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SRDP IN KENYA:
CAN EXPERIMENTS IN DEVELOPMENT SUCCEED?

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Introduction

In FY1971/72 Kenya embarked upon a programme of rural development activities in six divisions. The program was called the Special Rural Development Programme. Its premise was that rural development did not call for massive inputs of external resources to aid specific areas in development. Rather it stressed the need for discovering strategies that could be used to promote development all over Kenya using local resources. Thus the key concepts of SRDP were experimentation to discover successful strategies, and replicability. Only those strategies should be pursued that could be transferred to other areas using locally available resources, particularly human resources and existing development-oriented arms of the Kenya government. /

A third objective was implicit in the delegation of the programme to six government officers in the divisions who were given the title of Area Coordinator. The implicit concept was one of administrative devolution on local areas to encourage the formulation of programs and the critical review of alternatives by those most directly involved. Moreover, it was hoped that local initiative would enlist resources through self-help and make the execution of the programme less dependent on central government funding. This third objective may be termed local involvement.

In this paper four experiments conducted under SRDP are reviewed and appraised, to determine the value of these basic concepts and the fruits of the SRDP effort to experiment. The activities reported on here are only a small part of the entire SRDP program, selected because of their experimental element. /

/ Heyer, J. Ireri, D. and Moris, J. Rural Development in Kenya (Nairobi: E.A. Publishing House 1971) detail the available resources in various parts of Kenya.

/ Readers interested in a comprehensive report on the state of SRDP in early 1975 should refer to the Second Evaluation Report by the IDS team (Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies, Occasional Paper 12, 1975).

These activities demonstrate the value of social experiments for devising development programmes and they clearly support the concepts underlying SRDP as pilot activities for replication throughout Kenya.

Four Major Experiments

Within SRDP four experiments were devised that will be described here: 1) group extension, 2) unsecured credit, 3) labor intensive roads, and 4) development administration. The major experimental dimensions, conclusions, and replicability of each are described below. The paper concludes with implications of these experiments for the next phase of Kenya's development that will shift the location of this type of activity to District Development Committees and District Development Officers.

Group Extension. As the result of thinking about new approaches to the delivery of extension services to farmers in the SRDP areas a number of experiments were undertaken. New procedures were devised for training extension agents, for involving field personnel in the programming of their activities, and for recording the activities of extension agents to monitor what was actually being accomplished. In addition to experiments directed at the extension agents, a variety of new approaches were devised for involving the farmers. Extension was focussed on average farmers, delivered via village groups, and organized according to schedules and sites selected by the village groups. Finally, work was concentrated on a limited number of innovations, rather than a broad program involving complex options.

The programme of experiments demonstrated conclusively that extension through groups can reach far more people and reach them far more effectively than the existing methods directed at progressive farmers. Effectiveness of the training of farmers in the village was contrasted with poor results from farmer training centers. Effectiveness of in-service training for the field officers, and effectiveness of their participation in the programming of their activities were also demonstrated. The field staff management information system was not proved a conclusive success or failure, and further work needs to be done on appropriate management information systems.

All of the successful experiments are capable of being introduced directly into the Ministry of Agriculture's present

extension program. The only aspect of the program with slightly less replicability was the concentration on hybrid maize and soya beans as specific innovations, which will not be appropriate for all ecological zones in Kenya.

Unsecured Credit

The second series of experiments concern the use of credit as a device to promote the introduction of new farm techniques by small farmers. In Vihiga loans were extended to small farmers to promote purchases of hybrid maize and fertilizer as part of the strategy for encouraging the adoption of that crop. Loans were given without security. Expansion of the program was associated with a steadily declining rate of repayment. During 1975 experimentation was being undertaken with a number of alternative techniques to improve repayment rates. However, earlier experience points to low benefits and high costs for such a loan program that are unlikely to be offset by foreseeable increases in repayment rates. The benefits are low, because it is seldom that credit is the sole bottleneck to farmer adoption of new techniques. Furthermore, loans seldom go to the neediest. Therefore much of the loan-financed crop would have been produced in the absence of loan activity. The costs are high because the administration of large numbers of small loans is difficult under the best of circumstances. When administration of loans has any deficiencies these are rapidly interpreted to imply that the loans are grants and need not be repaid.

The development of an extensive series of trials, with alternative formulae for payment of loans for collection, and for combining loans with other agricultural activity appears to have demonstrated that a) it is difficult to extend credit to those most in need and b) it is likely that the real effects of credit will not warrant the real costs of administration, unless there are automatic mechanisms for repayment (as through marketing cooperatives that have a monopsony in purchasing the crop in question.)

The failure of the credit experiments should be a danger signal to foreign donors, international agencies, and the Government of Kenya. Replication is likely to produce unwanted effects, inequities in development and a waste of resources. If further abortive unsecured credit schemes can be avoided because of these

lessons, it will have been a valuable experiment for Kenya.

Labor-intensive road construction. The program, executed in three of the divisions under SRDP, was to establish principles for deploying labor for the construction of roads by labor-intensive methods. The program experimentally used local leadership to adjust siting of roads.

The programme resulted in the collection of basic cost data on labor-intensive construction methods, planning systems for such construction, and a strategy for recruiting, training, and organizing the necessary managerial and supervisory inputs. It was established that feeder, or rural access, roads could be constructed to a standard comparable to those of machine methods and that quantity of work was limited only by the number of supervisors and independent units available.

The experiment established both the limits and the advantages of labor-intensive methods. Graveling is best done by more capital-intensive methods; other operations can be accomplished with unskilled local labor under trained supervision. The SRDP experience is highly replicable and is being replicated through the Kenya Government's Rural Access Road Programme that will eventually lead to 88 labor-intensive construction units in the Ministry of Works. The method also appears promising as a technique to promote the building of water and soil conservation facilities.

The experiment in local participation in siting was successful, and demonstrated that the real value of local participation lies in the mobilization of self-help for ancillary work and donation of right-of-way.

Development Administration. One of the most significant experiments in SRDP arises from the different administrative machinery evolved to tackle the special programmes that were to be undertaken. Six features evolved in the course of administration that appeared desirable in comparison to the more conventional administrative structure. While results are qualitative, and only partially confirmed, the following conclusions appear to be supported:

1. The Project Committee
Project Committees have proved themselves a useful tool for generating and reviewing development activities. If local involvement is crucial to development then the project committee must work well. A measure of real decision-making power must be given to the committee if it is to be successful.

2. The Area Coordinator A/C
The Committee requires back-up of an effective executive to assist in project formulation by project committee members, to follow up on the coordination of projects, and to supply the committee with data necessary for planning.

3. Grants
The use of a grant to the Committee, with the A/C as executor, was successful in achieving quick and useful project completion under the roads schemes in two divisions. The built-in incentives for local participation make a matching grant system a useful concept in development.

4. PIM and FSMS
While a paper system cannot replace appropriate effort, initiative and coordination, the revised PIM system shows great utility as a device to locate bottlenecks and identify difficulties before they cripple a program. The field staff management system for extension work appears to be a promising information system and should be tested further by MOA.

5. Integration Between Ministries and Programs
Integration depends on effective work by the project committee and an attempt by local officers to ascertain community-wide repercussions of programs, or failure of programs. Some success was achieved in SRDP, but effective development under each of the previous headings is really required for constructive solutions to development problems.

6. Local Involvement
Where the local people could be effectively involved, manpower, land and other resources were mobilized by people in the division to achieve agreed upon targets. This can be achieved where the program can be formulated at a local level and a consensus exists

that the program is valuable. The product of the program must be broadly available to the group. Cooptation of local groups and specification of programs from above will not elicit resources or continuing interest in local participation.

Implications for rural Development and Kenya's Future
District Development Planning

The experience of SRDP has proved without a doubt the value of inculcating a drive towards experimentation by those involved in local development programmes. If the concepts of measuring performance, of proceeding with several alternative strategies, and of attention to local resource availability that were stressed under SRDP can be used by the local levels to adapt ideas and techniques to their needs, the ratio of costs to development benefits can be much higher than it has been on externally aided area development schemes.

SRDP has not demonstrated that it is easy to develop experimentation. Most programs executed under SRDP had little experimental content. Even those, such as labor-intensive roads, which had measured performance data, were missing important information. (The change in patterns of transport in response to road construction were not documented.) Even well-defined experiments often failed because of difficulties in execution. Nonetheless, a small percentage of real experimental data can prove a great reward in assisting the allocation of funds to high priority needs.

A secondary conclusion from the roads, the credit, and the extension experiments is that technical assistance can be of great assistance in assuring that necessary measurements are made and analyzed for their policy implications.

With respect to replicability SRDP has shown that advance discussion of how to proceed within the framework of existing institutional and economic resources can make it possible to move from pilot efforts to national programmes in a very short time. The concepts of labor intensive road construction were translated into a national programme within the last year. The concepts of group extension can be translated into a national effort equally quickly.

Replicability implies that limited programs can be thoroughly devised, then quickly translated into large programs. The disorganization consequent upon the failure of a large program can be avoided.

With respect to the third objective of SRDP, devolution and local involvement, a definitive conclusion can not yet be voiced. In some divisions the area coordinators and their project committees were able to engage in "creative problem solving", despite the generally hostile bureaucratic hierarchy and the total inadequacy of fiscal power delegated to the area coordinator. (In Nyanza Province, where the Provincial Commissioner has strongly supported initiative from district development committees, the Project Committee was particularly active and constructive; this may be causation; it may be accident.)

Some negative findings are clear: cooptation of local leaders to externally imposed programs will not work; financial resources should be controlled locally to some extent to permit needed flexibility in expenditures; local involvement is undoubtedly easier in areas that have already achieved some measure of development than in traditional societies (such as the pastoralists who do not accept the norms of a modern economy). Lastly, local involvement is not established by a single, isolated action—it must be effectively supported by the entire government machinery and it must be used to develop real local leadership.

Experience with the farmer committees and with the village committees involved in siting of roads indicates that many mechanisms can be used to generate initiatives from local people and that these initiatives can mobilize enthusiasm and resources that can not be tapped in any other way.

Kenya has set itself a large task with district level development planning. The lessons of SRDP for that effort are threefold: 1) The effort must not be organized on too gross a scale. 2) The effort should be phased-in to avoid rhetoric without substance. 3) The District planning can achieve only minor changes unless effective responsibility is devolved on the District Development Committee and the hierarchy of Ministries that reaches out from the center supports the District effort with adequate information and fiscal assistance. I will

elaborate on these points briefly.

The SRDP effort has shown that devising a plan for a division is a complex task. Effectiveness can be easily destroyed by activities at cross-purposes with one another. Land adjudication in one area effectively precluded the ranching development envisaged under SRDP. Eliciting local involvement has been difficult, even for the division. The danger of moving to districts as a basic unit is that inconsistencies in plans will take longer to identify and that local involvement may be foregone altogether.

The manpower that was given to SRDP consisted of reasonably experienced District officers and knowledgeable advisers. The need to staff a large number of District Development Officers at one time has left Kenya with no alternative but to recruit younger men with little field experience. The danger is that lack of experience may veil important opportunities and obscure local needs to these critical officers. Thus there would be great merit in establishing a limited number of district development officers and committees with easy access to more experienced persons—something that would not be possible if all 41 districts are to be immediately served.

The operation of the road grants to the Area coordinator has demonstrated the advantage of fiscal federalism in development programming. This needs to be coupled with mechanisms for providing local officers with information on their real rate of resource utilization. Lastly, the fiscal federalism needs to be directed to create incentives for mobilizing local resources, making the grants matching grants, so that local self-reliance can reduce the burden of centrally generated tax revenue.

These comments suggest an affirmative answer to the question: Can experiments in development succeed? Let us hope that both the successes and the failures signal a need to continue small scale experiments aimed at effective development for the small farmer.

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