A.I.D. Program Evaluation Report No. 19

A.I.D.'s Experience With Integrated Rural Development Projects

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A.I.D.'s EXPERIENCE WITH INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

A.I.D. PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT NO. 19

by

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FOREWORD

Integrated rural development projects have been an important part of A.I.D. assistance programs in the past. However, experience with such projects has not been as favorable as anticipated, and they are no longer encouraged in A.I.D. programs. This report, based on a series of impact evaluations, presents both some of the principal reasons for the limited accomplishments and some of the benefits that resulted from these projects.

Although single projects that include several activity components across several sectors are now considered inappropriate, there will still be occasions when assistance programs will need to address the development of specific communities and regions in developing countries. Thus the objective of the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) in conducting these evaluations and preparing this summary report is to inform A.I.D.'s policymakers and project design staff about the Agency's experience with these types of development activity. In this way A.I.D. can learn from its experience and apply the lessons to future programs, thereby avoiding some of the problems of the earlier programs and bringing greater understanding and confidence to the design of development strategies.

This report provides a synthesis of impact evaluations of 11 projects carried out in various countries over the past 4 years. The selection of projects was deliberately broad in order to allow a comparison of the experiences of different public and private organizations.

CDIE welcomes comments from its readers to help enrich our understanding of ways to reduce rural poverty in developing countries--one of the most challenging tasks facing development assistance programs.

W. Haven North
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Agency for International Development
July 1987

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SUMMARY

The concept of integrated rural development was propounded and enthusiastically embraced by A.I.D. in the 1970s. It is based on four essential premises: First, the constraints to development in a subsistence economy are multiple and multidimensional in nature and require multipronged, coordinated efforts. Second, expenditures on health, nutrition, or public education should be regarded as investments. Third, special programs are necessary to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged populations in remote, rural areas because the benefits of development do not trickle down to them, at least not within a short time span. Finally, participation of the beneficiaries is essential for generating long-term, self-sustaining growth. The integrated rural development projects funded by A.I.D. reflected these premises, albeit in a limited fashion. In most cases, they were agricultural projects, with a few social service components designed to increase small farmers' production and incomes.

Overall Effects and Impacts

Although the original expectations of their planners and designers did not materialize, A.I.D.-funded integrated rural development projects did have some positive impacts. They contributed to increased agricultural production and productivity in a majority of the cases. Their performance was more encouraging in Asia and South America than in Africa.

The incomes of the participating populations also rose in integrated rural development projects registering increased production. The main beneficiaries of increased incomes were the better-off farmers who could take advantage of the new opportunities because of their physical and technical resources or their privileged positions in their societies. Often the incomes of women farmers and farmers without access to irrigation facilities, adequate manpower, and ownership of land increased marginally, if at all.

The various social service components of integrated rural development projects, particularly health care, housing, education, and drinking water, benefited the most needy and deprived groups who usually could not pay for these services. However, the positive impact of such components was undermined by a general tendency to reduce the number of basic service components when projects faced financial and administrative problems.

Although the conditions varied from country to country, integrated rural development projects funded by A.I.D. were only modestly successful in achieving national-level objectives such as food self-sufficiency, increase in gross national product, or national security.

Serious doubts persist about the sustainability of integrated rural development projects primarily because the host countries do not have the political will or economic resources to maintain the services and inputs at the levels provided during the life of such projects.

Organizational Placement Alternatives

Four organizational configurations were used for implementing integrated rural development projects: project management units, subnational government bodies, national line ministries, and private voluntary organizations. Each of these had advantages and limitations. The project management units were unable to maintain their autonomy and became dependent on other organizations with greater power, resources, and capabilities. Moreover, such projects were not able to sustain their activities without external assistance because these units did not have an independent economic base. The main advantage of project management units was that they were usually effective in reducing bureaucratic delays. The placement of the projects in subnational units, in contrast, often caused implementation delays because of their limited administrative and technical capabilities. Such arrangements were also susceptible to influence and encroachments by line agencies. On the positive side, using subnational units contributed to the strengthening of local institutions and gave regional authorities a sense of ownership in the projects.

Placing integrated rural development projects under a national ministry enabled such projects to overcome some of the implementation problems because of the ministry's power and prestige. Moreover, the staff at the national level were generally better qualified than at the subnational level. Also, the likelihood of the institutionalization of the integrated rural development projects improved because national ministries could draw resources from their own budgets to finance project activities. However, several problems resulted from such arrangements. A single integrated rural development project did not figure prominently in the priorities of the national government. National line agencies also found it difficult to coordinate their activities with other ministries. Finally, centralization did not contribute to effective implementation at the grassroot level.

Private voluntary organizations (PVOs) tended to be innovative administrators of integrated rural development projects and encouraged beneficiary participation. However, PVOs could not exercise much leverage over the national power structure. Moreover, they could not help the projects become institutionalized within the regular government structure.

Factors Explaining the Performance of Integrated Rural Development Projects

1. Coordination of multiple ministries and agencies. Lack of coordination was a major malaise afflicting most of the projects. Dispersion of responsibilities and decision-making often paralyzed project management, while the centralization of control over project funds in a single lead agency delayed disbursements to appropriate agencies and organizations responsible for completing individual activities. The project staff on temporary assignment from different agencies and ministries had divided loyalties, which made coordination exceedingly difficult.

2. Reliance on public bureaucracies. Most of the integrated rural development projects created or expanded large public sector entities for distributing credit, providing agricultural inputs, procuring agricultural produce, and marketing. Unfortunately, such organizations were not able to discharge their responsibilities efficiently for a variety of reasons. Bureaucratic procedures restricted the creativity and initiative of the project staff, especially at the field level. There was also a general lack of adequate managerial and fiscal control over staff. Often they lacked adequate resources to perform their duties. And low salaries, inadequate benefits, and restricted opportunities for career advancement did not attract high caliber staff.

3. Socioeconomic factors. In designing integrated rural development projects, inadequate attention was given to various socioeconomic factors, particularly regarding the nature and composition of the local populations, gender-based division of labor in agriculture, socioeconomic constraints affecting farmers' economic behavior, and alternatives to the recommended delivery systems

4. Technical packages. Success of integrated rural development projects also depended on the nature and quality of technical packages being promoted. In many instances, suitable technical packages did not exist at the design level; designers assumed that they would somehow materialize at the time of implementation. Often the packages required considerable risks

and resources beyond the capability of the farmers. Sometimes they were unviable economically and incongruent with the prevalent sociocultural systems.

5. Approach to design. The blueprint approach to design was not conducive to effective management and did not provide managers the needed flexibility to cope with the new realities. It led managers to follow the specific project plans, even when they appeared to be inadequate or irrelevant.

6. Timing and project duration. Three timing factors adversely affected the performance and impacts of integrated rural development projects: (1) long time gaps between project identification and startup, (2) underestimation of the time required for completion of the various activities, and (3) inappropriate phaseout of project activities.

7. Beneficiary organizations. Most of the projects failed to build up strong, viable beneficiary organizations. However, when beneficiary organizations were effectively developed, the activities of the project were sustained over a long time and the costs of delivering services were reduced.

8. Policy environment. National economic policies, particularly those relating to pricing of agricultural commodities, economic organizations, and land tenure, have significantly affected the fortunes of integrated rural development projects.

General Conclusions

1. Integrated rural development as a strategy. There is a clear distinction between integrated rural development as a strategy and the projects that were designed to implement it. An integrated rural development strategy can be implemented in two ways. The first, and historically most common, is to promote a large and comprehensive multisector, multicomponent project. The second alternative is to initiate several single-activity projects that are independently managed and require minimal coordination but are planned as components of an overall rural development strategy. If the second alternative is followed, the problem of interorganizational coordination can be minimized, if not altogether eliminated. The difficulties faced by integrated rural development projects should not be taken to mean that the integrated rural development strategy itself is inappropriate and cannot be successful.

2. Need for an integrated rural development strategy. Integrated rural development is the most viable strategy in some special circumstances, such as (1) narcotics control development

assistance involving crop substitution and development of alternative sources of income, (2) multisectoral assistance to remote or famine-affected areas, (3) land settlement schemes, and (4) projects in border areas that are designed as security interventions for integrating the populace with the national mainstream.

3. Designing projects based on integrated rural development strategy. Several suggestions logically follow from the discussion in this paper: (1) Integrated rural development should be a long-term development strategy, to be implemented in different phases that build on the experience, knowledge, and progress made in the previous phase. (2) It should have a production and income generating focus that concentrates on a few carefully selected production activities that can generate strong forward and backward linkages to the economy. (3) There should be greater reliance on private sector firms to deliver the services and goods to the participating populations. (4) The technical packages for agricultural projects should be carefully selected and continually upgraded. (5) Attention should be given to socioeconomic differences among the local populations that derive from differences in access to land and resources, social status, and power. (6) National policies should be closely examined and discussed during the formulation of an integrated rural development strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of Integrated Rural Development

The Agency for International Development (A.I.D.), like other major international donor agencies, has been involved in designing, funding, and implementing integrated rural development projects since the late 1960s. It has so far funded more than 100 projects in various parts of the world (see Appendix A). Recently, the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of A.I.D.'s Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination conducted impact evaluations of 11 integrated rural development projects in nine countries to examine their achievements, effects, and failures (see Appendix B). This paper draws from the information and insights provided by these CDIE evaluations and from selected other reports and studies issued by A.I.D. The paper summarizes A.I.D.'s experience with integrated rural development projects to enable a better general understanding of the problems and impacts of such projects. It is written for a wide audience, and hence technical expressions have been avoided.

The concept of integrated rural development was propounded and enthusiastically embraced by A.I.D. and other donor agencies in the 1970s, when there was a serious rethinking of the nature, direction, and processes of development. During this period, several new premises appeared on the development landscape, which directly and indirectly affected the design and implementation of rural development projects. The four premises that have been crucial to the growth of the concept of integrated rural development are briefly mentioned here.[1]

First, the constraints to development in a subsistence economy are multiple and multidimensional in nature and cannot be tackled in isolation. For instance, little is gained by providing agricultural inputs to the farmers when marketing channels are limited. Agricultural credit is unlikely to affect production unless farmers are able to buy improved seeds or fertilizers. To put it simply, piecemeal development efforts are neither sufficient nor effective in breaking down the structures of subsistence economies. It was suggested that initiating several coordinated development activities simultaneously contributes to gains in agricultural production and rural welfare. Multiple development activities in an area have synergistic effects that increase the overall impact of the interventions.

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[1]Ruttan (1984) has briefly explained these premises and has noted that they have not always proved to be mutually compatible.

Second, expenditures on health, nutrition, or public education should be regarded as a social investment to be encouraged by development planners. Such expenditures contribute to long-term gains in productivity in addition to promoting social equity. After all, the human element is the most critical ingredient in economic development.

Third, the benefits of economic growth do not necessarily trickle down to the most needy segments of the population or, if they do, can take a long time to reach them, with the result that development initiatives can actually increase social and economic differentiation between the rich and poor. Thus we find islands of prosperity amidst abject poverty. The implication drawn from this premise was that special programs should be devised to meet the basic needs of the most disadvantaged populations who live in remote, rural areas and are deprived of the bare necessities of life.

Finally, the participation of the local population is essential for generating long-term, self-sustaining growth. People should be treated as active participants in the change process, not as passive recipients of benefits. The aim of all development activities should be to free people from old patterns of dependency that have stifled their creativity and to actively involve them in socially and economically rewarding activities.

The integrated rural development projects designed and funded by A.I.D. were supposed to reflect these premises in one form or another. They were expected to combine multisectoral development activities into a coherent delivery system relying on grassroots participation of the target populations. In actuality, however, most of the projects were agricultural development projects with limited scope for participation, designed to increase small farmers' production and incomes by addressing constraints on agriculture. They had single-sector purposes even when they dealt with multisectoral constraints (Clapp-Wincek 1985, 1). As with many other development endeavors, integrated rural development projects only partially adopted the conceptual premises on which their legitimacy was initially based.

In this paper, projects with the following characteristics were considered integrated rural development projects: (1) They focus on a limited, specific geographical area; (2) are multisectoral, with multicomponents; (3) attempt to coordinate the supply of goods and services to the local population; and (4) provide for some kind of beneficiary participation.

1.2 Scope and Organization of the Review

The scope of this review is limited in three respects. First, it focuses exclusively on A.I.D.'s experience with integrated rural development projects. It is not designed as a comparative study between them and other types of development interventions. Second, this review deals with a limited range of projects, topics, and issues and is not a comprehensive, exhaustive review of the A.I.D. experience. It was written within a short period, and the author had to be selective in the review of the available records and documents.

Finally, the conclusions and findings presented here are not necessarily definitive in the sense that they are not derived from rigorous, quantitative data. This was not possible for the simple reason that detailed, reliable data about the overall impacts of area development projects do not exist. Thus there remains ample scope for divergent, even conflicting conclusions and interpretations.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 examines the overall effects and impacts of integrated rural development projects. Sections 3 and 4 discuss the issues of organizational placement of projects and private sector involvement respectively. Section 5 examines some of the major factors and conditions that have affected the performance of integrated rural development projects. Finally, some general findings that have implications for future area-focused development programs and strategies are presented in Section 6.

2. OVERALL EFFECTS AND IMPACTS

A.I.D.'s experience with integrated rural development projects has been mixed. Although the original expectations of the planners and project designers did not materialize, the projects had positive effects on agricultural production and the living conditions of the local populations and seem to have contributed to overall development. Some of their effects are discussed in the following sections.

2.1 Agricultural Production

Integrated rural development projects were responsible for increased agricultural production and productivity in a majority of cases.[2] The major contributing factors to gains in

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[2]This conclusion clearly emerges from the 11 impact evaluations conducted by A.I.D., which are listed in Appendix B. (Only nine reports are listed because in two cases, the reports cover two projects.)

agriculture, as noted by various impact evaluations, included land reclamation; increased availability of agricultural inputs, particularly new varieties of seeds and fertilizers; expansion of or improvement in irrigation facilities; introduction of extension services; opening up of new marketing opportunities; and construction of physical infrastructures such as roads and storage facilities. Even when the original targets were not realized, the gains were usually significant and cannot be dismissed as marginal.

The success of integrated rural development projects in raising agricultural production has varied markedly in different regions. Performance was more encouraging in Asia and South America than in Africa. This is hardly surprising because the performance of all types of agricultural projects has been less than promising in Africa as a result of serious institutional constraints, political instability, and an unfavorable policy environment.

Some kinds of integrated rural development projects have been more successful than others in raising agricultural production. For example, integrated rural resettlement projects generally contributed to significant increases in agricultural production and productivity.[3] By contrast the projects that focused exclusively on building up grassroots organizations failed to register similar increases.[4] The evidence is not conclusive, however. It is quite probable that the impacts of grassroots organizations were not immediately visible and were, therefore, not captured by impact evaluations.

One general conclusion that can be drawn from A.I.D.'s evaluations is that the technical packages for agricultural production were usually adopted by only a minority of farmers during the initial stages. This small minority was generally responsible for increased production in most of the projects. However, when the packages were appropriate, and the necessary

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[3]This conclusion is highlighted by A.I.D.' impact evaluations. Almost all the land settlement projects evaluated by A.I.D. noted increases in agricultural production. These increases are at least partly attributable to the fact that the cultivation of new lands always contributes to increased production. However, the point is that unless the necessary services and inputs are provided simultaneously in such projects, the settlers would not be able to cultivate the land allotted to them (Scudder, 1984).

[4]A good example is provided by the HACHO Rural Community Development project in Haiti (A.I.D. 1983, Impact Evaluation Report No. 49).

inputs and support were forthcoming, their diffusion among the local populations was quite rapid, contributing to widespread increases in production.

2.2 Incomes and Income Distribution

Increased production and productivity do not automatically contribute to increases in incomes or profits. The latter are also affected by the the costs of agricultural inputs, prices of agricultural commodities, and the availability of markets. However, evidence indicates that in many integrated rural development projects, the incomes of the target populations did increase, leading to improvements in their living conditions and quality of life. Indeed, the majority of the impact evaluations conducted by CDIE concluded that the overall incomes and, consequently, the standard of living of the participating populations improved.

This positive picture has been somewhat clouded by several factors.

1. The real incomes of local populations did not increase to the extent projected by project planners,[5] and in some instances the income gains made by the farmers cannot be attributed to the project intervention. Since the late 1970s, the prices of agricultural commodities have risen in many developing countries, making farming slightly more profitable. This factor must be considered when examining the effects of integrated rural development projects.

2. Although no precise estimates are available, there is a general consensus that the actual number of farm families whose incomes increased has been below project targets. The projections made in the planning documents consistently failed to materialize. This might be partly explained by the fact that project designers have the pardonable weakness of painting an over-optimistic picture of the expected outcomes for all interventions. Certainly designers of integrated rural development projects were not free of this tendency.

3. The major income beneficiaries in integrated rural development projects, as in other development interventions, have been the better-off farmers who could take advantage of the new opportunities because of their physical and technical re-

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[5]This is borne out by the perusal of project completion reports and the general impressions of the experts.

sources or because of their privileged positions in the rural social systems. Four categories of farmers were the main beneficiaries:

-- Farmers with access to irrigated lands prior to or as a result of the project. Because most of the successful agricultural technical packages are designed for irrigated lands, only this category of farmer was able to use them effectively.

-- Farmers who could mobilize surplus labor during peak agricultural seasons. This has been the case especially in several Sub-Saharan African countries that rely primarily on manpower for all agricultural operations.

-- Farmers who could control and manipulate grassroots organizations or institutions developed under the project (e.g., credit societies, village cooperatives, or marketing institutions). The control of such organizations enabled them to appropriate a major share of the inputs and services provided by the project and thus to increase their incomes.

-- Farmers who enjoyed other advantages such as the proximity of their farms to markets, ownership of transport, or more land or capital.[6]

Such uneven distribution of income benefits among local populations lends substance to the general criticism that integrated rural development projects might have aggravated economic and social disparities in rural areas.

4. The incomes of rural women, particularly of women farmers, generally increased marginally, if at all. Women farmers were usually unable to take advantage of the inputs provided by the project because of a variety of socioeconomic constraints and limited donor focus. Moreover, male heads of household did not always share the enhanced incomes with women and other household members, even when the latter were directly engaged in agricultural operations. These problems have not been unique to integrated rural development projects, but are typical of all agricultural interventions.[7]

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[6]The experience of A.I.D. on this subject is consistent with the findings of other donor agencies. For example, see Chambers (1983), Hunter (1978), Kifle (1985), and Lele (1978).

[7]These conclusions emerge from several studies and evaluations conducted by CDIE on "Women in Development." See, for example, Carloni (1987) and A.I.D. (1981).

2.3 Basic Social Services

Almost all integrated rural development projects provided some basic social services and amenities for improving the quality of life. These included health care, housing, education, and drinking water. The importance of such services in the remote areas in which these projects were frequently located should not be underestimated; they undoubtedly made the living conditions a little more tolerable for the affected populations.[8]

Basic social services undoubtedly benefited the most needy and deprived social groups who usually could not pay for the needed services. Health and educational services seem to have had the most profound effects in many cases.[9] The provision of rudimentary medical services in remote areas saved lives and improved the general well-being. Schools established by the projects provided opportunities, albeit limited, for upward mobility to subsistence farm families.

However, the implementation of basic social services has been plagued by two problems: reduction in the number and quality of services provided. There was a tendency to reduce the number of basic social service components in the face of financial and administrative problems. Often projects started with several components but gradually many of them were abandoned. Even when a specific component was not altogether dropped, it was reduced in scale. Unlike the donor agencies, the host countries did not always view social expenditures as investments or assign them priorities in their agendas for action.

The quality of basic services also rapidly deteriorated over the years because of the paucity of funds or technical resources. Thus there are medical dispensaries without medicine, schools without teachers, or trainers without training materials. The revenues generated from such services were not adequate to cover operating expenses.

Integrated rural development projects had some indirect beneficial effects on the provision of basic social services. For example, in some cases, project designers persuaded host

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[8]A recent study by the World Bank of its integrated rural development projects in Latin America has also suggested that social services and infrastructure components benefited the poorest segment of the populations (LaCroix 1985, 22).

[9]This has been the personal experience of the author, which is corroborated by knowledgeable people in A.I.D.

governments to institute essential services in addition to those to be undertaken by the project. Moreover, the presence of an integrated rural development project funded by A.I.D. encouraged other donor agencies to provide basic social services in the area in the hope of utilizing the experience and expertise of the project staff.

2.4 National-Level Economic Effects

Integrated rural development projects were also designed to attain some national-level objectives such as food self-sufficiency, increase in gross national product, more equitable agrarian systems, and national security.[10] Although the conditions differed from country to country, the projects can at best claim modest success in achieving national-level objectives.[11]

None of the projects studied by CDIE had made a substantial contribution to the national economy at the time of the evaluation. This can be explained partly by the fact that several major projects (in the Philippines, Sudan, and Liberia) had not become fully operational and were facing implementation problems. In any case, their prospects for making a substantial contribution to the national economies did not appear to be very promising at the time of the impact evaluations.

From a national point of view, one critical issue is the economic rate of return on investment. All integrated rural development projects are likely to generate tangible, desired effects, but the real question is whether these are sufficient to justify the investments made. Unfortunately, financial and economic rates of return were not systematically computed for the vast majority of A.I.D. projects, and hence no conclusion can be drawn. However, in one impact evaluation, where economic analysis was done, the project was judged to have had a positive worth, "with its internal rate of return somewhat higher than the opportunity cost of the capital" (A.I.D. 1984, Project Impact Evaluation Report No. 53, p. B-38).

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[10]Several projects funded by A.I.D. in Southeast Asia and Latin America were designed for security considerations, but it is not clear whether they achieved this objective.

[11]It may be noted, however, that many of the first generation of integrated rural development projects, although not necessarily funded by A.I.D., were widely acclaimed to have significantly affected national policies. Among these projects were Comilla (Bangladesh), Lilongwe (Malawi), Puebla (Mexico), and Vihiga (Kenya).

2.5 Project Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the continuation of the stream of project benefits and services after termination of donor funding. The essential idea is that, after the initial investment of resources and efforts, the projects' benefits and services should become institutionalized and self-sustaining.

Serious doubts persist about the sustainability of integrated rural development projects primarily because the host countries do not have the political will or the resources to maintain and support the services and inputs at the level provided during the project life. The revenues generated through user fees or through taxation on increased incomes of the local populations did not meet recurring costs. Few efforts were made to mobilize local resources to sustain project activities in the long term. Even integrated rural development projects that have been considered exemplary models of successful implementation have at best a dubious record of sustainability. Most of them were able to maintain their benefit stream only because of external funding and failed to generate enough surplus or local support to be self-sustaining. Examples of such integrated rural development projects are Lilongwe project in Malawi and WADU and KADU in Ethiopia.

The general picture that emerges from the impact evaluations of integrated rural development projects shows a decline in physical infrastructure, agricultural support services, and basic social services after termination of project funding. Physical infrastructures survived but were poorly maintained. Resources were often inadequate to permit necessary repairs and renovations. Agricultural support organizations such as extension services, rural credit institutions, or parastatals supplying inputs and services continued to exist, but the quality of the services declined. Although the staff was often retained, operating funds were insufficient or unavailable, so staff were unable to discharge their functions effectively and morale tended to be low. There was also a rapid decline in the quality and coverage of basic social services when external funding stopped because the services usually could not be sustained by the revenues they generated. For example, dispensaries failed to charge enough to cover the cost of drugs, much less staff salaries. The users, who were accustomed to free services, were reluctant to pay for them when external funding was ended.

There are, however, examples of projects that applied cost-effective approaches and required beneficiaries to share project costs. In these cases, services could be sustained

after termination of external funding.[12] In some projects, the local populations mobilized themselves and successfully exerted pressure on the government to continue services at the existing level. For example, in the Egyptian-American Rural Improvement Service project, existing services were sustained at Abis, the largest project site, because of the cooperatives that were formed immediately after project initiation. These cooperatives successfully exerted pressure on the Government to continue to provide the services (A.I.D. 1983, Impact Evaluation Report No. 43, pp. 16-17).

3. ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT ALTERNATIVES

A wide range of organizational configurations were used for implementing integrated rural development projects (see Honadle and Van Sant 1984, Morss and Gow 1981, and Honadle et al. 1980). The specific choices reflected considerations such as the preferences of the donor agencies, capabilities of the host countries, the design of the project, and available funding. The most common configurations used are described in the following sections.

3.1 Project Management Units

Some integrated rural development projects used project management units, which were relatively autonomous organizational entities employing temporary staff and professionals, to implement the project. Project management units were expected to provide several advantages: (1) they would avoid bureaucratic red tape and bypass the normal civil service procedures; (2) they would provide the necessary autonomy for the project staff; and (3) they would attract high caliber staff by providing better salaries and benefits than would otherwise be available. The political leaders in many developing countries also saw project management units as mechanisms for controlling the bureaucratic apparatus inherited from their colonial masters, which they viewed with suspicion, if not disdain (Honadle and Van Sant 1984, Morss and Gow 1981, Honadle et al. 1980).

Few of these original expectations were fulfilled. In most cases, project management units were unable to maintain their autonomy and became dependent on other organizations with greater

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[12] A good example of such success is the A.I.D.-funded integrated rural development project in Bolivia (A.I.D. 1985, Impact Evaluation Report No. 57, p. E-9).

power, resources, and capabilities. For example, projects with major infrastructure components became dependent on the ministry of public works, while those which focused primarily on agricultural inputs and services came to depend on the ministry of agriculture.

Moreover, projects implemented through project management units were not effective in sustaining project benefits because of their inability to assume recurrent costs. Their effectiveness depended largely on external support; once external funding stopped, they collapsed or became ineffective. Finally, the most glaring weakness of project management units has been their failure to build up indigenous institutional capabilities and their reliance on expatriate staff to handle managerial responsibilities.

Project management units were generally effective in reducing bureaucratic delays. They were especially useful for completing physical infrastructure components of projects (Honadle and Van Sant 1984).

3.2 Subnational Government Bodies

The second most common organizational placement strategy has been to use a provincial or regional government unit as a host institution. This strategy was adopted to facilitate the movement toward economic decentralization as well as to link planning and implementation at the regional or provincial levels, promoting horizontal linkages.

It is doubtful that these objectives were accomplished satisfactorily in most cases. Such organizational arrangements proved to be susceptible to influence and encroachments by line agencies.[14] Moreover, unnecessary delays in implementation resulted because the subnational agencies, particularly those in several small countries in East Africa and Latin America, did not have the capabilities to shoulder the additional responsibilities expected of them. Local officials were often suspicious of the intentions of the central authorities, which compounded the problem. On the positive side, there are indications that this approach often contributed to the strengthening of local institutions. In addition, it gave the provincial authorities a sense of ownership of the project, which enhanced the project's prospects for success.

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[14]This is suggested in the case studies of integrated rural development project implementation presented by Crawford (1981).

On the whole, the success of this strategy largely depended on three factors: (1) the commitment of the central government to decentralization and its willingness to delegate power and responsibilities, (2) the institutional and administrative capabilities in the local government and the ability of the project management to effectively use them, and (3) the size and complexity of the project (relatively small and noncomplex projects were better administered by subnational government bodies).

3.3 National Line Ministries

Project organizational responsibility was also placed in national ministries. The main responsibility was frequently given to ministries of agriculture because of their direct involvement in planning and sponsorship of integrated rural development projects. In such cases, personnel or units from other agencies or ministries were attached to the line agency to provide a multisectoral focus.

One advantage of assigning responsibility to a national ministry rather than a local government unit was that the greater power and prestige of the national ministry enabled it more effectively to overcome any obstacles to implementation. Moreover, the administrative and technical staffs at the national level were generally better qualified than those at the subnational levels. Finally, the prospects for long-term institutionalization of project activities were enhanced because the national line ministry could draw on resources from its recurrent budget to finance project activities when external funding ended.

Several unanticipated problems resulted from this organizational placement approach. A single integrated rural development project did not figure prominently in the priorities of the national ministry and often did not receive the attention it required. As a result, decisions were postponed and implementation was delayed. Moreover, a single ministry at the national level encountered more problems in coordinating the activities of other ministries than did subnational units, where the projects were under the direct supervision of the chief provincial authorities. Finally, centralization did not contribute to effective implementation at the grassroots levels. Officials in the line ministries were often reluctant to share their authority with the local authorities, which undermined achievement of local participation and institution building.

3.4 Private Voluntary Organizations

Private voluntary organizations (PVOs) also directly administered small, integrated rural development initiatives following a participatory approach. Such arrangements were generally flexible and responsive to local needs and aspirations. Moreover, the staff were highly committed to ameliorating the conditions of the rural poor--although not necessarily more technically qualified than others. PVOs also were often more innovative in their approach.

Organizational arrangements involving PVOs had several limitations that were perhaps unavoidable given their nature and orientation. First, PVOs had little leverage over the national power structure and were generally perceived as outsiders. As a result, they could not influence decision-making at higher levels. Second, because PVOs administered projects with the assistance of expatriate staff, long-term institution building and development of indigenous capabilities may have suffered. Third, such projects could not be sustained for long because they were not institutionalized within the regular government structure (Honadle and Van Sant 1984, 32).

Despite these limitations, PVOs proved to be effective in implementing small projects with limited economic resources. Furthermore, they often encouraged beneficiary participation in the project activities.

4. PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS AND INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Integrated rural development projects have been almost exclusively public sector enterprises; there has been little direct involvement of private sector firms in their initiation, implementation, or funding. The role of private firms has generally been confined to providing technical assistance at design or implementation levels in A.I.D.-financed projects.[15]

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[15]In some cases, private corporations have been involved in integrated rural development efforts; for example, in Brazil and Ecuador, private corporations have been active in land resettlement projects (LaCroix 1985, 54). Their approach was simple and cautious. They did not make large investments in infrastructure development or social services. They financed each new phase using the surplus generated by the previous one; thus the projects were cost-effective. Contrary to popular impression, these initiatives also benefited the rural poor and the landless agriculturalists (ibid, p. 55). Private contractors also have played a useful role in clearing settlement areas of timber and building necessary infrastructure in Malaysia (Scudder 1984, 21).

In Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC) financed and implemented a land resettlement project and later partially administered a large land development project funded by A.I.D. The CDIE evaluation team, which studied both projects, came to the following conclusions:

-- The quality and timeliness of the services offered by the private company surpassed those being provided by public bureaucracies. The explanation advanced by the evaluation team was that CTC could impose discipline on both the staff and the client populations, which is difficult for government institutions to achieve.

-- There was no major difference between private and public sector costs for providing the same services.

-- Cost recovery was a major problem for the private company. Unlike the government, private companies must balance their budgets. In Sri Lanka, CTC found it difficult to recover its costs, and this was one reason it ultimately withdrew from the existing arrangement.

-- The division of responsibility for activities between the government and a private firm creates problems to the extent that the various services or inputs must be provided in an integrated fashion. CTC believed that it could not effectively manage extension and input supply while water supply was handled by the government.

-- The management of an integrated rural development project by a private company can arouse suspicion and resentment among government officials who might see it as an encroachment on their territory.

It should be mentioned, however, that CTC in Sri Lanka was not initially motivated by economic considerations. Its involvement in one of the projects was a public relations effort to demonstrate its corporate responsibility. Extreme caution is therefore necessary in making generalizations on the basis of CTC's experience.

5. FACTORS EXPLAINING THE PERFORMANCE OF INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

An important issue arises from this review of A.I.D.'s experience with integrated rural development projects: what are the factors that affect the performance of these projects?

These factors have been examined in detail in evaluations and studies undertaken by A.I.D.; however, two general observations are required before we discuss them.

First, integrated rural development projects by their very nature encompass multiple development activities; almost every kind of agricultural and rural development intervention has been carried out under these projects. This means that the same factors that explain the success or failure of these specific activities can also explain the achievements or failures of integrated rural development projects. For example, the factors responsible for the satisfactory performance of an extension project are also likely to lead to the success of an extension component in an integrated rural development project.

Second, with the exception of the need for interorganizational coordination arising from the involvement of multiple ministries and agencies, there are no other explanatory factors that are distinctive to such projects. Unfortunately, this point is often overlooked in the discussion of integrated rural development projects.

5.1 Coordination of Multiple Ministries and Agencies

Probably the most common malaise afflicting integrated rural development projects has been the problem of interministry or interagency coordination. The attempt to coordinate the work of different ministries and agencies often proved difficult, if not frustrating.[16] Even when these projects were administered by a single agency, they required a high level of coordination and cooperation with other agencies that was often not forthcoming and that undermined their overall performance.[17] The most frequently encountered problems in this regard were the following:

-- There was frequent competition among various ministries and agencies for project funds, each defending and protecting its own activities and mode of operation. Coordination committees, even when headed by influential officials, were not always able to contain this universal bureaucratic impulse.

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[16]Crawford's (1981) review of 21 A.I.D. integrated rural development projects amply demonstrates this problem.

[17]This problem is discussed in detail by Hondale and Van Sant (1984).

-- The centralization of control over project funds in a single lead agency delayed disbursements to appropriate agencies and organizations responsible for completing individual activities. This caused unnecessary delays in implementation.

-- In integrated rural development projects covering large geographical areas or involving several components, dispersion of responsibilities and decision-making often paralyzed the project management. Under such conditions, the decisions taken at a formal level were not always implemented at the field level. In other words, coordination at the national or provincial level did not always lead to coordination at the field level. This can be attributed to the organizational culture of the local-level administrative systems, which was geared to protecting its own autonomy and identity.

-- The project staff on temporary assignment from other agencies and ministries had divided loyalties, because their tenure, promotion, and future professional career depended on their own organizations. This was especially the case when the project was placed within a single line ministry.

5.2 Reliance on Public Bureaucracies

Undue reliance on public bureaucracies to deliver goods and services at the grassroots level has been perhaps the most salient cause of the poor performance of integrated rural development projects. Most of these projects, like many other development projects, created (or expanded) large, public sector entities for distributing credit; providing inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides; procuring agricultural produce; and marketing. Unfortunately, such organizational entities usually failed to discharge their duties and responsibilities efficiently for the following reasons:

-- Cumbersome bureaucratic procedures stifled the creativity and initiative of the project staff, especially at the field level.

-- Low salaries, inadequate benefits, and restricted opportunities for career advancement failed to attract high-caliber staff to live and work in remote, rural areas. In many cases, there was a high turnover among management and technical staff. It was not uncommon for senior- and middle-level staff to be composed of civil servants who could not be accommodated elsewhere.

-- There was a general lack of adequate managerial and fiscal control over the staff, who had little incentive to perform.

-- Adequate resources were not available to staff to help them perform their duties. The lack of adequate transportation for the field staff proved to be a major bottleneck for several projects, undermining their ability to reach the local populations. Extension services, for example, were usually incapacitated by lack of transportation at the field level.

-- Poor management contributed to corruption and misuse of authority, especially where the staff were involved in the distribution of scarce agricultural inputs at subsidized prices.

In many African nations, the public sector organizations established with funds from integrated rural development projects worsened rather than improved the existing supply situation by destroying indigenous economic institutions that could have provided the required services at minimal costs.[18] For example, by giving parastatals a monopoly in the procurement of major agricultural produce, governments undermined existing traders and private companies that had been purchasing crops at the farmgate or selling essential agricultural inputs in the village itself.

Often public bureaucracies not only failed to deliver, but also constituted a terrible drain on national and project resources.

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[18]In this connection, it is interesting to quote Kifle (1985 p. 14) who has spent considerable time with integrated rural development projects in Africa: "Examples of late delivery of fertilizers as well as the import of wrong type of fertilizer, the multiplication and supply of poor quality seed by government farms, etc. are too many to warrant their mention here. In general, given the fiscal and administrative crisis that African governments face, IRD [integrated rural development] projects that depend on other government institutions for supply of goods and services, or in the implementation of the complementary programs (e.g., rural road construction) may, in terms of both implementation and impact, be seriously affected by these dependent relations."

5.3 Socioeconomic Factors

In their efforts to design integrated rural development projects quickly, project planners often neglected the sociocultural and socioeconomic settings. The following factors in particular received inadequate examination at the design stage:

-- The nature and composition of the local populations. The diversity in the population based on land ownership, gender roles, ethnicity, or farming practices tended to be overlooked. Instead, local populations were perceived to be homogeneous entities.

-- The socioeconomic constraints affecting farmers' economic behavior. For example, several projects in West African countries failed because the agricultural decision-making in these societies tends to be communal. Individual farmers were not able to adopt the recommended innovations without some communal support for the innovations.

-- The gender-based division of labor in agricultural operations. For instance, in many countries, some agricultural tasks are traditionally assigned to women, and men refuse to undertake them. In such cases, many integrated rural development projects failed to the extent that they required the male farmers to participate in agricultural operations traditionally allocated to women (or vice versa).

-- Demand for goods and services. The effective demand for the goods and services to be generated by some projects did not exist at the outset nor did it develop subsequently.

-- Alternatives to the recommended delivery systems, which were congruent with the indigenous sociocultural systems. For example, project designers sought to distribute seeds or fertilizers through newly created organizations such as a government depot or village cooperative and ignored indigenous systems such as village grocers.

The relative neglect of these factors and conditions in planning integrated rural development projects led to the selection of intervention strategies that were inappropriate and therefore ineffective.

5.4 Technical Packages

Technical packages were at the core of the integrated rural development interventions examined. The success or failure of these projects depended largely on the packages' availability to and acceptance by the farmers. Yet, in many instances suitable technical packages did not exist at the time of project design; the planners assumed that they would be somehow available at the implementation stage. It is therefore not surprising that the failure of many projects in Africa to increase food production can be partly attributed to the lack of appropriate technologies, especially for rain-fed agriculture.[19]

Some major limitations of technical packages that were identified in various studies and evaluations are as follows:

-- Adoption of technical packages entailed risks that the majority of farmers were unwilling to assume.[20] In subsistence economies, food security as well as profit maximization is a major consideration for the peasant farmer (Saadat and Gigch 1981, 38). Thus even when the recommended packages were profitable, farmers often did not adopt them because of the risks involved.

-- The packages required greater resources than were available to the local populations. For example, a major constraint to the adoption of innovative agricultural technologies in East and West Africa has been the shortage of labor during peak periods in the agricultural cycle (Kifle 1985). Many projects in African countries failed because the technical packages overlooked this constraint.

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[19]This finding is also supported by several observers of the African scene. For example, Aklilu (1980) has noted that in Ethopia, the minimum technical package was widely distributed before the location-specific technologies existed. This resulted in poor adoption rates and minimal effects on output and incomes. Kifle (1985, 18) also points out that the Magbosi Integrated Rural Development project in Sierra Leone had no advanced technical package for upland rice cultivation.

[20]For example, the A.I.D. impact evaluation of an integrated rural development project in Liberia found that the technical packages required "unnecessary risks to the participating project farmers. In some cases, the project farmers would have been better off had they used traditional labor saving techniques" (A.I.D. 1984, Impact Evaluation Report No. 53, p. B-19).

-- Innovations were not economically viable. In an A.I.D.- funded integrated rural development project in Sudan, for example, it was just not profitable for farmers to grow cotton as required by the project; they actually incurred losses by cultivating cotton because of the low market prices (A.I.D. 1982, Impact Evaluation Report No. 31, p. D-1).

-- The technical packages were not consistent with the prevalent sociocultural systems and required significant modifications in the sociocultural environment or life style of the farmer.

It has not been uncommon for farmers themselves to adapt the original technical packages to make them relevant to their needs and circumstances. Such adaptations have taken various forms. Farmers used a different mix of inputs (e.g., reduced the use of the expensive fertilizers), changed cropping patterns (e.g., grew other crops that reduced the risk involved), or adopted only part of the recommended innovation (e.g., grew both the traditional and new varieties of corn). Sometimes the projects succeeded not because of the wisdom of their designers but because of the pragmatism and robust common sense of the farmers who made prudent, rational economic decisions.

5.5 Approach to Design

Despite their complexity, integrated rural development projects, like other development projects, were designed in advance. Planning and design documents specified the nature and context of project activities, their schedule, the estimated costs, and the organizational structures and the management system to be instituted. All this was usually accomplished within a few months.

The experience shows that such designs were not functional in achieving the long-term objectives of the interventions.[21] As indicated earlier, the designs were inadequate partly because of the paucity of reliable information and partly because of the haste in which they were prepared. Often, the assumptions on which the projections were based were faulty.

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[21]Several studies conducted by Development Alternatives, Inc. of A.I.D.-funded integrated rural development projects have stressed this point. For example, see Hondale and Van Sant (1984), Hondale et al. (1980), and Crawford (1981).

Despite these limitations, the existence of a precise blueprint led managers to follow the project plans, even when they appeared to be inappropriate or irrelevant. For example, credit institutions were built when there was no demand for credit, or corn production was encouraged even though it was unprofitable. This blueprint approach was not conducive to the questioning of project assumptions by the managerial staff, whose performance was evaluated on the basis of their undertaking the specified items of work. And even when the managers proposed changes, considerable time and resources were often required in making them because they had to be approved by the host government and A.I.D.

5.6 Timing Issues and Project Duration

Three timing issues that interfered with the effective implementation of integrated rural development projects were highlighted by A.I.D. studies and evaluations (see Demongeot 1983, 29).

First, there was usually a significant time gap between project identification and startup, ranging from 12 to 24 months. Such delays, though often unavoidable, created several problems that adversely affected project implementation. For example, the host country officials involved in the design of the project moved on; there were economic and social changes that made initial project assumptions questionable, if not invalid; or the enthusiasm of the political elites for the project diminished.

Second, the time estimates for various project tasks proved to be inaccurate. Often the planners underestimated the time required for their completion and assumed optimal conditions that did not exist. They were also under political pressure to demonstrate, at least on paper, quick, visible results.

Third, there had been inappropriate phasing out of the project-related activities during project implementation (Demongeot 1983; Morss and Gow 1981, 55-58). Time phasing of activities is relatively simple when they are primarily technical in nature and when performance standards are available for scheduling them. However, in the case of integrated rural development projects, phasing of the various activities was complicated by the institutional development dimension; for example, credit activities were delayed because of the unavailability of agricultural inputs. It was not simply a matter of determining a precise sequence of inputs and outputs but also involved institutionalization of new ways of doing things.

Integrated rural development initiatives required more time than other projects because of their multisectoral design coordination problems and the need to build up local institutions to sustain activities. Usually, it took 2 to 4 years before project foundations were established and some tangible results were produced. Unfortunately, the lifespan of most projects was 5 to 6 years, with the result that just when projects were gaining momentum, the level of funding stopped or declined. Under such conditions, many projects were unable to consolidate their gains and institutionalize effective delivery systems.

5.7 Beneficiary Organizations

Integrated rural development projects were often based on the premise that suitable beneficiary organizations (e.g., farmers clubs, irrigation user associations, or local cooperatives) would be established that would articulate the interests of the local populations and provide them with opportunities for sustained involvement in project decision-making. In fact, the early generation of integrated rural development projects commited significant resources for developing such organizations and were often successful in establishing them.[22]

A.I.D.'s experience suggests that when such organizations were effectively developed, project benefits could be sustained over time. Integrated rural development projects in Egypt and Bolivia are examples of this kind of success (A.I.D. 1983 and 1985, Impact Evaluation Reports No. 43 and 57). Such beneficiary organizations were able to reduce the costs of delivery services and to exert necessary pressure on appropriate authorities. However, most of the projects failed to build up strong, viable beneficiary organizations for the following reasons:

-- The projects lacked adequate technical, economic, and human resources for establishing these organizations.

-- The project management staff was not convinced of the need for these organizations, so their establishment was not a priority item in their agendas for action.

-- Powerful political interests felt threatened by their potential growth and succeeded in undermining them. This was especially the case when traditional elites such as tribal chiefs, large landowners, and their political allies perceived these organizations as

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[22]This point has been stressed by several students of integrated rural development projects (see, for example, Ruttan 1984, 398).

alternative sources of power. As a result, they tried either to control them or, failing that, to undermine them.

-- The structure of the proposed beneficiary organizations was not suitable to local conditions, and the participation groups did not perceive them as capable of representing their interests.

In the absence of such organizations, many projects could not mobilize local resources or gain legitimacy in the eyes of the local populations.

5.8 Policy Environment

The national policy environment is probably the most important factor over which the project planners and managers have no control. There is little doubt that the national economic policies in many developing countries, particularly in Africa and Latin America, have inhibited rather than promoted growth in the rural sector (A.I.D. 1985, Policy Paper Private Enterprise Development).

The following types of policies particularly undermined the prospects for the success of integrated rural development projects:

-- Pricing policies that kept the prices of agricultural commodities low to satisfy urban interests. As a result, there was little incentive for farmers to produce a surplus for the markets; the reward was not worth the extra effort they had to make. The situation has recently improved because of the policy dialogue and pressure exerted by international agencies and donors, including A.I.D., and acute food shortages in many parts of the world.

-- Economic organizational policies that gave input supply, marketing, or procurement monopolies to government or parastatal organizations. As indicated earlier, such organizations have consistently failed to perform effectively or efficiently. Local private enterprise was not encouraged.

-- Land tenure policies that did not guarantee land ownership to the cultivators. In many countries, a small minority of the population owned most of the land or the state controlled the land, with no fixed tenure rights. Farmers were not willing to invest under such conditions.

In addition, monetary and fiscal policies contributed to an uncertain economic environment that was not conducive to agricultural growth.

6. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages, we briefly reviewed the overall effects and impacts of integrated rural development projects. The discussion indicates that they were only partly successful in achieving their short-term objectives and long-term goals, and that the original, high expectations for the projects, which were probably unrealistic in many ways, did not materialize. Nonetheless, they did have positive effects on agricultural production, incomes of the local populations, availability of social services in remote rural areas, and national economies, which cannot be dismissed or ignored. The factors that seem to have affected their performance most strongly are organizational coordination, dependence on public bureaucracies, attention to socioeconomic factors, type of technical packages, time span and phasing of project activities, approach to design, functioning of beneficiary organizations, and national policy environment.

In addition to the above, several general conclusions are drawn from the findings about integrated rural development projects which have wider implications for development strategy planning. Although not examined in the evaluations and studies reviewed here, they logically follow from the rich and varied information and arguments presented in them.

6.1 Integrated Rural Development as a Strategy

The first general conclusion is that the serious difficulties encountered in integrated rural development projects should not be construed as the failure of integrated rural development as a strategy. There is a clear distinction between the underlying strategy and the projects that were designed to implement it; the two should not be confused with one another.

An integrated rural development strategy is based on a set of premises that were mentioned at the beginning of this paper and can be briefly recapitulated here: (1) the transformation of a subsistence economy can be better achieved by multipronged interventions that deal with the major constraints on development in a limited geographical area; (2) the provision of rudimentary social services in poor, depressed areas is a sound economic investment and can spread the benefits of development to a wider population; (3) the benefits of economic growth do not necessarily trickle down to the most needy populations, at least not

during a short time span, and therefore special initiatives are required to meet their needs; and (4) involvement of the local populations in development activities contributes to sustained growth. The integrated rural development strategy involves careful planning of a variety of interventions within a limited geographical region. This review found nothing to question the validity of these essential premises of an integrated rural development strategy.

An integrated rural development strategy can be implemented in two ways.

The first, and the historically most common, approach is to promote a large, multisector and multicomponent project that is comprehensive in nature and represents a single concerted effort to deal with the challenges of development in the area. Practically all the evaluations cited here focused on projects that followed this model. As indicated earlier, such projects proved to be difficult to manage and encountered insurmountable coordination problems that undermined their effectiveness. Other problems cited, such as the short time frames and the inflexible designs, further indicate that a single project may not be appropriate given the complexities of the integrated rural development strategy objectives and issues.

The other alternative is to initiate several single-sector, single-activity projects within an overall plan that are independently managed, require minimal coordination, and are introduced in an appropriate sequence. For example, the planning authorities in a district or province identify the major requirements for sustained development and design individual projects to deal with each of them. One project focuses on the improvement of agricultural extension services, while another facilitates the increased supply of hybrid seeds and fertilizers, and yet another is intended to develop marketing infrastructure. Finally, expanded social services are provided by concerned government departments. Such individual projects within the framework of a coherent rural development strategy can produce the same results that were expected of integrated rural development projects. This alternative appears more promising given the general difficulties with multisector projects.

Several advantages may possibly result from following the second approach. The projects will be easier to manage to the extent they deal with a single or limited range of activities. Thus the problem of interorganizational coordination will be minimized. Moreover, they can be effectively placed in the existing bureaucracies at the provincial or subnational level. One major reason why integrated rural development projects encountered organizational placement problems was that they focused on a number of activities that are usually the province of different ministries and agencies. Finally, because the pro-

jects will not work under the direction of a single management structure, there will be greater room for individual initiative and action for middle-level managers.

The question can be raised: How will the activities of the individual projects be coordinated so that they fit in the overall picture? The answer is that in most of the cases, no coordination is necessary except at the initial planning stage. The different projects for a specified geographical area can be planned so that they become operational in a given sequence and are able to provide the required inputs and services simultaneously. In the past, this need for parallel operations was interpreted inappropriately to mean a need for interorganizational coordination, if not integration, which compounded management problems in integrated rural development projects.

A recent study of integrated rural development projects in Latin American countries has also suggested that an "umbrella program covering a large number of smaller, independent projects is a better approach" than a single large project (LaCroix 1985, 47). The author suggests that each project should have the freedom to determine its own priorities, activities, and modes of operation within a broadly defined strategy. Such an approach, the author believes, will be more effective and will produce better results. By dealing with the complexities of integrated rural development at a strategic or program level rather than as a single project, many of the problems of coordination, management, short time frames, and inflexibility typically found in such projects may be mitigated if not overcome. Furthermore, A.I.D. may have more leverage in policy reform dialogue if it is tied to a broader, long-term program or strategy rather than to a single project.

The evaluations conducted by CDIE do not question the essential premises of an integrated rural development strategy. Rather they indicate the limitations of implementing it through the instrumentality of a single project. Hence the option of implementing the strategy through multiple individual projects designed at a strategic planning level cannot be discarded on the basis of available evidence.

6.2 Need for an Integrated Rural Development Strategy

The above discussion suggests that integrated rural development as a strategy should be broadly applied. Experience also suggests that an integrated rural development strategy can be the only viable option in many types of planned interventions where development of a partial region or area is urgent. These include (1) narcotics control development assistance, which involves crop substitution and the generation of alternative

sources of income and employment for the affected farmers; (2) development efforts in border or remote areas that are designed as national security interventions for integrating the populations within the national mainstream; (3) remote or famine-affected areas that require coordinated efforts in different sectors; and (4) land settlement schemes.

In all the above cases, a comprehensive strategy is necessary to deal with a multitude of economic, social, and even political problems. Efforts for agricultural and industrial growth need to be complemented with other initiatives for generating economic benefits and for consolidating social and political structures. For example, in narcotics control development projects, the narcotics-producing farmers need inputs, resources, and extension advice for growing alternative crops that can provide them reasonable income and economic security. In addition, because not all the affected farmers can find economically remunerative alternative crops, industries in private and public sectors are required for creating fresh employment opportunities. Finally, provision for basic social services and physical infrastructure is necessary for establishing the political legitimacy of the government and the presence of law enforcement agencies in the area. Under these conditions, a multisector approach undoubtedly looks most promising. The same is true of planned development initiatives in new land settlements, the remote and border areas, and the famine-affected regions where social and political structures break down because of the extreme economic crisis.

6.3 Designing Projects Based on an Integrated Rural Development Strategy

The last set of findings concerns the implications of A.I.D.'s experience for designing fresh initiatives embracing an integrated rural development framework. A number of suggestions follow from the discussions in Section 5, which are briefly described below.

6.3.1 Longer Time Span

Integrated rural development should be a long-term strategy covering 15 to 20 years and implemented in distinct phases, each building on the experience, knowledge, and progress made in the preceding one. The duration of a phase can be 4 to 5 years, depending on local conditions and circumstances.

Whenever possible, projects during the early stages should focus on agricultural components that can generate immediate, visible results without the expenditure of considerable resour-

ces. Examples of such projects include those designed to promote simple cash crops, small irrigation schemes, or the availability of fertilizers. "Quick and tangible results such as dip tanks, roads, clinics, fertilizers, or transportation can win immediate friends and influence future performance" (A.I.D. 1986, 30). Major infrastructure projects should come later, after the planners have a better and more intimate understanding of the local populations and conditions.

This approach will require that the donor agency's agreement with the host country be based on a flexible long-term strategy encompassing different projects and sequential funding. In such cases, funds for the projects to be launched during the first phase of integrated development would be obligated at the signing of the agreement. Before the end of the first phase, the progress of the various projects would be evaluated, plans and estimates for the next phase would be developed and approved, and a second tranche of funds would be obligated (Demongeot 1983, 32). This process would be repeated until the planned development of the area comes to an end.

6.3.2 Production-Centered Focus

The integrated rural development strategy should focus on a limited range of problems. It should be recognized that there are limits to planning and that all the constraints on development in a region cannot be effectively tackled by planned interventions. Moreover, the technical and economic resources available in the host countries are undoubtedly limited, and experience has shown that large-scale, multipronged interventions cannot be sustained over time with local resources.

The prudent course is to concentrate on a few carefully selected production activities that can generate strong forward and backward linkages to the local economy. The selected production activities should generate significant multiplier effects in terms of income, employment, and investment. It may be noted here that by focusing on the expansion of irrigation facilities that make the introduction of new varieties of crops possible (and profitable), many integrated rural development projects could generate wider linkages to the economy that contribute to overall economic growth in the area.

6.3.3 Encouragement of Private Enterprise

There should be greater reliance on private enterprise for implementing the integrated rural development strategy at the grassroot level. As far as possible, instead of developing

their own delivery systems, projects should encourage local entrepreneurs to provide the needed services and goods to farmers. For instance, suitable incentives can be given to village grocers for selling the required fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides, thereby avoiding the need for a public sector distribution depot. Local traders can also be encouraged to purchase the agricultural produce and sell it in the nearby towns or larger markets.

In many cases, specific projects can be organized as joint ventures between private and public sectors. Such an approach might be especially promising for land settlement projects in more market-oriented economic systems. However, it should be recognized that private firms in developing countries are not generally interested in agriculture and rural development. Direct investment in these areas is not sufficiently alluring to them, given their often very limited resource base and the uncertainty concerning the long-term policies of their own governments. Moreover, they also face numerous logistical and administrative problems in venturing into rural areas. An effective partnership between the private and public sectors could help to overcome some of these obstacles.

The partnership can take many forms and follow different institutional arrangements. In some cases, the government can contribute to the needed capital, help the firms to raise additional money from international donor agencies (LaCroix 47-52), and, if necessary, guarantee minimal returns on investment. In other cases, a simple division of labor may suffice. For example, the government can provide agricultural extension services and the private firms can take the responsibility of supplying the recommended agricultural inputs. Still in other cases, new organizational entities can be established for undertaking specific activities, such as construction of dams, roads, and canals.

Greater reliance on private initiative and efforts will reduce the overall operating costs of the projects and will improve their managerial performance. Above all, it will promote entrepreneurship and thus will contribute to long-term development.

6.3.4 Appropriate Technical Packages

The technical packages for agricultural projects should be carefully selected and continually upgraded. In addition to being technically sound and economically profitable, they should require only marginal risks and should be affordable to a major-

ity of the farmers. Moreover, they should not involve radical changes in the farming systems or life styles of the participating populations.

For the success of an integrated rural development strategy, it is essential that institutional capabilities for upgrading or producing new technical packages be developed. Moreover, effective linkages and networks should be developed between the projects and outside research institutions involved in applied farming research.

There is a general shortage of viable technical packages for rain-fed agriculture. The research is still in an early stage and has failed to produce the type of breakthroughs that are so conspicuous for irrigated crops. It is essential that projects focus only on those crops for which well-tested technical packages are available and have been found to be acceptable in pilot trials.

6.3.5 Recognition of Socioeconomic Differences

Careful attention should be given to socioeconomic differences among the local populations that derive from differences in access to land and resources, social status, and political power. As stated earlier, the participating population should not be considered as a single, undifferentiated group that will respond uniformly to the same incentive systems.

In particular, gender differences, which were ignored or overlooked in the designs of integrated rural development projects, should be carefully examined at the planning stage. Recognition of gender means that the economic and social roles of male and female farmers should be analyzed in relation to each other rather than in isolation. Some specific gender-related areas requiring careful examination on the basis of empirical data include division of labor in agricultural production, access to and control of production resources, differences in stakes and incentives, income streams, participation in development institutions, and roles in consumption. Such an analysis can contribute to more focused and sustainable project initiatives. A number of studies undertaken by CDIE have illustrated the importance to project success of analyzing gender roles and adapting projects accordingly. And on occasion, it might be desirable to initiate and support additional projects for women farmers within the overall framework of an integrated rural development strategy.

6.3.6 Policy Environment

Finally, and probably the most important, national policies should be carefully examined and discussed during the planning of an integrated rural development strategy. There is little justification for undertaking large integrated rural development initiatives requiring tremendous investment of human and material resources if existing national policies are likely to frustrate such efforts. As far as possible, donor agencies should not proceed with the designing of specific projects until they are confident that appropriate reforms will be instituted in due course (see A.I.D. Policy Paper 1985).

If the policy environment is unfavorable, a policy dialogue should be initiated with the host government about the overall impact of the current policies on the outcomes of the proposed interventions. In fact, if A.I.D.'s assistance is significant and the host government has a political stake in the area, the proposed assistance can be used as leverage for promoting rational agricultural policies that are conducive to long-term growth. Whereas single integrated rural development projects may have had little or no leverage in policy dialogue, shifting the integrated rural development concept to a strategic planning level involving multiple A.I.D. projects or programs may have considerably more weight in host government policy reform decisions.

APPENDIX A

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Bureau for Africa

Country/Region	Project Number	Project Title	Begin/End Dates
Algeria	6380002	Rural Development	1963/67
Botswana	6330077	Rural Development	1980/85
C&W Afr. Reg.	6250926	Sahel Development Program	1976/83
Cen. Afr. Rep.	6760015	Rural Development	1982/85
Chad	6770001	Lake Chad Irrigation	1977/81
Kenya	6150147	Vihiga Rural Development	1971/78
Liberia	6690139	Upper Bong County Rural Development	1978/84
Liberia	6690142	Lofa County Rural Development	1975/81
Mauritania	6820201	Guidimaka Integrated Rural Development	1975/82
Mauritania	6820207	Integrated Development of Oases	1980/85
Niger	6830205	Niamey Department Rural Development	1977/81
Niger	6830240	Niamey Department Development II	1981/86
Sahel Reg.	6250012	Gambia River Basin Development	1981/86
Senegal	6850239	Village Development Program	1979/82
Senegal	6850205	Casamance Regional Development	1978/85
Somalia	6490103	Kurtunwaare Settlement	1979/82
Somalia	6490113	Bay Region Development	1980/85
Somalia	6490054	Chismaio Area Development	1966/68
Sudan	6500026	Wadi Halfa Community Development	1978/82
Sudan	6500018	Blue Nile Agricultural Development	1978/85
Sudan	6500025	Abyei Integrated Rural Development	1978/81
Sudan	6500100	Sudan-Rahad Irrigation	1973/79
Tanzania	6210143	Arusha Area Development	1978/83
Upper Volta	6860201	Eastern ORD Integrated Rural Development	1974/81
Upper Volta	6860220	Dori Community Development	1976/80
Upper Volta	6860231	Seguenega Integrated Rural Development	1978/83
Zaire	6600059	North Shaba Rural Development	1976/86
Zaire	6600082	Imeloko Integrated Rural Development	1978/81
Zaire	6600093	Community Health-Integrated Rural Development	1981/84
Zambia	6110204	Chama Area Development	1981/84

Bureau for Asia

Country/Region	Project Number	Project Title	Begin/End Dates
Afghanistan	3060090	Helmand Valley	1954/77
India	3860467	Rajasthan Irrigation	1980/85
India	3860482	Rajasthan Area Development	1983/84
India	3860464	Gujarat Irrigation	1978/84
Indonesia	4970245	Citanduy Basin Development	1976/84
Indonesia	4970281	Citanduy II	1980/86
Indonesia	4970264	Provincial Area Development	1978/88
Indonesia	4970276	Provincial Area Development II	1979/89
Indonesia	4970244	Luwu Area and Transmigration	1975/83
Indonesia	4970240	Rural Works	1975/80
Indonesia	4970285	Rural Works II	1979/84
Indonesia	4970252	Sederhana Irrigation II	1978/83
Nepal	3670129	Rural Area Development - Rapti Zone	1980/85
Pakistan	3910471	Tribal Area Development	1982/87
Pakistan	3910485	Gadoon - Amazai Development	1983/88
Philippines	4920303	BICOL Integrated Rural Development	1978/83
Philippines	4920310	BICOL Integrated Rural Development II	1978/84
Philippines	4920289	BICOL Integrated Rural Development III	1979/85
Philippines	4920236	Provincial Development	1968/77
Philippines	4920275	Libmanan/Cabusao Integrated Rural Development I	1975/82
Sri Lanka	3830041	Mahaweli Ganga Irrigation	1977/82
Sri Lanka	3830073	Mahaweli Basin Development II	1981/86
Thailand	4930272	Lam Nam Oon On-Farm Development	1977/85
Thailand	4930289	Land Settlements	1979/84
Thailand	4930294	Highland Area Development (Mae Cham)	1980/87
Thailand	4930163	Accelerated Integrated Rural Development	1964/71
Thailand	4930308	Northeast Integrated Rural Development	1981/88

Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

Country/Region	Project Number	Project Title	Begin/End Dates
Bolivia	5110050	Sub-Tropical Lands Development	1975/81
Bolivia	5110499	Village Development	1978/85
Bolivia	5110543	Chapare Regional Development	1983/88
Bolivia	5110514	FIDES--Colonization	1979/84
Carib. Reg.	5380004	Integrated Rural Development	1972/82
Carib. Reg.	5380007	Integrated Agricultural Development	1972/82
Colombia	5140201	San Gil Integrated Rural Development	1976/80
Colombia	5140210	Integrated Rural Development	1976/80
Colombia	5140203	Small Farmer Development	1976/80
Costa Rica	5150158	Rural Development II	1979/81
Costa Rica	5150129	Integrated Rural Development	1976/79
Ecuador	5180012	Integrated Rural Development	1980/84
Ecuador	5180008	Yarqui Coop and Community Development	1979/82
Ecuador	5180021	Integrated Community Development	1982/85
Ecuador	5180028	Colonization--Sto. Domingo	1964
El Salvador	5190209	Integrated Rural Development	1979/82
Guatemala	5200233	Small Farmer Development	1976/84
Guatemala	5200274	Highlands Agricultural Development	1983/88
Guatemala	5200272	San Marcos Integrated Rural Development	1980/84
Guatemala	Proposed	Integrated Rural Development II	1987
Guatemala	5200249	Integrated Area Development	1978/82
Guatemala	5200204	Rural Development	1970/76
Guatemala	5200272	Integrated Rural Development	1980/84
Guyana	5040075	Small Farmer Development	1978/85
Haiti	5210061	HACHO Community Development	1966/79
Haiti	5210142	Gros Morne Integrated Rural Development II	1980/83
Haiti	5210081	Gros Morne Rural Development	1977/80
Haiti	5210073	Small Farmer Development	1974/81

Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (cont.)

Country/Region	Project Number	Project Title	Begin/End Dates
Honduras	5220227	Small Farmer Agricultural Development	1983/86
Honduras	5220128	Pespire Valley Integrated Rural Development	1976/80
Jamaica	5320046	Integrated Regional Rural Development	1977/84
Panama	5250186	Integrated Rural Development	1977/85
Panama	5250200	Guaymi Area Development	1979/83
Peru	5270163	Development of Sub-Tropical Lands	1978/83
Peru	5270244	Upper Huallaga Agricultural Development	1981/88
Peru	5270207	CEDRU Integrated Rural Development	1979/80
Peru	5270178	Integrated Rural Development	1979/85

Bureau for Near East

Country/Region	Project Number	Project Title	Begin/End Dates
Egypt	2630021	Development Decentralization	1978/87
Egypt	2630103	Basic Village Services	1980/85
Jordan	2780205	Jordan Valley Village Development II	1978/82
Jordan	2780221	Jordan Valley Village Development III	1979/83
Morocco	6080127	Doukkala Irrigation	1976/84
Near East Reg.	2980143	Rural Development in Gaza Strip	1976/81
Near East Reg.	2980166	Rural and Community Development	1981/85
Tunisia	6640285	Rural Development	1976/81
Tunisia	6640121	Medjerda Valley Development	1959/70
Tunisia	6640312	Central Tunisia Rural Development	1979/86
Tunisia	6640307	Integrated Rural Development - Siliana	1977/84
Yemen	2790031	Rural Development	1977/81

APPENDIX B

CDIE IMPACT EVALUATIONS REPORTS ON
INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Area Development in Liberia: Toward Integration and Participation. Project Impact Evaluation Report No. 53. Washington, D.C.: A.I.D., 1984.

Bolivia: Integrated Rural Development in a Colonization Setting. Project Impact Evaluation Report No. 57. Washington, D.C.: A.I.D., 1985.

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