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RN 322266

(832)

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Working papers

AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION IN KENYA: A REVIEW

By

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WORKING PAPER NO. 256

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
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December 1975

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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews some of the literature on agricultural administration in Kenya in the light of the reviewers own field ~~experience~~ experience. Discussed in some detail here is a recent work by Christopher Trapman, Change in Administrative Structure which is a study of Agricultural Administrative System in Kenya.



AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION IN KENYA: A REVIEWW. OUMA OYUGI

Agricultural development in Kenya has been the subject of many studies as is shown later in this paper. Most of the studies have been of a micro type, dealing singularly with some special aspects of the matter. In general the writing has revolved around three major themes which by implication seem to be considered critical to successful agricultural development. The assumptions which by now sound like folklore in the literature on agricultural development are (1) that sound organization infrastructure is critical to the success of agricultural development (2) that correct extension practices which implies the existence of effective's 'staff system' is another critical variable. (3) that money to purchase investment capital and inputs for agricultural development is a constraint. Hence the need to provide credit facilities to enable farmers to develop.

There has been a tendency on the part of scholars to study these issues in isolation. One of the very few studies which has attempted to raise many issues under one title is Change in Administrative Structures: A Case Study of Kenyan Agricultural Development by Christopher Trapman, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) London 1974, 100p. This book which is the subject of review here was commissioned as part of the Reading University - ODI Joint Programme on Agricultural Development Overseas.

The material in the book is largely based on secondary sources. Hence most of the issues raised are not new to the reader familiar with the literature on Kenyan agricultural development. The purpose of this essay is therefore simply to evaluate some of the conclusions 'reiterated' in this book in the light of what we already know. The accent of the essay as of the book is on administrative aspects of the matter. We focus our comments on the three major themes alluded to.

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Organizations Involved in Agricultural Development.

A major problem of Kenyan agricultural development is that there are several support organization whose activities are inter-dependent and directly affect the process of agricultural development but which often times tend to function in isolation of one another. The organizations involved in agricultural development may be classified as:-

- 1) Research 'Organizations' e.g. Kitale Maize Breeding Station, Cotton Experimental Stations at Kibos (near Kisumu) and at Malindi which are involved in research and dissemination of new innovations.
- 2) Administrative back-up organizations. Included here are Provincial Administration, various Government departments and Committees especially in the rural areas which provide support services to the Ministry of Agriculture.
- 3) Financing bodies e.g. The Commercial banks, International Agencies such as International Development Association (I.D.A.) Corporations and other Statutory bodies such as Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) which provide financial support to farmers - both large scale and small scale.
- 4) Training Institutions - especially the Farmers Training Centres (FTCs) at which the extension agents get refresher courses from time to time to keep up with the technological changes taking place in their fields.

An analysis of organizations involved in agricultural development should accordingly focus on the above. In Change in administrative structures....

- Trapman only discusses the roles of
- (1) Provincial Development Committees
 - (2) District Development Committees
 - (3) Boards and Corporations.

The analysis does not go far enough. For instance, in chapter one of the book an attempt is made to discuss among other things the role

of Provincial Administration in agricultural development. This objective is however not satisfactorily met. The issues discussed are rather peripheral. They touch on the general coordinating role of the Provincial Administration without specifically identifying its role in administration of agricultural development e.g. how the Provincial Administration influences agricultural change through its representatives being Chairmen of Agricultural Committees in the field, and also through policy and programme publicities. Having missed the point the author writes.

"there is little evidence to suggest that ... the government's intention to increase the Administration's participation in the process of development is being carried out" (P.17)

Unfortunately this conclusion does not reflect the reality of the situation. We use the Special Rural Development Programme (S.R.D.P) in Kenya to illustrate the point. The SRDP was an experimental programme in integrated rural development mounted in 1970 in a number of selected ecologically representative areas aimed at experimenting with various strategies for rural development.¹ Upon its launching the task of its overall coordination fell on the Provincial Administration. In consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Planning the Provincial Administration designated a District Officer (D.O.) to be in-charge of the coordination of the programmes in areas where it was being tried. Because of the Coordinating nature of his work he became known as Area Coordinator for the SRDP.

Agriculture has been a leading sector in the SRDP in terms of attention that has been paid to it in the planning process. The studies done about the SRDP thus far indicate that the area coordinators have played very critical roles in this process by getting the

1. For more on the SRDP in Kenya see James Steffield (ed) Educ^{tion} Employment and Rural Development Report of the Kericho (Kenya) Conference 1966 E.A.P.H. L J. Heyer et al Rural Development in Kenya. E.A.P.H. 1970; and especially Institute for Development Studies (IDS) Nairobi:-

An Overall Evaluation of the Special Rural Development Programme 1972 I.D.S. Occasional Paper No 8 1973.

local agricultural staff to carry out their responsibilities.² On a more general note one could say that the little that has been achieved in the SRDP areas thus far might not have been achieved without the active participation in the programme by the Administration. In fact an Area Coordinator in the SRDP is a member of the Provincial Administration and is answerable to the District Commissioner for his activities in the field.

Furthermore the major preoccupation of the Provincial Administration since 1964/65 has been mobilization of the people for local development through Self Help activities. Without the keen participation by the Provincial Administration in this regard a lot that has been achieved in that field might not have been achieved.² This is by no means a small input into the development process.

Mr. Trapman also discusses the roles of the District Development Committee (DDC) and also that of the District Development Advisory Committee without realizing that the two bodies had been merged into one planning organization by the time he was writing. Until recently an important institution for popular participation in agricultural development at the local level was the agricultural committee system with a hierarchy which starts at the divisional level and goes up to the Province. This committee is officially chaired by an officer of the Provincial Administration at every level of the hierarchy. It is potentially important in that apart from having as its members the regular relevant government officer it has also representation from the farming community. Its major function is to discuss all aspects of agricultural development in an area. In his discussion of organizations involved in agricultural development, Trapman does not even attempt to focus on this committee. Nor does he focus on the newly emerging role of the District Development Committees (DDCs) which now requires them to subject proposed agricultural projects in the districts to thorough scrutiny.

2. See for example I.D.S. An Overall Evaluation of the SRDP 1972 op . cit.

3. For more on this role see W. Ouma Oyugi "Popular Participation in Development Planning at the Local Level in D.K. Leonard (ed) Rural Administration in Kenya E.A.L.B. 1973.

The only institution for involving farmers in planning that Mr. Trapman mentions is the Central Agricultural Board. It is rather strange that he should 'forget' the existence of the relatively more representative District Agricultural Committee and its sub-committees found that at the divisional levels. He casually (P52) talks of a Sub-D.A.C. as having been established as part of one of the SRDP programmes to provide lessons for further expansions. But the truth of the matter is that Sub-D.A.Cs are a countrywide organization which exist in every Sub-district (division). Whether they are working well or not in all the districts is another question altogether.

Of course, as would be expected, they are not all working well throughout the country. There are however some districts where they have been used effectively as arenas for involving local farming interest groups in planned development. In a report prepared for the government a few years ago by the I.D.S. (University of Nairobi) the authors suggested that the Sub-D.A.Cs could be strengthened for more meaningful farmer involvement by assigning them meaningful roles to play.⁴

The discussion on the Boards and Corporations is also incomplete. Factors which influence their success are enumerated (P25 - 26) without subjecting these Boards and Corporations to a more rigorous analysis of their roles in agricultural development. Even the private sector involvement is inadequately discussed.

A major preoccupation of the Boards, Corporations and the private sector (especially the Commercial Banks) in agricultural development is the provision of credit to farmers both large scale and small scale. In a recent study Judith Heyer has analysed the roles which these organizations play in providing small-holder credit. Her conclusion is that it has not been a success story,⁵ because the organizations involved are overly concerned with the repayment ability even though the record shows this has not materialized. This study was readily available

4. See Overall Evaluation of the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) Occasional Paper No.8. Institute for Development Studies, Nairobi Section D.

5. Heyer, Judith 'Small holder credit in Kenya Agriculture' Institute for Development Studied (IDS) Working Paper No.85 February 1973.

to Trapman at the time of writing and this section could have benefited from some of the remarks made therein.

Change in Administrative Organization thus adds very little to our knowledge of the role that various organizations play in agricultural development.

Agricultural Administration in the Field.

In discussing agricultural administration in the field it is difficult to draw a line between that and the extension activities as Trapman does. The reviewer's contention is that the two are inseparable. Agricultural administration in the field is primarily concerned with extension activities. An Assistant Agricultural Officer (AAO) may be engaged in office work one morning but all that has direct bearing on his work as an extension agent in the field.

What then are the problems which face agricultural administration in the field? These can be put into two categories.

- (1) General problems arising from the nature of administrative system in the country.
- (2) Problems specific to the Ministry of Agriculture of which extension activities feature prominently.

Under the first may be enumerated:

- (a) Differentiated administrative system with no coordinating authority in the field resulting in.
- (b) Lack of inter-departmental cooperation.
- (c) Poor personnel control and communication.
- (d) Lack of effective planning machinery.
- (e) Bottlenecks in financial administration.

In the

In the second group could be put

- (a) Lack of intra-departmental coordination both in Nairobi and in the field.
- (b) Poor extension services.

Most of these problems are now common knowledge and Mr. Trapman has identified most of them. He proposes a number of solutions to these problems.

For effective administration he calls for uniform overall control of staff ^{with} related activity to reduce duplication to a minimum and ensure coordination of technical responsibilities (31)

The problem is a real one, but the solution proposed is somewhat commonplace. The amalgamation he is calling for does not necessarily solve the problem of inefficiency in administration which should be the primary concern of any administrative reform. Putting one officer at the district or provincial level in charge of a number of government departments and activities only turns the individual in question into an administrator - worse still into a 'bureaucrat! Thus, the coordination becomes administrative and not technical. Technical work in this case would continue to be handled by technical experts and that more or less simply pushes us back to the situation Trapman is attacking! I think also that the question of development coordination is no longer as serious as it used to be with the introduction of district planning (since 1973/74) and the strengthening of the District Development Committees through the appointment an 'executive' Officer known as District Development Officer (DDO).⁶

Coordination is, however, difficult to achieve without cooperation of those being coordinated. On the question of inter-departmental cooperation Trapman writes.

6. Twenty (20) such officers were posted to the field in January 1975. It is not known yet whether these officers are carrying out their coordinating duties with full cooperation of the relevant departments.

"A serious lack of cooperation exists between the agricultural department and departments under ministerial heads" (P33 bottom). It is important to note here that cooperation is better achieved in situations where roles are interdependent. Until recently Kenyan field organizations tended to behave as though nobody else was involved in what one was doing. But with the stress on integrated rural development since 1969 the interdependence of roles has been stressed and with the appointment of an office (DDO) solely responsible for promoting that interdependence in the development process, it is hoped things might change for the better in the near future. Already the problem of cooperation is not as serious as it used to be, say ten years ago. But that does not mean the problem has disappeared.

Aspects of lack of inter-departmental and intradepartmental cooperation still characterize many rural administrative situations. As we point out in some detail later in this essay, this has resulted in unnecessary costs in the process of development. The situation described here affects the general government system. The Ministry of Agriculture is a victim therefore of its own environment.

The problem is however not confined to field administration only. It is equally bad at the headquarters level. Trapman attributes it to the absence of mechanism below the cabinet level to coordinate ministries in Nairobi (P33). The problem here is not that a mechanism does not exist. The problem is one of failure to use the existing machinery. Take for instance the planning function. There is a Council of Economic Ministers which is a sub-Committee of the Cabinet statutorily charged with the responsibility of coordination of planning and plan implementation. The sad story about this Council is that it exists only on paper. It hardly meets to discharge its duties. And lately, the National Rural Development Committee which is a Sub-Committee of the Council of Ministers charged with coordinating the Special/Rural Development Programme has not held its meetings regularly - sometimes not even once in a year. So, the problem is not that mechanisms do not exist but rather that nobody seems to want to use them. This is true at the centre as it is at the periphery.

Personnel Control.

Another general problem concerns personnel control and nature of communication. Usually departmental employees are responsible for their promotions and discipline to their own departmental superiors. In the case of the department of Agriculture, there is a very long hierarchy which begins at the Junior Agricultural Assistant level up to Nairobi HQ. The system of control is hierarchical. The JAA is responsible to the AA and the AA to the AAO and the AAO to the DAO and the DAO to the PDA and the PDA to Nairobi HQ. In most cases they take directives from above without questioning them. An Assistant Agricultural Officer (AAO) may feel very strongly that a particular piece of directive from his superior (District Agricultural Officer - DAO) is not realistic but because of the structure of authority, he goes ahead and carries out the instruction knowing very well it will not work! On the centralized nature of agricultural (extension) administration one observer has written:-

" the rate of flow of information may be inhibited, the risk of wrong advice are increased and they tend to prevent a two way flow of information.⁷

On the question of control Trapman is particularly disturbed about the problem of frequent transfer of agricultural staff. The impression is given (P 35) that the problem of transfer is serious at every level of agricultural administration. This is not so. The problem of transfer is not serious at the sub-locational (Junior Agricultural Assistant also called Junior Technical Assistant) level. The problem seems to be felt at the divisional (Assistant Agricultural Officer) level where a survey of six divisions showed that AAOs were at their posts for an average of two years.⁸ The second study cited also showed that no JAAs ever moved out of their Division. Even interlocational transfers were hindered by lack of government accommodation which meant that of

7. E.R. Watts:- "Reaching East African Farmers" in Journal of Administration Overseas Vol. XII No.2 April 1973 Pp=

8. R. Chambers SRDP Evaluation Report No. 2 of 1970(Mimeo) I.D.S Nairobi and W. Ouma Oyugi "Assessing Local Administrative Capacities for Development Purposes" A Kenyan case in The African Review Vol. 5 No. 3 September, 1975.

necessity a JAA had to work in an area near enough to his home to travel daily.

What Mr. Trapman fails to show is that the problem is affecting senior officers. (i.e. AAO and above) Yet the solution he proposes has no bearing on the JAAs e.g. limiting posting to within individual provinces. JAAs as it is commonly known hardly move out of their own divisions and transfers out of the provinces are not even common among the AAOs.

As a solution, he also suggests the posting of staff between areas of similar conditions and environment to reduce transfers. In this respect, he suggests that it would be practical to break the country down by districts of varying agricultural characteristics and limit staff postings to within these blocks (P35) The geographical type of specialization which Trapman proposes is highly unworkable as it does not take into consideration the fact that even within a single Province or district there exists several 'ecological zones'. His proposal would deny officers the experience they would need in effectively running such Province or districts.

To show how unrealistic the suggestion is one has to turn to table 6 on P36 where he breaks the country into four "extension blocks". Under small holder high potential block he puts Machakos, Siaya, S.Nyanza, W. Pokot among others! It is not clear what criteria he uses in his classification but by no means can these districts be considered high potential areas. Take South Nyanza for example. The only high potential part of its six administrative divisions is Migori but even here only the upper highland areas can be regarded as 'high potential'. The remaining parts of the district - and this is the largest-ranges from very low potential to medium potential. The same could be said of Siaya and Machakos districts. West Pokot is definitely a low potential ~~rangeland~~ area and was selected as such in 1963 to represent a low potential area for SRDP experimental development.

Planning Machinery.

Lack of effective planning machinery and proper planning are some of the problems which face agricultural development in Kenya.

There are two organizations at the national level formally concerned with agricultural planning. These are the Ministry of Finance and Planning responsible for overall national planning, and the Planning Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture. The latter is concerned with agricultural planning alone. Besides these organizations there are also parastatal bodies such as Kenya Tea Development Authority, Pyrethrum Board e.t.c. and donor agencies such International Development Association (I.D.A.) etc. which are also closely involved in project identification in Agricultural development in Kenya. As Clive S. Gray once observed,

"Every one of these agencies exercises influence over the substance and manner of execution of the projects in which it participates."⁹

In the rural areas, very little systematic agricultural planning has ever been attempted. The District Development Committee which officially is supposed to coordinate development activities at the local level has been notable for its failure to carry out that function. Until 1974 the Committee lacked a secretariat and 'executive' leadership. With the appointment of a District Development Officer to be responsible for overall district planning and implementation it is hoped things will change for the better. Besides the DDC there is the Agricultural Committee, known at the district level as District Agricultural Committee. This Committee is equally insignificant as a 'planning' organization. It discusses agricultural problems and programmes without bothering to follow-up what is being done by the technical officers. It is simply in fact, a forum where policies are explained to those in attendance. It does not deal with project identification.

What actually happens is that agricultural projects are centrally determined and then pushed down the hierarchy for implementation at the appropriate level. Usually the Ministry of Finance and Planning (which has an agricultural sectoral unit) makes the initial move. In the formulation of a Medium Term Plan (i.e. Five Year Development Plan) the Ministry suggests such macro issues as rate of growth, employment, investment rate etc. to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry planners then try to relate to their own sector. In actually

9. Clive S. Gray 'Agricultural Planning in Kenya' in G.K. Helleiner (ed) Agricultural Planning in East Africa. E.A.H. 1968 p 21-31 at P22.

identifying the projects to go into the agricultural section of the plan, intra-ministerial discussions are critical. The Ministry of Agricultural has several functional divisions all of which must be coordinated by the Planning Division in the process plan formulation.

Most of what goes into the plan comes from the local level. Often the HQ. officers send for information down the hierarchy which is then used in identifying projects to go into a plan. A number of writers have commented on the negative aspects of this process. They all tend to argue that it has the potential for distortion of information as it passes through the various hierarchies - from the JAAs level to the MinistryHQ.¹⁰

Where large scale projects are concerned, the Ministry usually sends out a team of planners to carry out feasibility studies. Often these are projects jointly financed and managed by the GOK and a donor agency. Projects of this nature are usually subjected to a lot of inter and intra-ministerial discussions before they go into a development plan.

In general what can be stated here is that routine planning in the Ministry of Agriculture (as in many other GOK departments) is subject to bureaucratic behaviour in the Government system. The initiative is usually from above. Units at the local level are merely supposed to furnish the kind of information sought without being expected to actively participate in priority determination. In the end projects are identified which have no bearing on the existing realities at the implementation level. The discrepancy between what is "planned" and what can actually be done is a major problem in agricultural development in East Africa as many observers of the E. Africa scene have documented.¹¹ I submit that this experience is not unique to this ministry, rather it should be understood within a wider context of national planning inadequacies.

10. See for example. David K. Leonard "Communication and Decentralization" in Hyden et al (ed) Development Administration: The Kenyan Experience, Oxf. Univ. Press 1970. Pp 91-111.

11. See especially R. Chambers "Planning for Rural Areas in East Africa: Experience and Prescriptions" in D.K. Leonard Rural Administration in Kenya E.A.L.B. 1973; Jon Moris "Administrative Authority and the Problem of Effective Agricultural Administration in E. Africa" in The African Review Vol.2 No.2 June 72 p. 105 - 146.

The point to emphasize here is that agricultural planning in Kenya has been the victim of the national planning inadequacies. Until 1974, projects to go into the National Development Plan were identified centrally with the local level staff only playing a very passive, information giving role. District Development Committees which were supposed to take active part in planning and plan implementation were not well endowed for the task in hand. Their role in planning was not well defined and they did not have a Secretariat to provide the support services that the Committee needed. In short the Committees were being expected to do what the Central Government had not equipped them to do.

A proposal to improve this situation was made in a Government Report issued in 1971. In it the idea that the district should be made the focus of development planning was emphasized.¹² To implement the idea, the report suggested the appointment of two district level officers, one to be in charge of planning function and the other to be in charge of overall development administration in the district under the District Commissioner. The proposal was accepted.

In implementing it however, the Government decided to appoint only one officer to be responsible for both planning and overall coordination of development activities in the district. We referred to him a short while ago as the District Development Officer (DDO). The appointment of this officer gave the DDCs the integrating generalist that they had hitherto lacked. Overtime it is also intended to build a secretariat around him to service the Committee. Furthermore since 1971 a modest sum of money under the name-District Development Grant - has been given to the DDC to stimulate them into active participation in planning. The decision to make the district the focus of planning, the availability of the fund plus the appointment of DDOs have combined to strengthen district level planning.¹³

12. Republic of Kenya Report of the Commission of Inquiry (Public Service Structure and Remuneration Commission) 1970-1971 popularly known as The Ndegwa Commission Report. Govt. Printer Nairobi Ch.

13. More on this in W. Ouma Oyugi "Decentralization for integrated Rural Development" A paper read at The Seminar on Decentralization and Rural Development in Africa, organized by the Pan African Institute for Development Bureau Cameroon and held in Moshi Tanzania 4-16th August, 1975.

Since 1974, the local officers have been disaggregating district specific plans from the 1974/78 National Development Plan. The DDCs have been involved actively in this process. So far most of the district plans have been prepared initially by the Provincial Planning Officer and later by the newly appointed DDOs. The quality and usefulness of this decentralized planning system will depend, as Trapman correctly observes on how well the central and local planners coordinate their activities (P40). As the overall planning system improves, improved sectoral planning will ^{also} follow accordingly.

In Change in Administrative Structures Some of these issues are raised under what Trapman calls "Local Planning and involvement: (P38) The presentation draws heavily from existing government documents and memoranda which the author fails to identify fully for the benefit of the more curious readers. The purpose of my own extended discussion of the planning system has been an attempt to make up for that in - adequacy.

Bottlenecks in Financial Administration

Where weakness in the planning system leads to poor planning and to inability to identify resources for agricultural development, bottlenecks in financial administration robs agricultural projects of earmarked resource for implementation. In May-June of 1975 there was a lot of talk in the local press and also in the National Assembly in Kenya about the inability of departments to spend the development funds allocated to them in the 1974/75 financial year. As it sounded most of the blame was being heaped on the local staff. The problem is not that simple. The "failure" to spend by field officers is more often than not the result of administrative bottlenecks at the centre. It is, as the lessons learnt in the SRDP areas indicate often the centre that fails to process the Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) forms in time that usually leads to delay in releasing the funds to the field officers in time.¹⁴ Hence failure to spend the amount in question. As of the time of writing, this was still a problem in the Ministry of

14. See I.D.S. SRDP Evaluation Reports op cit Also. W. Ouma Oyugi The Administration of Rural Development in a Kenya Inter District: A case study of the Interaction between the Kenya Bureaucracy and Technical Assistance Personnel. Unpublished Ph.D. University Nairobi 1973 ch. VII R. Chambers "Planning for Rural Areas in East Africa" in D.K. Leonard Rural Administration op cit

Agriculture. In Change in Administrative Structures..... Trapman reveals that at the time he was in the Ministry (1973) there was only one officer to handle over 20,000 AIEs. This can be corroborated. I am reminded of a case in which an officer in the Planning Division in the Ministry of Agriculture in reply to a query regarding the delay of an AIE wrote to a field officer:-

The one person who writes AIEs is busy sending out AIEs for recurrent expenditure. As soon as he finishes with this, he will begin on development expenditure.¹⁵

The amount in question was not released in time to be spent before June 30th 1975 - the end of the financial year. This is one way in which 'failure' to spend earmarked funds comes about.

Several ways of tackling the problem, have been suggested some of which are:

- (1) Block allocation to the Province or District.
- (2) Forward budgeting for at least two years.
- (3) Strengthening the processing machinery at the centre.

Block allocation to Province or District involves aspects of financial deconcentration. It does not refer to ceding of financial powers to the periphery. Block allocation may be general (i.e. covering all government departments) or specific (i.e. departmental). In a system which is not politically decentralized, the allocation inevitably becomes partial. That is, allocations for major projects of national importance continue to be controlled centrally while those for minor and routine development are controlled at the sub-national level. One of the major principles of block allocation is that funds once approved by the central budgeting authority ^{are} released to the controlling body in whole and without earmarking what should be spent on what. Two advantages of block allocation are implicit therefore:-

- (1) It brings an end to the problem of delay in release of funds as money is made available in time to those who implement projects.
- (2) It gives room for manoeuvre thereby making it possible to shift resources around according to pressing needs.

15. Communication from Planning Division MOA to a field officer in Embu August 1974.

General partial block allocation is not a new idea in Kenya. Since Independence, the Department of Community Development sets aside a modest sum of money each year for self-help activities. These funds are allocated on Provincial basis. The Province in turn dishes them to District which in turn grant aid to community self-help projects. Usually there is no stipulation about what projects these funds must be spent on. The qualification is self-help! Although Community Development is a department as such, the nature of the utilization of the funds makes them become general rather than specific. The best example of general block allocation in Kenya is the District Development Grant fund which we referred to above. The funds are allocated on a geographical basis (each district getting about £50,000) without prior identification of projects. The D.D.C. then plans knowing how much additional development funds has been made available. The fund is controlled by the treasury and only released when a specific identified by the DDC has been approved centrally.

The experience with this grant does show that block allocation alone does not break the bottleneck unless at the same time the allocation is immediately released to the spending organization. If the Centre continues to sit on the funds and to release it piecemeal, the problem of processing and timing will continue to remain as seems to be happening in many districts with this fund.¹⁶ So the issue is therefore not just block allocation - but rather the allocation in the manner which will break the bottleneck.

In the case of MOA a block allocation can be made to the DDO once every year to cover routine administration and minor development projects contained in the district plan.

Forward budgeting would also go ^a long way in alleviating problems of planning under uncertainties. But it could not, unless it is accompanied with some delegation measures, reduce the amount of bottleneck as Trapman implies. As a national policy, forward budgeting was first recommended in the Ndegwa Report. Considering that the central bureaucracies are usually skeptical about financial decentralization, the most

16. There was only one officer in the Ministry as of August 1975, who was processing projects from all the 42 districts seeking release of funds.

realistic solution to the problem of financial administration for agricultural development would be to strengthen the central government organization by appointing more people to handle the A.I.E. There could be some geographical specialization of some kind in the ministry whereby officers would be put in charge of Provinces or a number of districts for the purpose of quick processing of AIEs. Alternatively the Provincial heads of departments should be allowed the right to ascend on the HQ. in case of any apparent delay in release of AID. The cost involved in making the trip would then be surcharged on the HQ. vote. This could get officers to be more active in their day to day activities.

Problems specific to the MOA

Most of what we have analysed in the foregoing pages are generic to the Kenyan administrative system. The MOA has thus been the victim of the national setting. But in addition to the foregoing problems one can discern problems which are unique to the MOA. Important here are (i) Intra-departmental coordination and cooperation.

(ii) Problems of field extension management.

(i) Lack of proper coordination within the Ministry among the various functional divisions exists in a rather disturbing manner and the point is well made by Mr. Trapman also. The reorganization of the ministry which was made in 1969 instead of yielding positive payoffs has had some unintended consequences. It has increased complexity at the centre with the result that divisions in question are not familiar with the activities of one another. This has on occasions led to the issuing of conflicting directives to field officers some of whom serve the interest of a number of such divisions. One such instance comes to mind readily. In 1970 an extension project was designed and approved for implementation by all the field officers (AAO, DAO, PDA) and subsequently by the Chief of extension services. Somehow, someone in the Planning Division in the MOA did not like it. Instead of communicating his reactions to the Extension Chief, he, obviously unaware of the position of the Chief, wrote to the PDA to disregard the project. That instruction caused so much conflict and confusion in the field that for two years no action on the projected innovation was attempted.¹⁸

18. See W. Ouma Oyugi et al in Overall Evaluation of the Special Rural Development Programme 1972 Section "D" Part on Agriculture.

There are many other such instances that could be cited.

Even in the field the reorganization has not brought the Ministry together in a functional sense either. Officially the PDA is charged with overall coordination of his ministries activities in the Province. The DAO does the same at the district level and the AAO at the divisional level. In actual fact the AAO has completely no functional or administrative control over say a divisional livestock officer. The same is true of the DAO over the District Livestock Officer or District Animal Husbandry Officers. It is common to find an AAO stranded in a division where the Livestock Officer's vehicle is going strong, and the L.O. in question not prepared to share it. These may be isolated incidents but the fact that they occur at all is a sign that something is wrong with the present set up.

(ii) Extension management

Agricultural extension activities in Kenya has received a lot of scholars attention in the recent past (E. Watts 1969, 1973; Leonard 1973a, 1973b; Chambers 1974, J. Moris 1972, 1973). There is therefore nothing new that Change in Administrative Structures adds to what we already know. What the section(of the book) dealing with extension does is simply to bring together the findings by various scholars and study groups without necessarily telling the reader so. The following problems (which are now common place) are identified as the ones facing the extension work in Kenya:-

(i) (Unilateral) approach on the extension service which is characterised by a lack of differentiation between the services required by the large scale or small scale farmers.

- (ii) Inefficiency of extension organisation characterized by
 - (a) poor transport and housing system
 - (b) tendency to set unrealistic targets
 - (c) poor terms of service (e.g. lack of promotional chances to higher grades)

(iii) Poor supervision and management

(iv) Neglect of economic factors such as marketing facilities

(v) Poor research communication

These are not unfamiliar problems. Almost every one who has studied aspects of Kenyan extension services has mentioned some if not all of these factors (e.g. Watts 1969, 1973; Leonard 1973a, 1973b; Moris 1972, 1973, Chambers 1974).

It is not the intention here to provide a detailed account of these problems as that has been achieved in the studies cited above and also in a recent study by the review.¹⁹ The purpose here is simply to examine some of the reforms proposed by various authors including Christopher Trapman.

To alleviate the problem of transport Mr. Trapman suggests :

"A more practical means of assisting field staff with transport problem might be for daily runs to be organised by a departmental Land Rover dropping staff at given points in the morning and collecting them again in the evening".

This proposal is impossible to implement. It would put the vehicle on the run throughout the day not to mention the problem of petrol which is chronic in this department. In large divisions one would need several vehicles to make such a run if one were to avoid dropping extension agents at their intended destinations after morning hours. Many farmers are also inaccessible by road. Implementing Trapman's recommendation would inevitably lead to favouring farmers along the main roads -a very unfortunate thing to even think of.

The solution to this problem is simple and it has been suggested to the Ministry of Agriculture already. The allocation to the AAO for vehicle running and maintainance should be increased to make the AAO more mobile so he can supervise his subordinates and also visit more farmers. At the locational level, the locational Agricultural Assistant (sometimes called Technical Assistant) should be provided with motorcycles. The Junior Agricultural Assistant (at least for the time being) should be provided with bicycles and some little repair allowance per month. For the Junior Agricultural Assistant an alternative method would be to provide them with bicycles and then charge it against their salaries at manageable instalments. Bicycle allowance would continue to be provided as at present.

19. W.Ouma Oyugi: "Assessing Local Administrative Capacity for Development Purposes"....in the African Review Vol 5 No.3.Sept 1975.

The setting of unrealistic targets is a reflection of bad planning. This is usually the result of (1) using poorly trained staff (2) top down target setting (3) using unreliable statistical base. This problem should be analysed together with 'poor supervision and management'. Poor supervision and management or lack of them leads to many problems. Lack of supervision of the junior staff may lead to the use of inflated and unreliable statistics. This in turn may lead to identification of wrong projects and unrealistic target setting. A management system which does not emphasize strengthening of the local administrative capacity for planning may also lead to unrealistic target setting. These interwoven problems as has been indicated are common to Kenyan agricultural extension.

To solve these problems Trapman recommends the replication of the "Agricultural extension management system" which was initiated three years ago by two researchers then at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) Nairobi in two locations of Mbere Division of Embu District as a part of the innovative process of the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP).²⁰ Chambers and Belshaw had been concerned with poor extension management and had sought to devise a system which could strengthen it. In their study of the extension problems in the area which preceded the development of the 'system' they had concluded that the main defects of the old system were: (Chambers 74:67)

- a. top down targetry which was usually unrealistic
- b. no systematic choices of priority between competing demands on staff time.
- c. no organized work planning for field staff
- d. little feedback on staff activities to supervisors
- e. a lack of standard reporting procedures.

20. For detailed description of the Management System see Robert Chambers... Managing Rural Development Lessons and Methods from Eastern Africa. The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies Uppsala 1974, esp Pp 65-78 for the Agricultural Experiment in Embu; R. Chambers & D. Belshaw. "A Management System approach to Rural Development" I.D.S. Disc. paper No.161, 1973
D. Belshaw and Robert Chambers Pim: "A practical Management System", I.D.S. Nairobi Discussion Paper No. 162 March, 1973

The system which was later devised to help solve these problems had five main operational compononets.

- a) regular management meeting held between supervisor (AA) and field workers.
- b) a procedure for the joint preparation by supervisor and field worker of a work plan based on the days available for work during the period between meetings.
- c) Supervision and communication through discussion at the meeting of a record of work done or a report or both
- d) standardized reporting to streamline report preparation and handling. (Chambers 1974:73)

The four benefits which were expected to accrue if the system worked well were:

- (i) Improved operational control
- (ii) Improved staff performance
- (iii) Improved knowledge of what staff do
- (iv) Improved planning through data collection and communication. (Chambers 1974:73-74)

In a recent evaluation of the 'system' we found that as an organizational device the system had operated well.²¹

Real improvements were observable in the following respects:

- (a) AAO obtained much more knowledge about the kind of work his staff were doing. If a particular crop was being neglected, the system drew his attention to the fact.
- (b) Joint target setting enabled the AAO to ensure that certain key extension activities were included in each month's plan
- (c) It seems that the system, once it was understood did give the field staff greater commitment since they felt their views about their work were being properly considered by their more senior officers.

21. Martin David, W.Ouma Oyugi and Malcolm Wallis "SRDP as an Experiment in Development Administration in the 2nd Evaluation of the SRDP. IDS Univ. of Nairobi 1975 forthcoming. This particular observation was made by M.Wallis to whom the group is indebted.

The experiment was however abandoned as soon as Chambers and Belshaw left the country in 1973. Nobody had remained behind who was professionally involved in it at the national level. The Nairobi officers did not think much about it. They felt it consumed too much paper and was rather too complicated for Junior staff to handle! What the observation was unable to establish was to what degree the system had induced the quality of extension advice given to the farmers to improve. In the absence of that knowledge any talk of replicating the system must be regarded cautiously.

The other problem which Trapman raises is poor terms of service (e.g. lack of promotional chances to higher grades) which tends to lower staff morale and commitment to work. This point had been made before by David Leonard in his study of extension services in Western Province of Kenya.²² He observed:

the younger men with secondary education and a certificate in agriculture level feel particularly cheated. Their contemporaries with a somewhat better pass in the East African Certificate of Education (formerly Cambridge School Certificate Examination or "O" level) are given one more year of agricultural training (for a diploma) and then receive twice the salary as AAO. What is more, there is considerable gap in status between the two... worse still they do not stand a chance of being promoted to AAO position however hard they may work.²³

I may add that the problem is not confined to this category of staff alone. Even the AAO is in a similar situation. Being a non university graduate, however hard he may work, he does not expect to be a D.A.O. one day - for that is the exclusive preserve of graduates with BSc in agriculture. At the grassroots level, the Junior Agricultural Assistant (JAA) is in a similar situation with respect to becoming an AA in charge of a location. These built-in exclusive devices simply help to weaken the commitment and morale of the extension agents.

This problem according to Leonard could be solved by:-

- (i) Appointing a person to a grade only if he stands a chance of upward mobility
- (ii) Basing promotion overwhelmingly on job performance

22. D.K. Leonard "Organizational Structure for Productivity in Agricultural Extension" in D.K. Leonard (ed) Rural Administration in Kenya E.A.L.B. 1973.

23. Ibid. p.146

(ii)cont:

(and not on rigid scholastic achievements.²⁴

If the academic barriers were to be removed along the lines suggested, an officer would only have himself to blame if he stagnated in one position on account of poor performance.

The other point also raised by Trapman - poor research communication has been given good deal of attention by other writers.²⁵ Often, the junior extension staff are never up to date with the latest technological changes in the field of agriculture. Part of the problem is to be found in the structure of agricultural administration which we have alluded to already. Citing his Embu study Watts decries the chain of hierarchy which any innovation flowing to the field staff has to be subjected. His argument is that extension tends to be over centralized and departmentalized. He writes:-

"the rate of flow of information may be inhibited, the risk of wrong advice are increased and they tend to prevent a two way flow of information."²⁶

he adds: "One of the problems of bureaucratic type extension service is that the extension agent is motivated more toward the bureaucracy than to the client. Lack of orientation towards the client leads in East Africa to the typically poor motivation of most extension workers".²⁷

David Leonard on the other hand refers to this problem as the information gap between junior and senior officers which is responsible for poor technical knowledge at the local level.²⁸

24. Ibid p. 152

25. E.g.E. Watts "Agricultural Extension in Embu Division of Kenya" in East African Journal of Rural Development 2, 1 (1969) Also E. Watts "Reaching East African Farmers" Journal of Administration Overseas Vol.XII No.2 April 1973; David Leonard "Organizational Structure..." op. cit.

26. E. Watts "Reaching E.A. Farmers" P 114.

27. Ibid P 116.

28. D. Leonard "Organizational Structure for Productivity" op cit P 114.

Jon Moris blames too much adherence to Civil Service rules and norms which inhibit effectiveness at the local level. He decries bureaucratic behaviour at the centre in its relation to field activities which he feels renders the activities of field staff useless. The central pressure on local level officers is counterproductive he concludes.²⁹ In yet another study he singles out, among other known factors, behavioural orientation to the centre as a major factor impeding good agricultural administration in the field.³⁰ The issues raised by Jon Moris here are mainly based on functional assumptions arising from his field studies. The studies however do not reveal any attempt by him to measure and quantify some of the alleged constraints to good agricultural administration that are identified here.

Future direction

As we pointed out at the beginning of this section, agricultural extension in Kenya has been sufficiently studied to enable generalizations to be made. Trapman's book is full of such generalizations which are derived from the more empirical studies, some of which have been cited here. At this point a claim can be made that enough is known about extension problems. What demands researchers attention now is to devise ways and means aimed at improving the situation. It is within this context that the efforts made by Chambers and Belshaw in Mbere Division of Embu should be welcomed.

IS CREDIT A CONSTRAINT ?

Like Extension, credit for agricultural development has been the subject of many studies in Kenya. Although the Government tends to think that credit is a constraint to agricultural development, some recent studies tend to cast a lot of doubts on this. Judith Heyer in a recent comprehensive survey of the credit situation in Kenya since Independence has come out against it

29. Jon Moris Managerial Structures and plan Implementation in Colonial and Modern Agricultural Extension: A comparison of Cotton and Tea Programmes in Central Kenya in D.K. Leonard (ed) Rural Administration in Kenya op cit.

30. Jon Moris Administrative Authority and the Problem of Effective Agricultural Administration in East Africa in The African Review Vol 2 No. 1 June 1972 Pp 105 - 146.

having made the following observations:

- (i) That the repayment has been poor
- (ii) That the Credit has gone to those 'able' to pay instead of those who need it.
- (iii) That credit should not be seen as a way of helping the farmers. The same could be achieved by other means e.g. raising of agricultural prices, subsidizing agricultural inputs, provision of more research, extension, education etc.

These observations lead her to wonder whether credit is a real bottleneck. "Could it not be one of the above"!

- (iv) That the smallholders are inexperienced in the use of credit. Need for credit education
- (v) That credit organization is so centralized that it is rendered ineffective in servicing the farmers.

Accordingly she recommends that subsidized credit should not be given unless the estimated social ^{returns} are high. She further argues that since there is the problem of access to subsidized credit there is a need to introduce credit on commercial terms. Her argument is that

"To concentrate entirely on subsidized credit introduces elements of selection that are ^{almost} certain to exclude smallholders who could benefit from credit on commercial terms because they have sufficiently good investment opportunities to justify the high-cost credit and they cannot get access to the limited supplies of subsidized credit"³¹

The people that Heyer has in mind are indeed very few in the rural areas. But even if they existed some of the issues Heyer herself raised would tend to negate the provision of credit to such

31. Judith Heyer "Small Holder Credit in Kenya Agricultural" Working Paper No. 85 Institute for Development Studies (IDS) Univ. of Nairobi Feb. 1973 37p + Bibliography.

smallholders. She writes

"With the present state of technology the skills and other resources of smallholders and the level of provision of infrastructure and services it may not often be possible to get a return that justifies the investment (op cit P 24)

Although her argument is rather unstructured what seems to emerge from it all is that it is not necessary to give credit to smallholders.

Von Pischke is also highly critical of the advocates of credit as a critical input into agricultural development (Cites Uma Lele and Eric Clayton). He argues that since there is a tendency on the part of credit receivers to transfer it out of agriculture for other purposes there is no justification for the provision of subsidized credit to agriculture especially to a select group of farmers.³²

Trapman too comes out every strongly against provision of credit but for a different reason altogether. The main thrust of his argument in the chapter on 'Agricultural Credit' is that the farmers can raise financial requirements from local sources and that they should be left alone to do precisely that. Like many other agricultural economists before him (see above) he argues that:

"there is lack of clear idea of the extent to which credit is really required by small holder farmers and how much its absence impedes the adoption of new innovations"

The author then continues to give three reasons why she thinks this may not be a problem:

- (i) Ability of the rural people to draw upon significant savings for local investment and in support of self-help Schemes.
- (ii) That deposits in local banks and cooperative societies have been growing and this point^s strongly to the availability of spare cash in the rural areas.

32. J.D. Von Pischke "A Critical Survey of Approaches to the Role of Credit in Smallholder Development" IDS University of Nairobi Working Paper No. 145 Feb. 1974.

- (iii) Increased cash flow from urban employed to relatives in the rural areas.

In view of these reasons, he suggests like Heyer that instead attention should be given to **improving** other facilities serving this sector such as marketing facilities, roads and the input supply network---And he concludes:

"Perhaps the simplest solution would be to abandon altogether short term credit to small holders, leaving farmers to find finance themselves" (P.62)

The conclusion is somewhat contradictory considering Trapman's arguments elsewhere in the book (P.59) that the tradition of borrowing and lending from money lenders and merchants is not as widespread in Kenya as it is in India. He gives what he considers to be the causal factors:

- (i) Possibility of there being little demand for credit in the rural areas
- (ii) Tendency of the rural folk to turn to their working relatives instead of to rural money lenders.
- (iii) An historical tradition which tended to regulate lending and borrowing by Provincial Administration (P.59)

Perhaps we should comment on the point raised by Trapman in justifying his concluding recommendation ie. that farmers should be left to find finance themselves. Firstly "the ability to draw upon significant savings for local investment and in support of self-help schemes" which is the first point raised in support of his argument is more apparent than real. From what we know about contributions to self-help schemes only a small percentage of the potential beneficiaries of the schemes are willing participants. Most of the contributions ^{are} extracted by coercion applied by the local chiefs and assistants chiefs. This writer has been told by staff working at the local level on several occasions that if forced collection for self-help schemes were to be stopped by the government, most of the now standing schemes would not be. Forced contribution has involved confiscation of property like sheep, goats, chicken for auction. It is doubtful

in the circumstances whether the same people in the absence of self-help "contribution" would have auctioned the same for agricultural development purposes!

On point number two, I would guess that the people who make use of local banks are rural petty merchants, especially shopkeepers and to a lesser degree local teachers. Traders are by 'tradition' overcareful about the way they use their meagre income. Because the shop business itself is a risk-taking business most of them would think twice before venturing into another risky exercise like investment in agriculture. As a result most of them tend to grow/^{for}domestic consumption except for those who qualify for the Guaranteed Medium Return (GMR) type loans.

The third point is weak by its very nature, namely that it is functionally specific. Relatives send money back home to be used for specific emergencies, and rarely as a 'tradition'. Only in very rare cases/^{it is sent}as a 'tradition' (i.e. from working husbands to their wives left behind.) The sums involved are on the average usually very small—from 10/- to 50/- per month on the average. Again this is no investment money.

Thus, the fact remains that there is no ready money that potential farmers can turn to in case of need, if money supply should be considered a constraint.

The Problem Restated

To say that is not to suggest that credit should be made available to all the poor farmers in the rural areas. The bad experience with credit giving thus far may be largely due to the fact that it was introduced prematurely. A credit receiver (loanees as they are known in the agricultural jargon) in the rural area is commonly an illiterate person who must depend on the local agricultural staff to do all the required paper work for him in fact from A - Z. He cannot keep his own farm record book. An agricultural assistant has to visit him several times in a week to keep him going especially at the growing and the harvesting stages. Left on his own, he would inevitably pull

out of the whole exercise.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that the junior agricultural staff who are in direct contact with the farmer are themselves usually not very sure of what to tell the farmer. Consequently, farm activities for which credit have been secured may fail, leading to failure of the farmer to meet his debt obligations. There have been cases where farmers have received wrong advice on planting time leading to either very low returns or crop failures. I know personally of many such cases especially of cotton growing in Nyanza and Kakamega districts. In one particular case in South Nyanza, a farmer who had received poor advice and infrequent supervision by the local staff had to report crop failure (GMAK maize). Fortunately (or was it unfortunately) for the creditors, this same farmer had grown rice (not with GMAK loan) which unlike his hybrid maize managed to do very well. The AAO for the areas was convinced that this man's failure had been due to "circumstances beyond his control" and wrote to the appropriate authorities to that effect. Yet when this unfortunate farmer took his rice to the maize and Produce Board all the amount that was due to him was withheld against his maize loan! Such illegal practices go a long way to discourage the would-be farmers. For the bigger loans (for farm machinery and general development) the problem is even more serious. Crop failures two times may lead to the auctioning of the peasant's piece of land that he may have put down as security. And you can do nothing worse to a peasant than deprive him of title to land. These are common occurrences these days especially in areas where land has been demarcated. Recently (Nov.74) when I was in Nyeri doing research, I was shown a big piece of land near Kagumo College which had just been auctioned because the owner had failed to meet his loan obligation. The case is not isolated, for these days local newspapers are full of advertisement of pieces of agricultural land being auctioned on behalf of the creditor - the Agricultural Finance Corporation.³³ These auctions go a long way

33. See for instance "Daily Nation" Nairobi of 29.8.75
P 20 & 21.

to discourage the would-be commercial farmers.

But the main problem as we have stated is that the credit system was rather prematurely introduced. What ought to have been done to start with was the education of the farmer - in addition to the establishment of the basic infrastructure that Trapman recommends (P.62). From here one could begin to introduce regulated subsidies to the very deserving cases before credit as we know it could be introduced. This would mean that as farmers "take off" through the use of subsidies into self-sufficient agriculture, they would automatically find themselves in the credit world without being over-conscious about it. We need a new rethinking of Kenya's agricultural development strategy.

AN OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Many studies have been done on various aspects of agricultural development in Kenya. The results of these studies are well documented. From these studies the following factors appear to be responsible for the lack of development of this sector.

- (i) Organizational structures which are centrally oriented and which inhibit local initiative both in planning and in project implementation.
- (ii) Lack of effective Staff System brought by
 - (a) Poor terms of employment and working conditions which lower staff morale and resolve.
 - (b) Low quality of frontline staff which leads to giving of wrong advice to farmers
 - (c) Lack of support resources for staff such as petrol, vehicles, operational guidelines etc.
- (iii) Underdevelopment of the clientele system characterized by (a) Lack of technological know how (b) lack of familia-

rity with exogenous factors which influence events in their system (c) inclination to avoid 'risky' engagements (d) absence of requisite infrastructure such as well developed roads and marketing outlets etc.

(iv) Absence of bold policies aimed at altering the structural configuration in the interest of agricultural development.

Under these broad classifications may be discerned several other sub-factors.

Agricultural development is a very involved process. There cannot be a single factor that is responsible for either its progress or lack of progress. Many factors do combine to define any given situation. What we still do not know, notwithstanding the many studies (including Trapman's) that now exist, is the degree to which the various factors influence or affect the development process. That knowledge is necessary for any given situation if a meaningful development strategy is to be formulated for the area concerned.

In retrospect, Change in Administrative Structures has highlighted some of the issues raised (in i-iv) above. Though the book lacks the sense of the original in many respects, it has succeeded in bringing many relevant issues in Kenyan agricultural development under one title. The central thesis in the book is that the structure of Kenyan agricultural administration is largely responsible for its underdevelopment. Accordingly he suggests that the structure should be changed if agricultural development is to take off. In making this recommendation the author follows in the footsteps of R. Chambers, Jon Morris and to some extent David Leonard before him. Most of the 'proposals' he puts forward are mere reiterations of what is already known such as replicating the extension management system, introducing district planning, reorganizing field services etc.

On the whole, the material in the book is very clearly presented and the book is one which all those interested in agricultural administration should have a look at.