Implementing decentralization programmes in Asia: 
a comparative analysis

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SUMMARY

Decentralization in development planning and administration is being attempted in novel ways as governments seek to generate economic growth and at the same time achieve greater social equity. Little has been done to assess comparatively the nature and effectiveness of these experiments. This article is based on a selection of eight case studies, each set in a different Asian country, where an innovative approach to decentralization has been adopted by the central government in order to achieve development aims. The stimulus to innovate is considered, the different forms of decentralization compared and a tentative comparative evaluation is made of the effectiveness of decentralizing development planning and implementation. What the analysis shows is that despite diversity in the objectives and differences in the forms decentralized programmes took there were common problems centring on administrative capability. This, the author argues, has important implications for governments and international agencies.

Governments of Asian developing countries have been experimenting cautiously over the past decade and a half with policies and programmes that seek to decentralize development planning and administration. The experiments are noteworthy in part because they are unusual; these governments are highly centralized in practice if not in structure and carry out most of their activities by central direction or control. For a variety of reasons to be examined later, they have chosen decentralized administrative arrangements to implement some of their development programmes, but little attempt has been made thus far to analyse them in comparative perspective. Sporadic and preliminary evaluations of individual programmes suggest that results have been highly variable—some were successful in achieving a few but not all of their objectives; a few produced the desired results in some provinces and districts but not in others; and some failed to achieve any of their intended goals but yielded lessons that were used to revise and improve subsequent experiments (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983).

Although these programmes do not constitute the whole of any country's experience with decentralization, they are noteworthy because they reflect the factors that influence governments' ability to pursue high priority objectives and to diffuse responsibility for development beyond the central bureaucracy. Thus, analysis of the factors that influenced the success or failure of these new programmes can contribute to improving administration in developing countries.
and to formulating and implementing programmes that generate economic growth with greater social equity, an avowed aim of all of the governments that initiated them.

This paper summarizes and analyses the experience with decentralized development in Asian countries through eight case studies commissioned by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development. From a review of these cases, the rationale and purposes of decentralization are discerned; the forms of decentralization that were used and their general impacts and results are described; and the administrative, political, behavioural, economic and physical factors that influenced their implementation are analysed.

APPROACHES TO DECENTRALIZATION

The variety of ways in which governments have attempted to decentralize development planning and administration is shown in Table 1. Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand used provincial administrative units; Pakistan and Nepal created integrated rural development programmes in which responsibility was deconcentrated to regional or district organizations; Malaysia and India used semi-autonomous authorities to pursue agricultural and rural development; and Sri Lanka strengthened district administration.

It is important to note that in all of these cases the initiative for decentralization came from the central government and not from demands for participation or devolution of authority from below. In every case funding for the experiments also came primarily from central revenues, although in the Philippines, Nepal and Indonesia the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) helped to initiate and finance them and provided technical assistance in their implementation. In Pakistan several international agencies contributed funds and advice. In Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka a central government ministry or agency played an important role in guiding or supervising the programmes, and even in those countries where a province, district, or special authority was given responsibility for development activities, the central government exercised pervasive influence. Thus, in a real sense, attempts at decentralization in Asia have been national policies, and analysis of them can provide insights into the variables affecting policy implementation in developing countries.

THE RATIONALE FOR DECENTRALIZATION

The cases reveal a wide range of reasons for decentralizing development planning and administration in Asia. Among them five seem to dominate:

1. In many countries decentralization policies were adopted because of the disappointing results of or recognized deficiencies in central planning and management. The limits of central planning in directing development at the local level became evident during the 1970s, as did the inflexibility and unresponsiveness of central bureaucracies in many countries. Decentralization was seen as a way of overcoming or avoiding these constraints (Rondinelli, 1978).
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2. During the 1970s and early 1980s the emphasis of development policies changed in many countries away from maximizing economic growth and toward promoting more equitable distribution of the benefits of development, reducing disparities in income and wealth between urban and rural areas and among regions, and increasing the productivity and income of the poor. Equitable growth policies strongly implied the need for programmes that were tailored to local conditions, that elicited the support and involvement of local administrators and of the people they were intended to help, and that integrated the variety of services required to stimulate the economies of rural areas (Rondinelli, 1979).

3. The growing involvement of government in promoting widespread, non-traditional development activities made it clear during the 1970s that complex and multifaceted programmes were difficult to direct and control exclusively from the centre. Decentralizing development planning and building the administrative capacity of local organizations seemed essential to improving the effectiveness of the central government, as well as the ability of local administrative units, to deliver services needed for development, especially in poor and remote rural regions.

4. Crises or external pressures to act expeditiously in some countries highlighted the difficulties and constraints of working through entrenched central bureaucracies and forced national leaders to search for alternative ways of co-ordinating activities at the provincial or local levels to solve serious social, political or economic problems quickly.

5. Decentralization in some countries was associated ideologically with principles of local self-reliance, participation, and accountability and was pursued as a desirable political objective in itself.

The cases reveal that it was a combination of these factors that usually led central government officials to propose decentralization and that often the rhetoric by which the proposals were justified veiled other motives and intentions. Central government officials in many countries believed that the new arrangements would elicit support and cooperation from local communities for national development policies, and decentralization was often viewed as an instrument for extending the central government's influence or control.

The rationale for decentralization varied among countries. In India, the Small Farmers Development Agency was established partly in reaction to the failure of panchayat raj and other experiments in local democracy. Since neither the central bureaucracy nor local governments could be relied upon to deliver services and to involve local residents in decision-making, other arrangements had to be found to increase agricultural production quickly when India faced a severe food crisis in the 1960s. With encouragement from international organizations, the government established special project units to integrate its services locally. But neither the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) nor the Integrated Rural Development Programme, which did increase agricultural output during the 1970s, were effective in raising the productivity or incomes of small-scale cultivators and landless labourers. The All India Credit Review Committee of the Reserve Bank of India was concerned that the Green Revolution would lead to more serious disparities than already existed between large- and small-scale cultivators, unless ways could be found quickly to provide the latter with credit, technical assistance and support services to increase their productivity and income (Mathur, 1982, p. 110). Semi-autonomous organizations—Small Farmers Development
Agencies—were created because past experience made it clear that local institutions were not strong enough to carry out participative development activities on their own and that the national civil service was not responsive or flexible enough to plan and implement such a programme (Mathur, 1982, p. 15).

A similar combination of factors, led to the creation of the Integrated Rural Development Programme in Pakistan in 1972. The Green Revolution was also successful there in increasing agricultural production, but as in India it exacerbated social and economic disparities in rural areas. The IRDP would sustain agricultural production and extend the benefits of the new methods and technology to the rural poor. By concentrating the local offices of national departments dealing with agricultural development, representatives of credit agencies and sales outlets for agricultural inputs in the markaz, and by co-ordinating their activities through a Project Manager, the government hoped to make the central bureaucracy more accessible and responsive to small farmers. The activities of central departments would be co-ordinated with those of farmers associations and private investors to give district residents a greater voice in development planning and administration, or at least to promote better communication between farmers and the government's agricultural service departments (Khan, 1982, p. 51).

Underlying these programmes in India and Pakistan was a long-standing ideological commitment to decentralization and popular participation in development. Khan points out that successive national plans in Pakistan emphasized these principles. The First Five-Year Plan in 1957 noted that

Planning in a free society must be based on a general consciousness of social purpose so that the people treat the plan as their own, intended for their benefit. They should have a sense of participation and be willing to extend their full support and cooperation in its fulfilment. Without the wholehearted participation of the people, the development programme will not achieve its full proportions; progress will be slow; and its benefits will remain open to question (Khan, 1982, p. 3).

A major objective of the Fourth Plan issued in 1970 was to promote ‘the maximum decentralization of responsibility and authority in all areas bearing upon plan implementation’ (Khan, 1952, p. 2). But as will be seen later, this conviction was not always widely shared in either India or Pakistan and the purposes and processes of decentralization were often interpreted differently by both central government officials and local elites.

Changes in the thrust of development policies in most Asian countries during the 1970s also had a profound effect on administrative procedures. In Indonesia the creation of the Provincial Development Programme was due to a ‘shift of development objectives from those fostering economic growth to others promoting distributional equity and widening popular participation in development planning and implementation’, (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 3). The U.S. Agency for International Development provided funds and technical assistance in 1977 to decentralize planning to the provinces and to help the central government increase the income and improve the living conditions of low income villagers. This was to be done by expanding the administrative capacity of central ministry field officers and local government officials. Regional Planning Agencies (BAIPEDAs) were to extend project planning, implementation and evaluation capacity to the provinces because
Decentralization Programmes in Asia

The small-scale rural development projects envisioned by the Indonesian government could not be effectively designed and carried out by the central agencies alone.

Increasing regional disparities and rural poverty in Thailand during the late 1960s and early 1970s also led the central government to search for more effective ways of raising the income of the rural poor. The Rural Employment Generation Programme sought to provide paid jobs for the poor during the dry season when farmers and farm workers were either idle or migrated to the cities looking for temporary employment. Recognizing that central ministries could not identify and formulate the myriad small-scale projects needed to absorb rural labour, political leaders deconcentrated the programme to provincial governments, which in turn sought to develop the capability of Tambon Councils to implement community development activities. In this way, the government could provide employment and also increase support for national policies among rural people, especially in areas where poverty led to social unrest and external subversion (Chakrit, 1982).

Attempts at decentralizing development administration in Sri Lanka were also closely related to the basic principles of national development, which included promoting a geographically widespread distribution of development activities and the benefits of growth; redistributing income to poorer groups within society; generating greater employment opportunities; creating self-sufficiency in food production; and providing social services and facilities to a large majority of the population. There was a strong belief in Sri Lanka that achieving these goals required popular participation. But participation, as Wanasinghe notes, has been perceived of 'more as an instrument mobilizing support of the public for specific projects and activities rather than as a state wherein the public participate directly in the decision-making process' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 6). The central government did not interpret its advocacy of popular involvement to require devolution of planning and implementation responsibilities. However, it was the worsening food crisis of the mid-1960s and the need to increase agricultural production among small-scale farmers that created strong dissatisfaction with central administration and the fragmentation of development programmes at the district level. Wanasinghe points out that at the village, divisional and district levels the national departments of Co-operative Development, Agricultural Marketing, Agrarian Services, Agriculture and Irrigation were each pursuing their programmes in isolation and responding to directions from their own headquarters in Colombo, without regard for the impact of each others' actions on rural communities. The senior public official in the district, the Government Agent, had little control over the decisions or operations of national departments within his jurisdiction (Wanasinghe, 1982, pp. 17-22). When it became clear that such arrangements would not achieve national goals and that district residents would not become enthusiastically involved in development activities, a different concept of decentralization and participation began to emerge. By 1980 the Presidential Commission on Development Councils would argue that Economic development as we see it is not a mere matter of 'growth' measured in terms of percentages of Gross National Product. We prefer a judicious blend between growth as such and... 'the quality of life.' That is not a mere material concept. It is more comprehensive than this in the sense that the totality of the environment in which it takes place is just as
important as economic growth itself. This shift in emphasis has other implications. It takes us logically in the direction of decentralized administration. Economic development is a mere exercise in bureaucracy if the people of the localities in which it takes place and whom it is intended to benefit do not share in the responsibilities of decision-making. (Government of Sri Lanka, Sessional Paper V of 1982, p. 32, quoted in Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 38).

Thus, responsibility for local development was devolved to District Development Councils in 1980.

Malaysian leaders turned to such public corporations, as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority to avoid the constraints of the regular bureaucracy in pursuing high-priority political and economic objectives. With a greater degree of independence special authorities could, as Nor Ghani points out, 'undertake their jobs with a greater sense of urgency and purpose . . . and be free in developing their own core of trained personnel and employing them on their own schemes of service' (Ghani, 1982, p. 2). In the case of FAMA, delegation was necessary because the government could not regulate the market directly to increase the access of poor Malay farmers. The private sector was dominated by Chinese traders, who were not organized to collect and sell the output of numerous and widely scattered small holders and padi planters, nor were they particularly interested in doing so. Delegating these functions to a public corporation was the only real alternative open to the government.

The Provincial Development Assistance Project (PDAP) in the Philippines was based on the assumption that decentralization could not be meaningful unless local governments had the technical and managerial capability to plan and implement local development activities. 'In specific terms', Iglesias points out, 'lack of local capability actually translates into shortages of trained manpower, lack of financial resources, and the fact that the major development tasks of local development were the responsibility of agents of national ministries' (Iglesias, 1982). The rationale for PDAP was that development of local technical, managerial and financial capacity must proceed or be undertaken concomitantly with decentralization.

In Nepal, USAID supported the decentralization of integrated rural development in the Rapti Zone because both aid agency and central government officials recognized that the severe problems of poverty in rural areas could not be solved from Kathmandu, which had weak communication and transportation linkages with remote regions. Moreover, the central government had limited financial, managerial and other resources with which to cope with problems of widespread rural poverty. If the problems were to be solved, the capacity of local officials to identify, plan, finance, and carry out projects would have to be strengthened (Bhalta, 1982, p. 6).

**FORMS OF DECENTRALIZATION**

Decentralization can be broadly defined as the transfer of planning, decision-making or management functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide or regional development organizations, specialized functional authorities or non-government organizations (Rondinelli, 1981). Four
forms of decentralization can be distinguished by the degree of authority and power, or the scope of functions, which the government of a sovereign state transfers to or shares with other organizations with its jurisdiction.

1. **Deconcentration** involves the transfer of functions within the central government hierarchy through the shifting of workload from central ministries to field officers, the creation of field agencies, or the shifting of responsibility to local administrative units that are part of the central government structure.

2. **Delegation** involves the transfer of functions to regional or functional development authorities, parastatal organizations, or special project implementation units that often operate free of central government regulations concerning personnel recruitment, contracting, budgeting, procurement and other matters, and that act as an agent for the state in performing prescribed functions with the ultimate responsibility for them remaining with the central government.

3. **Devolution** involves the transfer of functions or decision-making authority to legally incorporated local governments, such as states, provinces, districts or municipalities.

4. **Transfer to non-government institutions** involves shifting responsibilities for activities from the public sector to private or quasipublic organizations that are not part of the government structure.

The nine cases reviewed here indicate that all four types of decentralization were used in Asia, but that rarely were any of the four found in their 'pure' form. In most cases, the programmes were a mixture of deconcentration and delegation or of devolution and deconcentration. The use of non-government institutions such as voluntary and religious groups, private enterprises, farmers associations, rural co-operatives, and others, is common throughout Asia, although none of these cases focused exclusively on them. Five of the programmes—in Thailand, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines—illustrate the deconcentration of development planning and administration functions to subordinate units of the central government—regional, provincial and district organizations—that were financed, supervised, and monitored, if not directly controlled, by a central ministry or agency. Attempts to strengthen district planning and management in Sri Lanka prior to 1980 was also an example of deconcentration. Each case illustrates a somewhat different arrangement for deconcentration functions and a different pattern of interaction among central, subordinate and non-government organizations.

The programmes in India and Malaysia involved the delegation of functions to a semi-autonomous agency. The Small Farmers Development Agency in India combined some elements of delegation with decentralization. Although SFDA was established as a corporate body with its own governing board, it remained under the supervision of, and was financed from grants by, the central government. Mathur prefers to call the SFDA an experiment in 'controlled decentralization' (Mathur, 1982, p. 15). The Federal Agricultural Development Authority in Malaysia is a more conventional example of delegating functions to a public corporation, although it will be seen later that the Ministry of Agriculture maintained a good deal of indirect influence over FAMA’s activities.

The transfer of authority to incorporated local governments is seen in the establishment in Sri Lanka in 1980 of District Development Councils, with elected members, revenue raising and spending powers and the authority to make their own by-laws.
Deconcentration

The UNCRD cases illustrate five variations of deconcentration. In Thailand responsibility was shifted to provinces and tambons through financial grants from the central government; in Pakistan deconcentration consisted of coordinating arrangements at the subdistrict level; in Indonesia and the Philippines planning and some administrative functions were shared by national ministries with provinces; in Nepal a regional project co-ordinating office became the vehicle for expanding the capacity of district administrators to plan and implement projects; and in Sri Lanka national development activities were co-ordinated by district administrative committees, which were subordinate units of the central government until 1980.

(1) Deconcentration through financial grants—Thailand

In order to generate rural development and increase the income of poor farmers, the government of Thailand in 1975 began to set aside a prescribed amount each year from the national budget to finance small-scale projects in 5000 tambons (villages) and some low-income sanitary districts. The Tambon Council could select projects from categories determined by the National Committee on Rural Employment Generation. Most of the projects involved construction or improvement of water supply for domestic and agricultural use and construction or repair of community facilities that could increase agricultural production and household income or improve public health. The National Committee was headed by the Prime Minister and composed of high level officials of national ministries and agencies concerned with rural development. The projects chosen by the Tambon Councils had to provide employment in the farming off-season for villagers and be reviewed and approved by provincial and district committees. The Provincial Committee was headed by the Governor and composed of representatives of national ministries working in the province. It received funds according to criteria established by the national committee—usually based on the extent of damage done by the previous years’ drought and the province’s need for additional income—and allocated them among Tambons, usually on the basis of their agricultural area and farm population. It also approved project proposals and suggested changes in them, fixed local wage rates and prices of materials, monitored standards of construction, coordinated activities undertaken by more than one Tambon, and supervised the implementation of the programme in the Province. The activities of the Provincial Committee were to be linked with those of Tambon Councils through District Rural Employment Generation Programme Committees, which were chaired by the chief officer and composed of district officials. The district committees were responsible for reviewing and revising specifications and cost estimates for projects proposed by Tambon Councils, co-ordinating multi-tambon projects, disbursing funds and supervising and monitoring the implementation of the rural employment programme in the district. Both the provinces and the Tambon Councils were required to prepare annual plans and to co-ordinate their projects with those of the central government and local administrative units (Chakrit, 1982, p. 7–11). In this way, the central government maintained control over the programme but deconcentrated responsibility to provinces and tambons for allocating funds according to prescribed formulae and for identifying, designing and carrying out local projects according to national guidelines.
(2) Deconcentration through local co-ordination — Pakistan

In Pakistan, the attempt to improve agricultural production and increase the income of small-scale farmers was made through the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). The integration and co-ordination of resources and activities of national agencies at the local level would be promoted by designating project centres in rural towns (Markaz) that could serve 50 to 60 villages over a 250 to 300 square mile area. The programmes of national agencies would be integrated by concentrating their offices in the markaz and promoting, through village associations, projects that would provide agricultural inputs, credit, extension and related services (Khan, 1982, p. 26–27). Village IRDP Committees and a markaz committee consisting of representatives of each government agency and the Project Manager — were established, and the markaz committee was to work with farm co-operative federations and representatives of private businesses to integrate their agricultural development activities. The Project Manager, who was designated as secretary of the federation of village farm co-operatives and advisor to government agency representatives, would be the primary link between these two groups and the private sector (Khan, 1982, p. 30). He was appointed by the Provincial Department of Local Government and Rural Development but had no official authority over the field representatives of the national departments.

In the short term, the IRDP was to establish farmers co-operatives in each village and a federation of these associations at the markaz, prepare labour-intensive and multiple crop production plans, establish model farms in the villages and the markaz, supply agricultural inputs, credit, storage and marketing facilities, train farmers and do applied agricultural research. The long run task of the Project Manager and his staff was to help transform farmers’ associations into service and production co-operatives and eventually into social co-operative farms. The IRDP staff would arrange training programmes for farmers and credit on the basis of production plans, encourage cottage industry, generate off-farm employment opportunities, and help develop agro-processing, agricultural service enterprises and small agro-industries in the markaz. In addition, they were to assist farmers to mobilize savings, and plan and carry out rural public works and small-scale community and infrastructure projects (Khan, 1982, pp. 28–29).

In 1980, with the reinstatement of elected Union Councils, the IRDP was reorganized. A Markaz Council was created, consisting of the chairmen of all Union Councils, the Project Manager, representatives of national government agencies and a district councillor. The chairman of the Markaz Council was elected from among the non-official members, and the Project Manager was made council secretary. IRDP and the People’s Work Programme were merged into the Department of Local Government and Rural Development, an assistant director of which served as secretary of the District Council and supervised the markaz Project Managers within the district. Projects were prepared by Union Councils, reviewed by the Markaz Council and approved by the District Council, which allocated funds to local projects (Khan, 1982, p. 35).

(3) Deconcentration through district administration — Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka there have been three phases in the evolution of decentralization policies. From 1965 to 1970 attempts were made to co-ordinate the activities of
national government agencies involved in agricultural development at the district level. During the 1970s the government sought to strengthen the political influence of district co-ordinators by creating a district political authority and to provide financial resources for local development by creating a district development budget. In 1980, administrative reforms moved toward devolution and local government (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 14).

Until 1980, however, decentralization in Sri Lanka was perceived of as local co-ordination of national functions. Dissatisfaction with the fragmentation of, and lack of co-operation among, national departments led political leaders in 1965 to designate the Government Agent within each district as the co-ordinator of all national departments involved in agricultural development. He was designated as 'deputy head of department', providing him—at least theoretically—with administrative control over national technical officers working within his jurisdiction. Co-ordinating committees were established under his auspices to promote co-operation within the district and a Cabinet Committee chaired by the Prime Minister co-ordinated national agencies at the centre.

The immediate objective of deconcentrating the co-ordination of agricultural development activities in the 1960s was to overcome the serious food crisis in Sri Lanka. The Co-ordinating Committees were charged with formulating annual integrated agricultural programmes for districts and divisions; monitoring progress, overseeing the supply of support services, agricultural inputs and marketing arrangements needed to increase food production, and cutting through the bureaucratic maze at the centre to solve implementation problems (Wanasinghe, 1982, pp. 17-18).

But for reasons to be discussed later, the Government Agents were not entirely effective, the succession of a new political party to power in 1970 led to decentralization of all development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation responsibilities to the district. Government Agents would be responsible for formulating and implementing development plans, again primarily by coordinating national department representatives in the district. District Development Committees were established with the Government Agents as principal officers, Members of Parliament from the district, and senior representatives of government departments as members. Planning officers were to assist the Government Agent in carrying out development tasks. Divisional Development Councils were to serve as the link between the district body and community organizations, co-operatives and village committees.

In addition, a Member of Parliament from the ruling party was appointed as a District Political Authority (later called a District Minister) by the Prime Minister to expedite action, cut through red tape, and help overcome obstacles to the implementation of district plans. The Government Agent would thus have a channel of political influence in the capital and an additional source of authority for coordinating the representatives of national agencies. The government established a district development budget in 1974 that earmarked a specific amount of money each year—based on the number of parliamentary electorates within the district—for small-scale development activities selected by the district development committees (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 14).
(4) Decentralization through Provincial Development Planning—Indonesia and the Philippines

Decentralization in Indonesia and the Philippines was pursued through the deconcentration of rural development functions to provincial administrative units. In both cases, provincial development programmes were established by national planning and development agencies with assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In the Philippines, the Provincial Development Assistance Project (PDAP) was initiated in 1968 jointly by USAID and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) to strengthen the capability of the provincial governments to identify, design and implement local development projects in agricultural production and marketing, rural infrastructure and local fiscal administration. PDAP provided assistance to the provinces, first on a pilot basis and later throughout the country. Participating provinces had to create a Provincial Development Staff (PDS) to provide technical and management assistance to the Governor in planning and coordinating PDAP projects. USAID provided funding for staff training and technical assistance in assessing the feasibility of project proposals. PDAP assistance was provided only in these provinces in which the Governor was willing to exercise leadership and commit local resources to the projects. The Ministry of Local Government and Community Development supervised the programme and provided guidelines for project selection, planning and management (Iglesias, 1982).

A similar programme was set up in Indonesia in 1977. The Provincial Development Programme (PDP) allocated funds from the central government to support small-scale projects designed to raise the incomes of poor villagers, create employment opportunities or support local development activities. Policy was made by a Foreign Aid Steering Committee composed of high level officials of the National Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) and the Departments of Home Affairs, Finance, Public Works and Agriculture. The programme was implemented by the Department of Home Affairs through the Directorate General of Regional Development, which reviewed all PDP proposals submitted by provincial governments before they were sent to the National Planning Agency (Moeljarto, 1982, pp. 3.7-3.10).

Responsibility for planning, implementing and supervising the use of funds within national guidelines was deconcentrated to the provincial governors, who were assisted by the Regional Planning Agencies (BAPPEDAS), provincial governments before they were sent to the National Planning Agency (Moeljarto, District heads (BUPATI), along with district administrative and technical personnel and representatives of central government departments were given responsibility for project identification, planning and execution. Provincial and district planning units were expected to formulate a development programme aimed at alleviating rural poverty through processes of participative decision-making and addressing the specific conditions and needs of the districts (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 11).
Finally, in Nepal responsibility for development planning and administration was deconcentrated to regional development projects. The Rapti Integrated Rural Development Project, for example, began with assistance from USAID in 1977. Its objectives were to improve food production and consumption, increase income-generating opportunities for poor farmers, landless labourers and women, strengthen the ability of panchayat administration and other organizations to plan, implement and sustain local development activities and to increase the availability and use of national social and productive services in the region (Bhatta, 1982, p. 8).

The integrated rural development project in Rapti was implemented by a Project Co-ordination Office under the supervision of the Ministry of Local Development. The PCO was to co-ordinate all of the national agencies working within the district, provide assistance to villagers in adopting appropriate technology and review the feasibility of projects proposed by district agencies. It was also to provide technical assistance and training, information to national line agencies in the district for plan formulation, and evaluate the performance of on-going projects (Bhatta, 1982, pp. 15–20).

**Delegation**

In two countries—India and Malaysia—development functions were delegated to semi-autonomous agencies. In India, the Small Farmers Development Agency illustrated a highly controlled form of delegation, in which the incorporated bodies were supervised closely by, and were financially dependent on, the central government. The Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority in Malaysia was a more conventional public corporation to which the government delegated functions that could not be easily carried out by regular bureaucratic agencies.

The Small Farmers Development Agency was established in 1970 to identify small-scale and marginal farmers and agriculture labourers who required financial and technical assistance, to draw up plans for agricultural investment, and to help solve the production problems of these groups and improve their economic conditions. SFDA was also to help formulate and implement local projects, review the impact of proposed investments on small-scale agriculturalists, assist poor farmers in obtaining adequate credit to improve production, and provide risk coverage for their loans. In addition, it was authorized to give grants and subsidies to credit institutions that helped small-scale farmers, provide technical and financial assistance to farmers in improving agricultural and livestock raising practices, and strengthen farm marketing and processing organizations (Mathur, 1982, pp. 12–15).

SFDA's were incorporated in the districts as registered societies with their own governing boards, but were also linked closely to the regular administrative structure. The governing boards were headed by the District Collector; a senior civil servant acted as project officer and three assistants were appointed by the departments of agriculture, co-operatives and animal husbandry. Members of the board represented government departments operating in the district, local co-operatives, and banks. Funding for the SFDA projects came from central government grants and professional staff were seconded from State Governments.
However, SFDAs operated by their own rules and procedures, had their own offices and their employees were not part of the Indian civil service.

The government's objectives in establishing semi-autonomous corporations were to transfer central funds to the districts without routing them through the States and to create district agencies that were insulated from local political pressures. Incorporation would also allow the agencies to retain unexpended funds at the end of each fiscal year (Mathur, 1982, p. 42).

Promoting agricultural marketing among small-scale farmers in Malaysia was delegated to FAMA because the government could not control the market directly and because the private sector was not organized to serve this group. FAMA was given the tasks of establishing marketing facilities and processing and grading centres, promoting new or expanded domestic and foreign markets for agricultural products, and purchasing from and selling the products of poor farmers who had difficulty marketing their goods. FAMA was also authorized to do marketing research, disseminate marketing information to farmers and regulate the practices of market intermediaries. Created as a special authority in 1975, FAMA's board of directors was appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and its director-general was a federal civil service officer on secondment for two years. Its employees, however, were not part of the national civil service; rather they were subject to FAMA's own personnel and promotion system and were not transferable to other government agencies. FAMA had offices in the States, but its state officers were responsible only for routine operations; all policies were set by headquarters in Kuala Lumpur (Ghani, 1982).

**Devolution**

Finally, among the eight cases there was one example of devolution: the creation of District Development Councils in Sri Lanka in 1980.

In Sri Lanka, dissatisfaction with coordination by district development committees led in 1980 to legislation creating District Development Councils, which were to be composed of Members of Parliament in the district and other citizens who were popularly elected for four-year terms. The Councils were empowered to raise revenue from a variety of sources and obtain loans that would become part of the district development fund. The executive committee of the Council, composed of the District Minister, the Council chairman and two council members appointed by the District Minister with the concurrence of the council chairman, was to be responsible for formulating an annual development plan. The Council could formulate, finance, and implement projects and discharge local government functions previously performed by Village and Town Councils (Wanasinghe, 1982, pp. 40–42).

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DECENTRALIZED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION**

None of the UNCRD-commissioned cases were meant to be exhaustive evaluations; they were intended to examine the structure, process and operation of decentralized arrangements for development in particular provinces and districts as
a way of identifying the factors that seemed to influence implementation of the programmes. The assessments were based on observations in specific areas that were not necessarily representative of conditions in the rest of the country.

Yet, it became clear that decentralized arrangements for subnational development planning and administration almost everywhere produced mixed results. In most cases, decentralized arrangements were successful in bringing greater attention to the conditions and needs of rural areas and additional funding for small-scale development projects. Some elicited greater participation by local officials and non-government organizations than centrally administered programmes. But all faced administrative problems, especially in co-ordinating the activities of national departments and agencies at the local level, in acquiring sufficient numbers of trained planners and managers, and in obtaining, or being able to spend, financial resources.

The Small Farmers Development Agency in India, for example, seemed to make a noticeable impact in providing services and inputs that required only distribution to individual farmers. In Alwar, Mathur notes, the programme was instrumental in increasing the number of tubewells for irrigation, pumping equipment and cattle than in constructing physical infrastructure, providing technical assistance or strengthening local institutions (Mathur, 1982, pp. 28–29). In most years, however, the SFDA in Alwar was able to allocate less than half of the funds provided to it. In five fiscal years it was able to spend less than 25 per cent of its allocations, and the average for the other five years was about 73 per cent. SFDA in Alwar also suffered from rapid turnover of staff, unwillingness of local officials to innovate or to deal with local problems creatively, difficulty in translating central government guidelines into meaningful local development activities, and was highly dependent on the central government for funds and direction.

Chakrit Noranitipadungkarn found Thailand's Rural Employment Generation Programme to be very successful in Lampang Province, but points out that not all other provinces did as well (Chakrit, 1982, p. 29). Lampang was awarded two of the three first prizes in the Northern Region in 1980 for successful dam and concrete bridge projects. In 1980 and 1981, REG projects in Lampang employed about 50,000 man/days of labour and provided work for from 4000 to 5000 people each year, increasing the income of 2000 to 3000 rural households. Moreover, the programme helped train local officials to plan, design and carry out projects that were chosen in open meetings of Tambon Councils, whereas before projects were selected by higher level government officials and carried out entirely by contractors, with little or no participation by villagers. The Rural Employment Generation Programme set in motion a process through which Tambon leaders 'are learning how to conceive useful projects, how to get things done, how to mobilize people, how to communicate with officials and businessmen'. Perhaps most important of all, Chakrit notes, is that local leaders learned 'how to work democratically through the whole process of implementation' (Chakrit, 1982, pp. 52–53).

Yet, even in Lampang Province there were some Tambon leaders who did not commit the time and energy needed to make the programme successful, and who attempted to select projects without the participation of villagers. In tambons that chose larger scale, more complex projects there was a shortage of skilled technicians needed to design and implement them.
In Punjab's Manawala Markaz, Khan found Pakistan's IRDP to be highly successful, and in Harappa Markaz, slightly better than average. He notes that in both case study areas the Markaz Councils were active in undertaking local development projects, the number and value of which increased over the years (Khan, 1982; p. 65). Provincial governments provided much of the financing for local projects, but in each markaz people made contributions and the projects seemed to benefit a large segment of the rural population. In these areas the Markaz Councils were more successful in getting national ministries and agencies to provide infrastructure and social services, however, than they were in coordinating inputs for agricultural development. Indeed, throughout Punjab local representatives of national ministries lacked adequate resources to coordinate their activities and received little support from their headquarters to do so. The technical assistance that the central ministries were able to offer was often inappropriate for small-scale projects. Thus much of the success of the programme in these two areas was attributable to the project managers' ability to get local leaders to work together on self-help projects for which guidelines were clear, funds were readily available, and which did not necessarily depend on co-operation from national departments (Khan, 1982, p. 53).

Similarly, despite the fact that the Rapti IRDP project fell behind schedule and did not entirely meet its objectives, Bhatta found that it was having a noticeable impact on this poverty-stricken region of Nepal. It promoted projects that provided sorely needed drinking water for villages, trained at least 300 people in establishing and operating cottage industries, reforested 500 hectares and provided seed and chemical fertilizers for 900 hectares of land, created a small-farm credit programme, employed local labour in road improvement and trained district administrators in various aspects of small-scale project planning and implementation (Bhatta, 1982, p. 37-40).

In Pangasinan Province in the Philippines, the Provincial Development Assistance Project was highly successful in increasing the number of roads, bridges, drinking water systems and artesian wells, but fell short in building the technical and managerial capability of the Provincial Development Staff and of other local officials in planning, financing and implementing projects on their own. The programme in Pangasinan had a high rate of turnover among staff, which made the institutionalization of managerial and technical skills difficult (Iglesias, 1982).

Those cases in which decentralization aimed primarily at co-ordinating central government activities at the provincial or district levels seem to have been the least successful. The early attempts in Sri Lanka to use Government Agents to co-ordinate agricultural development in the districts failed; they allowed local political elites to 'consolidate their exercise of power and patronage rather than foster self-management by the people' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 16). But Wanasinghe argues that they did demonstrate the need for more effective co-ordinating mechanisms and focused the attention of the Prime Minister, Parliament, and the central bureaucracy on the district as a 'development locale', within which sectoral activities had to be better integrated if they were to have a greater impact. Moreover, they paved the way for strengthening the role of Government Agents during the 1970s.

The District Development Committees and district budgets that were established in Sri Lanka during the 1970s also fell short of their goals (Wanasinghe, 1983,
Much of the funding available through district budgets was used for infrastructure and services rather than for productive activities and the intervention of Members of Parliament and local political leaders undermined real involvement of district residents in the development process. But these reforms highlighted the need for devolution of development functions to the districts, a form of which came about in 1980 (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 31).

Thus, decentralized programmes in Asia have succeeded in achieving some of their objectives in some places, but even where they have been successful serious administrative problems arose, and the factors influencing implementation must be analysed in more detail.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION**

These eight cases commissioned by UNCRD reveal a variety of factors that influenced implementation, among the most important of which were: (1) the strength of central political and administrative support; (2) behavioural, attitudinal and cultural influences; (3) organizational factors; and (4) the adequacy and appropriateness of local financial, human and physical resources.

**Political and administrative support**

The degree to which national political leaders were committed to decentralizing planning and administrative functions, the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development activities, and the capacity of field officials of national agencies and departments to coordinate their activities at the local level were strong influences on decentralized development programmes in nearly all of the cases examined.

The degree to which national political leaders supported and focused attention on decentralized programmes seems to have had a profound influence on programme implementation in a number of cases. Chakrit observes that the Rural Employment Generation Programme in Thailand attained many of its goals because it had the special attention of the Prime Minister, who chaired its national committee, which included heads of the national ministries and departments whose support was needed to make the progress operate effectively at the Province and Tambon levels. The strong interest of the Prime Minister made the programme of high priority to cabinet ministers (Chakrit, 1982, p. 5).

Wanasinghe points out that central political support was also crucial in initiating district level co-ordination of agricultural programmes in Sri Lanka in the late 1960s. District co-ordination was only successful as long as the Prime Minister gave it his personal attention and hand-picked senior administrators to serve as Government Agents. When he turned his attention to other matters, when senior administrators returned to the capital a year or two later and were not replaced by people of equal status, and when high level officials' monitoring visits became less frequent, the ability of Government Agents to coordinate the activities of national departments within the districts waned quickly (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 21).

Khan also attributes some of the success of Pakistan's Integrated Rural Development Programme in Mananwala Markaz to the attention it received from
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high level political leaders and officials. 'Frequent visits by the national elites and the representatives of donor agencies created necessary compulsions for the national departments to demonstrate their commitment to the project by opening up their offices at or near the markaz complex', he notes. 'As the Project Manager got better access to his senior colleagues, logistical support to this markaz also improved, these factors helped Mananwala Markaz to attract more institutions and physical infrastructure to its area and that way stay in the lead' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 67).

Another frequently cited factor in the ability of governments to implement decentralization was the willingness and capacity of national agencies and departments to support decentralized administrative units and to facilitate the co-ordination of development activities at the local level. Decentralization was undermined in Sri Lanka because the national civil service opposed arrangements that threatened its power and control. The civil service unions protected the prerogatives of central administrators and intervened actively in the political process to prevent a diffusion of administrative responsibility. Wanasinghe points out that

The general thrust of these interventions have been towards maintaining individuality and autonomy of respective departmental cadres, strengthening the role of the bureaucracy in decision-making, enhancing career prospects through island-wide services. These thrusts have continuously run counter to attempts at implementation of local area-focused coordination, delegated decision-making by peoples representatives, and creation of self-management organizations with their own personnel (Wanasinghe, 1982, pp. 49-50).

As a result, even when strong pressures came from the Prime Minister to co-ordinate activities within districts, many field officers resisted and the 'technical department cadres continued to maintain their allegiance to their own departments rather than to the district organization' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 22). Field officers considered the district a temporary assignment and their commitment was to national headquarters at which decisions about their promotion, salaries and assignments continued to be made.

Bhatta also notes that the Rapti Integrated Rural Development Project in Nepal was affected by the reluctance of national ministries to co-ordinate their activities within districts. Although the Chief District Officer was responsible for co-ordinating the operations of central line agencies, the control of central departments and ministries remained stronger, and each ended up acting separately and sometimes in isolation from the others (Bhatta, 1982, p. 55).

Even in areas where Pakistan's IRDP was successful, the support and co-operation of the national departments remained weak. Khan observed that in Mananwala and Harappa representatives of some agencies such as the Irrigation and Industries Departments, the Agricultural Development Bank and the Punjab Agricultural Development and Supply Corporation rarely attended meetings of the markaz council. The Project Manager could get little support on technical matters from the national departments and often the kinds of advice they provided were inappropriate for the small-scale development projects being undertaken at the
local level. In neither markaz did representatives of most national departments receive adequate financial resources or transportation from their headquarters to be able to attend frequent co-ordinating meetings or to integrate their activities in the field. The IRDP approach did not fit well into the operating procedures of most national agencies and they made little effort to change their ways of doing things to facilitate or support district development planning and administration. Khan notes that they ‘only associated themselves with this programme as unwilling partners’, (Khan, 1982, p. 53) and that

Each department and agency continues to pursue its programme independently. Even the farm inputs, credit and agricultural extension agencies have not been able to properly integrate their field operations. Farmers from the two case study areas reported that they have to approach each of these agencies separately to avail themselves of their services. These farmers also mentioned that they do not look towards the Markaz as a source of supply of farm inputs and supporting services. They continue to go to the same old sources for meeting their needs to which they used to go before the introduction of the IRDP in their area (Khan, 1982, p. 73).

Under these circumstances the success of IRDP depended almost entirely on the participation and cooperation of local leaders.

**Behavioural, attitudinal and cultural factors**

Effectiveness in implementing decentralized programmes depended in every country on behavioural, attitudinal and cultural factors, among the most important of which were the commitment of local officials to decentralizing development, the quality of local leadership, the attitudes of rural people toward government, and the degree to which traditional customs and behaviour were compatible with decentralized administrative arrangements.

In several of the cases—SFDA in India, IRDP in Pakistan, the Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka and FAMA in Malaysia—the centrist attitudes and behaviour of national government officials was revealed in their unwillingness to give local administrators discretion in carrying out local development functions. In the case of FAMA in Malaysia, state and district officers of the Authority were given virtually no autonomy in making decisions, even though they were dealing with unique and quickly changing conditions. Their lack of control, or even influence, over the prices they paid for crops or the disposition of the products they acquired severely constrained their ability to react flexibly and effectively in carrying out the Authority’s mandate. The Assistant State FAMA Officers, who worked at the district level in daily interaction with the farmers, could only make recommendations to FAMA headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, where all operating decisions were made. Thus, although he is, to all intents and purposes, the chief businessman for the [Agricultural Marketing] Centre’, Nor Ghani points out, ‘he cannot conduct business according to his own terms and must continuously be guided by FAMA headquarters in Kuala Lumpur’ (Ghani, 1982, p. 16).

The success of the Indonesian Provincial Development Programme in Madura
dependent in large part on the willingness of provincial and local officials there to take on the additional work entailed in making the decentralized system work effectively. Moeljarto points out that the PDP and especially the Small-Village Credit Programme were very labour-intensive and the officials' time had to be allocated to a large number of new and unfamiliar tasks, including initiating 'bottom-up' planning, selecting target group participants, setting up new administrative arrangements that are responsive to local conditions and needs, training local leaders to manage the programmes, implementing the projects, monitoring and evaluating their progress and preparing requests for reimbursements (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 6-11).

But in most countries, field officers or local administrators were reluctant to take the initiative in dealing with development problems, to exercise their leadership or to perform their tasks innovatively. This was due in part to the dependency of local officials on central government agencies and in part to social or cultural factors. Bhatta notes that field officers of national ministries and local officials played a passive role in the Rapti Project, preferring foreign advisors to take the initiative:

Except in a few cases, the line agency people are not found playing the role of leaders, rather their role has been played by the experts and advisors attached to the programme. There is a general practice among villagers: they like to follow the instructions given to them by foreigners rather than those given by Nepali citizens. It is their belief that the foreigners know more than the local people (Bhatta, 1982, p. 47).

In India, those who managed the Small Farmers Development Agencies were given little discretion by the central bureaucracy—nearly all procedures and activities were prescribed by central rules and regulations—and there is little evidence that they were willing to innovate or take risks even when the opportunities arose. Mathur found that 'even where the agency is exhorted to adopt its own methods as determined by local conditions, it chooses to work in the well trodden path of central guidelines'. In Alwar, for example, all of the projects were adopted 'from the shelf of schemes provided by the government' (Mathur, 1982, p. 68).

The behaviour of local leaders was extremely important in nearly all of the cases examined. Chakrit found that in the villages in Thailand that were successful in implementing the Rural Employment Generation Programme, the relationships between the chief district officer and Tambon Council leaders were strong and the Tambon leaders played a vital role. Where local leaders were not skilled, honest and willing to commit their time and energy to initiating, following through on obtaining approval, and supervising the projects, they often failed or the financial allocations to the village were squandered (Chakrit, 1982, p. 60-61).

The success of the Indonesian Provincial Development Programme in Madura was also attributed to the positive attitudes of and strong leadership by provincial and local leaders. Where village leaders were willing to take initiative and to cooperate with higher level officials, the programme usually succeeded. In areas where the small scale credit schemes worked best, Moeljarto found 'the village head plays more than a pro forma role and does the groundwork for the operation of the programme' (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 5-18). Village leaders explain the
objectives of the programme and their rights and obligations to the villagers, and only after these preparations have been made do village leaders, the officials of the small village credit programme, and other community leaders—with some guidance from the subdistrict head—select those to receive loans. This open, participatory and co-operative process accounts for the smooth operation of the programme and the good record of loan repayments in successful villages. 'The result is remarkable', Moeljarto observes. 'The commitment of all [local leaders] as manifested in their cooperative behaviour and shared responsibility becomes one of the keys to the success of the KURK programme...’ (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 5.18). In villages where this leadership and co-operation were lacking, loans were often made on the basis of favouritism and to high-risk borrowers, resulting in many bad debts.

The success of the small village credit programme in many communities in Madura was also due to the ability of officials to attain the co-operation of influential informal leaders and to overcome, ameliorate or avoid the potentially adverse effects of traditional behaviour. The case writer observed that in Madura informal leaders are almost identical with kyais, i.e. religious leaders who, while not formally a part of the bureaucracy, play an influential role in society. They are very knowledgeable in Islamic dogma and religious rituals and constitute the desa [village] elite. The more orthodox kyais tend to perceive paying interest as haram or religious taboo. The provincial government is very well aware of this religious prohibition as interpreted by orthodox kyais, and therefore, prefers to use the term 'management fee' instead of interest. Even so, not all religious leaders buy the idea. Close and continuous communications and cooperation between KURK [Small Village Credit Programme] officials and religious leaders is indispensable for the success of the programme (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 5.18).

But decentralization in some countries also allowed local political leaders or elites to capture or dominate the programmes for their own ends. In Pakistan, local political interests strongly influenced the process of resource allocation for IRDP projects. Some chairmen of Union Councils who were members of the Markaz Council attempted to get proposals for their own villages approved, but were apathetic to, or opposed, projects for other villages (Khan, 1982, p. 68). In Sri Lanka, district development planning was weakened during the 1970s because Members of Parliament and other influential politicians were able to exercise strong influence in selecting projects financed from the district budget. Technical factors and feasibility assessments were often disregarded. 'The involvement of appointed party cadres was perceived as bringing about participation of the people in development decision-making', Wanasinghe noted. 'Narrow political interests favouring specific projects were perceived as articulation of public demand. Aggregation of individual electorate preferences in projects was perceived as district planning.' As a result the administrator came to be viewed as subservient to narrow political interests and 'recruitment to administration was perceived of as a logical compensation for loyalty to the party' (Wanasinghe, 1982, pp. 28-29).
Organizational factors

Such organizational variables as the clarity, conciseness and simplicity of the structure and procedures created to do decentralized planning and administration, the ability of the implementing agency staff to interact with higher level authorities, and the degree to which components of decentralized programmes were integrated, also influenced their outcome.

The difficulty in co-ordinating the activities of local administrators and national department representatives has already been described. Part of the problem was due to the low status of officials placed in charge of the programmes. The staff of the Small Farmers Development Agency in India did not have fixed tenure and, as Mathur points out, ‘responded to the erratic government policy of postings and transfers’ (Mathur, 1982, p. 67). The programme was headed by the District Collector and was only one of the many activities for which he was responsible. Mathur suggests that the government deliberately organized the programme in a way that would keep it dependent on the central ministries. ‘The result was that partly by design and partly by environmental influence, the unique characteristics of the new agency never attained sharp focus’ (Mathur, 1982, p. 67).

In Pakistan, IRDP Project Managers had virtually no formal powers to compel co-operation by representatives of national departments. Whatever success they achieved at the markaz level depended on their individual skills in persuading field officers and heads of local organizations to participate in Council activities and not on an organizational structure that facilitated or required integration of national efforts at the local level.

Where decentralized programmes were organized in a way that made their purposes, structure and procedures clear, concise and uncomplicated they seemed to have been much more successful than where the purposes were ambiguous and the procedures were complex. For example, the goals of the SFDA in India were overly ambitious and its procedures were difficult to apply at the local level. As the programme was designed, about 50 million households would be eligible for aid. But at the rate at which SFDA was able to provide assistance Mathur estimates that it would take about 50 years to reach the beneficiaries; if population growth in the target group was considered it might take 150 years. Moreover, there was a large gap between central planners’ rhetoric and what central officials were willing to allow local administrators to do. ‘At the central level the planners usually talked in high ideal tones and insisted that the local level officials needed to respond to local situations and not to central instructions’, Mathur contends. They told local officials that the most important goal of the programme was to raise the income of beneficiaries and that loans and subsidies were only a means to that end and not ends in themselves. But ‘these ideas somehow failed to percolate down’, he argues (Mathur, 1982, p. 67). In reality, SFDA staff were shackled by detailed central rules and regulations, many of which were inapplicable at the local level. Evaluations were based on the number of loans made rather than their impact on beneficiaries. The banks that made the loans to small scale farmers were more concerned with repayment than with the effects on agricultural production.

The difficulties of implementing decentralization in Sri Lanka can also be attributed to ambiguity in design and organization. Purposes of the district budget were never clarified and as a result varying interpretations emerged, ‘ranging from that of the provision of an electoral fund to the dawn of a district planning and
budgeting exercise'. Wanasinghe points out that 'this resulted in confusion, with the more conscientious elements in the bureaucracy attempting to inject techno-rationality into the programme and the Member of Parliament seeking to entrench his or her position in the electorate through distribution of favours' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 44). Moreover, the district budget process was never well integrated with the co-ordination functions of the Government Agent and as a result, 'the whole issue of providing resources to match decentralized responsibilities remains unresolved' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 36).

The ambiguities remained in the design of District Development Councils established in 1980. The relationships between the Councils and national agencies, for example, were left undefined. The District Ministers appointed in 1981 were not from electorates in the districts to which they were assigned. Wanasinghe notes that 'they derive their authority from the Executive President, owe their tenure to him, are not recallable by the people of the districts they are ministers of, and, on these counts if they are agents of anyone they are agents of the government at the centre rather than the people at the periphery' (Wanasinghe, 1982, p. 39).

In Indonesia and Thailand, however, clearly defined purposes and procedures allowed programmes to progress more smoothly and effectively in many areas. Chakrit points out that 'the central government has carefully laid down the responsibility and the authority, as well as the expected roles of respective levels of government' (Chakrit, 1982, p. 60). In Indonesia, rules and procedures were realistic and applicable at the local level. Provincial officials guided and supervised the programme to ensure that it was carried out effectively, but left room for local initiative and flexibility. Moeljarto comments that the 'frequency of visits of provincial BAPPEDA and sectoral staff from Surabaya to Madura for guiding, supervising and monitoring activities seems to be high', and that this not only motivated local officials but created a system of checks and balances that maintained effective implementation (Moeljarto, 1982, p. 64).

**Financial, human and physical resources**

The UNCRD cases also underline the crucial importance of adequate financial resources, skilled personnel and physical infrastructure at the local level.

The adequacy of financial resources and the ability to allocate and expand them effectively were noted in nearly every case. The lack of independent sources of revenue weakened the SFDA's ability to carry out its tasks in India. The dependence on central government grants kept the SFDA under the control of the central bureaucracy.

In some countries it was not the lack of financial resources that created problems but the inability of decentralized units to spend the money they received. In Nepal, nearly 80 per cent of the funding for the IRDP in Rapti came from USAID and there was no dearth of financial resources. The problem was getting the USAID funds, which were channelled through the Ministry of Finance in Kathmandu, to the Project Co-ordination Office in a timely manner. In fiscal year 1981–1982, for example, it took five months for allocated funds to reach the project. The central ministry imposed its standard rules on expenditure transactions and did not allow project managers to transfer funds from one budget item to another. When funds were late reaching the PCO, projects were delayed or postponed until money became available.
An equally important factor influencing programme implementation was the availability of skilled staff at the local level. Many programmes were plagued with shortages of trained technicians and managers. The SFDA in India was especially weakened by the rapid turnover of personnel within districts. In Alwar, Mathur observed that the average tenure of the District Collector—who headed SFDA—had been 17 months, and of the project officer 18 months. Although one project officer stayed for 48 months, this was rare, and during his term there were three changes in District Collector, two in agricultural project officer, two in the animal husbandry officer and five in the co-operatives officer. The knowledge that posts were temporary gave local officers little incentive to take responsibility for their functions or to build effective teams to co-ordinate their activities (Mathur, 1982, pp. 47-48).

Similarly, in Sri Lanka the officers assigned to the districts saw them as temporary appointments which they would hold only until they could get an assignment in the national capital, and were not willing to take risks or make mistakes that would threaten their promotion or reassignment.

In Pakistan, the technical personnel available to the Markaz Councils were quite limited. 'Only one sub-engineer is attached to the Project Manager', Khan observed. 'It is rather difficult for one person to look after the development work in all the 50 to 60 villages falling in the Markaz territory' (Khan, 1982, p. 50). Moreover, the Project Managers were often inadequately trained to do their jobs. Most were either agricultural technicians or generalist administrators who had little or no experience with area-wide planning and development.

Bhatta points out that the Rapti project in Nepal was also constrained by the lack of trained technicians and managers and by the unwillingness of those with adequate training to live and work in the region. Ninety per cent of the project office staff were low-level, ungaZetted, employees, who were capable of carrying out only the most basic and routine tasks (Bhatta, 1982, p. 21).

Finally, physical conditions and the adequacy of physical infrastructure seemed to affect the ability of field officials to implement decentralized programmes. Many of the areas in which the programmes were set up were rural regions or provinces remote from the national capital and in which settlements were not linked to administrative centres. The co-operation and interaction envisioned in the design of decentralized programmes were difficult to achieve because of poor roads, lack of transportation to villages and towns, and poor communications systems. Khan notes the difficulties national department representatives had in travelling to the markaz for meetings or to the 50 to 60 villages that were within the jurisdiction of the markaz centres. The Rapti zone in Nepal was physically isolated from the national capital and communications and transportation facilities between the headquarters of the Project Co-ordinating Office and districts in the Rapti region were extremely weak. 'Communications is one of the biggest problems in expediting the programme in the zone', Bhatta noted (Bhatta, 1982, p. 46). The Project Co-ordination Office, located in Tulsipur, was 20 km from Dang and the other four hill districts were further away. Nearly all of the communications took place through official correspondence or, in urgent situations, by wireless because of the difficulties of travelling from one part of the region to another or between the region and Kathmandu. During the monsoon season it could take up four days to travel from one district to another and in this period there was virtually no communication between the PCO and the line agencies.
CONCLUSION

Thus, although decentralized programmes were initiated for quite different reasons and have taken different forms in different countries, many of the problems that arose in formulating and implementing them seem to be common and recurring. It is to these problems—increasing political and administrative support for decentralization from the centre, organizing programmes in ways that are conducive to field management, creating or changing attitudes and behaviour of central officials, field staff and rural residents toward decentralized planning and management, and providing adequate financial, human and physical resources at the local level—that the attention of international assistance organizations and governments of developing countries must turn if such programmes are to be carried out more efficiently and effectively in the future.

Clearly, the administrative capacity of local organizations must be strengthened before new functions and responsibilities are assigned to them. The tasks of central ministries and agencies must be reoriented in a decentralized system of administration from control to supervision and support, and their capacity to strengthen local governments or administrative units must be expanded. Decentralization holds new opportunities and responsibilities for both local administrators and central bureaucracies, but it will not succeed unless they mutually support and reinforce each other. Finding ways of building the capacity of local administrative units to implement development programmes and of eliciting the support of central bureaucracies in that task offers an important challenge to governments of developing countries in the years to come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is a revised version of a paper prepared for the Project on Implementing Decentralization Policies and Programmes at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, Nagoya, Japan. The author is grateful for the assistance of Dr. G. Shabbir Cheema of UNCRD. The opinions and conclusions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

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