marakwet and West Pokot which began later than the other five, and their locations are marked on Figure 1. Without going into a detailed description of each programme, two features of the five programmes deserve mention.

Table 1. ASAL donors

Donor	Area
World Bank/IDA	Marigat and Nginyang Divisions, Baringo District (BPSAAP)
European Commission (EEC)	Machakos District (MIDP)
Britain (ODA)	Embu, Meru, and Isiolo Districts (EMI)
Norway (NORAD)	Turkana District
United States (USAID)	Kitui District
Netherlands	Elgeyo Marakwet and West Pokot Districts

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First, the programmes are heterogenous. They vary by:

(i) geography—some include high potential land within their brief (MIDP)
(ii) administrative unit—from supra-District (EMI) to sub-District (BPSAAP)
(iii) the locus of planning and implementation—from Provincial (EMI) to Divisional Headquarters (BPSAAP)
(iv) planning methodology—USAID commissioned a detailed report on Kitui before agreeing to fund its programme, whereas ODA in EMI deliberately avoided such an exercise, looking instead to the District Development Committees to identify projects
(v) co-ordinating mechanisms—some programmes have District Steering Committees (MIDP, Turkana, Kitui), whereas EMI relies on existing committees and informal mechanisms
(vi) programme content
(vii) the degree of donor support—Turkana is entirely funded by NORAD; other programmes involve considerable counterpart funding by GK.

This heterogeneity makes comparison of the different programmes difficult, but has allowed the programmes to tailor themselves to the peculiarities of their areas. It

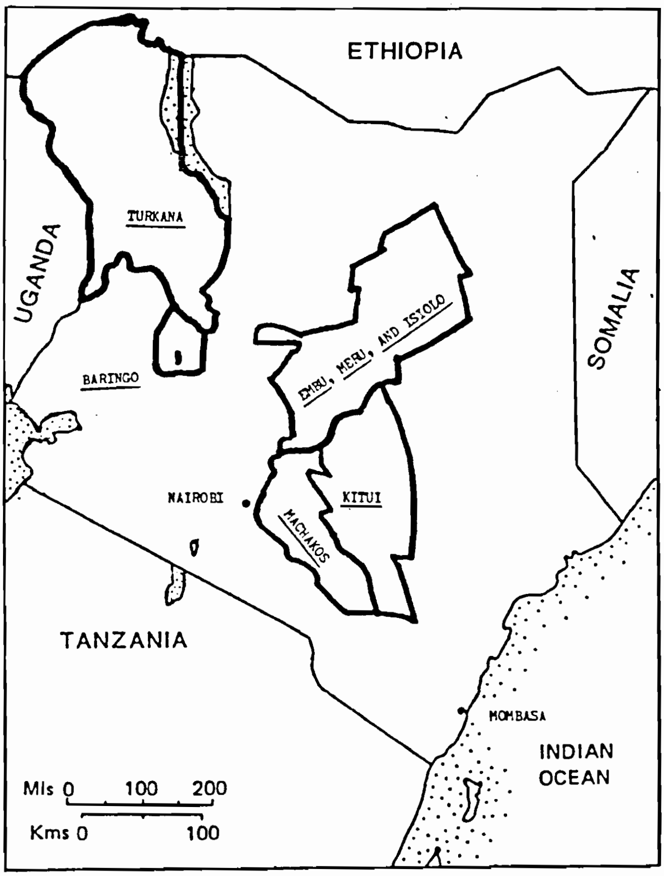

Figure 1. Kenya: arid and semi-arid lands programmes

Table 2. The main features of Kenyan ASAL programmes

Programme and donor agency	Area covered, km[2]	Population: 1979 census	Date of arrival of co-ordinator (month/year)[1]	Content: main activities and agencies concerned[2]	Donor funds committed (K£)[3]	Number of expatriate staff, at 6/83[4]
British-funded Embu, Meru, and Isiolo Programme (EMI)—Overseas Development, Administration, U.K.	38,241	1,136,830	4/1980	Soil and water conservation, goat and sheep improvement, forestry, dryland cropping, livestock development, (Thuchi-Nkubu Road), rural health facilities, plus other small projects. MOLD, MOA, MOH, MOTC, MOWD, MOENR, MOBE, plus some NGOs	K£1,106,054 for period 4/82 to 3/86. Possible K£2,590,175 to be approved for same period. Plus Thuchi-Nkubu Rd = K£12M plus.	6 TAs 2 PTAs 1 Vol
Machakos Integrated Development Programme (MIDP)—EEC	14,178	1,022,522	7/1978	Crop development, livestock, soil conservation, water development forestry, co-operatives, rural industry, community development and adult education, roads, planning. MOA, MOLD, MOWD, MOENR, MOCSS, KIE, MOTC, MOCD.	K£8,732,300 for period FY 78/79 to FY 81/82. Budget for FY 82/83 K£2,567,730 Framework for FY 83/84–85/86 = K£8,150,000	12 TAs (5 with MOWD)

Turkana Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme—Norway (NORAD)	61,768	142,702	9/1980	Irrigation, livestock, forestry, health, primary education, wells, administrative support and studies. MOA, MOLD, MOH, MOENR, MRDST, MOBE, some NGOs	K£2,250,000 for FY 80/81 to FY 83/8	7 TAs 2 Vols
Kitui Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Project—USAID	22,798	390,426	10/1981	Soil and water conservation, planning, data collection and analysis, studies. MEPD, MOA, SK.	About K£1,344,000 for period 9/81 to 8/85	4 TAs 1 Vol
Baringo Pilot Semi-Arid Areas Project (BPSAAP) —IDA, World Bank.	550	60,000	9/1979	Soil and water conservation, crop development, range management, livestock marketing, animal health, water development, tree planting, community development, land adjudication, health, rural crafts, basic education, planning and monitoring. MOA, MOLD, MOWD, MOCSS, MOLSPP, MOENR, MOH, MOBE.	IDA have made a 'soft' loan of K£3,900,000 to end in FY 1983/84	3 TAs 1 Vol

[1] Marks the start of planning activities in the field.
[2] MOA—Ministry of Agriculture: MOBE—Ministry of Basic Education: MOCD—Ministry of Cooperative Development: MOCSS—Ministry of Culture and Social Services: MOH—Ministry of Health: MOLD—Ministry of Livestock Development: MOLSPP—Ministry of Lands, Settlement and Physical Planning: MOTC—Ministry of Transport and Communication: MOENR—Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources: MOWD—Ministry of Water Development: MORDST—Ministry of Regional Development, Science and Technology: SK—Survey of Kenya: KIE—Kenya Industrial Estates: NGO—Non-governmental organization.
[3] FY—Kenyan financial year, runs July to June. USAID funds to Kitui do not include funds for complementary activities in Nairobi. ODA and NORAD commitments do not include the cost of expatriate advisers: those for the EEC, USAID and IDA do.
[4] TA-technical adviser or expert: PTA—junior adviser: Vol—volunteer.

will also allow the diligent evaluator the chance to compare and draw lessons from the different approaches by seeing which of the 'hundred flowers' blossom.

Second, the programmes share some characteristics, apart from their common genesis and policy frame. They remain formally within the established GK structure with no attempt to set up separate project agencies. Moreover activities are implemented by the competent line Ministries. Hence in addition to the involvement of planning, co-ordinating, and service agencies—respectively MEPD, the Office of the President, and the Ministry of Finance (MF)—programmes receive inputs from up to eight line Ministries. All the ASAL programmes are highly dependent both on expatriate manpower for planning and for some senior technical posts, and on donor funds for capital investment.

EARLY EXPERIENCES OF THE ASAL PROGRAMMES

Some six years after the detailed planning of the first ASAL programme began, a look at the programmes shows a mixed record. On the credit side can be listed the promising auguries for District planning, the various programme components which are going well—such as MIDP's cotton inputs and collection scheme, and indeed the very establishment of such wide-ranging attempts to tackle dryland development.

On the debit side however the programmes have experienced problems of slow and cumbersome planning and mobilization, delays and setbacks in implementation of projects, a lack of community involvement in planning (MIDP being the exception), too few technical successes, and the remote prospects for institutionalizing the programmes if and when expatriate support is withdrawn.

The time taken to mobilize and plan the ASAL programmes has been particularly frustrating to all concerned. Programmes have taken from 2 to 4 years to progress from initial identification and expressions of donor interest to significant activity in the field. More than half of the delay can be attributed to initial planning, discussion of plans and obtaining funding approvals from the relevant GK line Ministries and the donors. In some cases delays were prolonged by the degree of scrutiny adopted by the donors. The remaining time was taken up by mobilization, including time taken to recruit expatriate advisers; erect buildings; order, receive and commission equipment; carry out detailed planning and secure funds through the GK budget process. In no case has mobilization taken less than one year. Although some of the lag time is unavoidable (perhaps about half) the rest can be attributed to limitations in the operations of GK and especially of the donors which draw out the process unnecessarily.

It would be difficult to weigh the two sides of the balance, and indeed it would be inappropriate as the programmes have some years to run and in their early years might be expected to encounter rather more problems than successes. So, instead of trying to evaluate the experience, it is proposed to look at the problems, concentrating on the administrative and planning issues.

On examination the problems can be traced back to a number of basic obstacles which the ASAL programmes face, including:

(a) GK's difficulties in managing its operations, especially in rural development, and especially when working at the District level

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(b) lack of support for the drylands from the majority of politicians and senior civil servants
(c) heavy expatriate involvement as a counterweight to the lack of local support
(d) the administrative loads placed on donor bodies by small-scale rural development given their managerial orientation to big projects
(e) the technical difficulties of dryland development.

These obstacles merit closer attention.

GK's difficulties in managing rural development

Almost all ASAL programme components are being implemented by GK, and mainly by the line Ministries. The shortcomings of GK as a development agency are well-known both inside and outside of the Kenyan civil service (see, for example, Chambers, 1974; Moris, 1973; Holtham and Hazlewood, 1976; Government of Kenya, 1982). So far, the ASAL programmes have had particular problems with overcentralization, an excessive concern with control over District and field level staff especially as reflected in financial and procurement procedures, and a lack of co-ordination among agencies at the centre. Other critical problems, such as the lack of supervision and low morale of field workers, will doubtless affect the programmes as they intensify their activities.

Overcentralization means too many small decisions being referred back to officials at Headquarters, guaranteeing inordinate delay in dealing with most of them. It also means that too few high calibre staff are posted outside of Nairobi. Working largely at District level, the ASAL programmes have suffered from delays and misunderstandings as queries are passed back up the line. However, the programmes were meant to contribute to decentralization—or deconcentration to be precise—by doing much of their planning and co-ordination at District level.

District-level planning for the programmes has been made to work. Indeed, in the case of MIDP so impressed were external evaluators with the planning unit that they recommended that it widen its services to non-programme project planning in the District, eventually to become a District planning unit (ODI, 1982). Planning at the District level has succeeded in formulating area-specific projects, with greater detail and more accurate budgets. Moreover by keeping planning capability close to the field, it has permitted relatively speedy reaction to changing circumstances and replanning. Included in this is the reaction time to newly-identified projects and activities. In MIDP the lead time from identification to receiving funds has been as little as one year—an impressive performance in an annual budgeting system.

Most of the ASAL programmes have District Steering Committees (DSCs) acting as sub-committees of the already well-established District Development Committees (DDCs). In general DSCs meet at least quarterly and deal with technical problems, whereas the latter decide on District policy and ratify annual plans and budgets. They have worked well, not least in giving frequent and detailed reports of progress to local political leaders. These latter have frequently commented that they are better informed about the ASAL programmes than they are about national sectoral programmes affecting their constituencies. In addition to such formal co-ordination, informal contacts, for example between co-ordinators and District Heads of Department, have minimized problems of departmentalism (Heaver, 1982,

p. 22), and have established a healthy interchange between planners and implementors.

If decentralized planning and co-ordination has been successful, much of the planning has been done by expatriates, which is an issue in itself.

Thanks in large part to the GK financial system the supply of funds to most of the ASAL programmes has been deficient and erratic. Despite signed agreements between donors and GK, backed by extensive justifications, detailing the commitments by both sides, the annual budgetary exercise (Leonard, *et al.* 1983) has ridden roughshod over agreed programme elements. Each separate programme activity or project has to be justified annually in budget submissions made through each line Ministry to the Ministry of Finance. When the budget is printed it is common to find cuts made to individual project budgets and funds switched between the items by which project budgets are divided, all in an unpredictable and apparently arbitrary manner. Some programmes, notably MIDP, have been successful in building strong links to senior Nairobi officials and have suffered minimal cuts (less than 10 per cent). Others however have seen their estimates slashed by half or more. Hence annual work plans may need complete revision after the budget is printed. Moreover, not all the funds approved by Parliament may be authorized to field managers. Some items are retained in Nairobi—for example, staff payments and equipment procurement. Funds authorized to field personnel may be delayed by up to three months. Retentions at the centre complicate and delay procurement, whereas delays in authorizations play havoc with schedules. However, to its credit, in FY 1982/83 MOA authorized all District-level officers to spend their full annual allocations from the very first day of the financial year.

Co-ordination at central government level has been lacking. Each ASAL programme is made up of projects or subprogrammes implemented by different Ministries, with separate budgetary flows. Co-ordination at the centre is the responsibility of MEPD/MFP, except for BPSAAP where the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) is in charge and for Kitui where MOA shares the responsibility. The central ASAL co-ordinating mechanisms described above have barely functioned if at all. The only committee to meet has been the PCC, and that irregularly and with poor attendance. The designated linkmen have functioned only inasmuch as individual linkmen are personally interested in the programmes, or where programme co-ordinators have been able to develop personal contacts with them. As in the case of SRDP, the linkmen have changed post, and have had the extra task assigned to them with neither a countervailing reduction in other duties nor extra reward. MEPD, unlike MF or the Office of the President, lacked the power to exert pressure on the line Ministries. MEPD's incorporation into MFP may help. Co-ordination at the centre, essentially a matter of ensuring that funds are channelled to approved projects, has been slight or non-existent. To counter this, programme co-ordinators—mostly expatriates—and their counterparts, have developed personal links to key officers in line Ministry headquarters and in MF to lobby for budgets and other support.

In September 1982, the President announced that government development efforts would henceforth be concentrated on the District. The initiative became known as the 'District Focus' and the first round of changes was outlined in a memorandum from the President's Office (Government of Kenya, 1983). These include giving the DDC greater mandate to monitor development programmes at District level; forcing line Ministries to allocate 5–10 per cent of their budgets to

District proposals forwarded by the DDC; giving the District Tender Boards greater freedom to authorize procurement; speeding up spending authorizations to District level officers; and training and redeployment of staff from Nairobi and Provincial level to the Districts, especially planners and accounts staff.

These measures are being implemented. They will undoubtedly help to ease some of GK's problems in managing rural development, especially if staff of sufficient calibre are reassigned to the Districts. Nevertheless, the changes are modest and reflect the profound caution of Nairobi senior officials about the wisdom of delegating authority to the Districts. They fear, and not without reason, that opportunities for political interference and corruption will multiply. It remains to be seen how effective the District Focus will be, what further measures may be taken to strengthen the initiative, and whether the fears of senior officers will prove justified.

Lack of support for the drylands

The drylands have few of their sons in senior positions in Nairobi either as politicians or as civil servants. In general the drier and more remote the District, the less attention it gets at the centre. Some senior civil servants feel little personal sympathy for projects which have been planned at regional levels and which do not benefit their home areas, their close friends or their immediate political masters. Ministers are similarly unlikely to be sympathetic to the ASAL programmes. Moreover the degree of expatriate involvement in the programmes has alienated some line Ministry officials who regard them as a foreign intervention.

The time taken to plan and mobilize programmes has frustrated both politicians and civil servants alike and has alienated potential supporters. Two ways of mitigating this problem have been used.

First, some programmes had early access to donor funds for quick-disbursing projects, usually small social projects such as constructing a small water supply dam or building a health dispensary. Such projects can be identified, planned and started within one year—especially if funds are made available to non-governmental organizations free from the rigid schedules of government budgeting. No matter how small or how few these starter projects are, they demonstrate commitment from the donor, and allay nagging doubts that the programme is all talk with no action. Moreover such projects also give planners an early indication of the problems of implementation, thus imbuing greater realism in the plans made for larger, slower-maturing projects.

Secondly, in the cases of EMI and Turkana, the respective donors were already committed to funding major road construction in the Districts. Although in neither case were the roads formally part of the programmes, they were widely seen to be so, and were much appreciated as evidence of donor commitment. For EMI, which had a long genesis, the start made on the Thuchi-Nkubu Road came at just the point when local impatience and frustration was reaching a head. GK and donors can thus buy time for planning and mobilization by locating rural development programmes close to large-scale projects about to begin or just started.[1]

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[1] This does not necessarily result in geographical overconcentration of funding. For example, the Thuchi-Nkubu Road runs through the high-potential parts of Embu and Meru Districts, whereas the ASAL programme favours the drylands. However because local leaders think in terms of Districts rather than ecological zones, the dryland programme received reflected glory from the high-potential land project.

For most of the ASAL programmes, support has not been generated among the beneficiary communities to replace or counter the lack of support at the centre. With the exception of MIDP, the programmes have failed to generate much local community involvement in planning beyond the stage of initial project identification. Although the mechanisms of DSCs and, above all, DDCs exist to incorporate local views, they tend to be dominated by civil servants. Effectively the local input to planning has been slight.

Where local views have counted most, in identification, the process has tended to produce shopping list petitions with little attempt to rank priorities. Although this is seen by rural leaders as a gaming strategy—the more you ask for, the more you get—effectively it means an abdication of project selection to the planners and other civil servants. Faced by an undifferentiated list of thirty or more projects for a District, the sum total cost of which exceeds the indicative budget many times over, planners select projects for detailed preparation according to their own criteria. On the other hand, the reluctance of some donors to reveal their hand by publicly stating indicative levels of future support has encouraged rural leaders to present long shopping lists and other petitions in the hope of teasing more resources out of the donor.

Although decentralized planning has increased local community involvement, this has not been as great as hoped. If more voice is to be given to rural communities, specific additional steps to inform, educate, communicate and debate—such as the MIDP seminars—have to be taken. Such steps cost planning staff time and energy and compete with other uses of their time. Senior officers in GK and the donor agencies need to recognize and accept such costs, and encourage these steps.

As a result the programmes suffer from a relative lack of interest from line Ministry headquarters. Cuts in budgets, delays in the release of funds, and slow responses to requests for decisions attest to disinterest. This kind of informal support, very much a reflection of short run political priorities and personal interests, is important in an administrative system where informal pressures count for as much if not more than the formal imperatives of impersonal bureaucracy (Heaver, 1982; Moris, 1977; Hyden, 1983).

Expatriate involvement in the ASAL programmes

The counterweight to the lack of local support is provided by the foreign donors who provide the majority of funds for the programmes as well as expatriate advisers, from four to twelve in the various programmes. Without this support the programmes would all but disappear.

Expatriate staff can be divided into co-ordinators/planners and technical. In the five programmes dealt with here, there were some seven expatriates in planning and co-ordinating roles at the end of 1982.

The Kenyan government has very few planners outside of Nairobi. Each of the seven Provinces has a Planning Office with a complement of two professional officers, and each District has a District Development Officer. These officers are so occupied by the planning and administration of the Rural Development Fund (RDF), acting as secretaries to DDCs, attending formal meetings and accompanying visitors, that they have very little time to devote to detailed planning of non-RDF projects. Hence additional planners were needed for the ASAL programmes and, given the lack of senior planners in MEPD, expatriates were recruited.

Apart from acting within the GK system in planning and co-ordinating roles, they have in most cases also functioned as brokers between the aid donors and GK, conveying views and requirements both ways, and attempting to reconcile conflicts in policy and operating practice between the two. This latter role lacks formal recognition—naturally, since there are formal, but more cumbersome, channels entrusted with such brokerage. But it has been appreciated by both sides. Informally it confers considerable power on the co-ordinators. It is in part through this power that District-level planning of the programmes has earned respect in Nairobi. It is not clear that a Kenyan officer could act in the broker role. Indeed GK regulations forbid it. Lacking such a power base, District-level planning by nationals alone might be less respected.

Of the thirty-two expatriate technical advisers in posts at the end of 1982, most were attached to the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Water Development and to the Forestry Department. Although this list represents only about one-third of the agencies involved in the programmes, the vast majority of ASAL funds are disbursed through these four agencies. As a rule, wherever significant amounts of donor money are being spent, there are expatriates. In part they are there to provide expert advice and technical direction, but in part they are there to provide extra managerial capacity because many District Heads of Department are too burdened with existing commitments to be able to pay close attention to new activities and projects.

Almost all expatriates have a designated counterpart, but often these are staff in place who have the counterpart role added to their job description with no reduction in former duties and no extra reward. 'Counterparting' may thus be formal and not substantive. Consequently ASAL efforts could not continue in their present form if the expatriate staff were withdrawn. It will be some years before GK has enough professional officers of the right calibre to staff the ASAL programmes.

Much the same applies to funding: if donor support were withdrawn, it is unlikely that GK could find the money to fill the gap. Although dryland development may be a formal priority, when budget time comes around the vested political interests of the higher potential areas ensure that the lion's share of Kenyan resources goes there.

Hence the ASAL drive could not be sustained without donor support in staff and funds. However, given that the programmes are relatively cheap for most donors, taking up only a small part of what each donor gives to Kenya, there is no financial obstacle to donors continuing to fund ASAL programmes for as long as aid continues at present levels—that is, for the foreseeable future. Yet the pressures of 'faddism' (exhaustion and disenchantment with the problems of present efforts, the sparkle of new ideas, the need of donor agencies to demonstrate to their changing political masters changing emphases, etc.) and the widely-held view that aid is only needed for a short and limited period in any given part of the recipient country's economy (a view which holds good for one-off capital investments in physical infrastructure, but which is patently absurd for agricultural and rural development where a sustained effort is necessary) are likely to weaken donor interest and support in the long-term. Indeed it is hard to imagine that many of the programmes will get ten years donor support. IDA's support to BPSAAP is due to finish in 1984. Despite

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the laudatory comments made by ODI in their evaluation of MIDP, the EEC is scheduled to withdraw by the end of 1986—just 8 years after beginning a highly complex exercise in a large District. Given that MIDP can hardly be expected to have propelled Machakos District into self-sustaining growth in 8 years flat, and that it is unlikely that GK will have markedly more funds to cover the gap by then, the EEC's decision makes no sense developmentally. The funds thus saved will no doubt search out another rural development venture, in all probability a riskier one with little hope of being as useful as MIDP, while the future of MIDP will be jeopardized.

Expansion and replication of current ASAL efforts will depend on donors sponsoring additional dryland areas. MFP is keen to interest other donors in the ASAL. Subsequent allocations, some tentative, include the Netherlands—Ndeiya and Karai locations, Kiambu District; IFAD—Kwale and Kilifi Districts; EEC—Lamu District; Denmark—Taita District; and Switzerland—Laikipia District. But even if all these programmes come on stream, the ASAL Districts of Kajiado, Narok, Samburu, Marsabit, Tana River, Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir—a very large area indeed—would be left without special attention.

Administrative load on donors

Rural development programmes composed of multiple projects and activities, much subject to the uncertainties of rural Kenya where contingency and 'extreme situational constraints' [2] rule the day, impose a heavy load on managers and administrators. Although most donors readily agree to provide additional planning and managerial manpower in the field, they are reluctant to provide it at the centre of the administration and even more reluctant to provide it in their own administrations. In most cases, donor agencies form part of a metropolitan civil service where the creation of new posts may be interdicted or where cuts may be made. In recent years this has applied to Britain's ODA and to the United States's USAID.

In addition to the extra load placed on the GK centre, a heavy burden has fallen on donor agencies sponsoring ASAL programmes. The burden can be broken down into three packages. First, it takes far more time and effort in proportion to funds disbursed to scrutinize and approve spending in multisectoral rural development programmes than for large scale capital projects. At best a rural development programme proposal, covering a half dozen or more technical areas, will have to be read and commented on by a half dozen or more technical specialists. At worst each element of the programme may have to be separately proposed and approved through a scrutiny system designed to deal with a very few high-value investments and not with very many low cost activities.

Secondly, mobilization may be demanding. Rural development programmes commonly involve many petty start-up activities: orders for three stereoscopes, five tents; overseeing small contractors putting up a prefabricated office block; recruiting advisers in ones and twos, etc. These take up much donor staff time, but are usually seen as being too small to be worth handing over lock, stock and barrel

[2] Moris (1977) uses this phrase to cover the problems of geographical isolation, unreliability of input supplies, etc. so typical of remote rural areas of the Third World.

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to a service company.[3] Thirdly, once the rural programme is under way it demands close and frequent monitoring, replanning, and adjustments. At a minimum, this will involve donor staff having to deal with a near continuous stream of requests for changes in programme design and for additions to agreed inputs, all backed by detailed justifications.

Compared to the work load involved in appraising, approving, and monitoring an expensive physical infrastructure project such as a tarmac highway or an hydroelectric dam where the job can be tendered out to an experienced contractor and supervised by consulting engineers, rural development programmes are very costly to administer per dollar disbursed by the aid agency. Not only does this place a limit on the size or number of such programmes that an agency can finance irrespective of its budget, but also it makes rural development unpopular with some agency staff. Concern for the rural poor evaporates fast when overloaded administrators find themselves still clearing their in-trays at 7 p.m. on a Friday evening!

Part of this problem arises because the tripartite division of responsibilities between client, consultant, and contractor (Johnson, 1984), so well established and widely used in engineering projects, is rarely applied to rural development. The consultant role of resident engineers relieves clients and donors of administrative load. Clients and donors willingly pay for this service. However for most rural development efforts there is no such buffer and small problems end up on donor staff desks.

Moreover, some donors, being part of large metropolitan civil services, have organizational structures and systems inappropriate to the demands of rural development (Korten, 1980; Rondinelli, 1982). Rigid procedures for appraisal, approval, and disbursement of funds appropriate to running routine, steady-state operations like pension schemes and health services in the metropolitan country are applied to the very different context of rural development overseas. Such procedures put a premium on accurate planning and control which are possible when the task in hand is well understood and the task environment is dependable. Where the reverse applies, and the accent is on problem-solving and innovation, as is the case with rural development, the procedures become unnecessarily restrictive. To be fair, most donors have tried to adapt to these circumstances—for example, by delegating approval authority to decentralized offices closer to the field. But such measures have not been sufficient to offset the bureaucratic problem posed. Donors have still to come to terms with differences between large-scale, capital-intensive projects focused on technical problems and small-scale rural development with its predominantly human resources orientation (World Bank, 1983).

The burden of administering rural development funding has fallen heavily on a number of the donors sponsoring Kenyan ASAL programmes, leading to long delays on the donor side and to donor staff frustration with the programmes. Added to the endemic problems of underspending on rural development and schedule overruns (Moris, 1977; Waterston, 1965, Chaps. 8 and 9), it is little wonder that donor enthusiasm for rural development weakens. As enthusiasm wanes, so the faddism already described increases.

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[3]However, the EEC did engage a consultancy to provide expatriate staff for MIDP, and the whole of USAID's contribution to Kitui is handled by a contractor.

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Technical difficulties of dryland development

Technical solutions to dryland development are largely unproven. No inventory of quick technical solutions exists. Hence dryland projects tend to be experimental, incremental and slow-maturing. This poses intermediate problems of how to plan for experiments. 'Blueprint' planning (Korten, 1980) by definition cannot be used; and it is not clear how GK and donor commitment to activities which do not produce visible benefits in the short-run, that is before the next election or change of Minister, can be secured. In the longer-run, the viability of dryland development depends on technical success. That this will be forthcoming is a necessary article of faith for all concerned with the drylands.

Support for the ASAL programmes has been brought by good public relations, by implementing politically popular social service projects (water supply schemes, health dispensaries, etc.) and by linking the programmes to large scale physical development projects being funded by the donor in the same area. Nevertheless these are stopgaps and sops. Technical failures and setbacks, almost inevitable in the early years, will undermine support both locally and with the donors.

CONCLUSIONS

The obstacles that the ASAL programmes face are formidable and wide-ranging. Consequently they can be expected to run into diverse and serious problems, problems that will prove difficult to overcome. Why is this? Why should well-intentioned attempts to generate development in deprived areas apparently create more mess than success?

In this case, the answer is that the ASAL programmes are trying to change, reorientate, or overcome the following, simultaneously:

(a) the priorities of GK, and especially the informal priorities set by short-run and personalistic political interests
(b) the mode and style of GK operations
(c) donor agency ways of working
(d) the technical difficulties of dryland development.

With such an agenda, small wonder that the ASAL programmes face, and will continue to face, serious problems.

The questions arise: could efforts to promote dryland development have been conceived so as not to tackle so many giants at one time; and can the ASAL programmes make headway in adverse conditions, or are they doomed to failure?

To answer the first question, the technical difficulty of dryland development is inescapable. In the absence of known solutions, programmes have to be experimental. Experimentation calls for both high calibre manpower and flexible management. Given the scarcity of Kenyan professionals, and the unwillingness of GK to post more than a handful of its best staff to the drylands, expatriate involvement becomes inevitable. Hence the donor presence and the problems of the donor's ways of working are added to the problematic of dryland development. GK is the largest agency working for dryland development with the widest coverage. Non-governmental organizations of all kinds are poorly developed in the drylands.

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For the time being at least, working through GK with its inherent inflexibility is necessary. Moreover it means channelling resources through a system, parts of which are indifferent to the drylands and would rather the funds were spent elsewhere.

Hence it seems that the agenda listed is part and parcel of dryland development in Kenya at the moment. Tackling the agenda is part of the cost of dryland development. Finding ways of mitigating these problems, and setting in motion the changes needed thus become additional goals for the ASAL programmes. Changing the rules of the game, as it were, is as important as winning the game.

Turning to the second question, can the ASAL programmes make progress? The steps which GK has taken towards deconcentration through the District Focus give cause for hope. But the key issue is whether the programmes can command enough support from GK and the donors for long enough to reap the fruits of District level planning and co-ordination, and to demonstrate proven technical solutions to dryland problems. Given the power of both local imperatives, with their short-term horizons, and faddism in the donor agencies it is unlikely that support will be extended over the long run.

Instability in rural development policy is chronic. Human-orientated programmes are vulnerable to premature death in ways that physical projects are not. No matter what the problems, no matter what the cost-overruns, dams, roads and the like are hardly ever abandoned once begun. It would be nice if by now Kenya and its donors could maintain the continuity needed to give dryland development a chance to mature and prosper.

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