

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF TWO INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SRI LANKA ADOPTING THE PROCESS PLANNING APPROACH

Shafinaz Hassendeen

The distortions produced by the production oriented development efforts (the Green Revolution) in the 1960s gave rise to a new ideology, which has been dominating many national planning efforts (in less developed countries) as well as Development Assistance Administration. The essence of this latter strategy - "Integrated Rural Development" (IRD) - is that "poverty has not one but a multitude of causes and rural development requires, in practice, a strategy which will integrate a wide variety of factors" The strategy it is said not only permits planners to focus on the poorest and intervene more directly in favour of the marginal rural population but it also retains the productivity objectives.

The experiences of IRD programmes, however, shows that it has encountered many problems, and has achieved little success in its goal of alleviating poverty, while some have criticised the strategy itself. That it tries to do everything and ends up doing nothing. (Steedman 1977; Ruttan 1979; Morns and Gwyer 1983) Others attribute the failure not to the strategy but to the way it has been applied (Crenner et al 1983/84). The latter view the "blueprint" approach (with its rigidity and top-downness) which has been used predominantly as the cause of this failure. They argue that the application of the process approach which is more flexible and bottom-up will have more success. Being a fairly new approach its feasibility and effectiveness has not been evaluated.

The IRDP strategy has been adopted in Sri Lanka since the late 1970s by the government in an effort to "bring about balanced regional development; and to widen economic opportunities and enhance living standards in rural areas". These programmes funded by foreign donors are being undertaken in eleven of the twenty-four administrative districts of Sri Lanka. An interesting feature of these IRDPs is that while the blueprint approach is being tried in some districts, others are adopting the processes approach.

The aim of this paper is to examine two IRDPs adopting the process approach with the objective of ascertaining

- (1) the problems and constraints encountered in the application of this approach; and
- (2) the feasibility of adopting such an approach in a national strategy for regional development.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of what IRD really is, and the two different approaches (the process and blueprint) adopted in the application of the strategy, including a short synopsis of the two approaches as found in Sri Lanka. The processes approach adopted in Hambantota and Moneragala districts is then outlined to elicit the constraints, problems etc. of the approach. The final section shows that the approach, though viable in itself, largely depends on the personality and integrity of the programme or project manager/director. The complexities involved in coordination and management, when applying this approach to IRD, limit its potential as a tool for large regional development projects. It could however be used more successfully in smaller (area based) rural development projects.

Conceptualisation of integrated development and integrated rural development programmes

The absence of conceptual clarity with regard to the notion of integrated rural

development (IRD) has produced innumerable definitions of the term by an equal number of social scientists and developmentalists interested in rural development.

What does this term mean? The con-

15

cept of rural development itself, whether integrated or not, has been a point of debate for many years. Many less developed country (LDC) governments use the term in the literal sense, that is any development initiatives undertaken in rural areas. Other LDC governments have seen rural development as the coordination of a set of functions at either the central government level, regional level, or both to bring about development in rural areas.

For development theorists such as Cohen, rural development means "the improvement of the quality of rural life". Agencies such as the World Bank are even more specific, for them it means improving the economic and social life of a specific group of people, i.e. the rural poor. This confusion as to whether rural development is a strategy for improving rural life, or merely a means of administrative action to achieve the former, has also been transferred to the term Integrated Rural Development. This is clearly seen in an article written by Cohen in 1979.

In this article he shows the diverse ways in which the concept is used. Mosher, her says, sees IRD as the integration of project activities combined to reach the particular objective of either increasing agricultural production or increasing the satisfaction (economic or not economic) of rural living. These activities are usually in selected areas, particularly those with limited resources. To others such as Leopoldt what is integrated is not activities but the goals. For him "IRD is different from general agricultural and rural development because as a matter of policy it places greater emphasis on development of human resource potential and on achieving a more equitable access to resources and fairer income distribution".

Another view of IRD emphasises spatial planning. They see it as the integration of local projects, for rural development, into the strategy for balanced, urban and regional development (Friedmann 1975; Rondinelli and Ruddle 1976). To Uma Lele integrated rural development programmes (IRDPs) were one of the five types of rural develop-

ment projects found in Africa. IRDPs were essentially regional development programmes that focussed on making an impact on a given area in as short a period of time and were mainly on the initiative of donors. Although she does not specifically define it these programmes include diverse activities seen as prerequisites to reach certain rural development objectives.

Although there seem to be certain areas of common ground covered by these different views, they do not provide any clear systematic insight on the concept. Whilst elements of these definitions could be identified in some projects which are termed IRDP, they cannot be in others.

This conceptual confusion probably is due to the origin of the strategy. It originated not as a concept which was later applied as a strategy but as an operational strategy in the 1960s and 1970s. It was an outcome of the disillusionment with the elitist biased productive oriented approach (the Green Revolution). Moving thus to more comprehensive programmes to combat the problems of the rural poor, the Comilla Project undertaken in 1966 and funded by the Ford Foundation, was the first of these projects. It was envisaged that the only way of increasing agricultural production in India and alleviating poverty was through a comprehensive multi-pronged effort. This approach which was adopted in Comilla was seen by some as a revival of the community development approach of the fifties which had preceded the 'green revolution'. The only difference according to them was that its proponent stressed the integration of the numerous activities. This much publicised Comilla programme was succeeded by a number of projects which were called IRDP.

An examination of the material on IRDPs undertaken in most LDCs does not give a clearer picture of what IRD really is. Programmes that have the prefix 'integrated' take many diverse forms. Some LDC governments see the coordination of policy making and administration of several sectors and ministries to bring about development in

rural areas as IRD. The donor agencies such as the World Bank see it as targeted action on the rural poor to integrate them into the rural economy. With these divergent views of IRD it is not surprising that projects which are multi sectoral; projects which cover only one sector but include a number of sub-sectoral activities; projects managed through decentralised administration; agricultural projects; area based projects. Disillusionment with this strategy began to show in the late 1970s when the expected results were not reached. Criticism came from within the agencies adopting it as well as from outside (Uma Lele 1975; Crener et al 1983/84; Ritcher 1981; Cohen 1979/80; Hunter 1977). It was recognised that the benefits of the development efforts did not reach the intended beneficiaries.

While some questioned the strategy itself, for others such as Crener et al the problem is not with the strategy but with the manner in which it has been applied, i.e. the method of planning and implementation. The goal of rural development according to Crener et al is the alleviation of poverty. Poverty has many causes, not one, and the IRD strategy fulfils the need for an approach which integrates all of these variables. According to them the 'Blueprint approach' (with its rigidity, short life span and top-downness) of planning and implementation which was predominantly used in IRDP was the reason for the strategy's failure. They were of the opinion that process approach (with its bottom upness, flexibility, longer life span) could cope better with the realities and uncertainties of planning for rural development in LDCs.

IRDPs in Sri Lanka

IRDPs in Sri Lanka are a fairly new phenomenon. Although the first project was initiated only in 1976 by the World Bank, implementation began only in 1979. Since then IRDPs covering 12 of the 24 districts (largest regional administrative unit) of Sri Lanka have been established with external donor assistance. Negotiations with donors were under way to begin such projects in 6 other districts. Despite all the IRDPs being undertaken within the framework

and community projects or in projects such as sanitation and community dug wells where there is no implementing agency. Projects such as the latter projects usually are implemented by the people themselves with the help of local level extension workers. The PU coordinates the activities and the funding. Village level organisations— especially rural development societies and Gramodaya Mandalayas (village council) are also being used to implement the target group/areas based projects. In such instances they are assisted by the village level workers of the relevant departments. For instance agricultural extension work is done by the agricultural extension officer. Input supplies are handled by the official of the agrarian services department and so on.

Recognising the fact that undertaking certain activities such as community development work is beyond the scope of the state bureaucracy, an attempt of national policy, they vary in scope, focus and perception. This in a way can be attributed to the different approaches and tools utilised by the different donor agencies. The IRDP funded by international agencies such as the World Bank and IFAD use the 'blueprint approach', while those funded by bilateral agencies have been adopting the 'process approach'. All the IRDPs however are multisectoral and area based.

The development of rural areas and the improvement of the quality of rural life has been a major objectives in the development strategies undertaken by governments since independence. The strategies to promote national social welfare, to build up the rural economy, particularly focussed on the development of peasant agriculture and the promotion of irrigation and settlement schemes were the strategies that had a substantial impact on rural life. Poverty however continued to dominate the rural areas. IRDPs were seen by the present government as an important vehicle for accelerating growth in rural areas, particularly of backward districts which did not benefit from the large scale and extensive development projects such as the Mahaweli Development Scheme, the urban development scheme and the free trade zone.

It is envisaged that this strategy will facilitate greater allocation of resources to the rural sector within a system of decentralised planning and implementation (which has evolved in the last decade). Of the 12 IRDPs 5 were funded by the World Bank, 1 by IFAD and SIDA and 2 each by Norway and the Netherlands and 1 by Sweden.

Exemplification of the blueprint and process approach

The projects funded by the World Bank and IFAD take the form of 5-year plans, for activities specified by sectors. The plans also specify annual targets of achievement and expenditure. A project plan is required by the funding agency prior to signing of the agreement for funding and any subsequent deviations to the plan are looked upon with disfavour, the only flexibility being in the location of the sectoral activities to be decided during the course of implementation.

The scale of funding is much larger in these IRDPs, compared to the country sponsored ones, and the emphasis of the project is on production and income growth, thus focussing on infrastructural projects. The project plans are prepared by an interministerial working group (including expatriates) specially selected by the funding agency on the basis of available sectoral and technical data, short surveys, and rapid rural appraisals. The IRDP project office is set up at district level separately from the existing planning unit to coordinate the programme. Both the planning unit and the project office are under the Ministry of Plan Implementation which is in charge of IRDPs. The project office is not involved in the planning of the project but only in administering and implementing the plan according to schedule.

This approach has been and can be criticised for a number of reasons including: the inadequacy of the hurriedly prepared plan to recognise the problems existing in a complex situation; the lack of decentralised planning, and people's participation in project identification; the inefficiency and errors that could arise due to preplanned interventions into varied and constantly changing

society and making rapid and decisive choices on sectors and activities in an isolated manner. The major challenge of the planner thus becomes the designing of an efficient system of organisation and activities for producing outputs. Production outputs therefore become the major concern for project administrators. Reviewing the Sri Lankan IRDP programme, Rao et al observed that 'in the IRDPs funded by the World Bank they missed the concern and systematic attempt to achieve intersectoral linkages but contrary to expectations they observed contact between the implementors and beneficiaries. A certain degree of flexibility was also observable like modification of targets, in the light of actual pace of implementation and substituting projects with poor performance with new ones. However it could be concluded that the inadequacies that are pinpointed are really obstacles to the benefit of the projects reaching the poorest in these districts.

In contrast, the approach followed by the country sponsored IRDPs is more flexible, open-ended with the objective of long or medium term intervention.

The planning unit/project office at the district level undertake both planning and implementation while the aim of these programmes are to develop the district as a whole through increased production, priority is placed on channelling resources to the poorest section of the population. Concentrating less on infrastructural activities, they tend to choose a package of activities during the process of the project period, which would cater to the needs of these groups and areas. The flexible annual or short term 'rolling plan' procedure has been adopted in their efforts to reach this goal.

Some salient features of the 'process approach' adopted in the Hambantota and Moneragala District IRDPs

The Hambantota IRDP (HIRDEP) and Moneragala IRDPs (MONDEP) are both funded by the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) and were initiated in 1979 and 1984 respectively. The model of recurrent planning (rolling plan) has been adopted in both IRDP, and no time limits have been set in either case.

Project Management

These are the only two IRDPs where a separate project office was not established. The existing planning units (PUs) were strengthened to undertake the functions of both the regular planning unit and the project. The conviction (by NORAD) behind the establishment of such a unit was that it would contribute directly to the strengthening of the planning and administrative capacity of the district, being a normal line agency the PU could expect better cooperation from the ministerial line agencies in the district which were to undertake the implementation of the projects. It also enables the project director (in principle) to exercise a coordinating role over the various sources of district funding (the decentralised budget, the regular departmental budgets and the IRDP budget). The main function of the planning unit however is the coordination of the planning and implementation of the IRDP.

Planning Procedure and Planning

The Sri Lankan authorities and NORAD agreed at the inception of HIRDEP that "the goal of the planning

endeavours is a comprehensive integrated plan for development of the District. comprehensiveness and integration will be realised gradually through a revolving planning procedure". It was envisaged that knowledge obtained through systematic monitoring of the programme, and studies would enable the yearly revision of the District plan to achieve the expected goals.

However in practice the project commenced with a few projects (mainly infrastructural and sectoral) planned in isolation from each other. The district plan was never really applied but a system of integrated planning gradually emerged as the programme proceeded. The programme now attempts to achieve a balance between target group oriented projects (through area based and community/local level projects) and broader sectoral projects.

Although an annual plan is submitted to the donor for approval in principle, each activity covering a sector or part of a sector has to be the subject of an individual project report submitted to NORAD for specific approval. Although

not a specific requirement in the early years of the project in the later years each project has to be justified as linked to, supplementing or complementary to the established or ongoing projects or activities. This has contributed greatly to the quality of integrated planning.

As mentioned earlier the existing administrative organisation was used for both the planning and implementation of the programmes. In HIRDEP at the inception projects were drawn up by the line ministry and submitted to the planning unit in the form of a shopping list, the planning unit's function being the vetting of these plans and selecting some to be included in the annual plan. With the evolution of new approaches (such as the area and community based projects) the Planning Unit has been increasingly involved in the planning, in collaboration with the line ministries; in some cases in collaboration with sub-district and village level institutions and in some instances on its own.

Although the involvement of beneficiaries in planning and implementation was very poor at the beginning, attempts are being made to draw them in more closely into it. This is seen specially in the area and community based projects. Not only are they consulted and invited for discussions but many village youth have been involved in household surveys and studies carried out in villages to facilitate planning. MONDEP on the other hand has benefitted from the experience of HIRDEP since its inception continuous dialogue has been established between the project beneficiaries and planning unit. The planning unit together with the line ministries have a series of meetings with the people to identify constraints, problems and projects. Thus all the planning methods used in HIRDEP are also being used in MONDEP.

Implementation

Implementation of projects has been mainly through the line ministries. However due to the increasing focus on spatial and community based multisectoral activities being undertaken, new systems of delivery are being tried out. The planning unit (PU) has begun playing an active role in implementation. It is involved in implementing projects where there has been no clear-cut implementing agency, because of the nature of the project. These include projects of an innovative nature e.g. dryland farming; projects which are multisectoral like settlement

Bibliography

- Cohen, J.M., "Integrated Rural Development: Clearing the Underbush" *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. XX, no. 3, 1980.
- Cohen, J.M., *The Administration of Economic Development Programmes*, Harvard Institute for International Development, Development Discussion Paper, no. 79, 1979.
- Crனர் et al., *Integrated Rural Development: State of the Art Review*, Canadian International Development Agency, Canada 1983/84.
- Chambers, R., *Rural Development - Putting the Last First*.
- Dias, Hiran and Silva, W.P.T., *Strategy without Ideology. Experience of Rural Development in Sri Lanka*, Division of Human Settlements Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Research Monograph no. 1, Bangkok 1981.
- Food and Agricultural Organisation, High Level mission on the follow-up to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Sri Lanka, Rome 1982.
- Hunter, G., The validity of guideline for Rural Development, ODI *Review*, 1977, no. 2.
- HIRDEP Office/Planning Unit - Hambantota Integrated Rural Development Programme, *1986 Annual Programme*, Hambantota, 1985.
- Korten, D., *Community Organisation and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach*, Ford Foundation report, 1980.
- Holdcroft, L.E. and Jones, G., "The rise and fall of community development in developing countries, 1950-65", a critical analysis in G.E. Jones and M. Rolis (eds) *Progress in Rural Extension and Community Development* vol. Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 1982.
- Lele, Uma, *The Design of Rural Development: Lessons from Africa*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- Moneragala, Planning Unit, Moneragala District Integrated Rural Development 1986 programme. Moneragala 1985.
- Agreed Minutes of the Moneragala District Integrated Rural Development Programme, Colombo May 1985.

has been made to involve non-governmental organisation such as Sarvodaya (in new settlement areas) and the Norwegian Save the Children Fund (in the fisheries villages) to undertake such activities. These NGOs are directly funded by NORAD but work in close collaboration with the planning unit to plan and implement small inputs complementary to projects implemented by the IRDP.

Coordination

The success of such a vast, multisectoral programme depends on the proper coordination of activities. By the end of 1984, 100 projects were either established, ongoing or approved. The main responsibility for this as mentioned earlier is with the planning unit. The method of approval and reimbursement (see below) are some of the tools that contribute towards proper coordination. The district coordinating committee and subject committees are also seen as instruments for coordination. The district coordinating committee is chaired by the District Minister and represented by all 25 agencies involved in the IRDP; it earlier used to meet monthly to report on progress and coordination of activities as well as discuss ways of eliminating bottle-necks. Although its importance has been acknowledged, it was felt that such a large committee could not be effective. Subsequently the committee met only quarterly and several subject committees were established (for instance, settlement schemes committee, water management committee, review committees in each assistant government agent division (sub-district level), irrigation committee). These committees constitute representatives of different ministries involved in planning and implementation of particular projects as well as representatives of the planning unit.

Contributing considerably to the coordination of activities within the district was the training programme that was commenced in 1983. This training programme on rural development planning is conducted by the planning unit in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology. It encompasses a three-stage programme. The first stage is a one month training course for district level officials of all implementing agencies. The second stage is a month's course for sub-district level officers, and the third is for village level field officers, NGO members and rural leaders. These train-

ing courses not only serve as a means of training personnel on integrated planning but also enable closer personal contact between the personnel of different departments which has benefitted the coordination of the programme immensely. Such a training programme is also to be held in Moneragala in the near future.

Financial Management

The reimbursement system (of funds) through periodical imprests has served as an efficient tool for both financial operations of HIRDEP (and now MONDEP) as well as a tool for coordinating and monitoring activities. Once annual financial limits are set by NORAD and the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). The Ministry of Plan Implementation (MPI) as the ministry in charge of IRDPs is allocated the approved estimates by GOSL. MPI then allocates quarterly imprests to HIRDEP (Planning Unit), which in turn allocates a monthly imprest to each of the implementing agencies. These imprests are renewed only when the agency has submitted a monthly report of physical and financial progress to the PU. NORAD reimburses the expenditure to GOSL once reimbursement claims are submitted by the PU via MPI. This system of imprests and reimbursement, together with the system of project approval enables the PU to limit extravagances in proposals submitted by line ministries as well as in implementation. They also provide him/her with a means of limiting political interference in project identification and planning (the donor agency can be used as an excuse for not including their projects).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation have been highlighted as the main drawbacks in HIRDEP. Although discussions for setting up a proper monitoring and evaluation unit have been going on since inception, it is only by the year 1985 that such a unit was being established. Considering that the planning procedure is dependent on feedback from projects to enable the revision etc. of projects, this seems a serious drawback. A closer examination of the working of the programme shows that an ad hoc system of monitoring has been taking place which has in a way helped to fill in this gap. The system of project reviews under-

taken by a specialised team selected jointly by NORAD and the Planning Unit to review the progress, constraints, problems etc. of ongoing projects, have been an important source of feedback. The results of reviews are discussed not only at district level by the agencies involved in implementation but also at the head office level to resolve bottlenecks. In recent years the planning unit has begun undertaking reviews on its own to establish closer contact with beneficiaries and also monitor progress.

Another important system of feedback has been the monthly meetings organised by the planning unit between project beneficiaries and the planning unit and other village level extension workers. Such meetings have been set up only for a few projects (for instance as settlement schemes; tank rehabilitation and paddy cultivation and a few others) but has proved to be a very successful means of feedback. In MONDEP a monitoring system is already in the process of being established.

The planning and management approach, especially in HIRDEP, have been gradually but constantly changing to meet the demands of a programme whose aim was to improve the quality of life of the poorest sections of the community. It could in fact be said that the five guiding principles of the process approach discussed by Crener et al have to a certain extent been adopted in Hambantota. These five principles being (a) target group participation that is facilitated by a (b) flexible and (c) iterative planning process and by a (d) refined knowledge of the environment which in turn permits (e) the emergence and reinforcement of local participatory structures capable of absorbing outside resources. They conclude that these guiding principles in themselves do not constitute a success formula in themselves as contradictions do exist. It was too early they felt to appraise the results of this approach. The HIRDEP experience could throw some light on critical issues governing this approach. **Some Critical Issues on the Process Approach Adopted in HIRDEP**

The principles outlined in the preceding paragraph constitute a considerable challenge. Even for a small programme undertaking such an approach in a programme like HIRDEP which covers a whole administrative district with a population of 430,000 people, it is no easy

task. The preceding section shows that the process approach although more conducive to "reaching the people" than the blueprint approach, could, due to its complexity, lead to a number of management problems, which in turn could affect the programme. The succeeding sections look at some of these problems.

The complexities of a multisectoral project as well as a rolling planning procedure necessitate a highly efficient system of administration to coordinate the numerous activities. Not only has the central coordinating body (as the planning unit in HIRDEP) to be efficient, it also needs authority and a capable and efficient project manager or project director. Unless responsibility is clearly defined regarding the numerous planning, implementing and monitoring activities, bottlenecks will certainly arise. Multisectoral planning requires inputs from a number of departments, agencies and persons. The inefficiency on the part of a few or even one of these could lead to serious setbacks in the programme. The high intensity of work i.e. working on the basis of annual planning increases the pressure on the staff (for they are responsible for both planning and implementation unlike in the blueprint approach where they only undertake implementation). Efficient organisation of administration and management thus becomes in itself an important task for the project director.

The complexities of activities necessary in this approach requires a well trained as well as a large staff. Both at the planning unit level and at the line ministry level. Whist et al in their review of the Hambantota programme observe that the administration and management of the planning unit suffer from a very high work load. Each officer works at least three days a week outside working hours. They conclude that without some changes in the management of the PU and decentralisation of functions, the PU will not have the capacity to cope with the work load. This however is no easy task considering the existing organisational structure and constraints with regard to trained staff. Staff constraints will certainly be a problem if the process approach is used in large programmes.

Although a strong and efficient project or planning director is a prerequisite for proper coordination of activities, it

could, as Little in her article says, lead to other problems. "The 'coordinating agencies' role is crucial yet delicate". The IRDPs require a system of horizontal authority at the district level. The project director, although of the same rank (and very often junior in age and service) as the district heads of line ministries, has, in his role as coordinator (and controller of finance) of the IRDP, to exercise a certain degree of authority over the others, which understandably is not popular with the district heads. In Sri Lanka the line of authority is usually vertical, the district heads taking orders only from their superiors in head office. Thus an organisation where authority is vertical can and does cause friction. The ideal situation in the district organisation would be if these officials all worked in teams without any one official having authority over the other and despite this being achieved to a certain extent in HIRDEP due to the training programme in 1983, the project director still controls funds and thus has more authority than the rest.

Within this context another problem also arises: the contradictions that arise between the policy of the departments and that of the IRDPs. These ministries may have to abide by national or departmental rules which may not coincide with the policies and goals of the IRDP. For instance, in Hambantota the planning unit in consultation with the people introduced a plan to desilt a number of small tanks (reservoirs) with the aim of increasing the productive assets of a certain group of people. The irrigation departmental rules (the implementing agency) however did not allow for such an undertaking as they were not cost effective, nor in their terms viable. This was so even in the case of rehabilitation of small tanks, only tanks which come within certain specifications (in terms of internal rate of return, size of tank etc.) could be taken up for rehabilitation. If selections were made on this basis some of the poorest sections of the population would certainly not benefit. The district officials are thus placed in a dilemma of choosing between the departmental rules and the needs of the people. Very often the former wins for as little says, "the horizontal authority from the Regional Planning Office is much easier to resist than the vertical authority from one's own ministry."

Contradictions of this nature could be overcome by interministerial consultations at head office level. These however

are not always successful. Ministries are usually not willing to change national priorities to include priorities of IRDPs but in certain instances this could happen. IRDPs that do not come within the national strategy however will continue to face difficulties of having to work within national policies which may not be conducive to IRDPs objectives of reaching the poorest. It has thus to be recognised that whatever the approach whether blueprint or process, unless there is political conviction to change the existing structure and alleviate poverty, such rural development programmes cannot be entirely successful.

Coming back to the planning approach itself, we see that the very nature of the planning approach could, as Perera says, lead to the overall parameter of the IRD being lost sight of, leading to a set of disjointed projects. The planning unit, being immersed in the smooth running of the ongoing programme and trying to achieve the objective of planning activities for the poorest could lose sight of integrated planning. The projects they come up with could in themselves be justifiable but may not contribute towards planned integrative action. This was apparent in HIRDEP during the first few years of the project: The programme consists of 'fragmented' projects, some infrastructural projects, some projects aimed at the poorer sections of the population, some to increase productivity, all scattered in different parts of the district. However as mentioned earlier efforts were gradually made to plan other activities around these projects, other activities that are required to achieve the objectives of the programme.

This absence of comprehensive district planning in HIRDEP has been seen by many as a serious drawback. It is true that if the aim of the IRDP is to improve conditions in the district as a whole, district planning, is necessary. Such planning however should include coordinated planning of the different sources of funding in the district. The present organisational structure of administration in Sri Lanka however does not allow such coordinated action. The planning approach in HIRDEP and MONDEP enables the planners of the IRDP to take into consideration the activities undertaken by the other sources of funding. What is required thus is a framework for comprehensive district planning and not a comprehensive district plan. This has become doubly important in the light of projects being under-

taken now at three different levels (sectoral, area and community).

Many regional plans tend to be inward looking, lacking inter-regional linkages, often resulting in wasteful duplication of projects in different regions. There is scope within the process approach to achieve such inter-district linkages but in large regional projects the complexities involved in managing the project, staff constraints etc. are bound to deter such linkages. In Sri Lanka, although all the IRDPs are administered by the same ministry and many IRDPs are undertaken in adjoining districts (almost all those using the process approach), very few inter-district linkages exist. Each IRDP is quite understandably concentrating on developing its own approach to uplift conditions in its districts. It is true that different regions need different approaches but the IRDPs in Sri Lanka cover too big a region to have effective balanced growth, whether inter or intra district.

Preceding paragraphs mentioned the system of project approval and financial management as a means for proper co-ordination of activities, limiting friction between ministries, etc. While some view this control by the donor agency as positive, others may see this more as a drawback. As Korten in his work on community organisations and rural development has noted, the donor agency is answerable to their governments, not the peasants in the LDCs. The former usually prefer to see quick and tangible results which is not possible when the process approach is used. There are also pressures on it to meet disbursement schedules which forces it to select projects which are quick to implement, whereas implementation is slow in the process oriented approach (in HIRDEP the expected targets of expenditure were never met). Such contradictions facing the donor agency places the IRDP in a very vulnerable position. The more power the donor agency wields, the more power the donor agency wields, the more vulnerable the project becomes to its influence. In this context we also have to recognise that while the process approach being flexible permits a progressive increase in activities and funding it also permits a decrease in activities and funding at the will of the donor.

We then come to the question of sustainability of the project. Whether of the blueprint or the process approach, as Uma Lele quite correctly observed, most IRDPs are funded by external donors. These funds are usually available only for a certain period of time.

Even those medium and long term (those usually the process approach) are usually 10-15 years. The question is what happens when the funding stops? One could be quite optimistic and hope that by this time poverty would be alleviated and self reliant growth taking place. But unfortunately this has not been achieved and even if it did the infrastructural facilities and services provided by the project have to be maintained and rehabilitated.

By working through the existing organisational structure HIRDEP (and the other IRDPs in Sri Lanka) have ascertained that an administrative vacuum is not created with the ceasing of foreign funds. HIRDEP and MONDEP are on a better position than the other IRDPs as the planning unit could continue to monitor and support the activities (the project office in the other IRDPs will probably be dissolved and part of it absorbed into the regular PU, who would not have the same commitment as the former). The expenditure in HIRDEP showed that working through the existing organisation does not ensure that all activities and projects established by the project will be maintained by the implementing agencies. For instance, despite it being responsible for the building of a number of roads in Hambantota, the Ministry of Highways refused to maintain them, as department rules did not permit them to do so. This was also encountered in drinking water schemes implemented by the Water Resources Board and a few other agencies. Thus in recent years NORAD has begun to follow a policy of not approving projects (mainly infrastructural and service oriented) until it is established that recurrent funds are available for the maintenance of the project and that some agency has clear responsibility for its maintenance (for instance it was finally agreed that the district council would maintain the roads and the water schemes. So not only ministries, but local government organisations and village level organisations are incorporated into sustaining the programme).

The matter of recurrent expenditure however does not arise in the case of projects such as village development and community development schemes, which are designed to be self sustaining. Projects such as these are drawn up and implemented in close consultation with the project beneficiaries, thereby envisaging at least a certain degree of success. This leads us to the next important

question does this planning approach really foster participation; and bottom up planning.

In their review of the Hambantota IRDP Whist et al commend the planning unit in their effort to reach a balance between sectoral, area and local level activities. As mentioned earlier endeavours are being made to use the bottom up approach, involving the people in the planning and implementation. An examination of the experiences so far however shows that what Chambers says about even such programmes being "vulnerable to the interception by the elite" is unfortunately true as Whist et al point out. The planning unit not only used village level workers to obtain information from the people, but in many instances held meetings in villages, inviting people to discuss their problems, constraints and possible solutions to the problem. In many villages meetings were held not once but many times. However when it came to planning it was the village level organisations that were used (both nongovernmental voluntary, such as Rural Development societies; young farmers clubs; and the local government organisation the Gramodaya Mandalaya which comprise of village level officers as well as chairpersons of village voluntary organisations). It is quite well known in fact that in Sri Lanka as well as in most other LDCs village level voluntary organisations are usually dominated by the more educated, politically influential more economically powerful people. Hambantota is no exception. The poorest as Whist et al observed did not have the time, the means of the inclination to join these organisations. The poorest in many instance have been selected as beneficiaries (for income generating activities etc.) by the Gramodaya Mandalaya or other organisation. But it is uncertain whether the full benefit of the project is really reaching them. The vastness of the programme and time constraints deter closer cooperation between the people and officials, as well as monitoring which are prerequisite to the bottom-up approach.

It could be argued that the process approach in fact could give the elite more leeway to control the development efforts. Influential politicians for instance could persuade or intimidate the project management to plan or revise plans favouring their supporter/constituency etc. In the blueprint approach the politicians' influence could be limited as the plans are predetermined.

ed they could however interfere in the implementation. The planners using the process approach however are open to interference at both stages. This has been observed in both Hambantota and Moneragala. An important element here is the personality and integrity of the project director, of whether they submit to political interference or not. In both Hambantota and Moneragala the project directors have been using the donor agencies' close supervision as an excuse to overcome this problem. Political interference need not always be seen as negative, the cooperation of politicians could and should be sought if rural development is to be successful. Without political will on the part of the government any rural development project, whether of the blueprint or process approach, is unlikely to succeed. For instance, if no attempt is made to change the structure of land ownership on the part of the government, the majority of the landless will always be left out of such programmes. Likewise if tenancy laws favouring tenants are not passed and adhered to, landlords will continue to exploit tenants, undermining the efforts of any rural development programme.

In conclusion it should be noted that it is too early to assess the impact of the programme. Efforts are being made to reach a balance between activities aimed at target groups and broader sectoral programmes in an effort to achieve the overall goal of increasing employment and incomes of the people of the district and improving living conditions especially of the poorest sections of the population.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters show that although the IRDPs in the Hambantota and Moneragala districts are moving in the right direction using the process planning approach, they are doing so, because of the commitment of the personnel working in them. The success of such an approach depends to a large extent on such commitment and especially on the efficiency, personality and integrity of the project manager. Not only does the proper coordination of the complex planning and implementation system depend on his efficiency but his integrity is required to control corruption which could easily occur due to the inherent flexibility of the approach.

The process approach in itself is a very useful tool, for it enables the development of situation specific strategies

which is a very important prerequisite for rural development. However it has to be admitted that to undertake such an approach for IRDPs on a large scale using government bureaucracy (even with a decentralised system as in Sri Lanka) is not feasible. The numerous activities that have to be coordinated and integrated can be undertaken only by a large and well trained staff. Staff constraint is one of the first obstacles that any LDC will meet if it is to adopt the process approach for large national or regional development programmes. Another problem is the proper organisation of such a large staff.

Regional development programmes such as the Sri Lankan IRDPs cover too large an area to cater to the needs of individual villages. The physical size of the programme is an obstacle to the adoption of adequate measures for popular participation in planning and implementation which is a prerequisite to the approach. Detailed monitoring and close contact with village voluntary organisations let alone the people. This therefore leads us to conclude that the process approach cannot be used successfully in large multisectoral projects.

Rao et al, in their assessment of IRDP in Sri Lanka, concluded that a two-tier system, a district tier working on an overall perspective and a tier at the divisional level doing detailed groundwork to assist and promote participation and target group planning. This however is in effect what both HIRDEP and MONDEP are now attempting with their overall sectoral projects undertaking the former and the area development approach the latter. Staff constraints and restructuring of bureaucracy to accommodate new posts however are problems to face in such a two-tier system.

One can thus conclude that this approach is more suitable and conducive to projects aimed at smaller areas, for instance a group of small villages, than for a large regional development programme. This however is also subject to the national policy being conducive to rural development.

Notes

1. Holdcroft et al, 1982.
2. Crener et al, 1983/84, p. 49.
3. Foreword in Cohen 1979, p. 1.
4. Taken from Whist et al, 1984, p. 9.
5. Taken from ODIM 1979, p. 2.
6. Cohen, 1979, p. 9.
7. Cohen, 1980, p. 203-207.

8. Quoted in Cohen 1980.
9. Uma Lele 1975.
10. Cohen, 1979, p. 12.
11. The community development approach used multi-purpose village level workers and a self-help approach to increase agricultural production and strengthen rural infrastructure (Lane et al, 1982, p.207-232).
12. ODI, 1979, p. 2.
13. World Bank 1976.
14. Crener et al, 1983/84, p. 49.
15. Each district has an average of around 600,000 people.
16. FAO, 1982, p. 19.
17. A major irrigation and settlement scheme.
18. Perera, 1982, p. 8.
19. World Bank, 1980, p. 16.
20. The regular planning unit is the district agency of the Ministry of Plan and Implementation. Its usual function includes administration of (1) the decentralised budget allocated to each electorate, (2) Family Planning programme, and (3) Collector of Census and Statistics.
21. World Bank 1980, p. 33.
22. Kortten, 1980, p. 19.
23. Crener, et al, p. 53-57.
24. The planning staff in HIRDEP include a project director, two assistant directors, two senior planning officers (expatriates) and three planning officers and two development officers (DOs) at project office and 35 DOs and 83 special services officers working at divisional level.
25. Each parliamentary electorate within a district allocated a sum of Rs. 2 m.
26. HIRDEP Project Agreement 1979.
27. See Whist et al for details (p. 51-52).
28. HIRDEP 1986 Annual Prog. 1985, p. 13.
29. HIRDEP Annual Programme 1985, P.14.
30. Agreed Minutes Moneragala, 1985.
31. Rao et al, p. 66.
32. Agreed Minutes Moneragala, 1985.
33. Crener et al 1983/84, p. 70.
34. Whist et al, 1984, p. 72.
35. Angela Little, 1985.
36. Ibid., p. 7.
37. Perera, 1982, p. 8.
38. Rao et al, 1984; Whist et al, 1984, p. 52; Wickrama 1985.
39. See Dias and Silva 1981, p. 27-38.
40. Mollet, 1985, p. 24.
41. Kortten, 1980, p. 5.
42. HIRDEP, 1986 Annual Prog. 1985, p. 8.
43. See Little 1985.
44. Whist et al 1984, p. 72.
45. Chambers 1985, p. 150.
46. Whist et al, p. 59.
47. Rao et al, 1984, p. 87.