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REACHING THE RURAL POOR: LESSONS FROM THE KENYAN
SPECIAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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Reaching the Rural Poor; Lessons from the Kenya Special Rural Development Programme

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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been increasing concern that in the eyes of the poor development can be a mockery. All too often it is biased in favour of those who are among the better off, even when projects are specifically aimed at enabling the poor to raise their standards of living. This can occur either deliberately, as a result of manipulations by national or local elites who stand to benefit, or unintentionally, because the distributive impact of the project strategy has not been fully understood in advance.** Hence if development is to be equitable in the sense that the advantages derived from it are evenly spread, special attention must be paid to how projects are devised.

From this point of view much has been learnt from the experience of projects set up under the Kenyan Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP). The SRDP was devised to find and test innovative methods of fostering rural development within an integrated framework, i.e. one in which the projects are coordinated so as to complement one another. The basic concept was testing for the purpose of replication. Six areas in different Provinces of Kenya served as pilot areas: Administrative, technical and financial resources have been provided by the Kenyan government and five foreign government donors.

"Reaching the rural poor" was the outstanding objective of the projects under the SRDP*** This objective has later, been formulated even more strongly as "more equitable development" set out in Kenya's Development Plan for 1974 to 1978 (see paragraph 10.2, Government of Kenya (6) within the ambit of which the programme has been operating.

* The authors were involved in the Evaluation of the Kenyan Special Rural Development Programme.

** See Gotsch (4) for a general discussion of this problem.

***The four explicit principles have been: experimentation, evaluation, replicability and use of local resources. Three ultimate objectives have been identified: "increased rural production and productivity, increased rural incomes, hence higher standards of living; increased rural employment opportunities and better rural life" (S.R.D.P. (14)).

In this paper just four out of the many aspects of the SRDP which might be considered as being in furtherance of this aim are examined to find out how they have fallen short of their objectives and what can be done to avoid similar failure in the future.

Two of these four aspects are actually projects set up to assist small-scale farmers, namely, (I) extension service and (II) credit projects. A third aspect concerns (III) land tenure reform, in particular the conversion of customary and often communal land rights to registered and usually individual title. Fourthly, we look at the attempt at (IV) administrative decentralisation which was carried out to foster local participation in the planning and implementation of development projects.

2. Agricultural Extension

(a) Objectives and methods of agricultural extension under the SRDP

The general agricultural extension service in Kenya deploys about 10,000 full time workers and officers under the Ministry of Agriculture. The extension worker/farmer (households) ratio is considerably below 1 to 1,000. The basic objective of the Kenyan extension service is to improve agriculture among the large masses of smallholder farmers.

Although this concept has no direct equity component, indirectly there is an aspect of more equitable development based on the intention to reach the masses of the farming population with income generating innovations and improvements.

Under the Special Rural Development Programme extension was more directly supposed to be an instrument of reaching the rural poor development as one basic SRDP objective. Since the extension agent - farmer (household) ratio is above 1 to 500, direct communication between the change agents and the farmers can be established only with a very minor part of the farming population. The concept of spread or how the diffusion process of innovations can be promoted, therefore, is of crucial importance for stimulating more equitable development.

Under the concept of spread the SRDF extension experiments can be categorized into three conceptual aspects:

1. Most progressive or best farmer approach

Channelling the spread of innovations or improvements through the "most progressive" or best farmers within an area. Existing idols are utilized as catalysts for the diffusion of innovation which is expected to trickle down the progressiveness scale in a snowball effect.

2. Intensive extension or model approach

Idols or models are created by concentrating "intensive extension" on a few promising farmers in a particular area. These built up idols or models again have the function of promoting the spread of innovation.

3. Less progressive or average farmer approach

The extension service concentrates its attention directly on "less progressive" or average farmers expecting the spread of innovation among them without a time lag intrinsic for the first two concepts.

(b) How the extension concepts tend to be perverted

Thesis 1: The most progressive or best farmer approach is theoretically based on a misinterpretation of the Rogers' diffusion theory (Rogers (11)). This approach has the opposite effect to equitable development. It aggravates economic and social disparities. It promotes dualistic economic systems in the process of rural development.

Practically this approach is followed by extension workers for a simple reason. It is easier for them to work with the best farmers. By a certain extension effort those staff members can prove formally that they have been successful by reporting the highest number of adoptions directly resulting from their work.

The misinterpretation of Rogers is based on the assumption that the change agent's system of intervention has to be in line with the "natural" social process of diffusion. Innovations in the "natural" diffusion process enter a particular social unit through the "innovators" and "early adopters" and then spread to the "early" and "late majority" and finally reach the "laggards". We can simplify the 5 adopter categories of Rogers by dichotomizing in terms of "most" and "less progressive". The following hypothesis can be derived from the theoretical concepts of innovation in relation to extension:

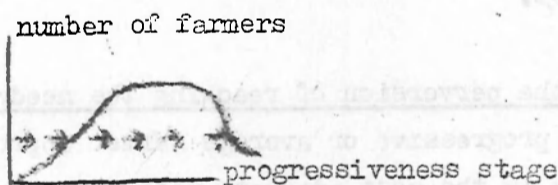
1. Starting promotion of agricultural innovation with most progressive farmers cumulates knowledge, skills and income generation among few farmers at the first instance.
2. In most rural developing societies there is a strong tendency towards social and economic discrepancies based on the very wide differences in knowledge, skills and opportunities. The agricultural activities of the more advanced section of the population tend to become incompatible with the activities of the less advanced. The concept of spread - although still valid - shows empirically a very slow and hampered trickling down of innovation - sometimes even being blocked nearly completely.
3. Extension focusing on the most progressive farmers tends to make their agricultural activities even more incompatible with the largest section of the population. Thus the spread of innovation is reduced.
4. Extension focusing on the "progressives" has another negative effect on the diffusion: recommendations for agricultural improvements - technically as well as where the farming system is concerned - are specific for the advanced farmers. They might be inappropriate for the average farmers right from the beginning of their introduction.

5. Extension can intervene in the "natural" diffusion process. Using appropriate communication techniques, adequate for the progressiveness stage of the target group, income generating agricultural innovation or improvement can be first introduced to everybody selected independently of his progressiveness in society.

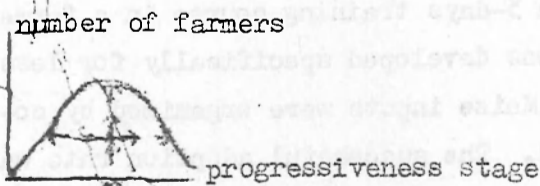
6. Further it is not the very advanced person who functions as idol for agricultural adoption. It is the person who can be identified with i.e. whose situation does not differ very much from the one of the adopter. Only the marginally better farmers therefore function effectively as idols in the agricultural diffusion of innovation.

7. If the previous two hypothesis are being accepted there is only one rationale in selecting farmers for extension: viz the farmers who belong to the majority in their progressiveness stage.

Conclusion: (a) The diffusion of income generating agricultural innovation stimulated by the agricultural extension is inefficient if devised as "frontal" strategy:



(b) The diffusion of income-generating agricultural innovation stimulated by agricultural extension is more effective if devised as "lateral" strategy:



Thesis 2: The concept of intensive extension - concentrating all efforts on a few farmers (not necessarily considering their progressiveness) to demonstrate to the others what progress can be made in agriculture is theoretically inconsistent. Models function only as long as they are compatible with the situation of the target population. Intensive extension tends to have the same effect as the most progressive approach. Model farmers are being created "artificially" who finally function like the most progressive described above.

In practice there seems to be a tendency to recruit more progressive farmers for building them up as models - combining two negative efforts for the diffusion process.

In the Kwale SRDP where an intensive extension project was conducted the selected farmers did not represent the bigger farmers in the area. An analysis of the land holding (Okoth-Ogendo (10), calculated from table 3 p.11) shows the average landsize of the model farms to be 15,56 hectares whereas the average landholding in the area is: (source: Okoth-Ogendo (10), table 2 p.5, calculated from Bumbani)

below 4 hectares	81%
4 - below 15 hectares	16%
15 and more hectares	3%

(c) Methods preventing the perversion of reaching the needy farmers

Thesis 3: The less progressive or average farmer approach theoretically is the most adequate method for initiating accelerated diffusion of innovation. But there is a lack of appropriate practical extension methods.

In the SRDP some extension experiments were conducted within this category. In a Hybrid Maize Project (Tetu SRDP, 1972/73) about 800 less progressive farmers (defined as "below average") were recruited. They had to undergo a 3-days training course in a farmers training centre. The course was developed specifically for less progressive farmers. The Hybrid Maize inputs were organized by co-operatives and credits were provided. The successful adoption rate was 97%. A random sample of about 60 farmers showed a strong diffusion effect within the same season. Two to three other farmers on average adopted Hybrid Maize

from each of the less progressive farmers although the secondary adoptors had no credit facilities (further description see Ascroft et al. (2)).

The first pilot projects for introducing Soya Beans in Kenya (Kisii and Migori SRDP, 1974) again were oriented towards the less progressive (defined as average farmers).

The technology as well as the training methods were specifically devised for average farmers. The adoption rate of the first 94 farmers was 100%. For the second planting 1,900 farmers signed application forms for seeds. The applications have to be taken as indicator for the diffusion process since limited seed availability could not satisfy the demand for seeds. This again showed a very strong diffusion process (for further description see Schönherr et al. (12)).

The practical problems of implementing the "less progressive" oriented extension approach centre around the selection procedure of farmers for extension activities (as demonstrators, for training, etc.).

1. If the recruitment of farmers is up to the judgement of extension staff there is always a tendency to select the better farmers even if the instructions are clearly against this.
2. The categorization of farmers according to progressiveness is difficult for an extension officer. Furthermore he has no information about most farmers whatsoever.

Facing this problem, the SRDP developed a procedure replacing subjective selection by objective methods: groups of farmers were chosen as neighbourhood groups (as far as possible depending on the willingness to participate). By this simple method which in effect revolutionised conventional extension procedures, farmers who represented the local population were statistically chosen. Most of the participants were "average". Furthermore the group approach is replacing the individual farm visit approach.

the first one offering a great potential for more effective communication between extension agent and farmers.

The SRDP Migori had introduced such an average farmer oriented group system in 1974 in the whole Migori Division. The greatest benefitter of this approach besides the farmers since then, has been the British American Tobacco Company. The tobacco extension was channelled through this approach in 1975 and the first heavy tobacco increase (and curing) - raising the number of growers within one season from 40 to 400 and the number of curing barns from a dozen or so to above 300 - was achieved in Kenya after many years of unsuccessful trials.

Thesis 5: Perversion of the extension aims of reaching the poor can be avoided if farmers are recruited for extension activities on the basis of objective criteria (e.g. neighbourhood groups).

Thesis 6: If extension services succeed in making average farmers first adopters of agricultural innovation the diffusion process will be much stronger than in the "natural"

3. Unsecured Seasonal Credit for Smallholders

The provision of credit for small-scale farmers is frequently suggested as a means of spreading agricultural development equitably. The rationale runs as follows: To raise agricultural production it is necessary for farmers to begin to use new seed types, fertilisers, insecticides and perhaps hire some labour saving devices such as hand-tillers, ox-ploughs or even tractors. These inputs can only be acquired with cash, which is just what small farmers lack. Banks do not find smallholders to be good risks and so special credit programmes should be set up to cater for the need.

There is much to be said for this line of argument but there are important qualifications to it. These were well illustrated in the project established in the Vihiga SRDP (Western Province) to provide fertilisers, insecticide and hybrid maize seed to smallholders. At first the loan could only be made to farmers prepared to plant two acres of maize, but this limit was reduced to one. As the average farm size in Vihiga is around two acres

and the credit was granted without security, most farmers in the area were eligible for the loan. The inputs were provided in kind and repayment made in cash after the harvest.

The first question to ask about this sort of project goes right to the first assumption on which such credit programmes are based, and that is whether all the inputs specified as necessary really are needed. The hybrid maize seeds are obviously indispensable but they are also a small cost item (less than Shs 30/- for one acre in 1975). Insecticides may be questionable but cost even less. The major, and most controversial query lies against the fertiliser including top dressing - which in 1975 cost some Shs 450/- (over U.S. \$50) for just one acre.

To begin with, it is not clear that fertiliser is always as vital as is supposed, even for a product of the Green Revolution such as hybrid maize. Often it may be possible for a farmer to raise his yields more by better husbandry practices, such as early planting, proper spacing of plants and efficient weeding, than by applying fertiliser, (Allan, (1)). The extent to which this is so clearly depends on soil conditions and prevailing standards of farming, but it is wrong to assume that raising yields requires fertiliser. To do so is to give priority to the costliest item first. It would benefit farmers more to give priority to improving the extension service so that they can learn the better husbandry. The poorest in particular would benefit if they could improve their incomes without incurring a burden of debt.

A further and related point is that where soil nutrients are to be supplemented it is not always best to follow research station recommendations concerning the application of synthetic fertilisers. Substitutes may be available in the form of compost or manure, and even when they are not, chemical fertilisers should often be applied in less than the suggested amounts. This is because the recommendations are often based on agronomic, not economic optima. The price of fertiliser can triple and yet the prescription of the research station remain the same. Here again the importance is emphasised of an efficient extension service. The aim should be to help farmers keep down their need for cash outlays on innovations instead of taking them for granted and so posing a financial constraint. This also

applies to inputs other than fertilisers. There is no need to encourage tractor hiring where ox-ploughs are available and cheaper.

The second major question to raise concerning credit programmes of the Vihiga type is whether the beneficiaries are really going to be the poorest farmers most in need of financial help. The question is not easy to answer because good data on farmers' financial positions are not available but in Vihiga there have been indications that it was often not the case. In a random sample of 300 farmers it was found that larger percentages of farmers who had obtained loans had already begun to use hybrid maize seed and fertiliser previously than was the case among farmers who did not receive loans. (Of loan recipients 93% had adopted hybrid maize seed and 76% had used fertiliser, while for farmers who did not receive the loan the figures were 78% and 36% respectively). This result is not surprising given the fact that extension services, which have much to do with the selection of loan recipients, so often have a progressive farmer bias. This does not argue against credit provision as such, but it does point to the need for safeguards if it is to be arrived at the neediest farmers.

A third and obvious question to ask about unsecured credit is whether farmers will repay. The answer is that only some of them will. The only economic incentive to repay arises when a loanee wants to establish a good reputation with the credit authority so as to be able to obtain another loan. For many farmers this motive seems to be insufficiently persuasive. In Vihiga the loan repayment rate went down from 82% in 1971 (when there were only 63 loanees, none of whom, it was discovered, really needed the credit) to 28% in 1973 (when 920 loans were made). The repayment rate went up in 1974 after an educational campaign, but remained under 50%.

What this means is that unsecured credit is an expensive way to help small scale farmers. Nor can it be considered equitable when benefits are distributed according to the propensity to default. Moreover, to insist on security by title deed is not a financial remedy because, among other reasons, the cost of foreclosing is high relative to the size of the loan. Schemes for small loans are only viable where the crop can only be sold through a particular agency and is not locally marketable. Then the loan repayments can be deducted from payout to farmers. This applies to crops such as coffee, tea, pyrethrum, and cotton. Under the right ecological and

product demand conditions loans could be made to farmers for any crop, but on the security of a non-locally marketable crop. (This idea is presently being tried out in Kenya, with cotton as the security crop). Otherwise it is probably better to subsidise the cost of essential and expensive inputs. The subsidy could be limited to the smallest farmers and for limited periods. The undoubted expense of such an approach should be weighed against a credit programme with a high rate of default.

To summarise, the importance of credit programmes for smallholders can be blown out of proportion. It cannot be considered equitable development to persuade a small farmer to saddle himself with a burden of debt that is not necessary. An extension service devoted to raising output without emphasis on the importance of expensive inputs would better meet their needs. Second, where credit is directed at poorer farmers special safeguards must be built in to the programme to make sure they get it. Third, where repayment rates are low, the deliberate provision of subsidy would distribute assistance with more precision than the unintended provision of subsidies to defaulters.

4. Land Tenure Policy.

a) The Policy Background.

Ever since the publication of the Swynnerton Plan in 1954, individualisation of land tenure has been accepted as a cardinal principle of land policy in Kenya. The argument then was that customary tenure was a major obstacle to rapid agricultural development in the African sector of the economy. Two primary defects were listed. Firstly it was claimed that the structure of customary tenure encouraged the acquisition of fragmented holdings, and incessant litigation. Both of these were said to be bad for agricultural development in that a great deal of labour time was lost in moving from one fragment to the next, and further that so much insecurity was caused by the factor of litigation that it was impossible to raise credit for or make long term investments in agriculture. Secondly it was also claimed that customary inheritance procedures often led to subdivision of holdings thus leading rapidly to units of sub-economic sizes. (see Heyer et.al. Chapter V, (7)).

Individualisation was expected to cure these ills firstly by rationalising the structure of the tenure system and location of holdings

such ~~that~~ farm planning, more efficient use of labour and proper diffusion of technical information by extension staff would be possible. Further, such rationalisation was expected to eliminate litigation thus reinforcing tenurial security. Security would then be guaranteed through registration and the issue of title deeds. The ultimate pay-off to the farmer was expected to be an ability to raise credit on the security of his holding.

It is important to stress that to a very large extent the Swynnerton Plan and later the post-independence government saw individualisation per se as capable of generating these advantages. Thus as late as 1966, it was being asserted that

(for a significant number of farmers, registration and where appropriate consolidation of their holdings stimulates increases in efficiency and output far out of proportion to the cost of the process. (see Development Plan 1966-70) para 8, p.124 (5)).

Thus individualisation was seen as pre-requisite to rapid agricultural development in Kenya.

b) Individualisation of tenure and SRDP

At the time when SRDP was launched, therefore, individualisation of tenure was already in progress on a large scale in most parts of the country. Project manuals of SRDP, thus accepted it as a 'supporting programme' the completion of which was fundamental to the success of most of the experiments which were to be initiated under the former.

The manner in which SRDP was implemented, however, did not permit this intimate inter-action. In the first instance the choice of experimental areas did not take this pre-requisite into account at all. Of the six areas chosen, only in Tetu and Vihiga was the tenure reform programme complete before SRDP was launched. And of the remaining four, only in Migori was the programme complete during the first four years of SRDP. Indeed to this date the programme has not been complete in most sections of Kwale, Mberere and Kapenguria SRDP areas. The practical implication of this, was that many of the agricultural experiments in SRDP had to be undertaken essentially on the basis of traditional tenure. This would not have produced any cause for alarm had it not been for the fact that many aspects of the SRDP package e.g. the issue of credit, farm planning assistance,

and the delivery of extension advice, were designed and administered on the assumption that individualisation had been completed in these areas. One result of this was a great deal of unevenness in the distribution of these resources both as between SRDP areas and within them as well. For example it was not unusual for the APC (the major small-scale aid organisation) to deal exclusively with registered landholders rather than with the vast majority of farmers who needed credit just as badly as the others. Similarly farm planning and extension service staff paid little attention to those areas where the tenure reform programme was incomplete. They rather preferred to work with registered holders eventhough as we argue below the actual selection of beneficiaries was based more on social status and similar criteria than the fact of registration alone.

Secondly, no active steps were taken to involve tenure reform personnel in SRDP work especially to ~~inculcate~~ inculcate them with the basic objectives of the experiment and the relevance of tenure to its viability. As a result there were cases such as in Mbere and Kapenguria, where forms of tenure inappropriate to land use patterns recommended in SRDP project manuals, were being pushed aggressively by tenure reform personnel to the great dismay of SRDP personnel. Thus individual titles were being granted in areas obviously suitable for group title. The result according to SRDP personnel in Mbere, was almost universal failure of group ranches in the area.

Thirdly, and more importantly the assumption that individualisation was necessary to the type of experimentation envisaged by SRDP operated in many cases to defeat one of the most cardinal aims of the programme namely equitable distribution of resources among the peasantry. The problems here were basically inherent to the processes of land tenure reform itself. The first related to the question of the issue of credit and farm planning information already alluded to above. Experience has shown that title alone has never been regarded as a necessary and sufficient condition for the delivery of these services. Research on the behaviour of credit institutions, and extension staff shows quite clearly that the 'progressive farmer' approach is still very much the norm. (Leonard (9)). Thus those benefitting from these services have tended to be the better educated, more highly placed and influential members of the community. In the context of SRDP this came out fairly clearly. In Kwale, ~~for example~~ those who were chosen to spearhead

SRDP experiments were not title deed holders per se. More importantly they represented the top quantile of rural society in the district. SRDP areas being very high service areas, the benefits drawn by these so-called 'progressive farmers' ~~have~~ therefore tended to be much greater than in non-SRDP areas.

The second problem related to the question of the structure of land distribution resulting from tenure reform. Without seeking to amplify the phenomenon, it can now be asserted with some truth that the processes of tenure reform (i.e. adjudication, consolidation and registration) have led to concentration of land rights into very few hands and in many cases this has been accompanied by expansion of holdings by what might be described simply as the 'rural bourgeoisie'. The phenomenon of concentration of land rights was foreseen by Swynnerton, but he regarded it as a 'normal' occurrence in development. Although it is clear that social and cultural attachments to land have combined to mitigate the rigours of individual ownership, in the context of SRDP, these may breakdown much faster than in non-SRDP areas. The effect is that actual (as opposed to potential) landlessness was in fact beginning to emerge in Tetu, Vihiga and to a lesser degree Migori. The expansion of holdings on the other hand was accompanied by stratification and the accumulation of economic and political resources into very few hands. The cumulative effect was clearly a paradox: that rather than providing a basis for an experiment in equitable distribution of resources, the SRDP was beginning to form a basis for the consolidation of power in rural society.

c) Corrective Measures and policies

The most important conclusion that may be drawn from the foregoing analysis is that the ability of individual tenure to generate development cannot simply be assumed. In the context of SRDP there should have been a re-examination of the traditional economic arguments about the role of tenure in agriculture particularly since there was no uniform tenurial system to operate from. Consequently SRDP personnel should have been more open to experimentation with a wide variety of tenurial forms in an attempt to evolve an optimum set of relationships between the two.

Secondly lack of inter-departmental co-operation was clearly a factor limiting any possible impact of tenure on SRDP experiments. In this aspect we have suggested elsewhere (Oroth-Ogendo (10)) that tenure

reform personnel should have been brought under SRDP management. For if anything is certain from available data, it is the fact that tenure reform personnel had completely lost sight of the original raison de'tre of that exercise and were treating it as just one other administrative duty that had to be completed.

Unless these situations could be evolved, it was in our view disastrous to base specific projects on a tenurial form which either did not exist in the experimental areas, or whose alleged peculiar merits had not really been tested.

5. Planning: Decentralisation

(a) The Administrative Objective

One of the earliest objectives of S.R.D.P. was "to establish procedure and techniques for accelerated and self-generating rural development which can be repeated in other similar areas and in particular, to improve the developmental capacity of Kenya Government Officials in the field".* This objective was clearly an administrative one pointing at the need to design planning and implementation procedures that would facilitate "accelerated" development by providing an opportunity to utilise local resources, including the administrative personnel. Thus the latter would have a chance to improve their "developmental capacity" as managers of rural development projects.

The above objective could only be achieved through some form of decentralisation, otherwise it was meaningless to talk about "self-generating" rural development when the institutional arrangements were such that the periphery did not have a chance to exhaust its potential, in planning and implementation. Further still the objective implied without necessarily quaranteeing, a high degree of local participation; that is to say the latter had to be consciously planned and catered for as a prerequisite for "self-generating" development. This had to be done otherwise the local potential would never be known, except superficially, and hence it would be difficult

* See Leach (8). Mr. Leach was co-ordinator of Rural Development Projects in the Kenya Ministry of Finance and Planning from 1968 - 73.

** See for example Leach, Ibid 361 - 62

to assess either the degree of "acceleration" or the degree of "self-generation". Ability to assess the two latter aspects is especially important in an experimental programme like S.R.D.P., otherwise there would not be any criteria, except at the level of abstract principles and objectives, for judging the results of the experiment.

(b) The Administrative Structures and Functions

What then were the administrative features of S.R.D.P. and did they indicate intention to decentralise? The latter question is raised because some people have argued that S.R.D.P. was never intended as an experiment in decentralisation.** The main administrative features of S.R.D.P. were the "Linkman", the Area Co-ordinator and the Programming and Implementation Management System. (PIM)

The Linkmen were created as "representatives" of S.R.D.P. in each relevant ministry since S.R.D.P. field operations involved a number of ministries. Their main job was to provide interministerial coordination. The Area Co-ordinator had the function of coordinating S.R.D.P. activities. There was one Area - Coordinator in each S.R.D.P. area. These posts were filled by District Officers from the Office of the President. The Programming and Implementation Management System had the following basic features

1. A project committee which met three times a year and whose main function as suggested by its composition, was to facilitate local participation by involving local people in project selection and identification of local resources, among other things.
2. Informal meetings between Area Coordinators and S.R.D.P. staff.
3. Annual Implementation and Evaluation Review.
4. An Annual Programming Exercise.
5. An Annual Estimate Exercise and
6. An Annual Re-plan and Submission of new Proposals.

P.I.M. was no doubt the most important feature of S.R.D.P. administration and it was intended to serve the following purposes. (see Chabala et.al. (3)).

1. to improve and focus information flows between field and headquarters
2. to increase co-ordination between sectoral ministries in the field
3. to raise the level of commitment of divisional officers to the programme
4. to provide for more effective control over the performance of divisional staff.

** See for example Leach, Ibid 361-62

5. to create mechanisms of collegial control among divisional officers
6. to encourage divisional officers to make demands upon headquarters where necessary for programme implementation.
7. to improve the general understanding of officers at all levels of the steps and timings involved in the implementation process.
9. to give the area coordinator a tool that would help him to both define and perform his job.

The intended functions of P.I.M. clearly show that the original idea was to put the emphasis, not on the headquarters at Nairobi but on the field. The focus on officers at the Divisional level indicates that this was the level at which "the developmental capacity of Kenyan Govt. Officials in the field" was to be created. Furthermore, if we take into account the existence of the Project Committee, and Area Co-ordinator as integral parts of P.I.M. It soon becomes clear that both decentralisation and local participation were conscious intentions of S.R.D.P. administration. This conclusion is not only justified on the basis of inference from S.R.D.P. administrative structures, but also on the basis of what the government intended to happen. The latter is partly indicated by the governments terms or reference for the first overall evaluation of S.R.D.P. by the research staff of the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi. The terms of reference included, inter alia, the following items (S.R.D.P. (13), p.IX):

1. In planning the S.R.D.P., was the unexploited potential for development of each SRDP areas adequately assessed?
2. Were the probable constraints preventing this potential from being maximally exploited adequately assessed?
3. Are the implementation stages effective enough to try out (these) new strategies and approaches?
4. How effective has the role of the Area Co-ordinators, District Development Committees and Ministry of Finance & Development in its capacity of overall SRDP Co-ordinator been?
5. To what extent have the local communities been adequately involved in the planning and implementation of SRDP and to what extent has this involvement been premature, timely or too late?

(c) The Field Performance:

What then actually happened to S.R.D.P. in terms of the institutional and other intentions to decentralise decision-making and thereby create local capacity to generate and sustain development through local participation? For reasons too numerous to list in full, S.R.D.P. did not materialise into the experiment in decentralisation that it was intended to be (S.R.D.P. (14), Chapter 19). The following are just some of the reasons:

1. For a number of reasons, the "Linkmen" system did not work uniformly well. One of these reasons was that some of the linkmen had other responsibilities and had had no field experience in rural administration.
2. The Area Co-ordinator did not have sufficient authority and therefore could not commit himself to binding decisions. Lack of authority to incur expenditure, in particular had severe consequences especially in terms of creating local commitment. In addition, the Area Co-ordinator had limited financial information and this made it possible for some ministries to "borrow" money from S.R.D.P. to take care of fiscal crises in other divisions or districts.
3. The Project Committees remained purely advisory. As a result their meetings were not well attended and in general they were not taken seriously. In some places where they were taken seriously e.g. Vihiga, they were seen as a forum for local notables to make their demands and in effect "they became" a device for formal cooptation of local leadership, with the real decisions being made by a smaller group".
4. The P.I.M. system was never fully accepted by the Provincial and District Commissioners, since the latter seemed to prefer the conventional reporting system. The result was that this reduced the potential utility of P.I.M. as a prototype for district planning in the future. It is quite possible that the Provincial and District Commissioners were afraid of the power inherent in the possession of systematic data at the divisional level, this despite the original emphasis on the division as the S.R.D.P. administrative Unit.

(d) Corrective Measures: - Commitment.

These reasons and most of the others enumerated in the Evaluation reveal that they are by and large institutional/administrative reasons which are, ipso facto, descriptive and not explanatory. They are descriptive because, the failure of decentralisation and participation to take place could not have been a direct result of institutional/administrative shortcomings of S.R.D.P. since as we have seen, most of the administrative structures pointed towards substantial decentralisation. The explanation of the failure seems to lie in the fact that decentralisation and consequently local participation cannot be a simple function of institutional manipulations. There must be in addition what one might call an ethic of participation and this ethic must be systematic. As it is, this ethic seems to have been lacking on the part of the Central Administrators in Nairobi. Thus, despite the presence of administrative structures, and a commitment to local participation by the field administrators like the Area Co-ordinator, participation and meaningful decentralisation did not take place.

The failure can also be accounted for by the fact that the conceivers of S.R.D.P., in this case the central administrators and foreign donors were not prepared to accept the equity implications of decentralisation and participation. Meaningful decentralisation must lead to access to resources by the local community, as a result of having power to take part in decision relating to resources. Hopefully this access would lead to a development of high stakes in the development activities and this would in turn lead to participation either with the intentions of preserving the status quo or changing it. One of course, does not want to deny the fact that decentralisation might have negative equity implications especially where there are vast regional inequalities in terms of resources endowment. Decentralisation, however, does not necessarily mean complete autonomy thereby institutionalising regional inequalities that might exist. It does mean, however, that the periphery should get a chance to enter into a consultative arrangement with the centre in order to jointly decide on the question of resources distribution. This, of course, calls for a commitment on the parts of both the centre and the periphery, to the notion of fair distribution. This commitment is a function of political orientation and without it administrative structures, no matter how decentralised, are likely to be inadequate.

6. Conclusions

This brief paper can hardly claim to have treated adequately all that has been learnt from the Kenyan SRDP. Nevertheless, enough has been said to make it clear that it is not an easy matter to ensure that rural development reaches all sections of the community. It is not simply a matter of guarding against the appropriation of development benefits by local vested interests but also of discarding experts cherished notions of the right way to pursue development goals. The magnitude and persistence of these obstacles requires that to overcome them there must be a firm and consistent commitment by government at both the national and local levels, otherwise the pattern of development will lapse into the old tendency towards inequality.

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