

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN
KURUNEGALA:

VIABILITY AND REPLICABILITY
OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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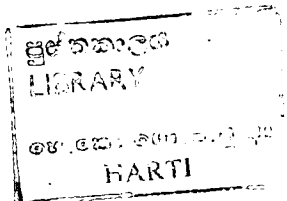
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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

ADA	Agricultural Development Authority
AGA	Additional Government Agent
ARTI	Agrarian Research and Training Institute
ASD	Agrarian Services Department
CCB	Coconut Cultivation Board
CO	Cultivation Officer
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAPH	Department of Animal Production and Health
DCB	Decentralised Budget
DDC	District Development Council
DM	District Minister
DMEC	Department of Minor Export Crops
GA	Government Agent
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
ID	Irrigation Department
IDA	International Development Agency
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Project
KIRDP	Kurunegala Integrated Rural Development Project
KVS	Village level agricultural extension worker
MP	Member of Parliament
MPCS	Multipurpose Cooperative Society
PD	Project Director
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SLIDA	Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration
WRB	Water Resources Board

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KURUNEGALA: VIABILITY AND
REPLICABILITY OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Inception of the study

In the World Bank *Staff appraisal report*, which constitutes a detailed description of the future Kurunegala Integrated Rural Development Project, 'overall responsibility for project evaluation' is attributed to the Agrarian Research and Training Institute (1979:45). It is further stated that 'local universities and research institutions' would be contracted to provide a complementary contribution in the form of 'small in-depth studies, focussed on specific aspects of the project' (1979:45-46).

In the first half of 1978 one of these smaller studies was commissioned with a view to providing information that would facilitate the pursuit of preliminary negotiations taking place between the World Bank and the Sri Lanka Government. The Management Services Division of the then Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs carried out this work and published a report entitled *Kurunegala Integrated Rural Development Project: administrative and organization infrastructure component*.

When the design of ARTI's evaluation input was discussed with World Bank staff, it was suggested that this Institute should also perform a piece of indepth research on the operation of the administrative and management structures peculiar to the Kurunegala project.

The team already involved in the ongoing ARTI/Wageningen University Research Project in Agricultural Planning was entrusted with this additional task. It was at the outset conceived as a two-man/two-and-a-half-month effort spread over the period October 1980-January 1981. But it was soon realised that the subject

deserved a less summary treatment. The Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration was approached and asked to collaborate. SLIDA was selected on the grounds that certain staff members had been associated with the earlier study carried out by the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs and were therefore already familiar with the issues involved. SLIDA agreed to second two researchers on a part-time basis to the original two-man team. Finally, the collaboration of an advisor working under Colombo Plan auspices in ARTI was also secured.

Fieldwork in Kurunegala District was commenced in the second half of October and terminated by the end of November 1980. Interviews with senior officials connected with project activities were continued in Colombo through the first weeks of December. The first draft of this report was completed and submitted for comment to the authorities concerned on 8 May 1981.

1.2 Research aims

The concision with which the original brief was expressed left room for considerable latitude of interpretation. Close scrutiny of the World Bank *Staff appraisal report* showed however that a major concern of the external funding agency was suitability for replication in other districts of the administrative and management structures selected for the Kurunegala Integrated Rural Development Project (KIRDP) (1979:20, 34, 44, 59).

The research team therefore chose to do more than a mere evaluation of administrative and management practices. It was decided to assess performance in these fields with a view to ascertaining, first, whether there was room for significant improvement and then, if necessary, how this might best be achieved. Seen from another angle, such a procedure could be regarded as tantamount to evaluating the replication potential of this type of scheme. For the originality of the IRD formulation consists, at least in the Sri Lanka context, in two major complementary characteristics designed to facilitate a rapid application of the

same model, if successful, in other geographical areas of the island.

The first of these characteristics is that the creation *ex nihilo* of project specific management structures is restricted to a bare minimum. The second is reliance on the administrative capacity of existing structures of government and of those development oriented organisations which already have a nationwide network of local subsidiaries.

In other words, IRD provides a means of 'raising productivity, employment, income and living standards of the rural population' (World Bank 1979:20), which avoids costly departures from the administrative norm and thus favours the concentration of all available funds on the pursuit of these stated goals. The authors of the concept suggest moreover that proven replicability of the overall design will contribute to a husbanding of resources both human and financial, when development efforts of a similar type are attempted in other districts.

1.2.1 Replicability

At the outset it was thought that 'replicability' could be measured in terms of implementation performance. It was proposed to gauge the viability of administrative and management structures in this type of integrated rural development project with reference to physical, financial and organisational achievement.

This seemed to imply a straightforward factual description of two basic categories of data, followed by a brief assessment of the probability of attaining similar or better levels of achievement with the same management structure in other districts. It was planned to gather:

- a) quantitative data relating to the
 - fulfilment of material targets (outputs)
 - respect of implementation schedules (bottlenecks)
 - efficiency of procurement procedures (timeliness)

- b) qualitative information on the
 - smoothness of information flow
 - adequacy of administrative structures
 - degree of collaboration between implementing agencies.

It was quite soon realised, however, that the apparently good performance of several project components did not necessarily bear witness to the adequacy of the administrative and management arrangements provided for in the project as designed.

Certain components showed a good record of target achievement, because departmental heads had sometimes been able to solve problems originating at a higher level of management by relying on the excellence of their personal relations with other district level officials to ensure timely implementation of their part of the programme. Other components were so conceived that they could be carried out independently by the agency concerned and necessitated an absolute minimum of interaction with the project office. The progress of yet a third category of project related activities could be assessed as quite satisfactory when judged by quantitative criteria, while performance viewed in a qualitative perspective proved in some cases disappointing.

The onus of evidence accumulating early in the study suggested that:

- a) the existence of project specific management structures could at times act as a decelerating factor in implementation;
- b) unimpressive levels of achievement were on the whole confined to those areas where cooperation of two or more agencies was required;
- c) project design as given in the *Staff appraisal report* neglected to spell out operational criteria for the ongoing (informal) evaluation of achievements essentially qualitative in character.

Substantiation of these shortcomings would clearly have led to a critical reappraisal of plan formulation and project structure in

the Kurunegala case. Negative conclusions at this stage would further have cast doubt upon the wisdom of replicating present IRD design in other districts. The research team consequently took the position that without an investigation of the general social and political context within which the project has to operate no sure measurement of administrative and management efficiency was possible.

This postulate in turn drew our attention to the fact that certain notions crucial to project design were lacking in clarity. Concepts like 'integration', 'prior consultation of implementing agencies', 'participation' of grassroots organisations lent themselves to such a variety of interpretations that few of those concerned seemed entirely agreed on exactly what constitutes 'integrated rural development'.

1.2.2 Ambiguities in project design

Several government officers involved at one time or another in the high level planning of the Kurunegala project have pointed to the 'mutually supportive' character of different components as evidence of the 'integrated' nature of the whole programme. This opinion was repeatedly expressed in our interviews with senior officials and was placed on record at a recent workshop on IRDP* in papers presented by Messrs Mano Perera and K. Ramanathar, respectively Director and Deputy Director of Regional Development in the Ministry of Plan Implementation. The degree and quality of this mutual support necessary to achieve integration are however nowhere specified.

But many of those interviewed tended to regard the project as 'integrated' merely because this adjective figures prominently in

* Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration in collaboration with KAS: workshop on 'Training of officers working in IRD projects', held on 5 December 1980 at the Bandaranayake Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo.

its title. Others stressed as pertinent the choice of strategy whereby development is fostered in a number of sectors simultaneously. They suggested that respect of the spatial constraint contributed *ipso facto* to an integration of the various activities carried out under the project within the boundaries of a single district.

This position is summarised and given quasi-official expression by Mr Mano Perera, for whom the principal elements in IRD that may be regarded as 'mutually supportive' are 'high priority... investments' (1980:2). 'Integration' is thus reduced to a series of sector specific injections of capital over a predetermined period of time within a given geographical area. Mr Perera later intimates in the same text that this restrictive definition of the essence of IRD may well not be the most desirable, but it remains the only feasible one 'in the present institutional and social context' (1980:8).

A pragmatic feeling on the part of planners for the limitations imposed by this context appears to have had some bearing on the extent of the consultations carried out during the design phase of the Kurunegala project and on the subsequent nature of the 'participation' that was to be elicited from the target population.

Popular participation in the taking of project linked decisions is evoked, in several of the contributions to the workshop already mentioned, as one of the most significant ingredients for the success of IRD. Yet in at least two of these papers it is emphasised how difficult this has proved so far, while preproject consultation of the people living in rural areas of Kurunegala district was never even attempted. Local Members of Parliament were canvassed for their suggestions as to how development might best be undertaken in their electorates. But no approach was made directly to villagers or village level organisations, although this was done in the planning stages of Hambantota and Matale integrated rural development projects (Perera 1980:6).

The Kurunegala project is then, on the one hand, described as an integrated regional programme, but in which the essential feature of 'integration' - that is, the mutually supportive nature of closely coordinated development activities - plays a role of very minor significance. It is, on the other hand, conceived to elicit popular participation, but is in reality unable to go far in this direction.

It is the research team's opinion that these disparities between declared policy and actual performance reflect a preproject situation that made them virtually inevitable. In keeping with its tradition, the World Bank had at the outset apparently proposed to finance in Kurunegala a project mainly concerned with improving irrigation infrastructure and roads. GOSL urged for a reconsideration of this proposal in view of the integrated rural development strategy for which it had just opted. The final project design as presented in the World Bank *Staff appraisal report* constitutes, according to certain key informants, a compromise between these two positions.

Although this document is regarded as final by the World Bank and GOSL alike, it contains numerous passages that remain ambiguous. Some imprecision in a report of this size and detail can be expected and is due no doubt to the difficulty of last minute checking, when a piece of work is researched on one continent and drafted on another. But there are other parts of the *Staff appraisal report* where the authors have apparently sought to avoid being overly precise.

These passages reflect in our view the tension that exists in most parliamentary democracies between centralising and centrifugal tendencies in government. It is desired, on the one hand, that KIRDP be locally managed to achieve a maximum of coordination between components - if not 'integration' - and greatest possible benefits at least cost to the target population; there is, on the other hand, an unvoiced fear that administrative autonomy may reach such a level that the project could become unamenable to political control from the centre. This latter position is reinforced in the particular case of the Kurunegala scheme by an understandable concern on the

part of senior officials in Colombo that project activities in the field may be substantially modified in response to the usually pertinent, but not always suitable views of World Bank supervisory missions.

The *Staff appraisal report* thus emphasises, for example, 'Local level political participation in identification of project investments' (1979:20) without ever determining how this could be achieved, while the same document points elsewhere to the danger of 'partisan political considerations in resource allocation at the local level' (1979:4).

But such theoretical inconsistencies are perhaps minor when compared with the practical problems inherent in the management of project inputs or the enforcement of fruitful cooperation between different government departments and office holders. The precise nature of relations between the Project Director, the District Minister and the Government Agent are far from clear in the World Bank document. While the relationship of subordination between the Project Director and the appropriate senior officers in the Ministry of Plan Implementation in Colombo constitutes an exception in that it is uncontested by all concerned, there is apparently nowhere any written indication as to what sanctions the Project Director can wield to secure compliance from an implementing agency guilty of negligent implementation of a component.

Although there have been the inevitable cases of friction between departments and the occasional human failure to fulfil targets, the record of the Kurunegala Integrated Rural Development Project has to date been on the whole remarkably good. The success of a scheme of this kind should be measured after all not in terms of a total absence of problems but on its capacity to overcome them without harmful delay. This, KIRDP has usually been able to achieve.

Our concern in taking a critical stance in the subsequent analysis of project management and administrative practices has not therefore been to censure. Our intention is to identify those weaknesses

inherent in IRDP structure, which may or may not in the Kurunegala context have been compensated for by the professional and political commitment of certain key officials. For it is the nature and extent of such built-in inadequacies that ultimately determine the wisdom of replicating the same model in other districts.

1.3 Methodology

The tasks to be accomplished were roughly divided between the two institutions to which team members were affiliated. The SLIDA researchers accepted the responsibility for some of the enquiries to be carried out at the headquarters level of certain government departments involved in KIRDP. The same two team members also analysed the pertinent legislative texts. The three officers working under ARTI auspices did all the fieldwork in Kurunegala district. In order to minimise the difficulties inherent in any endeavour to combine in one and the same text sections elaborated by two largely independent groups, the task of actually writing up results was undertaken by the ARTI researchers, who drew substantially upon the information provided by their colleagues at SLIDA.

Interviews with government officials were performed in much the same manner whatever the rank of the respondent. They took the form of a loose conversation prompted by a list of questions both general and quantitative. No attempt was made to elicit responses according to a predetermined schedule. On the contrary, informants were encouraged to elaborate or digress at will as soon as a topic awoke their personal interest or gave them an opportunity to voice their feelings.

This technique served us well in that it nearly always afforded an insight into the grounds for grievance or satisfaction of particular departments and individuals. We did however take pains to ensure that at the end of such open interviews we had secured as precise an answer as possible to each one of the questions on our list (cf. Annex 1).

In Kurunegala town we covered the whole gamut of officials responsible for component implementation at district level. But we also spent several days in the countryside visiting Agrarian Service Centres, Cultivation Officers, field personnel of the Department of Minor Export Crops and Agricultural Managers of the Agricultural Development Authority. This experience provided a valuable corrective to information we had gathered at other levels.

2. KIRDP: THE FORMAL DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a condensed description of the project as it was designed and to point up those features that make for its originality. We here draw only upon the World Bank *Staff appraisal report*, since it is agreed by all parties that this document should be seen as the canon by which performance is judged and responsibilities are defined.

2.1 Components

We consider that the project comprises two separate categories of component: in the first, we have grouped all those activities which have an objectively measurable end effect and make a clear contribution to the socio-economic development of Kurunegala district; in the second category, we place those managerial and administrative aspects of the project which demand an input but whose precise outputs remain somewhat intangible.

2.1.1 Development oriented activities

The *Staff appraisal report* lists 12 components, which fall into the first of our categories, and details a precise expenditure schedule for each. Table 1 constitutes a summary of this information.

No attempt has been made in this resumé to group the 12 main components according to any logic of our own. They are set out here in the order in which they are dealt with in the report quoted. On closer examination, however, several crosscutting subclassifications do appear possible.

It is interesting to observe, for example, that the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research is involved in the implementation of no less than four different components (1,2,3 and 4), in which several distinct departments of the same ministry are responsible for

Table 1: Components of KIRDP

Title	Subcomponents	Agencies concerned
1. Irrigation and water management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehabilitation of major tanks - Rehabilitation of minor tanks and anicuts - Lift irrigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irrigation Department - Department of Agriculture - Agrarian Services Department - Agricultural Development Authority
2. Coconut development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved husbandry - Plantation rehabilitation - Coffee, pepper, cocoa intercropping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coconut Cultivation Board - Department of Minor Export Crops
3. Agricultural extension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Agriculture
4. Agricultural input supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of seed processing centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agrarian Services Department - Department of Agriculture
5. Agricultural credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> paddy and subsidiary food crops coconut rehabilitation farm equipment and vehicles - Overdue loan recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People's Bank - Bank of Ceylon
6. Livestock		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Animal Production and Health

Table 1 continued.

Title	Subcomponents	Agencies concerned
7. Groundwater exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hydrological surveys - Hydrological mapping - Well construction 	- Water Resources Board
8. Rural roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village access roads - School access roads 	- Department of Highways
9. Rural water supply	- Well construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Local Government Services - National Water Supply and Drainage Board
10. Rural electrification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of distribution lines and substations 	- Ceylon Electricity Board
11. Health		- Department of Health
12. Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional Department of Education - Ministry of Higher Education

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carrying out activities described as complementary. In no other component does a single ministry field more than two departments (the Ministry of Finance and Planning in agricultural credit and the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction in rural water supply). We shall later see (3.2.2) that the collaboration which might be expected of two or more agencies assuming complementary attributions under the same ministerial umbrella is not always as productive as could be hoped.

KIRDP components can be further grouped into significant categories according to the preeminence of a particular aspect. Thus, while the provision of a certain amount of capital investment - in the form of vehicles, buildings and office furniture - is a feature of nearly all components, it assumes major proportions in the case of components 1,7,8,10,11 and 12: without the special machines and apparatus made available under the programme these components would not exist.

Quite the opposite is true, however, of components 2,3,4,5,6, and 9, in which the supply of equipment plays a minor role when compared with the principal objective of strengthening the operational capacity of the field agencies concerned. This is achieved mainly by increasing both the number and mobility of staff while at the same time extending an existing network of facilities to improve coverage in hitherto neglected areas of the district.

The importance of the distinction we have drawn between the latter two categories of component lies in the worldwide experience that it in practice usually proves easier to carry out a development effort demanding almost exclusively heavy infrastructural investment than it is to increase the efficiency of established institutions. To build a new road may thus be costly, but it requires less thought than the restructuring of an agricultural input supply system: earthmoving machines are more predictable than government employees, farmers and prices.

The problems met with in the development of institutional capacities

tend to increase with the number of actors involved. It is therefore, foreseeable that the greatest difficulties will be encountered in those components of KIRDP, in which not only two or more agencies must cooperate to ensure implementation but success also depends upon the reactions of the target population. For these are precisely the programmes which have a strongly institutional character insofar as they attempt (or *should* attempt) to address the farming community as a whole and thereby create the premises for group action.

The components that answer this description are the first four on the *Staff appraisal report* list - and, to a much lesser extent, also the fifth. The success of each is strongly conditioned by farmer attitudes to the innovations proposed. These components are, besides, particularly vulnerable in that they comprise a number of mutually supporting activities, so that failure of one can cause the breakdown of others dependent on it: coconut development (2) cannot proceed without credit (5); water management (1) is impossible without the introduction of new varieties by the agricultural extension services (3) and agricultural input supply (4) is again closely linked to the credit function (5). This is a simplification. The ramifications of interdependence are in reality much more complex.

In no other component is the achievement of targets conditioned to anything like the same degree by the ability of largely autonomous government agencies to work in harmony. It must be emphasised, however, that interagency cooperation in the implementation of scheduled activities is a necessary but hardly sufficient precondition for the occurrence of 'integrated' development. Project sponsored programmes may well be 'mutually supporting' insofar as they call upon several departments for a coordination of their efforts. But for it to be possible to speak of 'integration', combined efforts must have an incremental effect that exceeds the sum of departmental inputs.

The efficiency of the resource development activities planned under KIRDP is in the last analysis also a function of staff motivation.

It is not possible to measure this, particularly in the case of components fielding hundreds of officers in Kurunegala district.

It may nonetheless be apposite to point out that provision is made in five components (1,2,3,5 and 7) for sending a very limited number of agents on short 'overseas study tours' to neighbouring countries. The possibility of being selected may be found to have a certain influence upon individual performance (cf. 4.2.3).

2.1.2 Management and control

The management component in KIRDP is so designed that a minimum of the project's resources are concentrated in this relatively unproductive sphere of activity. While full-time responsibility for coordination, accountancy and progress control is vested in the project office situated in the Kachcheri precinct at Kurunegala, other KIRDP management duties are performed on a part-time basis, at district level, by the local branches of implementing agencies and, at national level, by the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

Crucial to the functioning of the whole project is the Director, seconded by his staff. He must ensure that components progress according to schedule, identify the reasons for less than average standards of performance, contribute to the solution of conflicts and report regularly to the funding agencies.

In Kurunegala, his most important points of reference are in principle the District Minister and the Government Agent. The former plays a decisive role in assuming the responsibility for issues of a political character, thus leaving the Project Director free to deal with his allotted tasks. The Government Agent's position *vis à vis* the project is however nowhere very precisely defined.

The District Minister is closely implicated in all management decisions insofar as he is chairman of the project Coordinating Committee, which should meet 'at least once a month' (World Bank 1979:43) in Kurunegala.

The Director is member-secretary of this committee, which comprises the heads of all agencies responsible at district level for the implementation of components. The Director also presides over the meetings of *ad hoc* subcommittees dealing with specific problem areas in the overall programme. On these subcommittees sit the heads of implementing agencies concerned by the problems in hand and certain members of their staff.

The District Minister, the Government Agent and the Project Director all three further represent the project at a national level. A steering committee chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Plan Implementation meets at three-monthly intervals in Colombo to resolve ... policy issues as well as implementation bottlenecks and coordination problems' (World Bank 1979:43). Attendance at the meetings of the Steering Committee is on invitation and is usually restricted to government officials directly concerned at either national or district level by items on the agenda.

Unlike the District Minister and the Government Agent, the Director of KIRDP has project specific functions both in the district and within the headquarters staff of his line ministry. He is responsible - with the Director, Regional Development - for the Project Cell, which operates inside the Ministry of Plan Implementation, and has close links with the Centralised Tender Section. The latter organises the supply to project components of scheduled material inputs that must for the most part be imported or else are not available in Kurunegala district.

2.2 Unconventional features

In the past, large scale rural development projects have often been designed to resemble a semi-autonomous relay of government at the regional level. The rationale behind this procedure was to achieve devolution and local reconcentration of authority. Such projects took over many of the tasks previously incumbent upon local authorities or the regional offices of ministries located in the capital. But

these existing authorities were rarely abolished outright. Instead, the project would either reduce them to near silence in its geographical sphere of influence or would else accept with them an uneasy relationship based on mutual avoidance. Both the project and the other agencies would maintain separate vertical linkages with their parent organisations at national level.

This kind of arrangement has in many countries resulted in a vesting of project leadership with disproportionate powers, in lack of coordination, patchy development and substantial wastage owing to frequent duplication of efforts. The intention behind KIRDP is that the project should escape these particular pitfalls. It has moreover been moderately successful in this respect.

This it has achieved by exercising a certain control over project linked activities, whilst at the same time in no way infringing upon the administrative autonomy of implementing agencies or preventing them from fulfilling their regular programmes. KIRDP is to be seen more as a catalyst acting upon an existing development potential than as an independent authority 'bringing' development to Kurunegala district.

Section 2.2.1 to 2.2.5 describe these novel aspects of KIRDP.

2.2.1 Decentralisation

Although its physical presence cannot be observed to extend beyond the walls of a small office building in Kurunegala town, KIRDP is at the origin of a cluster of activities which directly influence the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the district. In this sense, project administration is truly decentralised, for it does little more than marshal the efforts of implementing agencies and serve as a clearing house for two-way communication between these and the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

The Ministry for its part has a say in project orientations through its Secretary, who chairs the Steering Committee (cf. 2.1.2.). But this general supervisory role is shared with the District Minister and also, in principle, with the Government Agent (World Bank 1979:42).

The Project Director cannot be regarded as a focus of power, for he takes no independent decisions with regard to implementation and merely sees to it that the programme as outlined in the *Staff appraisal report* is adhered to. Although the Director does not himself handle such matters as the delivery of equipment or the transfer of funds to implementing agencies, he is in a position - as officer of the Ministry of Plan Implementation and member of the Project Cell in that ministry - to expedite certain procedures. An interesting aspect of his activities is, however, that he cannot himself wield sanctions against agencies negligent or slow in carrying out project work.

The whole issue of sanctions in project management is revealing in that it demonstrates just how decentralised the management of KIRDP really is: while decisions to modify the original design of components are collegial insofar as they are taken in committee meetings, it is in no document specified precisely where the power to sanction inadequate implementation lies.

The ability to enforce adherence to project design no doubt ultimately rests with the World Bank, which can refuse to reimburse expenditure on unapproved items. This and the generally high levels of commitment to service that may be observed among senior government officers in Sri Lanka are apparently sufficient to ensure compliance in a management structure characterised by an exceptionally even spread of responsibilities.

2.2.2 Implementation by proxy

Attempts at 'integrated rural development' have in other countries often taken the form of a mere transfer to the project of authority

over a wide array of local government agencies previously affiliated to parent organisations at national level. This has given rise to frequent conflicts of loyalties, anxieties on the part of staff with regard to regular promotion and apprehension concerning the future after the project has come to an end. Cooperation between these formerly autonomous agencies regrouped under project auspices has moreover rarely shown much improvement over the earlier situation.

KIRDP neatly sidesteps all these problems by leaving intact agencies already existing in the district and relying for implementation exclusively upon them. It should be in the interest of the agencies concerned to collaborate with the project insofar as the latter supplies them in almost all cases with badly needed new equipment and buildings. The project should thereby achieve its own goals, while each of the agencies is the object at district level of capital investments, which will continue to benefit them when the project is over.

2.2.3 Reinforcement of field agencies

Central to KIRDP strategy is a strengthening of the capacity of field agencies (World Bank 1979:20). The aim is not so much to vest them with new roles and to encourage the use of an innovative technology as to foster an expansion of their normally scheduled activities.

This objective is achieved in most fields by simply providing funds to finance training, the salaries of incremental staff, the construction of living quarters, office and storage space. An important subsidiary aspect of this kind of support to existing programmes is the supply of vehicles to improve the mobility of personnel and thus increase the frequency of each agent's contacts with the rural population of outlying areas. Similarly, funds have been made available to cover the field indemnities of greater numbers of staff and, in certain cases, to make it possible for officers to purchase on credit their own vehicles for partial use in the field.

But some components of KIRDP have required more specific inputs. Such is the case, for instance, of the groundwater exploration, rural roads and water supply components, all of which could not become operational unless supplied under the project with some fairly sophisticated pieces of machinery. In this respect KIRDP has very occasionally been ready to sponsor a new type of activity (i.e. experimental hard-rock drilling for groundwater by the Water Resources Board). Nonetheless, most capital equipment provided by the project is intended for use in extending the existing infrastructure.

2.2.4. Global approach

Many so-called integrated rural development projects concentrate almost exclusively upon strongly production related activities. These may include a certain amount of training in agriculture and vital rural skills, like farm machinery repair or carpentry. But they rarely address a true cross-section of rural needs. In the formal design of KIRDP a real effort has been made to ensure multisectoral coverage. Production was obviously a major concern of the planners, since nearly 80% of the funds available are devoted to the first five components, in all of which agriculture predominates (World Bank 1979: Annex 2, Table 1). Rs.76.5 million are nevertheless to be spent on roads, water supply, electrification, health and education, despite the fact that in all these respects Kurunegala district is by and large far in advance of the standards usually met with in the developing countries.

So, even though KIRDP clearly centres on agricultural development, this is paralleled by activities in other spheres. Besides, even within agriculture care has been taken to strike a balance between the sector with the greatest potential for economic growth and that characterised by the urgency to meet rapidly increasing subsistence needs; the coconut industry and minor export crops thus benefit from a substantially smaller input of funds than does the tank rehabilitation and water management programme aimed principally at improving rural

incomes in the less favoured central and northern parts of the district.

KIRDP is then not only multisectoral in its approach but at the same time endeavours to avoid concentration of resources and a consequent worsening of intradistrict disparities.

2.2.5 Interdependent components

We have already noted (cf. 2.1.1) that one of the characteristics of the project is that certain components are interrelated and call for a high degree of coordination. This is particularly true of the first five listed in Table 1.

We are informed by one of the government servants closely associated with KIRDP during its design phase, that this was in fact intentional. The irrigation and agricultural input supply components were thus, for example, from the outset conceived of as complementary. The same is clearly true of water management, the introduction of new cropping patterns, agricultural extension and credit. Even rural roads tie into the plans for health and education, since they will be traced to improve access to clinics and schools, while the electrification scheme is to take the needs of these same institutions into account.

The only components which are not evidently linked to others are livestock, groundwater exploration and water supply.

The mutually supportive nature of the majority of components together with the global approach described above lend credence to the notion that this is indeed an 'integrated' project.

3. INTEGRATION

We pointed in the Introduction (1.2.2) to a number of ambiguities that beset the design of KIRDP. A highly nuanced gamut of opinions on what 'integrated rural development' really is or could be in the Sri Lankan context has made it difficult for those responsible to refine the project's original rather schematic framework. Lack of consensus has inhibited departure from a literalist interpretation of the *Staff appraisal report*. There has thus been little leeway for the removal of inconsistencies and areas of potential conflict built into the project from the start.

In this chapter we discuss the whole issue of integration and try to evaluate how successful the management structure has been in fostering this end.

3.1 The concept

Though it is not always made explicit, it would seem that most officials agree that a minimal definition of 'integrated rural development' implies the carrying out of a certain number of mutually supportive activities the net result of which is, in the words of one of them, 'more than the sum of the parts'. Consultation of the target population in the planning phase, concentration of the development effort upon less privileged groups in the community, active participation of rural people in the taking of specific decisions during implementation and ongoing readjustment of project strategy in response to evaluation feedback are also frequently mentioned as features of IRD.

It is interesting to note that the *Staff appraisal report* nowhere endorses even the minimal definition. We are however assured that GOSL was insistent that the project be multisectoral and that components be designed insofar as possible with a view to being mutually supportive.

3.2. Mutual support

We shall in this section first describe the interlinkages between related components and then assess the adequacy of project management in coordinating their activities.

3.2.1 Clusters of components

According to the project document, 'the principal... thrust would be to rehabilitate the production base and to improve supporting services essential for increased paddy and coconut production' (World Bank 1979:20). As already mentioned (2.1.1), these objectives can only be achieved through the collaboration of several agencies engaging in complementary activities.

The improvement of paddy yields calls for the upgrading of existing irrigation works, the introduction of better management practices and new varieties, the supply of agricultural inputs and the provision of credit.

With regard to irrigation, responsibility lies within Kurunegala district not only with the Irrigation Department but also with the Agrarian Services Department. The former is charged with the rehabilitation under project auspices of nine major tanks in the Dry Zone, while the latter is in principle only required to carry out regular maintenance work on minor tanks -- a task that ASD would have performed whether or not KIRDIP had been launched. There is however some confusion in that certain field officers of the Agrarian Services Department refer to maintenance work on minor tanks as part of a 500 minor tank and anicut rehabilitation plan, which is directly financed under the project and scheduled for implementation by the Irrigation Department.

In reality, the only official operational* linkage that ASD has to the project is in matters concerned with water management. Yet here again some ambiguity prevails, for different departments understand this term in different manners.

The Department of Agriculture in Kurunegala began in 1978 to test on the command areas of ten minor tanks and their associated *chena* lands a series of new cropping patterns elaborated at the Maha Illuppalama Research Station. The intention was to achieve better timing of agricultural operations in *maha* paddy cultivation, to save water and reduce the risk factor attendant upon the growing in *yala* of a whole range of field crops on sparingly irrigated asweddumised land. Extension staff belonging to the Department of Agriculture were specially trained at Maha Illuppalama and the experiment is claimed finally to have proved a success in *yala* 1980.

Since then, the Agrarian Services Department has supposedly taken over from the extension service and its Cultivation Officers are said to be supervising the introduction of the new technology on 41 more minor tanks recently rehabilitated by the Irrigation Department.

It is however, simultaneously maintained by the Department of Agriculture that its own village level extensionists (KVSs) will be doing the same thing on 200 minor tanks in the course of 1980-81.

Apart from the fact that it is unequivocally held by the Agricultural Development Authority that the Irrigation Department had in November 1980 completed rehabilitation work (a *sine qua non* for improved water management) on no more than 30 tanks, it is quite obvious that the whole minor irrigation component of KIRDP is fraught with uncertainties: none of the three agencies involved seems to have a clear perception

* ASD is scheduled to receive vehicles paid for out of project funds. These are to improve its efficiency in the general area of agricultural input supply. But participation in this component is entirely consonant with the Department's traditional activities, which are merely streamlined by this addition to its transport fleet.

of its duties or achievements in this field.

To complicate the picture still further, the Agricultural Development Authority is required, according to the *Staff appraisal report* (1979:41), to give support to ASD activities in water management; and assurances were given us by the ADA chief officer in Kurunegala that this was in fact the case on the 30 minor tanks already rehabilitated.

These multiple confusions stem probably from the facts that

- a) the criteria for judging the degree of completion of minor irrigation rehabilitation work are not the same for all the parties involved (cf. 4.1.2. below);
- b) different agencies have cut the original Maha Illuppalama water management package down to size, each one to suit its own requirements;
- c) the term 'water management' is extensively used to describe the organisation of minor tank irrigation under the provisions of the recent Agrarian Services Act (No. 58, 1979), which in no way refers to the Maha Illuppalama package.

The irrigation programmes under KIRDP implicate further inputs from the Department of Agriculture and the Agrarian Services Department insofar as the former makes available the seed for paddy and most other field crops, while the latter provides farmers with fertiliser and agro-chemicals. In all these activities both organisations compete to a certain extent with the Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, whose retail outlets are particularly active in remote areas of the district. In recent months, ADA has also begun to fulfil a modest supply function. In each of these cases the project has improved the timeliness of input supply by providing the agencies concerned with badly needed trucks and jeeps. The construction with project funds at Maho of a seed processing plant will also contribute to the spread of improved varieties.

Agricultural extension is described in the *Staff appraisal report* as a component with no cross-linkages to others. Yet we have already seen how KVSs and Cultivation Officers perform tasks that cannot always be clearly distinguished. It is said that COs are there to organise the farmers, while the duty of the KVS is to transmit to them appropriate aspects of new agricultural technology. However, there were in November 1980 in Kurunegala district 517 COs and only 314 KVSs. Moreover, the COs are in the main local men and women, enjoying the confidence of the population with whom they work, and are unlikely to move out of the area. The KVSs are on the contrary often people from other regions of the island and are quite frequently transferred from one posting to another.

The KVS thus not uncommonly has the double disadvantage of unfamiliarity with his or her clientele and a very much larger number of farm families to approach than does the CO. In such circumstances, he either never contacts a large proportion of the farming population or else relies on his good relations with certain COs, who serve as his relays. The field officers of the Agrarian Services Department are in this sense very much integrated into the project, since they bear the unofficial burden of much of the extension work.

COs also have substantial informal duties to fulfil in the coconut growing areas in the south of Kurunegala district. For here the 37 Coconut Development Officers of the Coconut Cultivation Board have apparently so much to do by way of subsidy issues and supervisory visits to permit-holders* that they have little - if any - time at their disposal for extension activities. So Cultivation Officers are being encouraged by ADA to popularise certain aspects of the coconut rehabilitation programme.

The coconut development component of KIRDP has however a more vital and official link with the Department of Minor Export Crops, which supplies it with planting materials for the coffee, pepper

* Subscribers to the various coconut rehabilitation schemes.

and cocoa intercropping scheme. The latter department also makes gestures towards extension in as much as it runs a small number of demonstration plots in farmers' coconut plantations and provides the Department of Agriculture with one subject matter specialist to serve on a panel mainly engaged in training KVS generalists.

Only one other component has some formal relationship with another agency in view of accomplishing project sponsored activities. The People's Bank, charged with loan recovery under the agricultural credit component, employs its sister organisation, the Cooperative Movement, to act as an intermediary with defaulters. But the Bank of Ceylon, which is also funded by KIRDP under the same component, operates entirely on its own.

This is equally the case of the remaining components: livestock, groundwater exploration, rural water supply, roads, electrification, health and education. If, as we suggested in section 2.2.5., the latter four can be said to have been planned as functionally integrated, none of these components calls for the least cooperation between agencies during the implementation phase. In fact they differ fundamentally from the preceding nexus of highly interrelated programmes in that they in no way depend upon a positive response from the target population for their success. Or, put another way, their appeal to the inhabitants of rural areas is assured in advance, because they offer no more than an improvement of existing services already in high demand. Even the livestock component is no more, in the last analysis, than the provision of more easily accessible prophylactic and therapeutic veterinary care of long proven validity.

All those components concerned with agriculture and irrigation are however extremely vulnerable to the quality of public response with respect to innovatory practices. The failure of one to elicit a positive reaction on the part of farmers can bring to nothing the efforts of one or more others. All must progress at an even rate, for improved agricultural methods can only be successfully introduced if all material inputs, technical knowledge and organisational skills are made available simultaneously.

3.2.2 Friction between implementing agencies

In respect of all but the first four components listed in Table 1 the project fulfils almost no coordinating functions. It acts as a dispenser of inputs and tries to accelerate implementation when components fall behind schedule. Its monitoring system highlights delays. Whether these are due to a slow-down in the supply of inputs from outside the district or to slackness on the part of implementing agencies, the Director can do little more than point up these inadequacies and hope that the publicity given them will move those responsible to remedial action.

The Director's position is rather different with regard to those four components in which interagency cooperation is a vital ingredient for successful implementation. The cross-cutting ties of interdependence which, as already described, link several of the organisations directly involved in agricultural development activities do of occasion give rise to certain tensions that it is the Director's role to palliate. Agencies more or less covertly accuse each other of failing to work to schedule or provide reciprocally essential services. The spontaneous emigration of staff in the agricultural sector from one department to another in response to better opportunities does nothing to improve relations between their respective heads at district level.

It would be hardly fair to speak of 'conflict' between the majority of implementing agencies in the agricultural sector. For each organisation's programme is outlined as a discrete entity in the *Staff appraisal report* and it is thus possible, in the last resort, for each agency to go about its business almost entirely on its own.

Ambiguities or, at the very least, misunderstandings with regard to the precise extent of their responsibilities in the general area of irrigation may inspire with a certain mutual diffidence the relations between the Irrigation Department and ASD. A lack of clearly defined boundaries between the latter and the Department of Agriculture is similarly not very conducive to formal cooperation at field level. The recently constituted Agricultural Development Authority has few problems of its

own in Kurunegala district, but is the object of very strong reserves on the part of the Department of Agriculture and ASD. The reasons for this are twofold: on the one hand, it arrogates for itself a new role as coordinator between KVSs and COs while, on the other hand, (as an ADA official put it) the Authority proposes 'to ensure that officers of all agencies in agriculture in fact do their work'. This body's perception of itself as a sort of agricultural police force does little to encourage the voluntary collaboration of other departments; but then nor does this hamper its own other, barely nascent activities in the area of specialised input supply.

It is the contention of ADA's Deputy Director for the Northwest province that the Director of KIRDP and the Project Cell in the Ministry of Plan Implementation actually solicit information on the progress of components that his Agricultural Managers collect on a monthly basis in the electorates for which each bears responsibility. In this respect the Authority fulfils a monitoring function for the project. ADA has so far rarely gone further than point up certain deficiencies in implementation. In one case it has however pressed for action and remained largely thwarted.

We are referring to the conflict which openly opposes in Kurunegala district the Department of Minor Export Crops and the Coconut Cultivation Board. While subsidies for coffee, pepper and cocoa intercropping on coconut land are handled by the Board, DMEC is alone in its command of the technical knowhow necessary to achieve the success of this programme. Having been deprived at the beginning of KIRDP of 20 field officers, who were drafted into the ranks of the Department of Agriculture's extension staff, DMEC no longer has sufficient personnel to ensure follow-up on the intercropping scheme. Considerable pressure was brought to bear by the regional office of DMEC in order that resources be again made available for carrying out minor export crop extension activities. ADA fully supported this move, but was unable in the long run to achieve more than a commitment on the part of the Coconut Cultivation Board to recruit five or six new field officers for training and subsequent employment in intercropping follow-up.

In this type of confrontation the Project Director may intervene with varying degrees of success. But there are conflicts in KIRDP about which the Director can do virtually nothing. Instead of involving different departments called upon to cooperate in the field, they are characteristic of vertical relationships between implementing agencies and the Centralised Tender Section in Colombo, which is instrumental in supplying them with all major material inputs. Many agencies do not suffer unduly from the long delays frequently attendant upon the delivery of equipment, because they can in the meantime concentrate their efforts upon the carrying out of their regular programmes unconnected with KIRDP. The Water Resources Board is however in the peculiar position of having made special provision for Kurunegala district where, prior to the project, it had almost no activities.

Owing to the cumbersome procedures inherent in the method of international competitive bidding imposed by the World Bank, the groundwater exploration component had by the end of October 1980 received only a small part of its somewhat costly equipment. The items that had been delivered were incomplete and it had therefore been impossible to embark upon scheduled work. The net result of delays and logistic inefficiencies was that in 20 months the agency had been able to spend only 3.74% of its total Rs. 9.7 million budget for the five-year period. Resentment was running high.

3.2.3 Mediation

It is supposedly the Project Director's role to see that reason prevails and conciliate the conflicting claims of all parties to a dispute arising from a disparity of views on the implementation of interrelated components. He can himself, however, do little more than counsel moderation, emphasise the objective reality of constraints in a particular situation and add his weight to the remonstrances he considers most justified according to his reading of the *Staff appraisal report*. If he requires support, he can try to enlist the

aid of the Government Agent, appeal to the powers vested with the District Minister and, ultimately, persuade both men to back him in his pursuit of a favourable decision by the Secretary of the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

The Government Agent and the District Minister may be called upon individually, in the course of project Coordination Committee meetings held monthly at district level, in the context of *ad hoc* subcommittees devoted to a specific issue or in their capacity as members of the Steering Committee chaired in Colombo at three-monthly intervals by the Secretary of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. But the GA and the DM are in such instances confined to an advisory or monitory role. The strength of their arguments lies, in the last analysis, in their ability to mobilise the opinion of high officialdom in the line ministries concerned. And this depends on the extent of their respective networks of personal and political relationships.

Numerous observers would consider that conflicts between agencies responsible for carrying out components can, if all else fails, always be solved by order of the Secretary of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. Although this is apparently true, too little should not be made of the political constraints with which the Secretary has to reckon when bringing the Steering Committee to endorse his final decision: he must take into consideration the relative political weight of the ultimate superiors of those immediately involved.

A case in point is the dispute over intercropping follow-up related above: a decision in favour of the Department of Minor Export Crops was initially rendered at district level as the result of deliberations in the *ad hoc* subcommittee; this was subsequently reneged and replaced by an inadequate compromise at a Steering Committee meeting. Since DMEC's request for more resources and responsibility in intercropping extension activities was fully justified by the fact that the Coconut Cultivation Board had neither the manpower nor the experience to perform these duties, it is difficult to see what - other than political considerations - can have motivated the solution finally handed down.

3.3 Measuring Integration

Although the formal design of KIRDP clearly includes numerous features germane to an 'integrated' project; much of the empirical evidence reported in this chapter seems to point to a less than satisfactory level of performance in this respect. Despite a fairly consistent achievement of quantitative targets by the majority of components, activities apparently endowed with a potential for proving mutually supportive have not always combined to produce the multiplier effect characteristic of truly integrated development. There are in our opinion three basic reasons for this major shortcoming.

The first of these is the circumstances in which the project came about. We have already mentioned (cf. 1.2.2) that the World Bank was initially uninterested in anything more than a sectoral plan for boosting agricultural productivity and improving the communications infrastructure in Kurunegala district. A vigorous stand by GOSL induced the funding agency into conceding 'a pragmatic compromise between comprehensiveness and manageability' (World Bank 1979:21). Yet this is still conceived of by the authors of the *Staff appraisal report* as little more than an investment programme (*ibid.*).

During the planning phase a team of specialists examined individual aspects of the district's problems and came up with a series of equally individual proposals. The heads of agencies at district level were consulted, but several confined their response to the presentation of a list of material *desiderata* giving little attention to the manner in which additional equipment and buildings might contribute to a coordinated development effort. Functional interrelationships were hardly contemplated either by the design team or by those who would later be responsible for implementation. The outlook of all concerned was sectorally determined - that is, 'conventional', as one disappointed government planner remarked, and 'these IRDP programmes are unconventional'.

The second reason for the sketchiness with which the principle of 'integration' has been incorporated into the project is no doubt institutional in character. While it is usually possible to ensure interdepartmental collaboration at district level, it is frequently more difficult to secure a corresponding formal commitment between different ministries commanding these local subsidiaries. Even if ministries can be induced at one point in time to give general assurance of mutual cooperation, political priorities change and adherence to such pledges may in specific circumstances become an embarrassment at a later date.

Lastly, the project's potential for living up to the ideal of 'integration' seems to have suffered from the absence of adequate feedback mechanisms: correction of the project's trajectory away from integration could have been achieved, if the Director had had timely access to the results of ongoing evaluation. As things stand, he has more than once publicly complained that he has received no indication from those responsible of what impact the project is having at grass-roots level and who among the rural population is reaping benefits from specific programmes.

He does have at his disposal a monitoring system which provides him and the Project Cell with data on the respect of implementation schedules and expenditure. But this is essentially quantitative material; and he remains uninformed as to the qualitative results of the development effort deployed. Unable to perceive the overall effects of project sponsored activities, leadership is reduced to overindulgence in 'targetry': enforcement of performance measured in terms of datelines and figures has become a necessary substitute for appraisal followed by the formulation of remedial policies.

It might have been more appropriate had the responsibility for ongoing evaluation not been conferred upon an outside institution. Past

experience has shown* that projects comprising within their administrative structure an evaluation wing are better informed and thus more sensitive to the need for constant readjustment than is KIRDP.

It is true that in enlisting a Sri Lankan research institute to carry out evaluation duties the design team was offering nationals a valuable opportunity to acquire new skills. These were however handed down to the researchers somewhat hastily without sufficient emphasis being laid upon those aspects of the task that do not lend themselves to a purely mechanistic approach. Little was done moreover to communicate to officers an adequate understanding of the importance and scope of the role they would be called upon to play. Had their training in evaluation techniques been handled with greater subtlety and a less literalistic concern for 'head-counting', feedback to the project might have been significantly more productive and fostered closer adherence to the principles behind integrated rural development.

* E.g. the IDA-funded Project Rural de Sedhiou in southern Senegal and the now famous CADU set up by the Swedish International Development Authority in Ethiopia (Cohen 1974).

4. PERFORMANCE

It is stated in the minutes of the Coordination Committee meeting, which took place on 30 August 1980, that the World Bank had 'expressed concern over the substantial cost over-runs that the project ~~was~~ experiencing' and that in 'nearly all the project's components' cost increases were much higher than had been anticipated at the time of appraisal.

Despite rapidly escalating inflation, most components are nonetheless apparently being carried out more or less according to schedule. Some of them are even proceeding faster than was initially planned. It is however sometimes difficult to judge overall rates of performance because all parties are not entirely agreed as to the criteria to be employed. The *Staff appraisal report* frequently confines itself in the description of components to a mere statement of objectives accompanied by a list of material means to be used in the attainment of these ends. Little attention is given to defining the parameters of 'successful' implementation.

In this chapter we identify some of the factors that must be taken into account when assessing performance. We consider that the degree of 'success' met with in the implementation of any one component stands in close relation both to its specific design and to a number of external constraints that impinge to a greater or lesser extent upon all components.

We first go into certain design features, the analysis of which points up the existence of three distinct categories of component. The limit of each group's potential for 'success' is determined from the outset, so that substantial disparities in levels of achievement may more truthfully reflect the complexity of work to be carried out than the competence of management. In the second part of this chapter we examine external constraints upon performance.

We would however like to emphasise yet again (cf. 2.2.1) that responsibility is in KIRDP so diffuse that it is very difficult to formulate a judgement on standards of performance which is not highly subjective. Information on achievements is biased according to source and hard quantitative facts provided by agencies are rarely complete. Figures relating to KIRDP activities are often confused with those referring to ongoing regular programmes, so that the precise situation at any given moment in time remains obscure.

4.1 Component design and the measurement of achievement

We have already distinguished between components the success of which is strongly conditioned by the response of the target population and those in which such response is not of crucial significance (2.1.1).

We singled out the first five components listed in Table 1 as response oriented. A further subdivision is however possible in this group between components which are so conceived as actually to elicit farmer response and those in which little effort is in fact deployed to this end.

4.1.1 Response orientation

Three components cover areas in which a positive response on the part of farmers can be the *only* true measure of success. These components are agricultural extension, input supply and credit.

Although it is technically possible to assess the credit programme in terms of loans recovered and sums lent, this in fact proves very difficult - at least in the case of the People's Bank, which bears the responsibility for the greater part of KIRDP-sponsored activities in the credit field. The problem is to evaluate the efficiency of loan recovery procedures when the functioning of legal machinery is so slow that after almost two years by no means all defaulters had been served with a letter of demand and only 1,927 court cases out of 11,396 pending in mid-November 1980 had actually been heard.

This state of affairs may well not be due to inadequate organisation on the part of the Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, charged with the responsibility for loan recovery. But insofar as levels of lending are contingent upon the cancelling or rescheduling of formerly contracted debts the success of the small farmer credit programme obviously depends upon the response of potential beneficiaries. The reactions of the latter cannot be neglected in an attempt at evaluation.

It is however exceedingly difficult, if not possible, in this particular case to apportion the blame for poor performance. In agricultural extension and input supply it is similarly not at all easy to assess the efficiency of the agencies involved in implementation, for substantially good management may well be neutralised by the unreceptive attitudes of farmers.

Thus, the extension service has used project funds to increase its cadre of KVSs from 160 to 314 (November 1980) and has consequently reduced the ratio of small farmers* to village level officers from 1,073:1 to 547:1. This more than meets the World Bank target of one KVS to 600 farm families. The Department of Agriculture has also gained from the project the opportunity to recruit more subject matter officers, to improve its fleet of vehicles and to construct buildings in outlying areas. But the question as to whether these quantitative improvements constitute 'success' remains open until the precise impact of the whole extension programme upon farmers is measured.

Such a study is in progress. Though it may be doubted whether an investigation based mainly on the results of a one-shot questionnaire into the frequency of contacts between KVSs and farmers affords a true insight into the efficiency of extension work. It is conceivable

* We define small farmers as operators of holdings under 20 acres - cf, World Bank 1979:9. The ratio of 547:1 is calculated without taking into account the fact that 51 KVSs out of the total of 314 are employed at the Agrarian Service Centres of the district.

that yields may well increase; but this increment may be due to factors quite beyond the scope of extension and have occurred even despite a certain resistance on the part of farmers to specific aspects of the knowhow introduced by KVSs.

Extension, like credit, is so dependent upon a multiplicity of farmer motivations that it is hardly feasible to say more than that precise numerical targets stipulated in the *Staff appraisal report* have or have not been attained. The same goes for agricultural input supply. Alternative sources of supply are so numerous (MPCSs, ADA, DA, CCB, private traders) that only a major study carried out over several years would reveal trends in this respect. A painstaking examination of achievements by ASD (the principal actor in this component) would on its own provide very little information on farmers' behaviour and their tendency to utilise a larger quantity of modern inputs.

The highly response oriented design of the three components discussed in this subsection precludes a precise appraisal of performance. Although other components are apparently conceived along similar lines, management practices have been such as to obviate dependence on farmer response.

4.1.2.2 Response avoidance.

On the face of things, irrigation, water management and coconut development are components which demand strong farmer involvement and cooperation.

True to its tradition as an agency with a solid engineering bias, the Irrigation Department has chosen under KIRDP to concentrate on tank rehabilitation work, whilst leaving responsibility for the strengthening of irrigation-linked farmer institutions to the Agrarian Services Department and the Department of Agriculture. We have already described the equivocation to which this situation has given rise (cf. 3.2.1).

The fact that the Irrigation Department deliberately eschews sustained contact with farmer organisations and concerns itself only with technical matters would apparently make it easier to judge its performance in purely objective terms. This is however not that simple, as opinions as to the extent of the real achievements of ID under KIRDP differ radically.

Where the Irrigation Department claims to have reached an advanced stage in the rehabilitation of nine major tanks, one critic from another department expresses scepticism and suggests that the figure is actually only two. This disparity calls for explanation, as does also that between the number of minor tanks said to have been refurbished and the much lower level of achievement reported by the Agricultural Development Authority.

We believe that there is no dishonest intention behind these conflicting claims. It would seem that the problem lies rather in an unequal perception of what constitutes progress in the highly technical field of irrigation engineering.

It has for instance been maintained in defence of ID that 51 minor tanks (and not a mere 30) had in fact been rehabilitated by the end of August 1980, but that they were not all immediately serviceable due to the lack at that time of the year of the water necessary to consolidate the repaired bunds. Similarly, the Department's brief stated in the case of major tanks that water losses should be reduced to 20%. However, this would have made it essential to line numerous channels and to construct more regulators. Budgetary constraints were such that these refinements had to be omitted and water losses remain at around 30%, according to those in charge at district level. Inflation has also made it imperative to cut back on the width of channels and the quality of service roads.

So, to an outsider it would appear that the Irrigation Department has been negligent. It is however possible that a bad impression of the Department's performance exists merely because judgement is

passed on the basis of criteria that are no longer valid. The example afforded by the substantial cutbacks decided for the minor tanks rehabilitation scheme would lend support to this interpretation. From 500 at the time of project planning the number of village tanks scheduled for improvement was reduced in the course of 1980 to a mere 160. This decision was made by ID in conjunction with the higher levels of project management in the context of an *ad hoc* committee. Motivation was quite simple: it was realised that the average cost of this sort of work had escalated by 213% since project inception and that the same sum of money would therefore cover less than one third of the tanks initially proposed.

Deliberate avoidance of involvement with the target population may well facilitate implementation. (Top level irrigation officials in Kurunegala specifically state that farmers are *not* consulted on questions of design and construction). But this does not dispell the ambiguities that derive from the absence of clearly conceived criteria by which to evaluate performance.

The coconut development component also does its best to keep farmers at arm's length and should therefore be amenable to an objective assessment of its efficiency. The programme is based upon the attractiveness of the subsidies offered to voluntary participants in various types of plantation rehabilitation work and intercropping. It is reckoned that little effort has to be deployed to persuade planters to take out 'permits'. The component's main concerns are therefore the supply of sufficient planting materials and the supervision of improvement operations.

Even though positive farmer response may be judged automatic given the subsidy incentive, attempts to evaluate progress in these areas must take into account the climatic constraint. In 1979 drought conditions seriously handicapped the programme insofar as coconut seedlings, coffee, pepper and cocoa planting materials were widely damaged before they could become established. This was a serious setback and only the target for the physical rehabilitation of existing

stands of coconut (contour ditching, thinning out) could be fulfilled that year. Planting operations were also little advanced in November 1980 when we carried out the fieldwork for the present report. But since the figures supplied to us referred to the situation as of the end of the preceding month, when the *maha* rains had hardly begun, it would be unfair to use them to judge overall performance for 1980.

It did however come to our notice that 70,000 coffee plants requested for Dodangaslanda electorate as part of the coconut intercropping programme were not delivered. Farmers had been encouraged to dig the corresponding number of holes only to see their efforts cancelled by the erosive effects of rainfall in November 1980. The local Coconut Development Officer claims to have forwarded the order to his superiors in Kurunegala. Whether the Coconut Cultivation Board in the district capital failed to pass on instructions to the Department of Minor Export Crops or whether the latter would not comply remains a matter for conjecture. In view of the friction between the two agencies, to which we referred in 3.2.2, such an event is not altogether surprising. It would be interesting to speculate whether a fair number of similar instances have not escaped us in the course of investigation.

Even so, it would seem that the Department of Minor Export Crops experiences no difficulty in establishing the nurseries and demonstration plots required. The head of the Department in Kurunegala went so far as to express his disappointment at the modesty of the intercropping targets that are fixed in the *Staff appraisal report*. He however indicated that the strongest constraint upon performance of the component for which he is partially responsible is the manner in which subsidy payments are made: since the Coconut Cultivation Board makes the issue of subsidies contingent upon the completion of approved rehabilitation and new plantings, many of the smaller farmers apparently cannot carry out improvement work on their plantations for want of the capital initially necessary to reward hired labour.

So despite the avowedly unambitious character of its planting programme (World Bank 1979:25) and the distance affected with regard to farmers, this component too is nonetheless handicapped by a design which neglects to give sufficient weight to economic factors restricting capacity for a positive response.

4.1.3 Response neutrality

In assessing the performance of the seven remaining components it is unnecessary to take group orientation into account. None of them rely in any manner upon the response of the rural population for their successful implementation. Nor do any of them seek deliberately to minimise the extent of contact with the beneficiaries. These programmes are in the main confined to improving the social and physical infrastructure.

One only - livestock - might have had a considerably greater impact had it been conceived from the outset as part of the extension effort. But design was conservative and little more than an expansion of existing prophylactic and therapeutic services is planned.

Problems encountered have consequently been of minor significance and progress is generally reported to be satisfactory. In two instances - rural roads and electrification - achievements have exceeded expectations to such a degree that the former programme will have been terminated two years before schedule and the latter is said to be advancing so rapidly as to constitute almost an embarrassment to other components.

The only component in this group that is quite definitely lagging behind is groundwater exploration, which has proved very vulnerable to delays in the delivery of essential items of equipment (cf. 3.2.2). But factors inherent in the design in no way impinge upon either this or other components belonging to the same general category marked by a priority given to infrastructural improvement.

4.2 Extraneous constraints

The implementation schedules of all components are affected to some extent by three types of constraint which department heads can frequently do little to counteract. We now examine these.

4.2.1 Procurements

We mentioned in the Introduction that project specific management practices could act as a decelerating factor in implementation (1.2.1). This is notably the case where a component is heavily dependent upon the Centralised Tender Section of the Ministry of Plan Implementation for the procurement and delivery of inputs.

A certain dilatoriness in respecting the calendar of deliveries seems to be characteristic of the Section's dealings with most components. Some of the agencies involved - like the Departments of Highways and Minor Export Crops - have managed to perform well despite this. Common ways of making good a lack of material means are the borrowing of machinery by one department from another at district level or else hire of items with funds obtained from the Kachcheri. The success of such remedial tactics is very largely conditioned by the personal consideration enjoyed by individual officers making the request and by the availability of the items needed: it is relatively easy to borrow or hire trucks and earthmoving equipment but almost impossible to get hold of a hard-rock drilling rig at short notice.

Stimulated by KIRDP proposals to launch into a type of exploratory drilling rarely if ever before attempted on the island, the Water Resources Board thus tired of waiting for delivery by the Centralised Tender Section of a particular set of well-driving machinery and undertook to purchase it with its own funds. But to mark its impatience with a whole series of similar delays the WRB has for the time being refused to use the equipment in Kurunegala and is at present experimenting with it in other areas.

Had the Irrigation Department been obliged to obtain all its equipment for project work from the Centralised Tender Section, the tank rehabilitation programme would have been even more behind schedule than is commonly maintained. ID is however well endowed with material means and is able to acquire locally produced inputs - like cement and sluice gates - direct from the manufacturers without recourse to the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

Other implementing agencies seem to keep little check on the timeliness of input supply. In November 1980, the Agrarian Services Department, DAPH, the Departments of Health and Education were, for instance, all conscious that many of the vehicles and much of the specialised equipment they were supposed to receive had in fact not arrived on time. But none of them was concerned enough to be able to declare offhand even approximately what was still lacking.

It is difficult to apportion responsibility for these delays. Loose condemnation of the Centralised Tender Section is widespread among district level officials. It is however well known that international competitive bidding procedures imposed by the World Bank have done nothing to lighten the Section's task in the case of KIRDP. A serious overloading of port facilities in Colombo in the second half of 1980 seems furthermore to have been an aggravating factor.

4.2.2 Political factors

A common complaint among the heads of agencies responsible for implementation is that they are impeded in their KIRDP activities by the supposedly arbitrary intervention of political figures. The increasing decentralisation of political power has resulted in Members of Parliament acquiring what amounts to an almost irresistible say in a very large array of matters concerning the development of their electorates.

The high profile kept by politicians at the local level is almost always commented upon disfavouredly by government servants who, rightly

or wrongly, fear negative sanctions were they to offer any opposition. Whether politicians are acting, as is often alleged, in their own interests or whether they see themselves as protecting their constituents against red tape and a bureaucratic lack of imagination is neither here nor there. Their activism is perceived as a threat by government servants, who in reality do spend quite some time in tractations with a view to marshalling the administrative support necessary for them to carry out their work according to plan.

The Irrigation Department has thus been involved in a protracted struggle to ensure that KIRDP funds are spent on the planned rehabilitation of minor tanks in the Dry Zone and not on the repair of village irrigation systems situated in the south of Kurunegala district. (Though, to be fair to the politicians, our informants may have made some confusion here between KIRDP work and construction carried out under World Food Programme auspices). Other departures from programme instigated by the intercession of a political figure were reported particularly in cases involving the siting of a new building scheduled under KIRDP: the choice of a given place made by the implementing agency was often changed at the last moment (incurring delays) to accommodate the opinion of a Member of Parliament.

The agencies concerned usually expressed their dissatisfaction to the Project Director, whose avowed policy is to forward the complaint to the District Minister. As ultimate political authority at the district level, the latter is in a good position to issue a definitive decision. But electoral considerations may even so cause the outcome to be unpalatable to the initially aggrieved party.

Attempts by politicians to modify specific aspects of the KIRDP programme may or may not be as frequent as is charged. A compromise solution acceptable to all those involved seems mostly to be found, but not without loss of valuable time. And it is the delaying effect of political intervention that is the subject of the most serious criticisms voiced by government servants. Their work schedules are

upset without warning by political demonstrations and meetings or visits by important personalities. They feel that their staffs are pressed into service on such occasions and that KIRDP activities are consequently disrupted. This seems to be particularly frequent in agencies which, like the Department of Agriculture and ASD, have a large network of junior staff living in rural areas.

4.2.3 Staff motivation

The heads of several field agencies pinpointed understaffing and staff demotivation as serious obstacles to the respect of implementation schedules. The problem exists at two levels. There is, on the one hand, the nationwide phenomenon of the 'brain drain' and, on the other hand, the difficulty inherent in keeping trained junior staff, when competing organisations in the same general area of activity can offer slightly better salaries or more attractive long term career opportunities and marginal benefits.

The exodus to the private sector, the Middle East and Africa of trained middle and upper echelon technical staff has over the past two or three years badly affected the efficiency of agencies involved in construction work. The Irrigation Department, Highways and Education thus all complained of the departure of qualified personnel and the impossibility of finding replacements who possess sufficient engineering experience. It is frequently felt that younger men may have a theoretical training which is adequate but that they as yet possess little ability to apply their knowledge to a field situation. Moreover, younger appointees fresh from professional study courses tend to treat government jobs in the field as a mere stepping stone to more comfortable positions.

Even when such officers envisage a career in government service as a viable future, frictions arise because they are sometimes called upon to work alongside the employees of private contracting firms, who are substantially better paid than themselves. Though considerations of job security do make government service attractive to some, resentment at observed disparities in remuneration hardly increases motivation.

It struck the research team that one of the reasons for the lack of enthusiasm noted among officers serving in agencies implicated in KIRDP was that most of them have never had a say in the design of the programmes they are required to carry out. It is true that many of them were either too junior or not yet posted to Kurunegala when the project appraisal team briefly consulted agency heads at district level (cf. 3.3). Nevertheless, had consultation of those officials at that time well acquainted with local problems played a more significant role in the planning process, it is conceivable that many public servants in Kurunegala would today show a greater commitment to programmes drawn up on the basis of their own professional advice or that of trusted predecessors.

Under KIRDP there is provision for a limited number of study tours abroad. These are apparently intended for middle echelon staff eager to improve their technical competence in the course of visits to institutions and projects in neighbouring South Asian countries. The sums budgeted are modest (from Rs.150,000 to Rs.500,00), when the cost of air transport is taken into consideration, and only four components, beside project management, are thus catered for.

It might be thought that these travel opportunities would be the object of strong competition on the part of eligible officers and an important factor in work motivation. But most of those potentially concerned have never heard of them, possibly because inflation has caused the tacit elimination of this 'luxury' expenditure. In the one case in which some thought had been given to the matter, the Deputy Director at the national level of the department declared that his enthusiasm was very mitigated by the fact that the allocation of remunerated foreign study leave to Kurunegala staff would automatically suscite bad feeling among his personnel in other districts.

Among lower echelon staff the hope of obtaining substantially better paid posts abroad or in the private sector is much less prevalent than

in the higher grades. They know that their educational level seriously limits their possibilities. But there is a certain amount of 'migration' from one government service to another in search of better career opportunities.

The principal victim of this tendency has been the Coconut Cultivation Board which suffers, according to the Assistant General Manager for Kurunegala, from a constant trickle of manpower towards the Department of Agriculture. Each of the 37 Coconut Development Officers is thus in principle entitled to the assistance of a Field Aid. Yet by November 1980 all but four had left, most of them with the intention of becoming KVSs in the enlarged cadre created with the injection of KIRDP funds. It is possible that this preference for employment in the Department of Agriculture in an albeit very humble position is prompted in some cases by the fact that each year a small number of KVSs are selected for further training. There is thus in DA a certain potential for promotion that is almost totally lacking in the much smaller cadre of the Coconut Cultivation Board.

Junior field staff cannot however on the whole be accused of obstructive behaviour. They are mostly, if not exactly content with their circumstances, at least resigned to the humbleness of the role they are required to play. Our own observations would suggest that occasionally unsatisfactory levels of performance by the lowest echelons are more due to inadequate supervision and technical support than to a calculated withdrawal.

Inflation, the rising cost of living and, particularly, increases in the price of fuel have even so been the causes in recent months of growing impatience on the part of field officers. One small cadre in Kurunegala district even threatened to make exclusive use of public bus transport for the conduct of official business if indemnities for travel by private vehicle were not substantially and rapidly improved. It is not difficult to imagine the decelerating effect that the putting into practice of such a threat would have on KIRDP activities in the agricultural sector.

5. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Insofar as the responsibility for the day to day conduct in the field of project sponsored activities falls to a multiplicity of government agencies, the administration of KIRDP is very largely decentralised. Heavy reliance is placed upon the preexisting administrative capacity of each of the bodies involved so that the burden borne by the project office is extremely light in this respect. This, as will have become clear in preceding chapters, was one of the principal objectives pursued in project design.

KIRDP is however endowed with a management structure that is peculiar to the project and, in principle, of sufficient weight to ensure the compliance of implementing agencies at every stage in the five-year programme. In keeping with the search for flexibility and economy which prompted the option for 'implementation by proxy', the permanent staffing requirements of management have been confined to a bare minimum. A whole series of part-time managerial roles has been lent to senior government officials who are expected, singly or collegially, to assist the Project Director in the execution of his duties.

In this chapter we examine the roles played by conspicuous actors in the management process. We distinguish between management at district level and decision-making in an interministerial context. Although the individuals involved are, with one important exception, frequently the same, the parameters for discussion are different in Kurunegala and Colombo. The intricacy of technical and political problems is such at the local level that the limitations imposed upon incumbents by their office are more apparent here.

It is for this reason that we will deal in more detail with disparities between the theoretical and actual functions of personnel participating in management within the district. Our subsequent analysis of management related events at national level will be somewhat briefer.

5.1. At district level

After a straight description of the various roles in management as they are ideally defined in the *Staff appraisal report* and appropriate legislation, we will discuss how they have evolved in practice and try to assess the efficiency with which the system works at district level.

5.1.1 In theory

Central to project management is of course the Director. He is a staff member of the Ministry of Plan Implementation, to which he stands directly responsible. The Director has the rank of Additional Government Agent and is, as such, subordinate to the GA for Kurunegala district. As the principal of a project operating in a territory presided over by the District Minister, he is also required to abide by the decisions of this high political official.

The Director's attributions are, according to the *Staff appraisal report*, more administrative than truly managerial. Of seven duties listed, only the last two remotely suggest that the Director might of occasion exercise his own discretion and possibly take certain decisions. He is thus called upon to 'resolve implementation bottlenecks' and 'liaise with the Project Steering Committee.' (in Colombo) (World Bank 1979:43).

The Project document does not go with any precision into the roles to be played by the District Minister and the Government Agent. Both bear some responsibility for coordination of project programmes in respect of development activities being carried on by other government agencies in Kurunegala. It is however at the present moment difficult to distinguish the exact line of demarcation between these two officials, for legislation creating the post of District Minister is still recent.

It seems clear nonetheless that the GA retains a predominantly administrative function, while the District Minister is liable to operate on a more political plane with a view to furthering development activities. Both should thus be involved in project management insofar as the former is the immediate theoretical superior of the Director (in his capacity as Additional Government Agent) and the latter is the senior representative of government in the district.

The District Minister has another important motive for participation in KIRDP management: the heads of all government agencies operating in Kurunegala are *ipso facto* legally regarded as his assistant secretaries in their several fields of specialisation. The officers responsible for carrying out project work in the field are consequently, in theory, directly answerable to the DM.

Their involvement in the project is however already secured at another level in virtue of specific agreements reached between their line ministries and the Ministry of Plan Implementation, under whose umbrella KIRDP came into being. Each agency chief is required to carry out activities listed in the *Staff appraisal report* or as subsequently modified by collegial decision.

Such modifications may be debated at district level in one of two contexts. The first is the Project Coordinating Committee which should, according to the *Staff appraisal report*, 'meet at least once a month' (World Bank 1979:43); the second is a series of *ad hoc* subcommittees constituted with reference to particular problem areas. The Coordinating Committee comprises the Project Director, the GA and the District Minister, who chairs meetings, besides, upon invitation, the local heads of all implementing agencies concerned by the agenda. Subcommittees are convened by the Director; and membership is principally restricted to officers having a technical acquaintance with the particular problem on hand. Members of Parliament are frequently invited to attend both types of meeting whenever measures for implementation in their electorates are up for debate.

This outline of arrangements for management at district level is obviously incomplete, for it does not describe the effect upon local decision-making of vertical linkages with line ministries situated in Colombo. Its deliberately schematic nature does however make it easier to point up certain structural defects.

5.1.2 In practice

We have already commented upon the narrowness of the functions attributed to the Project Director: he enjoys extremely little leeway for the exercise of initiative, almost none whatsoever for the timely taking of urgent decisions without prior consultation of his political and administrative superiors, and is in fact relegated to a role in which the monitoring of performance and accountancy very largely predominate over all other functions. His room for manoeuvre is so restricted that even a request to him from the World Bank to prepare an 'up-dated five-year plan', in order to readjust priorities with a view to making allowance for inflation, was interpreted as a mere exercise in the elimination of superfluous items from the originally budgeted list of project activities.

The weakness of the Project Director's position resides essentially in his subordination to the District Minister, who is in reality able to vet all decisions and see to it that those implemented concord with party political priorities. This is not in itself an evil, as it does at least ensure that conflict between central government policy as advocated by the Cabinet and local orientations is avoided. It does however seriously limit the Director's scope and cause talents of a certain calibre to be wasted in what are on the whole rather menial tasks.

It also means that the project is hardly equipped to resist modifications to its programme from without when these are proposed with adequate political backing. In the second half of 1980 it was thus mooted that the supply under project auspices of 200 four-wheel tractors should be abandoned and substituted by the establishment of commercial fruit

orchards and a buffalo breeding station. No economic feasibility study had been carried out to prove the viability of these proposals. But it seemed likely that political opportunity would cause much energy to be deployed in their favour.

Such departures from plan are not necessarily deleterious to project implementation and may constitute creative responses to unforeseen shifts in certain key parameters. But the fact that they can at present take place whether or not the Project Director entirely approves the change of direction is to be regretted. For the implication is that no one really exercises complete control over the management process.

This weakness in the design of KIRDP could be substantially attenuated were the Director's functions more circumstantially described in the project document. He should be more specifically empowered to introduce modifications in the course of implementation or to reformulate those proposed by other authorities and agencies concerned. Attribution to the PD of such functions would help to avoid the development of sectoral unbalances and inconsistencies in the execution of scheduled programmes.

In Kurunegala the Government Agent has chosen not to prevail himself of the fact that the Project Director's rank as Additional GA places the latter in a position of *de jure* subordination. Had the GA not tacitly left the exercise of authority over KIRDP at the local level to the District Minister, the project might well have become the focus of (possibly conflicting) requirements from another quarter. For Government Agents are ultimately responsible for the coordination of a large number of regular field activities carried on by various agencies in each district. It is conceivable that under a different GA recognising other priorities these might compete for resources with an IRD programme.

As things stand, the GA's neutral attitude towards KIRDP may be the source of a certain absence of collaboration between the project and other development undertakings in rural areas. But there is no obvious clash. It is however, to say the least, somewhat 'untidy' that there should exist in the Kachcheri a fully operational Planning Unit mainly concerned with managing the Decentralised Budget, which despite potentially organic links through the GA, almost completely ignores the possibility of cooperation or even simple complementarity with KIRDP.

The Deputy Director Planning officially in charge of this unit is moreover in principle, like the Project Director, a staff member of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. In the event of the GA taking an active interest in the coordination of IRD and DCB programmes, it is difficult to see how he, as the representative of one ministry, can effectively enjoin cooperation between two employees of approximately equal standing belonging to another.

From the evidence presented so far in this section one clear lesson emerges: legislative texts defining the theoretical attributions of certain key officials in the district administration predicate a structure and lines of authority that might not always operate in the best interests of KIRDP.

Although structural limitations of this nature should quite definitely be borne in mind when the design of similar IRD projects is contemplated elsewhere on the island, the research team cannot endorse the view that major difficulties have been encountered in Kurunegala as a direct result of the ambiguities described. Most of the officers concerned have adapted remarkably well to the situation.

The Project Director has not yielded to the temptation to overstep the very restrictive mandate assigned to him by the *Staff appraisal report* and has quite appropriately referred to the District Minister whenever attempts have been made to involve him in political issues. The Government Agent has for his part withdrawn from all areas in

which confrontation with the DM might have occurred. The district level heads of most implementing agencies have made no bones about accepting project directives in the execution of component work whilst continuing nonetheless to insist upon their autonomy in regular programme activities not sponsored by KIRDP.

The commonly adopted strategy of non-intervention has then, on the whole, been effective. But the harmony, which thus apparently reigns, has not been achieved without cost.

Although it is the avowed intent of KIRDP to emphasise local level participation in the identification of investment opportunities (World Bank 1979:20), the caesura tacitly fostered in relations between the Kachcheri and the project office has made it impossible for components to tap the human resources of the existing Rural Development Societies. For these operate with the assistance of Rural Development Officers, whose access to funds is through their Divisional AGAs and, ultimately, the GA himself. The single minded pursuit of goals specifically determined in the *Staff appraisal report* with a view to avoiding controversy has in this instance prevented the project from availing itself of a large potential for voluntary support in the countryside.

The principles of implementation by proxy and management at one remove certainly also help to reduce the opportunities for tension insofar as most agencies can keep at a respectful distance from one another and may use the Director for the negotiation of difficult compromises. However, the Director is often ill-equipped to mediate, since the only information about the realities of the situation in the field that he possesses is what he can extract from the monthly progress reports forwarded by the implementing agencies themselves.

The objective accuracy of these reports is unfortunately not always self-evident (cf. 4.1.2) and is sometimes vigorously contested at Coordinating and *ad hoc* subcommittee meetings. But then even

the Coordinating Committee did not sit with anything like the required monthly frequency (World Bank 1979:43) during the first 20 months of project operations (January 1979 - August 1980). So the Director not only occasionally received information of doubtful validity but was moreover, for long periods, without any means of submitting certain contentions to the corrective of public debate.

Data on the progress of implementation fed to the Project Director by agencies concerned may be less than complete for reasons other than those already quoted: the district level heads of organisations involved in carrying out project work may sometimes perceive the necessity to 'cover up' activities that are not entirely germane to their mandate. Evidence exists to suggest that political pressures are brought to bear in order that the planned network of rural roads and electrification be modified. Similarly, the siting of buildings to be constructed under KIRDP may be occasionally changed to fit in with the recommendations of local notables.

Such 'interference' with management and execution according to plan may not always be as deleterious to project interests as it might appear at first sight. It could indeed pass for precisely that kind of 'grassroots participation' that according to the project document (World Bank 1979:4) it is government policy to elicit.

It is however rarely seen in this light by those concerned with implementation. Referring to the manner in which KIRDP had enabled his agency to broaden its cadre of field personnel, one component head remarked that 'each MP has now got his own' (officer in that agency's speciality): Members of Parliament are so closely identified with what goes on in their electorates that any development that occurs there is regarded by them as the hard won reward of a personal struggle. Coordinating Committee meetings are thus sometimes reported to become quite boisterous when MPs press for the bestowal of project benefits upon their electorates despite the existence of

implementation plans that stress the necessity to favour less developed areas of the district.

Political pressures of this kind cannot be entirely ignored, particularly when there exist objectively valid arguments to support requests for the modification of certain aspects of KIRDP. But more covert attempts to divert project resources are made. When cases of this kind come to the notice of management, the sanction is straightforward: the project and, ultimately, the World Bank simply refuse to reimburse expenditure. This happened apparently when a Member of Parliament pressed for minor tank rehabilitation under KIRDP in an electorate where no such action was planned. The exact facts of the incident are obscure. But the Irrigation Department seems to have found it difficult to refuse and was eventually obliged to finance the work with funds from a separate budget.

Apprehension that similar situations may reoccur leads certain agency heads at district level to adopt very cautious attitudes with regard to KIRDP. One upper échelon technician told the research team that he now never undertakes any project-related activity without first obtaining the express approval of his head office in Colombo. Delayed implementation or suspended compliance with project schedules, as in the groundwater exploration component (cf. 4.2.1), can constitute a manner of passive resistance by agencies to what are perceived as unacceptable procedures on the part of KIRDP officialdom. But while the Water Resources Board has made no secret of its reticence to collaborate with the project in what it considers to be substantially less than optimal conditions, other agencies seem to have had occasional recourse to the subterfuge of carefully doctoring the contents of their monthly progress reports.

In recent months the Project Director has taken a modest initiative intended to ensure that he is better and more consistently informed in the future. He is said to have enlisted the assistance of the

Agricultural Development Authority, whose Agricultural Managers in each electorate now send him independent reports on the progress of certain crucial components of KIRDP. One of these is irrigation and water management.

Even so, as a well placed observer pointed out to us, it is one thing to report on shortcomings in implementation at field level, but quite another to secure the compliance of defaulting agencies in readjusting schedules when the protagonists in this confrontation come under the authority of different ministries. Thus the ADA had to admit partial defeat in attempting to have the responsibility for coconut intercropping transferred from the Coconut Cultivation Board to the Department of Minor Export Crops (cf. 3.2.2): the Agricultural Development Authority could bring no pressure to bear on the CCB, because the latter is controlled at national level by the Ministry of Coconut Industries, which is a quite separate entity to the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research.

So, although the Project Director is of late better informed on progress, the detailed reports he receives do not necessarily increase his hold over implementing agencies. He is of the opinion that he can always in the last resort enforce discipline by appealing to the Secretary of his own Ministry of Plan Implementation, who is chairman of the Project Steering Committee. This institution is intended to provide the link between KIRDP field activities and policy makers in Colombo.

5.2 At national level

The Steering Committee is presented as the locus of all major decisions concerning project management. It has met regularly in Colombo every three months since April 1979. It was initially intended that membership be restricted to planners and the executive heads of implementing agencies at national level. In summing up at the end of the first meeting the chairman stated that 'the Steering Committee should serve as the forum for dealing with broad policy matters where activities of several line Ministries and Departments are involved'.

He further requested on the same occasion that 'procedural matters ... should not form the subject matter of the agenda of the Steering Committee' (minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 1979).

This is the Steering Committee in theory. In practice things are rather different.

Firstly, attendance at committee meetings is so assiduous that the presence of 50 officials from all levels of government is not unusual. Although only the key figures from each agency are actually invited, there is a tendency for each of these to bring along with him a full complement of supporting staff. A gathering of this size is obviously un conducive to constructive exchanges. So is it that most of those present offer no contribution to the debate.

Secondly, the strictures imposed from the outset on what should constitute the purpose of these meetings (cf. above) are such that very little could in fact be usefully discussed: implementing agencies are rarely required by the *Staff appraisal report* to collaborate with one another and are no more spontaneously inclined to do so in Colombo than they are in the field.

Thirdly, the agenda of the Steering Committee is so tightly controlled by the convening body that little opportunity for debate is given to participants. (Though this may constitute a slightly spurious criticism insofar as agencies are requested to submit their problems in advance and there is thus little time available for the discussion of untabled items).

For these reasons attendance at Steering Committee meetings is not regarded as very fruitful by a number of those regularly invited. The research team made a point of soliciting the opinions of all those interviewed on the nature and functions of the committee. The overriding majority of those questioned entertained a very negative view of the efficacy of this institution.

Some saw no purpose in it whatsoever. Others regretted the absence of constructive dialogue. Most were of the opinion that it functions merely to endorse decisions already taken elsewhere. No one agreed that the Committee operates as a coordinating body. A small minority mentioned that it allows members to keep track of other KIRDP components and to learn by their mistakes.

As the research team understands the situation, the Steering Committee has three functions: it serves as a vehicle for the announcement of decisions already reached by the Secretary of the Ministry of Plan Implementation and the Director Regional Development in prior consultation with chosen officers in the implementing agencies directly concerned in each case; it allows the Secretary to save precious hours insofar as he can meet numerous individuals in the course of one session instead of being obliged to arrange an extended series of interviews, which would necessarily prove more time consuming; it provides a symbolic focus without which it might be difficult for the officers of many implementing agencies to perceive that this very diffuse 'project' possesses an objective identity of its own.

It is not easy to establish whether these functions warrant the convening of the Steering Committee or not. It is however, certain that the way in which the Committee is run causes some resentment. Expectations seem to be that a 'committee' should operate as a democratic assembly. Now, members are not in this instance systematically canvassed for their opinions. They may moreover be called to public account. Their justifications and arguments may even be briefly heard. But final solutions are authoritatively imposed by the chairman.

This is perhaps not all that desirable given the negative impression that it produces in most of those who put in a hardly more than symbolic appearance at these gatherings. It should however be asked whether the manner in which Steering Committee meetings are conducted is not dictated in the first instance by the uninvited attendance of supernumeraries: the expeditious style employed by the

chairman may constitute his only viable riposte to the otherwise unmanageable situation prompted by overattendance.

As chief executive of the Ministry of Plan Implementation the Secretary apparently uses the Steering Committee for the endorsement of ministerial policy. The practical implications of this policy for KIRDP should in principle be elaborated by the Project Cell in the same ministry. But this unit comprises only the Project Director and the Director, Regional Development. These officials are consulted by the Secretary, who then formulates decisions with a view to what is for him politically possible.

It is thus perhaps a slight overstatement to maintain, as does the Project Director, that his own authority is guaranteed by the Secretary and that implementing agencies must in the last resort comply with decisions announced at Steering Committee meetings. For the Secretary is himself subject to political pressures and can only enforce injunctions to implementing agencies that will meet with the approval of each cabinet minister concerned.

The project's decision-making superstructure centering on the Steering Committee constitutes in the research team's opinion one of KIRDP's weakest points. Although this managerial arrangement provides for the existence of organic links with the Ministry of Plan Implementation's all-important Centralised Tender Section, this latter body proceeds at its own pace. The project does not seem to enjoy much leverage over the operation of this Section even though it be located under the same ministerial umbrella.

The problem with the Steering Committee is not conceptual. It should indeed exist. It remains however somewhat toothless insofar as the style in which its business is conducted tends to alienate a majority of the participants. Their tendency is to pay lip service to the chairman and continue thereafter in the implementation of components as if little or nothing had occurred.

For the Steering Committee to acquire a greater capacity for problem solving and expediting procedures there are at least five prerequisites:

- 1) that the number of members be drastically reduced and limited to those who are specifically concerned by the order of the day;
- 2) that the conduct of meetings be such as to stimulate the active participation of those attending and their involvement in the formulation of the decisions taken;
- 3) that the agenda be drawn up at least partially to accommodate the requests of agency heads not affiliated to the Ministry of Plan Implementation;
- 4) that the data utilised to inform decision-making be of proven accuracy;
- 5) that the Project Cell in the Ministry of Plan Implementation be made truly functional in order that the data required be checked and placed at the timely disposal of all members of the Steering Committee; the Cell should also be concerned with identifying issues for debate.

6. THE LIMITS OF ACHIEVEMENT: A REPLICABLE MODEL?

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to describe the Kurunegala project in terms as objective as possible. The facts presented inevitably lent themselves to a critical analysis, which has not always been entirely positive in tone. Nevertheless, if success is defined as the attainment of stated objectives within a given span of time, KIRDP can be said to have established a fairly good record: the majority of components have been carried out according to plan and more or less on schedule.

It is true that insufficient provision for inflation was made in the original plan and that for this reason tank rehabilitation work has been drastically curtailed (cf. 4.1.2). Delays in the delivery of equipment have also seriously retarded the groundwater exploration programme (cf. 3.2.2). Yet, by and large, activities initially planned have been implemented.

Performance measured in terms of target fulfilment does not however in any way bear witness to the project's economic and social viability. The as yet unpublished drafts of two ARTI reports on the water management and agricultural credit programmes sponsored by KIRDP draw attention to certain inadequacies in component design, which suggest that real achievements will fall very far short of expectations in these areas. An impending mid-project study of impacts at farm level will no doubt provide more ample indications as to the efficiency with which development has been promoted in the district.

It is clear that the success met with in the field by specific components will acquire considerable significance when thought is given to the advisability of replicating the Kurunegala model elsewhere in the island. For this is what the World Bank explicitly proposes (1979:20).

It is however not the purpose of the present report to examine cost-benefit ratios. In this last chapter we intend to assess the prospects

for successful replication on another plane. We will endeavour to identify constraints which, operating at different levels in project implementation and management, would in all probability reappear and prove detrimental were attempts made to transpose the overall design of KIRDP to other districts without undertaking substantial prior modification of a number of structural features.

We consider that the constraints relevant to our argument fall into four basic categories. Each of these comprises elements which are not *ipso facto* constraining, but can become so in a particular institutional environment under certain conditions. It is a question of degree.

Our categories are:

the degree to which,

1. the stated goals of the project are realistic and, therefore, actually attainable given the level of inputs planned (i.e. adequacy of funding and implementation capacity);
2. the management structure chosen for the project dovetails with the existing official set-up at district level;
3. *idem* at national level;
4. foreign donors insist upon respect of their several policies and take steps to enforce compliance in the context of the project(s) they are funding.

We shall now briefly discuss each of these categories of constraint with a view to demonstrating which of the principal options inherent in KIRDP are not replicable or are, at least, of doubtful validity for inclusion in the design of IRD projects planned for other districts. We will in two final sections present the broad conclusions of our findings and try to assess how ongoing modification of national policy impinging upon local government practice may affect the design of

future integrated rural development projects.

6.1. Stated objectives of KIRDP

An attentive perusal of the World Bank *Staff appraisal report* suggests that the Kurunegala project aims to promote development along three main axes. The first centers on an increase in production. The other two have a more ideological bias. They are:

1. to raise productivity, employment, incomes and living standards of the rural population;
2. to ensure an equitable spread throughout the district of the development effect;
3. to implicate the beneficiaries in the choice of options affecting them.

The question we try to answer here is whether the overall strategy employed and the stated social objectives are consonant with the political context and the inputs made available. If they are not, some doubt may be cast upon the appropriateness of the Kurunegala model for replication.

6.1.1 Economic uplift

One of the basic postulates of KIRDP is that heavy concentration upon methods of improving small farm paddy and coconut yields automatically makes the project replicable 'in practically all districts of Sri Lanka', because these two crops are cultivated throughout the island (World Bank 1979:59-60). This is unfortunately hardly true: coconuts constitute an exceedingly minor part of the rural economy in those few areas of the Dry Zone where they are grown outside home gardens and are quite unsuited to the ecology of the more elevated hill tracts; the social and agronomic constraints weighing upon paddy production in the Wet Low Country are further so totally different in character to those encountered in Kurunegala district that no common development strategy could be applied with any hope of success in both contexts.

Apart from this major obstacle to the replication of the Kurunegala model elsewhere, it has yet to be proven that the tactics chosen for the promotion of coconut and paddy production in this district are in fact at all appropriate. Great emphasis has been laid in the *Staff appraisal report* upon agricultural extension, water management, credit and input supply. But there are few signs as yet that the investment effort put into these activities has been instrumental in improving yields. Overall inputs do not seem to have been commensurate with a rise in productivity.

The contents and style of agricultural extension have remained monotonously true to pre-project performance, though the number of field officers has increased dramatically. Water management using the Maha Illuppalam package seems to have turned out to be too labour intensive in terms of extension personnel to spread rapidly and become common practice. (Besides, only a certain type and size of tank appears to lend itself to the kind of cropping system proposed). The results of the credit programme are unencouraging, while there is little to suggest that the delivery of a greater volume of fertiliser, seed and agrochemicals by the Agrarian Services Department has in fact done more than displace trade previously in the hands of the cooperative system and private merchants.

If programmes specifically designed for operation under KIRDP have not clearly paid off, the wisdom of replicating the model may well be questioned. Had more attention been paid to farmer motivation and a methodology been worked out to elaborate sub-programmes addressing well defined categories of farmers each characterised by a whole cluster of common economic interests and potentials, certain components of the Kurunegala model - other than paddy or coconut - might have acquired a more easily replicable profile.

Where community of motivation is lacking among target groups, uniform response does not occur. A minority will react positively to the opportunities offered, but the majority will remain economically or culturally unable to respond.

6.1.2 Equity

Another major option of KIRDP is that planning should aim at diminishing intradistrict disparities and closing the gap between the poor and those better endowed.

The first of these objectives is not too difficult to achieve within the narrow confines of a development effort devoted mainly to the improvement of paddy cultivation and increasing the productivity of coconut lands. KIRDP adopted the strategy of concentrating on the first in the Dry Zone and on the second in higher rainfall areas, so that the two programmes privileged different sets of farmers and an equitable balance was struck between north and south.

It was more difficult to reconcile the conflicting aims of increasing productivity and achieving a socially acceptable spread of project benefits. Bigger farmers seem to have reaped greater advantage from the project than the smaller ones and the landless. For there exists a deeply rooted belief among agricultural extensionists that wealthier producers are easier to work with, can be more readily persuaded of the merits of an innovation and tend more convincing demonstration plots.

This may well be true. But since small farmers rarely follow the example of richer innovators, because they do not possess the economic security or sufficient investment capital to expose themselves willingly to major risks, the net result of this prejudice is that an appropriate extension message rarely reaches the poor man and is not even normally propagated with this category of recipient in mind. Hope is placed in the efficacy of the 'demonstration effect'. Needless to say, experience has shown that small farmers near the margins of subsistence are hardly amenable to such an approach.

The Coconut Cultivation Board apparently offers a gamut of special subsidies to producers farming less than one acre. But figures attesting the success of this initiative were not made available to

the research team. The minor export crop interplanting programme is open to all applicants. It is however interesting to observe that demonstration plots are laid out on the lands of comfortably well-off owner-cultivators: the intention is to ensure that the demonstration does not fail for want of capital or labour. Yet this in itself underlines how critical are the first two or three years in this type of enterprise. The small producer, who is not cushioned by a flexible reserve of working capital, is unwilling to risk such a venture.

The pursuit of equity has made only very mediocre progress in the context of KIRDP. The probability of such an outcome is explicitly recognised in the *Staff appraisal report*, where it is admitted that only 'one-third of the direct benefits' of the project are expected to accrue to more than two-thirds of the intended target group - that is, to farmers working three acres or less (1979:56).

We consider this to constitute a major weakness in the design of KIRDP, which it will be possible to remedy only by adopting a radically different approach to extension and the structuring of subsidies to promote agricultural innovation. The project has done almost nothing to elaborate a new extension methodology with the small farmer specifically in view. In this respect it comes nowhere near the objective of furthering equitable access to improved production techniques and therefore cannot be recommended for replication in its present form.

The absence of a clear cut distinction in most other districts between areas characterised by a strong potential for the development of one major crop in each (paddy and coconut in Kurunegala) would further limit the possibilities for the reduction of intradistrict disparities under IRD elsewhere. Kurunegala is fortunate in being climatically and ecologically well endowed. But many other districts comprise large areas where the potential for agricultural development is slight without very major investment: simple bipolar thrusts of the paddy-coconut type would not result in a geographically equitable distribution

of benefits and certain intradistrict disparities would be liable to increase were the Kurunegala model applied there.

6.1.3 Participation

The *Staff appraisal report* acknowledges the government's policy of encouraging 'grassroot participation', but only in order to justify the 'decentralization of planning, monitoring and coordination' under KIRDP (World Bank 1979:4). Quite apart from the fact that the planning function remained - even so - strongly vested with Colombo based officials, no serious attempt has been made to implicate the rural population of Kurunegala in the formulation and implementation of project components.

Members of Parliament have been permitted to air their views on development proposals immediately concerning their electorates. But farmers have not been directly approached and the impression gained by the research team was that few of the beneficiaries were aware that certain programmes they stood to gain by had anything to do with an overall plan for the district. Most people in the countryside regarded project sponsored activities as part of the regular programmes of the several agencies charged with implementation and saw no reason why their own 'participation' should be greater now than in the past.

This failure to encourage participation is unfortunate, since it means that a large potential for selfhelp and valuable experience based on an intimate knowledge of rural conditions has been ignored. It may however be asked whether this is in reality a shortcoming attributable to the design of the project itself or whether it should be ascribed to the political context which caused the choice of a particular design to prevail.

It could be maintained that the balance between political forces in certain areas of the Sri Lankan countryside is such that it would be unwise for the present government to rely too heavily upon a mobilisation of the rural population. Participation is a two-edged weapon that can easily turn against the wielder. Nevertheless, if participation is to

be paid more than mere lip service, the Kurunegala model cannot be viewed as a panacea and its replication in other districts would certainly not induce a greater degree of social awareness or farmers' collaboration than has already been the case.

One possible (though perhaps not very auspicious) avenue towards greater participation lay through the revitalisation of the village based Rural Development Societies. The difficulty here was that they are already administered by a Development Officer and his subordinates, who all operate from within the Kachcheri system. The fact that the RDSs rely for funding upon the Decentralised Budget also sets them conceptually quite apart from the project. To encourage participation in IRD activities through this channel it would be necessary to provide at the design stage for much stronger links between the project and the whole local government set-up (cf. 6.4 below).

6.2 Institutional and management constraints

We have in previous chapters commented at length upon the potentially awkward situations that arise from the simultaneous existence in one district of two parallel administrative structures, which at certain critical points even share the same personnel. A similar phenomenon also occurs at national level. Here we summarise the ambiguities built into arrangements made for the management of KIRDP and highlight the difficulties that might accompany attempts to reproduce an analogous structure in districts outside Kurunegala.

6.2.1 Within the district

We have stressed that there is little or no tension between the Project Director and the two senior officials with whom he is, in principle, called upon to collaborate almost daily. This is because the Director defers willingly to the District Minister and even gladly unburdens himself of certain problems onto this hierarchical superior as soon as he can identify them as predominantly 'political' in character. The

District Minister clearly accepts this role as political guide, while the Government Agent has for his part maintained only a very loose connection with the project.

The system thus works smoothly in Kurunegala because of the complementarity which characterises the attitudes of the particular officers involved. But if the GA were to assert his authority over the Project Director, whose rank as Additional Government Agent makes him technically answerable to the former, and if the GA himself insisted upon a greater say in matters than the District Minister was prepared to allow him, major clashes might ensue. Progress in implementation would then in all probability become extremely slow.

Those ambiguities would have to be dispelled before the Kurunegala model can be used to inspire other IRD efforts elsewhere. The crux of the matter is that roles are ill-defined in the *Staff appraisal report*. The Project Director's attributions are adequately spelt out insofar as matters relating to programming, disbursements, accountancy and monitoring are concerned. But the degree of this liberty of action in the fields of decision-making and policy readjustment is not at all clear. The project document does not take sufficient note of the fact that the Project Director, as an employee of the Ministry of Plan Implementation, can hardly at the same time bear the designation of AGA. For this would, as things now stand, suggest his subordination to higher officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs and could thus give rise to a sterile conflict of professional loyalties. Nor is the precise nature of the PD's relationship to the District Minister anywhere defined in detail.

The District Minister's position as supreme government authority throughout the territory covered by the project also exposes implementation of the development plan to discretionary modification on the pretext of political imperatives. Although no such intervention seems to have unjustifiably jeopardized any component of KIRDP, political considerations might in this manner have quite serious adverse effects upon the performance of projects set up in other districts.

The District Minister can obviously play a very useful role in channelling political interests into the achievement of development goals. As a mediator between Members of Parliament championing the cause of their electorates and the project leadership bent upon efficient implementation he can fulfil a vital function. Steps must nonetheless be taken when preparing project documents to ensure that the authority of this high official cannot become the source of substantial departures from plan at a later stage.

At the present moment the Kurunegala project operates quite independently of the ongoing programmes regularly pursued by numerous government agencies in the region. This has as yet been the cause of little friction and no duplication of effort has occurred. Innovative legislation does however threaten in the near future to disturb this state of equilibrium.

When the District Development Councils come into being the Decentralised Budget, which is now allocated on a fixed share basis to each electorate, will disappear and be replaced by an annual lump sum to be administered and parcelled out much as each Council thinks fit. This will create an opportunity for concentrating funds on particular investment projects regardless of their spatial distribution within the district. Relatively major undertakings may thus be financed in place of the very small injections of capital that were hitherto made in each electorate with Decentralised Budget allocations.

This administrative innovation could throw a painstakingly designed IRD project quite off balance. For if care is not taken in the future to coordinate District Development Council strategies with those of integrated rural development projects, long term IRD planning may prove rather fruitless. In the last section of this chapter we propose a solution to this problem.

A last constraint weighing at district level upon the replicability of KIRDP resides in the operation of the Project Coordinating Committee. As long as this body remains concerned with issues of mere implementation

it functions very adequately. But as soon as questions of conflicting differences in ministerial policies come into play, participants cease to be the free agents of locally achieved compromise and entrench themselves behind directives handed down from their superiors in Colombo. The Coordinating Committee and its *ad hoc* subcommittees provide the only forum in which sufficient familiarity with the complexities of the situation in the field permits the taking of appropriate remedial steps at short notice. But members frequently do not have the authority to endorse obviously viable solutions that go counter to the overall policies of their line ministries.

Such decisions are often left pending until the next meeting of the Steering Committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. This arrangement is however not a happy one, because it occasions long delays and leaves room for interministerial conflicts at national level to be played out in the district to the detriment of locally reached consensus.

Future integrated rural development projects must be designed in such a manner that greater autonomy is given to the local heads of implementing agencies for the working out of apposite solutions along lines that do not of necessity slavishly obey in every detail the national policies of their line ministries. Greater flexibility is required, since guidelines elaborated on a countrywide basis not infrequently need to be modified to acquire accrued relevancy in field conditions.

6.2.2 At national level

In the Kurunegala project design considerable emphasis is laid upon the Steering Committee as the locus for dealing with all problems that elude local efforts at finding a solution. We have already (cf. 5.2) cast doubt upon the real potential of this body for imposing a compromise between even senior representatives of line ministries whose policy imperatives clash in the context of KIRDP.

The Steering Committee is also well nigh powerless to enforce compliance in the face of opposition with adjustments to the original plan.

Another source of difficulties has been the restructuring of the Ministry of Plan Implementation under the auspices of the present government. This coincided with the setting up of the Kurunegala project and made for a situation that was hardly conducive to the constitution of a fully operational Project Cell within the parent organisation in Colombo. The management of KIRDIP can thus rely on no adequate backstopping by a group of permanent staff responsible for economic analysis, projection and long term planning adjustment. This, it should be stressed, is a *sine qua non* for the successful replication of the Kurunegala model in other districts.

However, staffing problems in the context of the Project Cell are only indicative of a host of similar obstacles which would arise from the mere multiplication of similarly structured development programmes throughout the country: the recruitment of project directors and evaluation personnel of sufficient calibre would prove increasingly difficult, while the Centralised Tender Section would find its already strained capacities severely overtaxed.

The staffing constraint must be very closely examined before commitments are made to further integrated rural development undertakings in new districts. Though management and procurement procedures may call for fairly standardised skills and experience, it must not be supposed that it will be anything but arduous to recruit personnel conversant with evaluation techniques. If ARTI is at present responding to the project's needs in this field, it should nonetheless be realised that the Institute's capacity and desire to fulfil this kind of specialised role are limited. Other commitments may in the future cause further requests to undertake evaluation work to be declined.

If the authorities responsible for IRD projects in new districts cannot arrange for the training of their own evaluation personnel, it may again

be asked whether it is at all worth replicating the Kurunegala model. For the efficiency of its peculiar management structure is strongly dependent upon the quality of the feedback to be obtained from ongoing evaluation.

6.2.3 Donor influence

There stands in the background of KIRDP a fundamental equivocation, which may (quite apart from any other objections) well put paid to hopes of replicating this rural development model elsewhere in the island.

The fact is that the Kurunegala project is financed by the World Bank. Although much of the preparatory work was carried out by technical staff working under the Sri Lankan government, the Bank retained the right to vet any proposals and even published the final project document under its own *imprimatur*. Although concessions were made to stated national priorities, KIRDP still bears the very strong stamp of its Washington origins. Moreover, a steady stream of supervisory missions serves to ensure that there are no major departures from the norms laid down by the Bank, which also imposes programme cuts when it deems them necessary and even unilaterally sanctions organisations indulging in unapproved spending under KIRDP.

Yet, the project is mooted as a replicable model. The question is, in the final analysis, not so much whether KIRDP is replicable *per se* but rather whether donor agencies other than the World Bank will accept to finance this transposition of an already highly dubious experiment to another district. The Bank is involved in setting up much smaller schemes in Puttalam and Matale. But it is doubtful whether Washington will wish to participate in the projects which it is proposed to implement in numerous other districts where there is as yet no IRD undertaking.

There is every indication that donor agencies each bring a certain amount of pressure to bear upon the government with a view to ensuring that their several 'philosophies' of rural development

are taken into account. It is thus most improbable that SIDA would, for instance, endorse the rigorous targetry inherent in the Kurunegala model, while other donors might insist much more heavily upon popular consultation and selfhelp components than is the wont of the World Bank. Be it for this reason alone, serious doubt may be harboured as to KIRDP's potential for replication.

6.3 The poverty of planning

We have repeatedly pointed to the divorce in KIRDP between planning and implementation. When the question of replicability is broached, the crux of the matter is ultimately whether initial and ongoing planning procedures are sufficiently sophisticated, flexible and wieldy for projects of the types proposed to develop adequately sensitive responses to the economic and institutional environments in which they have to operate.

In the light of the evidence from Kurunegala the temptation is strong to assert that this is not the case. Not only was the project sketchily planned, but very little effort was put into conceiving a management structure that would be able and motivated to formulate and implement tactical modifications as the project progressed.

The research team was told by a senior officer in the Ministry of Finance and Planning that a list of guidelines comprising five principal points existed and that all integrated rural development projects were designed to conform to these parameters. These were however so general that they may well serve more to inhibit further creative thought in planning than to stimulate a search for new formulae. The list reads more like a series of warnings than of positive exhortations.

We were unable to obtain a copy of the document in which these guidelines were enshrined. Their contents were communicated to us verbally. This may well signify that they are no longer considered as relevant as they were in 1976, when the design phase of KIRDP was inaugurated. Although they are, despite their concision, so all-embracing as to be almost

trite, they make it rather clear that 'replicability' is expected in the context of IRD to be synonymous with 'inexpensive'. The admonition seems to be that the model will remain replicable only as long as single components are quick yielding and do not immobilise large amounts of investment capital over long periods of time.

This planning policy would suggest that little thought was actually ever given to the model's potential for replication. It is no doubt true that each component of the Kurunegala project is replicable - but in isolation. Cross-linkages between components are almost an afterthought and add only marginally to the separate efficiency of each. This is abundantly obvious in the failure of response oriented components to engage in concerted action at farmer level (cf. 3.2.1, 3.2.2.).

KIRD is thus more a catalogue of very loosely connected objectives, accompanied by a list of instructions informing users how to attain the proposed goals, than a structurally coherent regional development plan. The project can implement but hardly adjust to changing circumstances and foster ongoing development as the opportunity arises. This very classical profile again severely restricts its utility as a model for replication in other districts.

6.4 Improving the model

In the course of our investigation of management structures in the Kurunegala project we have constantly found it necessary to proceed at two different levels of analysis simultaneously, to point up the interdependence between activities taking place in the district and decisions hammered out in Colombo. If the Kurunegala model is to be refined so that its chances for successful application elsewhere are enhanced, some consideration must be given to improving these vertical linkages.

The most imperative measure is that cogent steps must be taken at national level to synchronise all IRD undertakings throughout the

country. Unless this is done, manpower constraints will rapidly become an insuperable obstacle to implementation (cf. 6.2.2) and no unity of methodology in planning practices will be forthcoming. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the staff of different projects will be sufficiently conversant with one another's success and failures to benefit by the experience gained in other districts.

When the Puttalam and Matale integrated rural development projects were still on the drawing board, an attempt was made to initiate government officials in the districts concerned by inviting them to attend at least one KIRDP Steering Committee meeting. It is not certain that this move was very productive in pedagogical terms, since the number of people present at the gathering was so large that little constructive debate was possible. Similar efforts do not seem to have been deployed in the direction of personnel involved in the Hambantota, Matara and Nuwara Eliya projects.

A body specifically established to coordinate IRD would not, however, merely serve as a clearing house for information and as a recruitment-cum-training bureau. Its essential function would be to ensure the even and planned extension throughout the island of projects to districts scheduled according to a precise hierarchy of priorities. It would also play a role in convincing donor agencies to respect these priorities and in promoting some consensus among them as to the exact nature of the integrated rural development that it is the Sri Lankan government's desire to foster.

It may be argued that several of these functions are already performed by the KIRDP Project Cell and the Steering Committee operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. It might moreover be urged that a mere strengthening of the same ministry's Regional Development Division would provide an adequate response to the need for more countrywide coordination of IRD. This is however to make light of certain structural imponderables.

Even though administration of the Decentralised Budget is vested in the Ministry of Plan Implementation, it has by no means proved an easy matter to combine KIRDP activities with those financed quite independently from this source. Little effort has as yet been made in this direction and future prospects for 'more integration' at this level do not appear promising. For ongoing negotiations with respect to the functioning of the future District Development Councils suggest, as already mentioned (cf. 6.2.1), that the Decentralised Budget will in all probability be replaced by a district development budget administered by the Council. Autonomous management by the DDC of the capital sums made available could cause an IRD project to go seriously awry.

As the research team sees it, the only way to obviate this danger is to implicate District Development Councils very directly in the management of IRD. The Council would in future projects assume almost all the functions that are in the Kurunegala case incumbent upon the Steering Committee. It would thus have a final say in the use of donated funds and be able to coordinate their deployment with that of the district development budget.

We further propose that Project Directors retain the designation of AGA, but be full members of the Kachcheri staff responsible only for project activities and immediately answerable exclusively to the Development Councils. In this manner a more collegial leadership could be ensured, strategies employed would more faithfully reflect local opinion and greater, besides more timely control could be exercised over the details of implementation.

The District Minister would, as a prominent member of the DDC, constitute the project's principal link with the Ministry of Plan Implementation, although relations between the Project Director and the Centralised Tender Section would obviously of necessity continue. A team should be built up in the Ministry of Plan Implementation to assume responsibilities in preliminary investigation for proposed IRDP and in the subsequent elaboration of project designs. Attention should be given

by this team to creating and strengthening complementary planning capacity within the administrative structure already existing at district level. Whilst working as an autonomous unit, this group should nevertheless establish linkages with the Ministry of Planning and Finance so as to be in a position to draw on the accumulated experience of the latter in the fields of socio-economic investigation and plan formulation. The institutionalised nature of such a connection would further help to ensure that the team is kept permanently abreast of the evolution of national policy orientations.

The Ministry of Plan Implementation should also pay more attention than in the past to the monitoring and evaluation of ongoing projects. There should be a greater concern for the measuring of impact among target populations than has hitherto been the case. Project performance should be judged not merely in terms of target fulfilment, but qualitatively according to indicators such as income distribution and labour absorption. Whether this ministry should train and supply permanent evaluation teams to project management or subcontract this function to outside specialists is still a matter for debate (cf. 3.3). Whatever the solution ultimately chosen, emphasis should be laid on timely feedback to management.

Finally, the body constituted within the Ministry of Plan Implementation to coordinate integrated rural development projects throughout the island should be empowered to commission research designed with an interregional bias. The results of such research - into, say, *chena* cultivation or water management - would not only supply answers to specific technical problems encountered by individual projects but could provide information valuable for the formulation of IRDP in other areas and at a later date.

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KURUNEGALA INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

MANAGEMENT EVALUATION STUDY: checklist of subjects to be broached - selectively and where appropriate - in the course of interviews with government officials involved in project implementation.

[The 'agency' referred to below is the government organisation in which the respondent is employed.]

1. Project component genesis and design
 - 1.1. Date at which the agency became involved
 - 1.2. Responsibilities in project preparation
 - 1.3. Extent to which the agency was consulted
 - 1.4. Extent to which the agency's views were respected in project design
 - 1.5. Administrative locus at which the agency's participation and the scope of this participation were finally approved
 - 1.6. Discrepancies between KIRDP's stated objectives and the official policies of the agency
2. Nature and scope of the project component
 - 2.1. Extent of the agency's activities within the project:
 - increase in normal workload
 - performance of new tasks
 - necessity to draft in extra staff at the same or more specialised levels
 - 2.2. Degree of collaboration with other agencies for the achievement of project determined tasks
 - 2.3. Magnitude of material inputs required to carry out the component
 - 2.4. Problems posed by the novelty of certain KIRDP activities
3. Evolution of the project component since inception
 - Causes of:

3.1 Delays in implementation

Non-implementation

Reorientations of specific aspects of the agency's programme

Non-respect of quality criteria in construction work

3.1.1 Institutional arrangements

- ambiguity of contractual obligations
- devolution of responsibility for specific subcomponents

3.1.2 Financial problems

- inadequacy of funding as a result of inflation or underbudgeting
- difficulties in obtaining dis-/reimbursement
- lack of autonomy in spending

3.1.3 Staffing problems

- lack of enough and/or sufficiently qualified personnel
- slow recruitment procedures
- low levels of motivation
- staff turnover

3.1.4 Inadequacy of physical inputs

- quantities
- quality
- timeliness

3.1.5 Insufficiently detailed specification in component design making further investigation necessary

- site selection
- target populations
- construction work
- others

3.2 Measures taken to solve the problems enumerated under 3.1.

3.3 Major departures from the original parameters of the component

- reasons
- origin of proposed solutions
- locus of decision-making in this respect

4. Relations with other agencies and bodies

4.1 Frequency during the year 1980 of contacts on KIRDP business with:

- Ministry of Plan Implementation
- own head office
- District Minister
- Government Agent
- Project Director
- World Bank
- Members of Parliament

4.2. Object of these contacts:

- budget preparation
- procurements
- implementation bottlenecks
- others

4.3. Extent of involvement with:

- Project office
- Coordinating Committee
- *Ad hoc* subcommittees
- Steering Committee

5. Efficiency of progress reporting

5.1. Identity of monitoring authority

5.2. Frequency of reporting

5.3. Results

6. Kurunegala after KIRDP

6.1. Means of ensuring programme continuity in the post-project period

6.2. Necessity of such continuity

6.3. Funding

6.4. Nature of the administrative structure required to manage the continued effort

ANNEX 2 RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED DURING FIELDWORK

At district level:

Project Director
Assistant Project Director
District Minister
Assistant to the District Minister
Government Agent
Assistant Director of Agriculture
Successor to the above
Assistant Commissioner, Agrarian Services Department
Divisional Officer, Agrarian Services Department, Maho
Deputy Provincial Director, Northwest Province; Agricultural
Development Authority
Agricultural Managers of the Agricultural Development Authority
in Kurunegala in Polgahawela, Dodangaslanda and
Mawathagama electorates
District Extension Officer, Department of Minor Export Crops
Assistant General Manager (Technical), Coconut Cultivation Board
Regional Manager, Coconut Cultivation Board
Director, Irrigation Department
Chief Engineer, Irrigation Department
Chief Engineer, Department of Highways
Veterinary Officer, Kurunegala Range, Department of Animal Produc-
tion and Health
Medical Superintendent, Department of Health
Deputy Director of Education, Department of Education
Resident Engineer, Water Resources Board
District Manager, Bank of Ceylon
Assistant Manager, Bank of Ceylon
Assistant Manager in charge of KIRDP work, Bank of Ceylon
District Manager, People's Bank
Numerous Cultivation Officers and KVSSs

At national level:

High ranking executive officers of all the agencies consulted
at district level

Secretary, Ministry of Plan Implementation

Director, Regional Planning Division, Ministry of Plan Implementation

United Nations Expert in Agricultural Planning, Ministry of
Finance and Planning