

THE DIVERGENT APPROACHES OF IRDPS AND PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN NEPAL

Soorya Lal Amatya

Introduction

A series of programme designed to accelerate multi-facet development of regions or areas were implemented in different parts of the world in the past. The multi-purpose river valley projects like the Tennessee River Valley Authority in the U.S.A. can be cited as a pioneering project in early 1930's. The Rapti Valley Development Project in the central inner Terai of Nepal initiated in mid-1950's was also basically an area development programme although resettlement was the main objective with an effective malaria eradication programme. An initiation of integrated rural development programme could be traced back to mid 1970's when the Bicol River Basin Development Programme was launched in the Philippines (Rondinelli 1979 and Koppel 1987).

The integrated rural development programmes with multi-sectoral approach appeared very sound and a series of such IRDP's have been designed and are being implemented in Nepal. Among the most of the appraisal and evaluation reports I have reviewed, Rasuwa-Nuwakot Integrated Rural Development has been generally referred as the first IRDP in Nepal. Rasuwa Nuwakot IRDP (later termed as RASNU DEV) was launched only in 1976 whereas Integrated Hill Development Programme (IHDP) was designed and implemented in 1974. So in fact, IHDP, in my opinion, should be considered as the first integrated rural development programme in Nepal.

The IRDP's in Nepal are generally designed with long term perspective ranging from 15 to 20 years of development programmes and are conceived of three distinct phases. The first phase is of infrastructure building and programme initiation. The second phase is of intensive implementation of the projects and strengthening of local institutions. The third phase is of handing over the responsibility to the concerned district line agencies and the completion of the major construction scheme (Pradhan 1985). Keeping in view, the very slow rate of implementation of development programmes in Nepal, the five years of first phase has been experienced inadequate for

implementation of the programmes as visualized in the project document. So Rapti and RASNU DEV IRDPs have been redesigned of eight years for the second phase (Amatya 1988).

All of these ten IRDP's have been designed and launched mainly with bi-lateral or multi-lateral agencies (Table I). Currently IRDP's have covered 32 districts out of 75 districts in the country and are in the different phases of implementation (Table II). These IRDPs differ considerably in terms of area coverage. Dhading IRDP (DDDP) covers on district of Bagmati Zone whereas Rapti IRDP covers the entire five districts of Rapti Zone in Mid-western Nepal.

Table I
INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NEPAL

	Project	Coverage km Area in Sq. Km	Population	Major Financer	Commence- ment Year
1.	Rasuwa-Nuwakot (Rasnu Dev)	2,458	2,32,899	IDA/UNDP	1976
2.	Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP)	2,200	2,10,000	DEH (Swiss)	1974
3.	Sagarmatha	4,779	8,86,016	ADB/IFAD/EEC	1978
4.	Kosi Hill Area (KHARDEP)	6,335	5,54,000	ODA (U. K.)	1979
5.	Mahakali	5,300	3,46,662	IDA/UNDP	1979
6.	Rapti	10,515	8,50,000	USAID	1980
7.	Karnali-Bheri (KBIRD)	7,569	4,00,000	CIDA	1981
8.	Dhading District Development Project (DDDP)	3,000	2,80,500	GTZ	1983
9.	Seti	12,300	8,00,000	ADB	1986
10.	Mechi Hill Irrigation and Related Development Programme		4,47,468	SNV (Dutch)	1986
11.	Lumbini Project (Proposed)		15,71,499	JICA (Japan)	

Table II

**INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN
NEPAL**

(IRDP - STATUS)

	Project	District	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
1.	Rasuwa-Nuwakot	2	1976-1983	1984-1985	1985-1983
2.	IRDP	2	1974-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990
3.	Sagarmatha	3	1978-1985	1986-	
4.	Kosi (KHARDEP)	4	1977-1979	1979-1985	
5.	Mahakali	3	1980-1985	1986-1990	
6.	Rapti	5	1980-1985	1988-1996	
7.	Karnali-Bheri	3	1981-1985	1985-1990	
8.	Dhading	1	1983-1985	1985-1990	
9.	Seti	5	1986-		
10.	Mechi Hill Irrigation and related develop- ment programme	3	1986		

Almost all the IRDP's have specifically mentioned objectives of enhancing rural farming production generating rural employment opportunities, strengthening of local institutions and improving on environmental situation.

The IRDP's in Nepal are designed mainly for general rural development and unlike in India these IRDP's are not oriented to certain target groups of population. In that sense, all the IRDP's are basically are development programmes.

This paper deals mainly with two important issues of IRDP's in Nepal, first, the approaches adopted by IRDPs in delivering services and disseminating development messages and second, the problems confronted by IRDP's in their implementation.

Approaches

At present ten IRDP's are in different phases of implementation. Two IRDP's are in the third phase; six IRDP's in the second phase; and two IRDP's in the first phase. All the integrated rural development programmes in Nepal have invariably incorporated multi - sectoral integrated approach. While framing IRDP's, all of these have been planned to improve all the sectors of the economy. The multi-sectoral integrated approach seems to be sound in principle but there are serious limitations of integration of the development programmes in actual implementation in a country like Nepal,

where co-ordination between line agencies at national, district and local levels is lacking. In fact, lack of efficient co-ordination between IRDP projects and the government line agencies has also been reported as serious constraints in the implementation of the development programs. So, in the second or third phases of these IRDPs serious thoughts have been given to redesign the IRDPs to focus mainly on the productive sectors of agriculture, forestry, livestock and strengthening of local institutions. Most of the IRDP's are designed differently programme-wise and have adopted different approaches of implementation.

Tuki System

IHDP has maintained tuki system of voluntary field agents in the implementation of integrated rural development programmes. The concept of tuki system is that the villagers are in darkness and if provided with some light they can easily find their way themselves towards development of their way of live. The tuki volunteers are the local people engaged in farming, trade and other occupations. They usually disseminate development activities by distributing improved seeds, fertilizers and tools and maintain demonstration farms. They get 20 percent commission out of the total sale of agricultural inputs and the project subsidies of the transport cost. Despite the constraints, the tuki system has proved effective in reaching the people at the grass roots. They are accountable to themselves as well as to their neighbours. The tuki system of voluntary field agents is generally considered as a good innovation suited to the Nepalese situation (IDS 1982).

System of Field Assistants

RASNU DEV and IRDP, on the other hand, have relied entirely on the field assistants of the district line agencies in reaching to the people at village level. The field assistants like Junior Technicians (J.T.) and Junior Technical Assistants (J. T. A.) are the government employees and are supposed to manage the delivery of services and dissemination of agricultural inputs in the rural areas. These field assistants being outsiders are not generally trusted by the local people, and they have somewhat bureaucratic attitude. Their overall performances have not been so effective in carrying out the development programmes.

This approach of operation through the field assistants of the district line agencies have been adopted by Sagarmatha IRDP, Mahakali IRDP and Seti IRDP.

Integrated Village Development (IVD)

Although KBIRD project also operates through the field level extension workers of district line agencies, it has a unique provision of Integrated Village Development (IVD). The concept of IVD incorporates the group formation at village level. These village level groups are expected to interact or dialogue with the district line agencies

regarding village level development programmes. According to a study (Veit 1984), the concept of IVD has not yet been put into operation and the village level people are not involved in the management of development activities.

Local Private Enterprises

The Rapti IRDP suffered from a number of constraints and the implementation of development programmes was not satisfactory. The study has obviously indicated that the construction materials and agricultural inputs could not be transported and delivered on time through the semi-government organization like Agriculture Inputs Corporation in Rapti Zone. As consequence, the construction of projects was much delayed and the implementation of development programmes suffered considerably (PADCO 1985). In the second phases of Rapti Project, it has been aimed to emphasis on development of local private enterprise for delivery of services and agricultural inputs.

The Confidence Building Measure

Unlike other IRDP's, Dhading Project (DDDP) was designed differently and has adopted entirely different approach in the implementation of rural development programmes in Dhading district. The confidence building measures at ward (sub-village Panchayat) level is a unique approach of motivating rural people to organize plan and implement the small development schemes and generating confidence of the people to Dhading project. Under the program of confidence building measure Rs. 25,000 has been granted to all 450 wards in Dhading district for completion of small schemes which, the villagers think, will serve their felt need and their first priority. In the process of final selection of the scheme, it is left entirely to their decision. According to a sample evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development in 1984, most of the small schemes were completed on time and in the process the villagers learned much about planning and implementing small development activities (DDDP 1985).

Dhading project has been designed on process approach rather than project approach. The project document incorporates no physical targets but focuses mainly on setting in motion, a process of development. The project as such aims at strengthening the district and local level institutions.

Irrigation System Approach

Mechi IRDP also appears quite different in its design and the whole project is largely based on hill irrigation system. The other development activities are incorporated to supplement the hill irrigation system for achieving rural development in the three districts of Mechi Zone. It has plan to construct about 50 small irrigation projects in Ilam, Panchthar and Taplejung districts of Mechi Zone. The focus has been on

development of irrigation facilities and it is assumed that it will contribute substantially to all round development of the districts.

Gaun Sallah (Village Dialogue)

While reviewing other development programs, I have found a few other approaches being used to mobilizing rural people to development activities at village level. The Resources Conservation and Utilization Project has used Gaun Sallah (Village dialogue) as the way of creating awareness among the rural people. The main focus seems make rural people more aware of the problems of rapid deforestation and proper management of forest. The rural people, however, were not involved in a way of participation in afforestation and forest management.

Mechanism of Group Organizers

Small Farmers Development Programme (SFDP) has been operating through the mechanism of group organizers at the village level. The group organizers are basically employees of Agriculture Development Bank (ADB/Nepal). Their main functions are to help organize homogeneous groups of small, marginal and landless farmers and furnish them with information regarding credit loans from ADB/N as well as from other commercial banks (Sah 1985, Maharjan, Loochwanchat and Mayer 1983 and APROSC 1987). The group approach and group liability for credit loans are the main components of SFDP philosophy. It is generally assumed that through such groups improvement in sanitation, school, health and family planning can be expected. Group organizers can stimulate rural people towards such improvements. But their role does not seem to be so effective in making repayment of credit loans. According to sample study, the percentage of repayment rate comes to about 28 percent per annum (Maharjan 1983).

Lami (Match maker) Approach

It will be quite relevant to mention here the concept of "Lami" used in a participatory action research for rural development and energy planning in Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. According to this concept the research team members are Lami (match-maker). They are, in fact, facilitatory who help villagers integrate their values, knowledge perceptions with relevant information and outlook on development opportunities; they pursue in dialogue with villagers as participants by living in villages and support them in organizing and management of productive and equitable use of resources and available technology (Bajracharya, Morse and Pongsapich 1987). Such Lami approach was experimented in a number of selected villages of three countries and quite a number of rural projects were planned and implemented by villagers themselves. Such approach may sound very good in principle, but how far it can be feasible in terms of manpower and resources on extensive rural development programme like IRDP's is still questionable.

National Development Services (NDS)

The National Development Service that was initiated in early 1970' in Nepal also had the objectives of orienting the students to the rural life and problems of the country and to help the villagers in designing and of implementing small rural development activities. All the degree-level students of Tribhuvan University had to live and provide services for ten months in one of the villages. The NDS was incorporated as a compulsory component in the academic curriculum. Beside teaching at one of the schools, the NDS students helped greatly in mobilizing local as well as the external resources for implementing the small rural project like, rural drinking water schemes, irrigation, school building, wooden bridges, literacy classes, sanitation and family planning programmes. In the whole process, the NDS students were simply the development agents and the major decisions were made by the village Panchayats or by a committee of the villagers. The NDS programme was service-oriented and very productive. The NDS programme was initiated in 1973 as a pilot project and later was introduced as full-fledged programme in 1974. It was continued for a number of years as the most successful and stimulating programme in creating awareness and development attitude among the rural people.

The benefit ratio per students to the cost measured in terms of gross investment was about 1.43. That is the NDS programme contributed about 43 percent more in return compared to the total gross investments in the programme. (Pradhan 1978). This estimation, however, has not incorporated the non-quantifiable items like eradication of social evils, propagation of the family planning programme, public health education, literacy campaign etc.

In context of expanding rural development programmes in Nepal, the NDS can be redesigned and implemented in a better way as development agents in the rural areas. In my opinion, financial resource is not a constraint in reviving the NDS programme. But because of political implications, the government seems to be hesitant and has adopted a go-slow policy. This is obviously a glaring example of lack of political commitment for continued support to a successful programmes that aimed at rural upliftment. My main contention here is to highlight a fact that we have not given much thought and due consideration in incorporating some of our own experiences while designing and implementing the rural development programmes in Nepal.

Problems of Implementation

Nepal as a land-locked and mountainous country is seriously handicapped and lack a good network of transportation. These are generally considered as constraints for the rapid economic development. When we view critically the processes of implementation of rural development, we get the general impression that the development activities in the country move very slowly. This becomes quite obvious

when we take into consideration the rate of investment of development budget as a whole in the country. According to an estimation, the utilization of the foreign aid commitment in Nepal was about 51.2 percent of the total committed amount in a five-year period from 1981/82 to 1985/86 (Ministry of Finance 1987). Effort is made here to identify and analyse some constraints that can be overcome with a proper management of the processes involved.

One of the main reasons for slow rate of implementation of IRDP's in Nepal is the long delay in disbursement of budgetary fund to the district. The field observation in Dang and Salyan districts of Mid-western Nepal in 1987 has substantiated that the first trimester budget disbursement reached to the district in the month of December as against the scheduled date of September. There is a practice of granting some advance fund in the month of September which is mainly used for staff pay and administrative expenses. Funds for development activities or programmes are not available unless the first trimester budget disbursement reaches to the district. As a consequence, the initiation process of annual development programmes are much delayed and obviously become difficult to complete the annual development projects within the fiscal year. The district line agency or project office also find it difficult to submit the financial statements to district treasury office on time. This sort of situation leads to a vicious circle of delayed disbursement of budgetary fund, late initiation of the development programmes and delayed submission of the financial statement. The net result of which is the low rate of implementation of programme under IRDP's.

When we review carefully the implementation of development programmes in a district, the large proportions of the programmes remain incomplete at the end of the fiscal year. The incompleting programmes or projects need to be incorporated in the next fiscal year.

In a major sector like agriculture in Salyan district, the disbursement of the total appropriated budget for 1985/86 was of about 56 percent and the actual expenditure was of about 54.5 percent of the total budget. The disbursement of the total appropriated budget in case of Soil and Water Resources Conservation was almost 100 percent but the actual expenditure was only 78 percent of the total disbursed amount (Amatya 1987). According to the progress report of the projects under the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development for the Year 1985/86, the progress of implementation in terms of percentages ranged from 47.42 percent in Rukum district to 49.79 percent in Pyuthan district. The percentages of progress in case of other districts of Rapti Zone were 14.84 percent in Rolpa district, 20.45 percent in Salyan district and 25.49 percent in Dang district. So in my opinion, the delayed disbursement of budgetary fund is the first reason for the very poor rate of implementation of IRDP's in Nepal. To overcome this constraint, the mechanism of disbursing the appropriated budgetary fund from the

Ministry of Finance to the district line agencies need to be improved and expedited. As provided in Decentralization Scheme, the accounting as well as auditing processes are also to be strengthened. The performance of the development programmes are to be regularly supervised and monitored.

Secondly, the shortage of the technical manpower has been a problem faced by all IRDP's. The co-ordinators and other administrative staff are also frequently transferred from one project to another and from project to central offices. The shortage of experienced technical manpower cannot be solved easily but the frequent transfer of technical and administrative staff can at least be halted for reasonable period of time.

Thirdly, field allowances in most cases are inadequate and vary considerably between the staff under the foreign assisted project and the district line agencies. The differential field allowance make the technical and administrative field staff of the line agencies demoralised and they take very little interest in carrying out their office responsibilities. Adequate field allowances are to be provided to all the field staff.

Fourthly, the co-ordinations between different ministries at the national level and among district line agencies at the district level are lacking. The Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development (MPLD) has been designated as the main co-ordinating and implementing agency in case of IRDS's in Nepal. The Local Development Officers (LDO's) are attached to the MPLD. The LDO's as secretaries to the District Panchayats are entrusted with the responsibility of co-ordinating all the development programs in the districts. According to the provision of decentralization scheme, all the district-level development offices are supposed to be under the umbrella of district Panchayat secretariat. But in reality, the horizontal linkage among the district line agencies seems to be very weak. The LDOs have no administrative authority over staff of other line agencies. The traditional vertical linkages of these line agencies to their central ministries are still quite strong. The administrative as well as technical staff of district line agencies depend on their concerned central ministries for their promotion and transfer. The development funds also are as usual channelled through their ministries. The district Panchayat secretariat, in fact, has no say so far the promotion and transfer of the line agencies staff are concerned.

The Chief District Officers (CDO's) have comparatively more administrative authority in the district than LDO's. In most of the districts, CDO's, LDO's and the officers of the leading line agencies are of the same second class gazetted level and all of them have a strong feeling of their ranks. In such situation, LDOs are not so much effective in co-ordinating all the development activities. Frequently misunderstanding between CDO and LDO make it very difficult for co-ordinated action.

Fifthly, integrated multi-sectoral approach appears very impressive in principle but very difficult to put into operation in a developing country like Nepal. Even in case of a well designed integrated project of the Bicol River Basin Development Programme in the Philippines, integrated approach has been seriously questioned as a viable approach for implementation of rural development programmes (Kopel 1987). Most of the evaluation reports of IRDP's in Nepal have indicated failures in the application of integrated approach. Leading sectoral agencies were not seriously involved in the implementation of sectoral components of IRDP's. Leading sectoral agencies like Department of agriculture, Department of forestry, Department of irrigation and Department of cottage industries were not seriously involved in Kosi Hill Area Rural Development Programme (KHARDEP). The major programmes could not be implemented under KHARDEP because of lack of co-ordination between the project and district line agencies. In the management of development programmes under KHARDEP, the local institutions were completely ignored in the past, which created a feeling among local people that the decisions were usually made by the members of U.K. technical team. The district level line agencies were not even consulted. As a consequence, the productive sectors like agriculture and cottage industries recorded very little progress of implementation. Now most of the IRDP's have been redesigned and adopted sectoral approach. The focus have been mainly on productive sectors like agriculture, forestry, livestock and the strengthening of local institutions like Panchayats.

Sixthly, supervision and monitoring of the on-going projects usually are not done carefully at regular intervals. According to Decentralization Act of 1982 and By-laws of 1984, supervision committees are to be constituted under the chairmanship of the R.P. member of the concerned district. But RP members of the districts have not authority in decision making processes regarding the formulation of periodic as well as annual plans for the districts. As such, they consider supervision committees simply as fault-finding bodies. The district supervision committees formed under the chairmanship of the district R.P. members so far do not seem to be so active and responsive in their performances. Lack of regular supervision and monitoring can also be referred as one of the constraint in the implementation of IRDP's.

Conclusion

Currently there are ten IRDP's in different phases of implementation and cover 32 districts. It has also been planned to extend to further few districts in future. Most of these IRDP's are designed differently and vary considerably in their approaches of implementing rural development programmes. The tuki system seems to be well tested and very appropriate in Nepalese condition. This has been successfully applied in the districts of Dolkha and Sindhupalchok. But this approach has not been adopted by any other IRDP. The concept of integrated village development and village dialogue as

incorporated in Karnali-Bheri IRDP is relatively new and has not yet been fully tested. The confidence-building approach of Dhading Project is yet to be properly evaluated. Privatization of the process of delivery of services and development inputs cannot be viable in the hill and mountain districts unless it is subsidized by the government to a considerable extent. The traditional approach of extending services through the field assistants of the line agencies is much bureaucratized and inefficient in delivery of services. However, a number of IRDP's have adopted this approach in the implementation of rural development programmes.

It seems we have not given much thought in incorporating our own experiences while formulating new integrated rural development programmes. The implementation of rural development programme in a mountainous and landlocked country like Nepal is generally regarded as difficult and is characterized by slow process. The IRDP's are confronted with number of constraints like delayed disbursement of budgetary fund, bureaucratic, administrative linkages, absence of proper co-ordination and lack of sectoral agencies serious involvement in the implementation of rural development programmes. A concerted effort is to be made by His Majesty's Government of Nepal to overcome these obstacles so that the implementation of rural development programmes can be much improved effective and efficient.

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