Poverty Reduction, Sustainability and Learning

An evaluability assessment of seven area development projects

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Executive Summary

Background

Over the recent decades Sida has dedicated considerable efforts to the support of area development projects. These are investment projects designed to develop a rural area largely to benefit the rural poor. They often serve peripheral areas neglected by past investment strategies. Many are multisectoral with activities in agriculture, water supply, health, rural infrastructure, and small-scale off-farm enterprises. The main intended beneficiaries have generally been smallholders. These projects have rarely been targeted to benefit the poorest rural strata such as the landless. Yet, the landless have, occasionally and in proportion to their position in society, benefited from increased employment opportunities during project implementation and subsequently, as production has risen. Investments in infrastructure and social services have, with the same restrictions, reached a broad spectrum of the rural population.

Originally, an important feature of area development projects was the delimitation to well defined areas, regions that share a common history, administrative and governmental organisation, or other key characteristics. The size was often limited to a scale wherein the project could be expected to have a significant impact on the economy and livelihoods of the area population as a whole. The new generation of area development projects represents, in varying degree, different area development characteristics. Some cover selected districts and villages in relatively vast geographical areas and are paired to a major emphasis on governmental capacity building at national or regional levels. These programmes effectively function as hybrids, combining broad sectoral and multisectoral institutional support with area development components.

The project sample reviewed in this study (Rural Employment Sector Programme, RESP, Phase III, Bangladesh; UNICEF Social Development Programme, Bolivia; Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia; Cambodia Area and Regeneration Project, CARERE2, through UNDP; Local Land Management of Natural Resources, LAMP, Tanzania; Rural Water, Health and Sanitation Programme, HESAWA, Tanzania; Mountain Rural Development Programme, MRDP, Vietnam) is a mix of new projects and older projects in new phases, representing both the project generations mentioned above. Each project embodies large investments of time, money, and effort by Sida as well as by partner organizations and host countries. The latest financial proposals for the projects in the sample add up to more than one billion sw.kr.

Area development projects

According to development agency evaluations, policy research and special studies, the area development approach has encountered many problems. Evaluations and experience have shown that the rural poor have not benefited from these projects as expected. The complexity of the programs and the disparity between a multi-sector approach and the organisational structure and capacity of development country administrations and donors, often led to severe problems. Bypass structures were established that could not be sustained without external funding or acceptance of a lower degree of integration between different components. The links to the macroeconomic environment (prices, subsidies and regulations, potential benefits from positive externalities) were frequently neglected. Many first generation area development projects from the 1970s were maintained for years at great cost before they were finally scaled down to local standards of performance.

The Study

Against this background Sida has made a preliminary decision to initiate a study of the poverty reduction impact and sustainability of area development projects. Before launching a more comprehensive study, the present study was carried out to assess the "evaluability" of a sample of Sida supported area development projects. The proposed comprehensive study would analyse how problems of poverty reduction and sustainability have been tackled in recent area development projects as well as in new phases of older projects. It would attempt to answer questions such as the following: What are the strategies for poverty reduction and sustainability in area development projects currently supported by Sida? What are the actual and likely results of such projects with regard to sustainable poverty reduction? To what extent and in what respects do new projects represent an advance over past projects? Are projects equipped with adequate mechanisms for feedback, learning and adaptation?

The following issues should be reviewed for the sample projects: poverty reduction objectives, targeting, expected and likely poverty reduction impacts, monitoring and learning mechanisms, existing project information, need for and feasibility of further data collection, attribution problems, key sustainability issues, project sample. The purpose of this report is to provide Sida/UTV with a preliminary evaluability assessment for an informed decision concerning the design, timing and implementation of a proposed study of the poverty reduction impact, sustainability and learning capacity of a selection of Sida-supported area development projects.

The report is based on a rapid desk review of project documents, monitoring and consultancy reports, evaluations, and key informant interviews. It is an initial assessment rather than an in-depth and exhaustive review. The views and judgements presented in the report should not be regarded as an evaluation per se. They represent an inventory of perceptions, conclusions and opinions of evaluators and other project actors on a series of important issues, where all actors involved do not necessarily share valuations and judgements. The objective is to provocatively highlight the key issues in current discourse on poverty impact and sustainability in area development projects. Particular emphasis is placed on providing a basis for considering the trade-offs between different objectives related to poverty and sustainability.

Findings

There is a wide variation among the reviewed programmes with respect to *poverty reduction objectives* and poverty focus. None of the projects can be considered to have poverty reduction as a main and clearly stated objective. The conclusion resulting from the review is that the poverty focus of the projects is vague. Poverty reduction when stated as an objective is a long-term and unspecified goal and the links between goal or objectives and means are unclear and unspecified. Different versions of implicit "trickle-down" thinking predominate as a substitute for more specific and critical analysis of the mediating links between project activities, outputs and outcomes.

Area targeting is the most frequently used mechanism for reaching the poor. It builds on the assumption that by selecting areas considered to be poor or marginal for implementation of project activities, a certain focus on the poor will be achieved. This may or may not be true, since the outcome of area targeting depends on a series of additional intervening factors. Area targeting can only be accepted as an initial approximation, which needs to be followed up, and refined through more explicit poverty assessment. Social and economic stratification is a dimension that runs through different levels and geographical areas of a society. Accordingly, local communities or areas considered to be poor and marginal are generally no less stratified than large cities or central, economical-

ly dynamic areas. The social and ethnic relationships and mechanisms that produce and reproduce poverty, and the systems of rules and norms that define the character of governance and policies in a society are not restricted to geographical or other areas, they permeate and affect the society as a whole.

Sustainability has been a recurrent and major problem for development interventions, particularly in the context of complex approaches such as area development projects, which imply a high level of capacity and efficiency of host country governments and administrations. Project phase out is intimately related with sustainability, but various forces work against timely phase out. It is unlikely that recipient institutions will suggest the phase out of a free or low-cost resource, or that consultants with implementation or technical assistance contracts, will suggest cutting down or phasing out a project. The logic of such vested interests, or inertia, among key stakeholders means that the responsibility for phase out primarily rests on the donor. Sustainability is a main Sida concern with respect to the reviewed projects, but the point of departure and potential of the projects for achieving sustainability varies widely. Some projects (e.g., HESAWA, RESP) are actually in a phase out stage, while other projects will continue for years. CARERE2 will depend on external financial support for the remaining period, since virtually the whole Cambodian public investment budget is aid financed, while other projects can count on a somewhat more favourable macroeconomic environment.

Most projects confront a major trade-off between sustainability and poverty reduction objectives. HESAWA, for example, may during the remaining period concentrate funding on the best performing (more well-off) districts where there will be a good return on investment and better prospects for sustainability, or actively target poorer communities. Cost sharing and willingness to pay by participating communities are crucial for sustainability and more likely if relatively affluent communities are targeted. On the other hand, higher demands on consumer contributions and financing may exclude poor families and drive them to unsafe water sources.

Many of the "new" area development projects (e.g., ANRS, MRDP) seek to ensure greater sustainability by strengthening and working through governmental planning and coordination structures. Sustainability and integration of the Sida project thus becomes a part of an overall process within the counterpart institutions. There are indications that in the short and mid-term there may be insufficient capacity among counterpart institutions to absorb all the intended capacity building. For the institution being strengthened, the Sida project may be just one small project among many. It is thus important to put Sida's attempts to achieve sustainability and integration within a perspective of how collaborating bureaucracies adapt to the broader political economy of development cooperation.

A crosscutting challenge for all projects which assume that sustainability can be most effectively achieved by working through and strengthening governmental institutions, is to analyse the character and dynamic of prevailing economic and political power structures. Most reviewed projects display what must be seen as a rather naïve perspective on the prospects for poverty reduction, participation and empowerment of the poor while operating within the institutional power structures that accept or even generate that poverty. Evaluations of these projects repeatedly point out that the gap between rhetoric and reality regarding poverty reduction and participation by the poor is great. Nonetheless, this is an issue that is rarely acted upon due to the political implications involved.

Learning from experience is essential in complex and changing projects and settings. A precondition for systematic learning is the existence of systems and channels for monitoring and evaluation, which constitute the vital links of interaction between different levels and actors of a project. Most reviewed projects have a formal system for monitoring and evaluation linked to Sida, the Swedish

embassy and the host government. Additionally, Sida's supervision, follow up or monitoring teams conduct monitoring through annual missions. External evaluations and ad hoc studies are carried out periodically as a complement to these components. Apparently, this system is not functioning well. The project review leaves the impression that neither the individual parts of the system nor the links and dynamics between the parts are performing adequately. There is also evidence demonstrating that this system disregards or is particularly weak concerning the learning aspect of monitoring and evaluation. Logical framework analysis that should constitute the conceptual point of departure and backbone for monitoring, evaluation and learning seems to be a donor-driven and formal exercise in most projects, and has not had much impact on overall project management, monitoring and decision-making.

This situation extends beyond the programme level and also characterises the monitoring, evaluation and learning relationships between donor, embassies, implementation consultants, supervision teams and host country governments. More than constituting a coherent *system* for interaction, assessment, adaptation and learning the key actors and links involved tend to be disconnected, apparently performing a series of ad hoc tasks and activities without clear objectives and direction. One reasons for this is related to the ownership of these systems, and to different or contradictory perceptions among key actors about objectives, character and crucial requirements related to such systems. Implementing bureaucracies, for example, tend to see themselves primarily as a mechanism for delivery of instructions and inputs to rural areas. They perceive incoming information and data exclusively as a tool for planning of input deliveries and not as a tool for reflection on impact and the effectiveness of the system. In such contexts, monitoring and evaluation of quality and outcomes, especially participatory monitoring and learning, is not an obvious priority. Many of the incongruities within the reviewed systems seem to stem from the different inherent assumptions by different actors regarding the role of monitoring, evaluation and learning in development projects.

Proposal

The review of the quality of existing project data sources (monitoring and evaluation systems, baseline data, data bases, surveys and special studies) indicates that the basis for more orthodox quantitative impact evaluation is very weak. Therefore, two alternative-cum-complementary methodological approaches are suggested.

The first one is the so-called "*theory based evaluation*" approach, which is likely to fit well into Sida's evaluation purposes and the restrictions in terms of available data. The second one is more associated with monitoring and implementation at an operational level. It consists of identifying, analysing and comparing "*best practices*" (within or across projects) in relation to different aspects of implementation, operation and project management. Best practices would constitute the point of departure for continuous, progressively expanded comparisons and "benchmarking" across similar, comparable groups, settings, activities or procedures.

The project review has indicated that a comprehensive evaluation of area development projects needs to be positioned within a continuum between, on the one hand, improving the internal design of the projects themselves, and on the other, reconsidering the role of these projects in the changing context of development cooperation. It is therefore suggested that the evaluation should be built on strategic thematic studies incorporating internal project aspects as well as the broader perspective of globalisation, sector-wide approaches and new partnerships.

The thematic studies should ideally comprise 2–5 projects and each study should include three crosscutting issues: poverty, sustainability and learning. A challenge for all the studies will be to

anchor analyses within an understanding of prevailing economic and political power structures. The thematic studies will provide the basis for an overall synthesis review and report. Three thematic studies are outlined in the report. This list is not exhaustive, but reflects what appear to be among the most relevant themes for the projects in question. The final choice of studies should be made through a participatory inventory of existing programmes involving relevant stakeholders. The three thematic studies outlined are:

Integration: What has become of integration after integrated rural development?
This thematic study would explore and compare objectives, means and results of integration in "new" and "old" area development projects.

Where do security, vulnerability and livelihood diversification fit in?
This thematic study would analyse, compare and evaluate different characteristics of poverty, alternative poverty reduction strategies and different categories of the poor, against the background of emerging rural development approaches.

Implementation versus institutional development: where is the project's soul?
This thematic study would centre on the ambiguous relationship in many of the current projects between the objectives of activities focused directly on the target group and indirect efforts through institutional development or capacity building. Are area development projects structures for channelling aid and resources to poor people, or are they about influencing the knowledge, capacities, norms and values of host country institutions, with the intention that improved governance will eventually lead to an environment wherein poverty is reduced?

Two suggestions for how the proposed evaluation could be implemented are offered. The first constitutes a traditional consultancy team approach, while the other is a larger research team effort that would take longer time, but would result in a more empirically grounded product, and serve to better anchor the study in the broader Swedish and international discourses on rural development.

1. Background

Sida/UTV has made a preliminary decision to commission a study of the poverty reduction impact and sustainability of area development projects. The area development approach has encountered many problems over the years. Evaluations and experience have shown that one problem is that rural poor have not benefited from such projects as expected. Sustainability has also been a serious problem; projects have in many cases created institutional structures and incentives that could not be sustained without external funding.

The study proposed by Sida/UTV will analyse how problems of poverty reduction and sustainability have been tackled in more recent area development projects as well as in new phases of older projects. It will attempt to answer questions such as the following: What are the strategies for poverty reduction and sustainability in area development projects currently supported by Sida? What are the actual and likely results of such projects with regard to sustainable poverty reduction? To what extent and in what respects do new area development projects represent an advance over past projects of the same kind? To what extent have remaining older projects improved their performance over time? Are projects equipped with adequate mechanisms for feedback, learning and adaptation?[1]

2. Purpose and limitations

The purpose of the present report is to provide Sida/UTV with a *preliminary evaluability assessment* for an informed decision concerning the design, timing and implementation of a proposed study of the poverty reduction impact, sustainability and learning capacity of a selection of Sida-supported area development projects (for a brief characterisation of these projects see Appendix 1). The report is based on a rapid desk review of project documents, evaluations, consultancy reports and key informant interviews. It should be regarded as a preliminary assessment rather than an in-depth and exhaustive review. For that reason, the views and judgements presented in the report should not in any way be regarded as an evaluation per se. They represent an inventory of perceptions, conclusions and opinions of evaluators and other project actors on a series of important issues, where all actors involved in the selected projects do not necessarily share valuations and judgements. The objective is not to draw conclusions, but rather to provocatively highlight the key issues in current discourse on poverty impact and sustainability in area development projects. Particular emphasis is placed on providing a basis for considering the trade-offs between different objectives related to poverty and sustainability.

Within the time frame given it has been impossible to treat in-depth all aspects referred to in the terms of reference for the study. The analysis of existing data and the feasibility of further data collection, for instance, have been dealt with rather briefly and would deserve a closer scrutiny. The selection of the project sample was made according to reasons of expediency and rapid access to information. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the reviewed sample is necessarily the most

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[1] According to the terms of reference, the following issues should be reviewed for the sample projects: poverty reduction objectives, targeting, expected and likely poverty reduction impacts, monitoring and learning mechanisms, timing of proposed evaluation in relation to expected project impacts, existing project information, need for and feasibility of further data collection, attribution problems, key sustainability issues, project sample. These issues have been closely followed in the format developed for recording and systematisation of data and information that has been applied to each selected programme.

appropriate one, considering Sida's overall project portfolio and potential replacements. Nevertheless, adjustments and priorities regarding what is within and what is beyond the scope of the study and its time frame have been defined in continuous dialogue and agreement with Sida.

3. What is area development?

Area development projects are investment projects designed to develop a rural area largely to benefit the rural poor. They often serve low potential, degraded areas neglected by past investment strategies. Many are multisectoral, with activities in agriculture (crops, livestock, conservation, fisheries, forestry), water supply, health, rural infrastructure, and small-scale off-farm enterprises. The main intended beneficiaries of area development projects have been smallholders; these projects have rarely been targeted to benefit the poorest in the rural population, notably the landless.[2] Landless families have, however, occasionally and in proportion to their position in society, benefited from increased employment opportunities during project implementation and subsequently, as production has risen. Investments in infrastructure and social services have, with the same restrictions, reached a broad spectrum of the rural population.

The rationale underpinning area development projects consists of various interrelated elements. By offering a strategic and integrated set of activities and services concentrating on defined geographical areas where the poor live, products and services the poor produce and consume, and assets the poor hold, this approach is expected to:

· raise the productivity of the poor's physical assets and increase their incomes, through the provision of infrastructure, credit, technology, and complementary inputs and by regularising de facto land tenure rights;

· develop human capital by improving access to (and the quality of) basic health, nutrition and education services;

· improve living conditions by providing basic infrastructure and social services; and/or providing safety nets.

In problem analysis and project design, however, area targeting has tended to replace more precise poverty targeting. The fact has often been overlooked that all areas of a society, whether central or peripheral, are stratified according to social class, ethnicity, gender and similar variables, and that the social mechanisms producing and reproducing such patterns affect all levels and areas of a given society. Therefore, without explicit poverty assessment and targeting, investments in infrastructure and production-oriented activities are likely to disproportionally benefit the more well off categories of inhabitants, even in an area that is generally considered to be poor.

Originally, one important feature of area development projects was the delimitation to well defined areas, such as regions or areas that share a common history, administrative and governmental organisation, or other key characteristics. The size of these areas was limited to a scale wherein the project could be expected to have a significant impact on the economy and livelihoods of the

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[2] This section is based on a review of broader international and bilateral donor agency assessments of experiences with area development projects such as, Area Development Projects, Lessons and Practices, No.3, Operations Evaluation Department, The World Bank, Washington D.C., September 1, 1993, and, Integrated Area Development, Experiences with Netherlands Aid in Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1999, as well as the reviews conducted by Sida referred to below.

population of these areas as a whole. In the Sida sample of area development programmes, some belong to this category (e.g. RESP, LAMP, PROANDES), while other programmes, such as MRDP and Support to Amhara National Regional State represent considerably different area development characteristics. These two programmes cover selected districts and villages in relatively vast geographical areas. They are also paired to a major emphasis on governmental capacity building at national (Vietnam) or area (Amhara National Regional State – a region with a population of over 14 million) levels. These programmes effectively function as hybrids combining broad sectoral and multi-sectoral institutional support with area development components. The nature of the intended and actual relationship between field level activities and the institutional support components is sometimes ambiguous in these "hybrid" area development and institutional capacity building programmes.

Most reviews and assessments of area development projects and the precursor project generation, integrated rural development, have arrived at a set of shared conclusions about the problems and weaknesses associated with this approach.[3] Among these are the following:

·   Local and government ownership is considered a key requirement for project success. The complexity of the programs and the mismatch between a multi-sector approach and the organisational structure and capacity of development country administrations, as well as many donors, nonetheless, often led to severe organisational and management problems. This has often either led to establishment of unsustainable bypass structures to ensure integration, especially in earlier integrated rural development projects, or acceptance of a lesser degree of integration between different components.

·   The links to macro policy and the policy environment, such as crop and market prices, subsidies and regulations as well as potential benefits from positive externalities, were frequently ignored.

·   The projects tended to be designed and implemented according to a blueprint rather than a process-oriented approach. Blueprints are particularly at odds with complex and multisectoral approaches where unforeseen and unforeseeable events commonly occur. Such projects are likely to be better served by a flexible process design and management, facilitating the problem solving capacity and learning among the people involved.[4]

·   Participation was often promoted at the conceptual and rhetorical level, but generally limited and weak in project design and implementation (normally including information dissemination and consultation, but excluding shared control or transfer of authority and control over decision-making and resources).

·   Sustainability has been an acute and persistent problem for area and integrated rural development project (as for many other project categories as well). The projects usually created institutional structures and bypass organisations requiring external funding and incentives, which were not sustainable when donor support was withdrawn. Most of the projects were also operating on scale and investment intensity, which would have been impossible without a continuous inflow

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[3] Lars Erik Birgegård, A review of experiences with integrated rural development in the last ten years, NATUR, Sida, Stockholm, 1997, Gösta Edgren, Review of the new generation of Sida-funded area development projects targeting the poor, Policy, Sida, Stockholm, 1999, The World Bank, Area Development Projects, Washington D.C., September 1, 1993.

[4] A pioneering and influential account of the learning process approach can be found in David C. Korten, Rural Development Programming: The Learning Process Approach, Rural Development Participation Review, Vol.2, No.2, Winter 1981. A more recent discussion of the learning process approach particularly focusing on monitoring and benchmarking aspects is Charles Sabel, Learning by Monitoring: The Institutions of Economic Development, in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (eds.), The Handbook of Economic Sociology, Princeton University Press, Russell Sage Foundation, 1994.

of external funding. National and local capacities to generate revenue to cover recurrent costs and capital investments were not realistically assessed.

· Timely project phase out is intimately related with sustainability. In this context sustainability refers to the project's achievements rather than the "project" itself. The logic of vested interests, or inertia, among key stakeholders means that it is unlikely that a recipient organisation will suggest the phase out of a free or low-cost resource and it is just as unlikely that a consultancy firm with an implementation and technical assistance contract, will suggest cutting down or phasing out the operation. Given the logic of such vested interests, the responsibility for a well-managed phase out, primarily rests on the donor agency.[5] The attention currently paid to ownership and partnership has tended to muddle such concerns.

Many of these projects, thus, failed to meet their stated objectives or rapidly disintegrated after the withdrawal of external funding.

Recent directions in rural development policy are beginning to raise profound new questions regarding the roles and methods of area development projects. Sector-wide approaches, comprehensive development frameworks, and general awareness regarding the limited role of aid in development processes in the face of globalisation all have profound implications for three questions:

· Where do area development projects fit in the future of development cooperation?

· What are the prospects for area development projects making a sustainable impact on poverty reduction in the face of overwhelming macro and structural factors?

· What is or should be "sustainable" regarding the role of the state, the applicability of the technologies being promoted, etc., in a turbulent world?

4.   Poverty and poverty reduction

Poverty is multi-dimensional, extending beyond low levels of income and including dimensions such as:

· Lack of opportunity: low levels of consumption and income, usually relative to a national poverty line. This is generally associated with the level and distribution of physical assets, such as land, "human capital", social assets and market opportunities, which determine the returns to these assets.

· Low capabilities: little or no improvements in health and education among a particular socio-economic group;

· Low level of security: exposure to risk and income shocks, which may arise at the national, local, household or individual level.

· Lack of power: limited capacity to access and influence state institutions and social processes that shape resource allocations and public policy choices.

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[5] Hans Hedlund, The phasing out of aid programmes: Experiences and guidelines, Development Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, 1994, Claes Lindahl et al., The Nordic Funded Rural Employment Sector Programme in Bangladesh, Vol.1: Main Report, Sida Evaluation 98/29.

The empirical correlations between these different dimensions of poverty are overwhelmingly positive and highlight the fact that the poor suffer from multiple and inter-related deprivations.

The definition of poverty has evolved over the past decade together with international knowledge about the nature of poverty and its determinants. In 1990, the World Development Report expanded the traditional income-based definition of poverty to further include capabilities – such as health, education and nutrition. This framework explicitly recognized the interaction and causal relationship among these dimensions. It recommended a strategy for poverty reduction based on broad-based growth in incomes and on investment in basic education and health care, together with safety nets for those unable to participate in growth.

In light of the evolution of the debate and experience the 1990s, the 2000 World Development Report further extends the concept of poverty to include the dimensions of vulnerability, voicelessness, and powerlessness.[6] These, and concepts such as social exclusion broaden the framework for poverty analysis and expand the range of policies and actions for poverty reduction that should be considered. The individualist conception of poverty held by mainstream economists, however, still predominate in the thinking and practice of many development agencies and governments. More comprehensive and holistically grounded conceptions focusing on the social relationships and mechanisms that produce and reproduce poverty beyond the level of individuals' access or lack of access to "opportunities"[7] have not yet entered the mainstream development discourse and practice.

5. Sustainability

As has been stressed above, sustainability has been a recurrent and principal problem for development interventions, expressed particularly clearly in the context of complex approaches, such as integrated rural development, which imply a comparatively high level of capacity and efficiency of host country governments and administrations. The most important determinant of the sustainability of development cooperation is to be found in the character of the historically defined formal and informal systems of rules and norms that provide the framework for and define the character of governance and administration in host countries. Political regimes and governments are expressions of, play by and reproduce these rule systems in interaction with the "civil society". This process shapes, modifies or reproduces the nature of "social capital" and social relationships at large in a given society. Although critically important for the sustainability of development achievements, these rule systems (particularly the informal ones) are largely beyond the reach of development cooperation.

Thus, the sustainability of a given area development project is related to the norms and values that emerge from the "social capital" that forms in and around the project. These issues have come up in recent Sida thinking, first with the strong emphasis on partnership, and recently with statements regarding how concern for poverty must ultimately be rooted in the norms and values of different development actors. These fundamental issues are, however, difficult to assess. Norms and values are formed within a local historical, cultural, social and political context. Aid and dialogue are

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[6] The World Bank, Poverty Group, PREM, Consultations with the Poor, Global Synthesis, prepared for Global Synthesis workshop, September 22–23, 1999. See also the DAC Sourcebook on Poverty Reduction, DAC Informal Network on Poverty Reduction, March 2000, Draft, which includes concepts such as social exclusion and empowerment among the basic causes and dimensions of poverty.

[7] Charles Tilly, Durable Inequality, University of California Press, Berkley, 1999.

blunt instruments with which to influence these factors and attribution problems are enormous in attempting to assess the sustainability of impact.

In a more operational and short-term sense, sustainability is viewed in relation to the phasing out of development projects and sustainability in this context generally refers to the sustainability of the processes initiated and achievements made by a project or any other development cooperation undertaking. As has been noted above, phase out is a complex process due to the constellation of interests among key development cooperation stakeholders. At least two case study reviews have been carried out on phase out of Sida projects.[8] Hans Hedlund, the author of one of these studies (integrated rural development in Zambia, power plant in Laos), found that phasing out in these projects was based on donor budget and administrative concerns rather than on the sustainability capacity. The decision was made and enforced by the donor and not taken seriously by local staff, who did not believe a phase out would occur. Recipient, local and expatriate staff considered that more could be achieved in well performing projects and a prolonged project period could improve the poorly performing cases. The phase out decision also initiated a process whereby the recipient government attempted to find new donors to replace the outgoing one, a process that became more important than consolidation of what had already been achieved in the project.

On the basis of this experience operational guidelines for phase out were developed.[9] According to the guidelines, a phase out period should be included in the project document; a specific phase out period should be established, as well as checkpoints on impact and sustainability performance. An independent team of local and external consultants should be contracted to facilitate the process. As soon as a phase out date is defined a phase out planning document should be prepared and, finally, a new project management composed of new and old staff should be installed to carry out the process.

Arguments have also been put forward in favour of establishing specific, measurable and time-bound targets in development cooperation in order to facilitate the phase out.[10] For the reasons referred to above, failure to achieve targets tends to lead to extension of project activities rather than termination. Proponents of time-bound targets argue that strict time limits, preferably based on a logical framework analysis, should be established and enforced in order to counteract the forces and interests that tend to prolong projects indefinitely. Almost everybody would agree in principle about the usefulness of time-bound targets for planning purposes. Nevertheless, a critical problem remains, namely *who* is to establish the right level of the targets and on what grounds. Many of the targets in a logical framework analysis are established on the basis of incomplete and imperfect information, rules of thumb or rough approximations, by development agencies, government staff and consultants.

A weakness of the time-bound targets argument is that it suffers from an "engineering" bias (getting the targets "right" and then enforcing them is supposed to suffice) that is not very compatible with process approaches and the recognition of uncertainty, limited knowledge, and unforeseen or unintended consequences (cf. section 6 – on Learning below). In process projects, targets should be

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[8] Hans Hedlund, The phasing out of aid programmes: Experiences and guidelines, Julie Catterson, Claes Lindahl, The Sustainability Enigma, Aid dependency and the phasing out of projects, The case of Swedish aid to Tanzania, EGDI, Almqvist & Wicksell International, Stockholm, 1999.

[9] The phase out period in this case is defined as the activities carried out between the decision to terminate a project and the end of all external aid resources to local institutions.

[10] Jan Valdelin, Göran Schill, Aid management: Strategies for effectiveness, concentration and graduation, Sida Project 2015, Stockholm, 1997, quoted in Julie Catterson, Claes Lindahl, The Sustainability Enigma, Aid dependency and the phasing out of projects, The case of Swedish aid to Tanzania.

viewed as provisional benchmarks, which are adjusted in the light of learning from experience and emerging best practice. The key to sustainability and successful phase out is not necessarily achievement of pre-established targets, especially when targets refer to outputs rather than outcomes or impacts. Sustainability in a deeper and more genuine sense is attained through a process of empowerment of counterpart stakeholders (with a particular focus on the poor and vulnerable) in a development undertaking.

A central aspect of the phase out issue is in the sustainability of service institutions that have been "strengthened" during a period of time through direct or indirect subsidies. These subsidies have taken many forms:

· covering the operating costs of credit institutions

· subsidising transport or cost of agricultural inputs

· providing offices, transport or salary support to governmental extension agents

· providing offices, transport or salary support to farmer organisations

· providing offices, transport or salary support to NGO's

· providing offices, transport or salary support to the private sector, etc.

Instead of looking at the underlying issues of sustainable service provision, area development projects have often either ignored the issue, or have jumped to subsidising a new type of institution when sustainability concerns have been raised (from government to NGO's, to the private sector, to farmer organisations, etc.) on the assumption that the new partner is inherently more efficient, effective or sustainable. Another approach has been to establish competitive contracting relationships with potential service providers, on the assumption that this will solve the problem.

Finally, the gradual introduction of "cost-recovery" has been used as a solution for phasing out. There is some evidence that the poor can and do pay for services that they value. Nonetheless, there is a clear tendency in many contexts for this form of "sustainable service provision" to greatly reduce access by poor target groups. Many area development projects have been weak in analysis of public goods issues, which inevitably are the key factors in understanding the prospects for both sustainable and equitable service provision.

Empowerment implies to invest someone with authority, power or resources. Development agencies should thus eventually invest or transfer their control over decision-making and resources to stakeholders of development interventions, thus promoting counterpart ownership of projects. Agencies should, at different levels, act as facilitators, endowing or equipping (particularly the poor and disadvantaged) stakeholders with resources and capacities enabling their empowerment. Agencies should ideally convey institutional capacity in a broad sense; including knowledge, information, management capacity, connections, economic resources, and freedom for the stakeholders to take the process in their own hands.

In this interaction process the donor agency should transit from promoter to companion of the initiative and process, and remain a companion only as long as those who now are taking over the initiative and the ownership require this. The empowered group thus transits from mobilised to mobiliser, from convened to convenor, from a group that at the outset needed an external agent's help to initiate a process, to a group that controls its own process. To achieve a sustainable transmission of ownership and control within a reasonable period of time it is necessary to plan and prepare for stakeholder take-over from the beginning of the interaction process.

This empowerment process occurs at two levels. The first is that of ownership and capacity among host country institutions. The second is empowerment of the poor themselves to control these institutions. The former relates to sustainability and the latter to democracy, and naturally constitutes a highly politicised process. Due to the sensitive issues of power, and the technocratic nature of many development interventions there is a tendency to focus on the former and accept highly questionable assumptions about the latter, or to relegate this to an array of participatory techniques. The growing critique of the populist participatory approaches of the early 1990's has drawn attention to the structural obstacles to empowerment of the poor.[11] Area development projects have rarely taken this critique on board, focusing rather on empowering partner institutions, even if these institutions are part of the problem. This again is an example of the types of trade-offs that emerge between sustainability and poverty reduction objectives.

6. Learning

Learning from own and others' experience is, of course, a basic requirement for any successful development intervention. Process approaches and learning are particularly essential in situations where we lack sufficient knowledge about key project conditions and means to achieve objectives, or where social settings and dynamics are unknown, unpredictable or unstable. In such situations, which are recurrent in the world of induced development activities, learning and innovation should be closely interrelated and interdependent elements of planning, preparation and implementation.[12]

Traditional development investment and blueprint approaches tend to assume that we know (or can get to know) most of what we need to know at the outset of a project process, and therefore are able to plan in detail and in advance. The rationale underlying process or learning and innovation approaches assumes that we are living in a world of radical uncertainty and that our initial knowledge about key project conditions and societal dynamics is severely limited.

The project cycle in such contexts is ideally conceived as an iterative process of experimentation and innovation, followed by reflection, learning and adaptation, leading to modified approaches, forms of intervention or objectives. Quality in project planning and implementation is attained through focus on identification and resolution of problems, and discovery and correction of error in the course of an intervention. New approaches, methods and procedures are developed, on a limited scale (e.g., a province or geographical area) through experimentation, innovation and learning, which can subsequently be applied on a broader (e.g., national) scale.

One prerequisite for systematic learning and experimentation is to establish some organized and coherent hypotheses about the relations between new approaches, new means or new activities on the one hand, and expected or desired outcomes on the other. Another, more practical, precondition for learning and innovation is a *monitoring and evaluation system* that allows stakeholders to system-

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[11] Andrea Cornwall, Beneficiary, Consumer, Citizen: Changing Perspectives on Participation for Poverty Reduction, Sida Studies, 2000 (forthcoming).

[12] The World Bank's new adaptable lending instruments are a promising attempt to systematically apply a process approach. Learning and Innovation Loans and Adaptable Programme Loans are to be used when: 1) institutional capacities need to be built up in preparation for a large-scale program; 2) the environment in which the project is to take place is promising but uncharted; 3) to pilot a potentially good development effort when the time is right and the ground has already been laid through a local initiative, social assessment, other participatory exercise or another partner's efforts; 4) in some combination of these conditions. Adaptable Lending, New Investment Instruments, The World Bank, Washington D.C., August 1997.

atically follow, analyse and contribute to the learning process taking place. This system should also constitute an alert mechanism identifying problems and errors as well as emerging best practice in the course of the learning process.

An important factor in how actors in area development projects learn is that of prevailing narratives regarding development processes. There are many examples of how preconceived notions regarding poverty prevail in the face of extensive research demonstrating their falsehood. Development projects are led by national and expatriate elites who operate within unconscious attitudes and assumptions about why people are poor and what can be done about it. New methodologies show promise for better understanding how key actors "make sense" of poverty, but their broader influence on development cooperation's processes remains to be proven. An increasing number of studies have been produced in conjunction with Sida area development projects, but the record is poor regarding the impact of such findings on influencing project assumptions, goals and even upon existing management and learning systems. The latter are themselves designed to collect and apply data on what are assumed to be the central issues facing the project. There is rarely a structure in place to support critical reflection on the underlying project narratives or "theories of change" (cf. section 8.2).

A major reason for this is that the activities, goals and assumptions of many projects are strongly influenced by a political dialogue between Sida and host ministries (and increasingly other donors). This political process (which is of course a positive aspect with regard to democratising development cooperation) is inevitably based in prevailing policy narratives, and is often impervious to influence from research and evaluations. The result is therefore statements that reinforce rather than question prevailing policies. In response to these tendencies, former participatory planning methodologies are being adapted to focus on the political policy discourse, rather than mere project design.[13] Due to the obvious and sensitive political manifestations of this process, the potential of using area development projects as a vehicle for this form of engagement remains largely unexplored.

7. Evaluation of Area Development Projects – a preliminary review

The following Sida-supported area development projects are included in the present review (see also Appendix 1):

· Rural Employment Sector Programme, RESP, Phase III, Bangladesh;
· UNICEF Social Development Programme, Bolivia;
· ANRS/Sida Cooperation in Rural Development Programme, Ethiopia;
· Cambodia Area and Regeneration Project, CARERE2, through UNDP;
· Local Land Management of Natural Resources, LAMP, Tanzania;
· Rural Water, Health and Sanitation Programme, HESAWA, Tanzania;
· Mountain Rural Development Programme, MRDP, Vietnam.

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[13] Tim Holmes, Ian Scoones, Participatory Environmental Policy Processes: Experiences from North and South, IDS Working Paper 113, IDS Sussex, 2000.

This is a very heterogeneous sample where the common denominator is some kind of area focus. As we shall see, the sample comprises wide variations with respect to area, character and coverage. Although interest in the area development approach declined in the aftermath of the earlier wave of integrated rural development projects, over the years area development projects have remained a considerable proportion of most donor portfolios and now area development rethinking and new approaches seem to be receiving increasing attention. The above project sample is a mix of new projects and older projects in new phases, each representing large investments of time, money, and effort by Sida as well as by partner organizations and host countries. The latest financial proposals for the projects in the sample add up to more than one billion sw.kr. An evaluation that provides useful feedback to project owners and other stakeholders, and extracts lessons that could be applied to other projects of the same kind would, according to Sida/UTV, be clearly justified.[14]

As has been noticed by Sida/UTV, all the projects in the sample are complex operations with various, more or less interdependent objectives and involving a corresponding variety of components and activities. Many of these individual components could be regarded as considerable projects themselves. Although they are usually confined to a few rural districts, the targeted population is in most cases very large. As shown by a recent evaluation of the RESP project, an evaluation of a single one of these projects can be a very ambitious task. An evaluation covering half a dozen such projects would be a huge undertaking, even if there are prior evaluations in some of the cases.

Almost by definition area development projects also involve a variety of mutually supportive sectoral activities or components in order to achieve a critical mass that may lead to sustainable impact (e.g., water, health, sanitation; income generating, credit and productive activities linked, for instance, to literacy, awareness raising or empowerment components).

The complexity with regard to components and activities is further accentuated by the fact that these projects often direct their interventions to target groups at different levels of a society, in order to create synergies and mutual support. A selection of the abovementioned project components or activities at the local or regional levels is thus frequently complemented with activities aimed to strengthen or build capacity in the public administration or the local government, or to influence policies and attitudes of the national government.

This complexity and heterogeneity of the project sample mean that an evaluation should not attempt to establish comparability among projects exclusively according to conventional quantitative evaluation criteria or approaches. In addition, there is no consistent baseline data among the projects in the sample that would allow consistent application of such an approach. We will return to this issue below (section 8. *Evaluation of Area Development Projects – a proposal*).

7.1. Review of projects

7.1.1. Poverty objectives
There is a wide variation among the reviewed programmes with respect to poverty reduction objectives and poverty focus. None of the projects, however, can be considered to have poverty reduction as a main and clearly stated objective. Some programmes, e.g., LAMP and HESAWA, were initiated before Sida's renewed policy focus on poverty and do not have any explicit poverty reduction objectives. The effects of project activities on poverty can in these cases at best be inferred in a very vague manner. In LAMP, as observed by the Sida Follow-up Team, through the assumption

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[14] Stefan Molund, Evaluation of regional development projects in the perspective of sustainable poverty reduction: points for discussion, Sida/UTV, March 13, 2000

that its focus on natural resources and on areas that are inhabited also by resource-poor groups, may benefit the poor and that programme resources are accessible to them. HESAWA's overriding goal is to improve the health and the welfare of the rural population through improved health, sanitation, water supply and provision of low cost technologies at village, ward and district levels, but these activities are not directed to any specific categories of the rural population.

The Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) programme aims to gradually alleviate poverty through enhancing social and economic development in general, and through the provision of social and economic infrastructure in particular. In initial planning for the programme a number of detailed studies were conducted of relevance for the challenge of linking this objective to concrete activities. These studies have had limited impact on subsequent programming. Many components lack explicit causal assumptions regarding the relationship between these broader objectives and expected impact on poverty reduction. Whilst the objectives of some components, particularly credit, emphasise poverty reduction more than the main documents, most component plans make no mention of poverty, vulnerability or overall programme targeting. In other words, there are few explicit links mentioned between the proposed activities and desired impact on the ultimate target groups.

In the MRDP programme poverty is mentioned in terms of targeting with the statement that:

> "The ultimate beneficiary of the MRDP is the *poorer section of the farming population in the programme area* who rely upon upland farming systems." The primary emphasis of MRDP is institutional development, thus "The primary and direct target group of the Pro-gramme is the *staff of the MARD (*Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)*, province authorities, DARD at all levels, village institutions and other involved organisations* responsible for and involved in its implementation." (italics in original documents).[15]

This primary emphasis is generally referred to as "methods development and capacity building". In some respects this label is a misnomer, as it implies mere inputs of new methodological models/ fixes and training. In reality, MRDP has striven to influence the norms and values of the staff of the institutions involved and the political structures in which they operate through critical reflection on the future of rural development in Vietnam. This is a far more complex process than might be assumed by looking at "methods development and capacity building", and is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural setting in the programme area. Though not explicitly stated, MRDP has focused strong attention on influencing the prevailing "policy narratives" of Vietnamese rural development with respect to poverty reduction.

More recent documents (1998 Annual Progress Report) make somewhat more specific mention of poverty objectives. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of clarity in the programme of how the objectives will eventually impact on poor households. Different reviews have proposed far stronger and more explicit poverty reduction objectives for the next phase.[16] It is yet unclear how these recommendations have been received within MARD. On the whole, one can discern two distinct percep-tions of how poverty objectives are to be anchored, through institutional development and directly through the services that the project finances. There is no clear consensus regarding the nature of the trade-offs between these two approaches within MRDP.

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[15] Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme 1996–2000, Main Programme Document.

[16] Michael Flint, Nguyen Xuan Nguyen, Review of Objectives, Monitoring and Policies, 1999, Rick Davies, Lasse Krantz, A Study of Perceptions and Responses to Poverty within the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme, 1999.

The overall goal of RESP III is to contribute to socio-economic development of rural Bangladesh and one of its specific objectives is to achieve a substantial increase in income and empowerment of the rural poor. Institution building has been a prominent means to achieve this objective. The programme has worked hard to fulfil various sub-objectives (infrastructure development, micro-finance, institutional development), which may or may not serve the rural poor. According to the 1998 comprehensive evaluation of RESP, it is difficult to argue that RESP's provision of rural infrastructure is a poverty focused approach per se, since the programme has, by and large, not used poverty criteria for beneficiary selection.

As beneficiaries, the poor are likely to benefit from infrastructure investments in line with their overall position in the society. Potential positive social and economic impact of some of these investments (markets, small-scale water schemes) has also to a large extent been negated by poor operation and maintenance. RESP's infrastructure development programme has focused mainly on road improvement, whereas water development continues to be the area of highest potential sustainable economic benefits for the poor.

PROANDES in Bolivia was conceived as a program that would alleviate poverty through the delivery of basic services. Its general objective is promoting and delivering basic services that will enhance the survival, development and protection of *campesino* children and women, and contribute to alleviating and changing the conditions of poverty as indicated by a reduction in maternal and child mortality.

In the CARERE/SEILA programme poverty reduction is not an immediate but a longer-term development objective. Through decentralised governance, the programme aims to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and spread of peace in Cambodia by strengthening the bonds linking civil society to the structures of the state and empowering the Cambodian rural population to become a fully participating member in the development process. The original development objective of CARERE gave primacy to poverty alleviation, seeing the spread of peace as a consequence of addressing poverty. The revised objective places the achievements of poverty alleviation and the spread of peace on equal footing, seeing both as important.

The means of achieving poverty reduction and peace consist of strengthening the bonds linking civil society to the structures of the state and empowering the Cambodian rural population to become fully participating members in the development process. The revised development objective emphasises that the implementation of a decentralised governance system is the primary means of achieving poverty alleviation and peace. According to the Strategic Evaluation 2000, none of the immediate objectives in the project document are directly relevant to poverty alleviation and it can be doubted that CARERE has made a significant direct contribution to poverty alleviation also on the grounds that neither the scope nor the nature of services delivered by the programme suggest a significant impact.

The general conclusion, resulting from the review of project documents, monitoring reports, evaluations and special studies, is that the poverty focus of these area development projects is vague. Poverty reduction when stated as an objective is a long-term and unspecified goal and the links between goal or objectives and means (e.g. project components and activities) are unclear and unspecified. Different versions of implicit "trickle-down" thinking predominate as a substitute for more specific and critical analysis and assessment of the mediating links between project activities, outputs and outcomes.

7.1.2. Poverty targeting

The mechanism most frequently used for reaching the poor is area targeting, building on the assumption that by selecting areas for implementation of project activities that are generally considered to be poor or marginal a certain focus on poor groups will be achieved. This may or may not be true and the outcome of such targeting generally depends on a series of additional intervening factors. Area targeting can only be accepted as an initial approximation which needs to be followed up and refined through more explicit poverty assessment and targeting. This is so because social and economic stratification is a dimension that runs through different levels (e.g. national, regional, local) and geographical areas of a society. Local communities or areas considered to be poor and marginal are generally no less stratified than large cities or central, economically dynamic areas. The social and ethnic relationships and mechanisms that produce and reproduce poverty, and the systems of rules and norms that define the character of governance and policies in a society are not restricted to geographical or other areas, they permeate and affect the society as a whole.

The HESAWA programme, as observed in the 1996 evaluation, does not specifically target poor categories in the districts where it operates. All the inhabitants are supposed to be able to benefit from the programme. It has been suggested that during the remaining part of the programme the best performing districts should be identified, to concentrate funding on districts where there will be a good return on investment. This approach is understandable given the limited time left for the programme to operate. It does not, however, take into account Sida's current focus on poverty reduction and may imply a trade-off between economic rate of return and sustainability considerations on the one hand, and poverty targeting on the other. A similar trade-off may be at hand in the case of HESAWA's latrinisation programme where one of three approaches to entry is to begin with "early acceptors who are more influential or affluent". A third trade-off has to do with cost sharing, contributions and willingness to pay by participating communities, crucial for sustainability and maintenance in the long run. The flipside of this coin is that higher demands on consumer contributions and financing may drive poorer families to unsafe water sources.

LAMP is geographically targeted at four districts distinguished by remoteness and marginalisation with respect to infrastructure, markets and attention by donors and government. The target group is defined in terms of occupation, as land users at the village level or crop cultivators, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists. The secondary target group consists of village level organisations, district councils and selected NGOs that are assisting rural communities. The pastoralist (maasai) population has not been specifically targeted, but constitutes the most vulnerable category in some of the districts and is also a key category with regard to land security. According to the Formative Evaluation 2000 and the Follow-up Team Report, Supplement on Poverty Issues 1999, LAMP and its land security component seem to have been particularly deficient, however, in its support to the pastoralists. The lack of awareness about social and ethnic differences and stratification and the fact that LAMP districts are inhabited by groups and individuals that are likely to experience very different levels of poverty and livelihood situations thus leads to a lack of recognition of the needs, problems and opportunities of poor individuals and groups.

A mixed approach to area poverty targeting has been taken in the Amhara programme in Ethiopia. The programme operates in two zones, one of which was specifically chosen for its poverty and vulnerability to drought. In this zone, initial target districts have been chosen on the basis of poverty criteria. In the better-off zone, no such targeting has been done. The reasons for this are unclear, but appear to be due to local political decisions and the desire to show quick results. Within the credit, and to some extent the gender component, clear beneficiary criteria, such as land ownership have been established. Otherwise, there is little attempt to specify target groups within the geo-

graphical areas chosen. Project stakeholders frequently dismiss targeting concerns, expressing the view that "everybody is poor" in the programme areas.

The overall MRDP project area has been chosen due to its poverty. Furthermore, MRDP has striven to shift emphasis to the more isolated higher areas, largely as a mechanism to reach poorer strata of the population. This desire to shift to poorer geographical areas has not always been followed in practice. The reasons for this are unclear, but can be presumed to be due to factors of convenience and political choices. Some programme documents explicitly reject targeting within the chosen villages, calling for development of these communities as a whole. In practice, the choice of programme participants is based on household interest and "capacity". It appears that this often means that the technology chooses the participants, as the poorest farmers lack resources and interest in applying the "models" that the programme promotes through subsidised inputs and credit.

Within the chosen geographic areas, the issue of targeting comes into conflict with the emphasis on participation and local ownership. When the poor choose not to participate, the "project" (i.e., outside forces) cannot intervene without upsetting local priorities. Similarly, the "black box" of local power relationships, within which poverty is anchored, has not been an issue that the project has deemed feasible or desirable to engage in changing.

Beyond these issues, a major aspect of poverty targeting within MRDP is through striving to focus on ethnic minority communities, which are generally poorer than others. Again, however, it sometimes seems that the ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) within these communities benefit more from the programme due to their technological preferences, language abilities (few extension agents speak minority languages) and resources. There has been no effort to link gender issues to the question of poverty targeting. This is an issue, which has been extensively criticised.

RESP activities are geographically focused on five districts in the Greater Faridpur Area and this programme is exceptional among the reviewed projects in the sense that it has a primary target group defined on criteria beyond vague area targeting. RESP's target group is "men and women of landless households who depend on manual labour as their main source of income and do not own more than 0.5 acres of functional land". Its secondary target group consists of small and marginal traders, transport operators, craftsmen, etc. Although no specific poverty targeting has characterized the provision of infrastructure as such, some significant innovations in the context of the programme, such as the Labour Contracting Societies directly targeting (temporary, unskilled, low wage) employment to the poor, can be considered as a contribution to poverty reduction approaches. The innovative element of LCS is their emphasis on social change, modifying to some extent the power structure in rural areas and the exploitative practices by the rural elite. Earth road maintenance and roadside tree plantations, developed and encouraged under RESP, are other forms of innovations in employment creation for the poor. The innovation lies in job creation often of longer duration at a low cost. However, as pointed out in the 1998 evaluation, the programme has not been able to reach the "hard core poor" in Bangladesh.

PROANDES is one of three area-based programs within UNICEF-Bolivia. It has concentrated its efforts in very poor provinces of Northern Potosí and Southern Cochabamba. Northern Potosí is an extremely poor (95 percent of households have unsatisfied basic needs and 53.2 percent are extremely poor) highland area with scarce resources and a declining mining sector. Mainly traditionally organised indigenous peoples inhabit it. Municipal governments are extremely weak and the NGO presence is low. Institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank imply that parts of the region are not economically viable and therefore steady out-migration should be both accepted, and indeed supported. It has been argued that the most effective development strategy in

such a context is to *invest in people rather than the place*, i.e., prioritise human capital formation, especially among children.

Southern Cochabamba is also a poor (93.4 percent of households have unsatisfied basic needs), primarily agricultural region, but more geographically differentiated with potentially fertile lower land offering more cultivation options. Few *ayllus* and traditional leaders remain and the area is more influenced by dominant mestizo and urban culture than Northern Potosí. The potential return to productive investment is higher here than in Northern Potosí. These areas thus share a high level of poverty, but besides poverty they have different characteristics and are not poor in exactly the same way. According the 1997 External Evaluation, these differences influence constraints and possibilities of PROANDES and suggest the need for a regionally differentiated strategy.

In Northern Potosí, for instance, the child development project and other project interventions are not functioning primarily because of public sector weakness and because the investments in infrastructure have not been accompanied by support to social organisation, community mobilisation and integration with other appropriate programme components. Conversely, in Southern Cochabamba the projects have been performing well because the presence and support from a counterpart NGO has fostered the social mobilisation necessary for effective community control of the project and has helped to link it to other elements of PROANDES work in these communities.

CARERE is being implemented in five provinces and works with villages where the entire population, poor as well as more affluent is included. The various objectives and systematic ambitions to cover broad areas allow only limited attention to special cases and categories such as the poorest. Effective targeting of the most needy strata demands time and resources, something that is considered to detract from other CARERE priorities. The UNDP mid-term evaluation notes, however, that the Local Planning Process and PRA methodology have not always been applied when identifying participants and beneficiaries. For instance, the selection of beneficiaries for the Minimum Package Agricultural Support Programme was often done by the village chief, and the planning and selection of package done at the provincial level. Although the programme was explicitly intended for the very poorest to increase food security among other things, the result was that villagers with at least a minimum of resources and land, whom had a better chance of benefiting from the programme, were selected.

As noted by the Sida Advisory Team Review, June 1999, the Local Planning Process does not necessarily allow participation of the poor, because a high level of poverty is an obvious constraint to participation. Project plans and forms in the Local Planning Process require a certain degree of education and resources, which the poorest strata often lack. Within the villages, selection is made through the wealth ranking method that is included as a part of LPP. Both inter and intra village selection tools are inexact and subject to manipulation. The programme will from year 2000 cover a larger share of the poor communities in the five provinces. With the expansion of the programme, the criteria for selecting new communes are 1) poverty and 2) to achieve coverage of a whole district. Previously, also the security criteria in commune selection put limitations on reaching the very poor.

7.1.3. Sustainability

As has been observed in the 1992 and 1996 evaluations, one of the main problems of the HESAWA programme has to do with the sustainability of programme activities and achievements after the phase out of the Swedish funding (80–90 percent). To improve the prospects of sustainability is the main objective of HESAWA's phase IV, where most activities have been focused on such improvement of the programme, in line with major recommendations of the 1992 and 1996 evalua-

tions. One of HESAWA's greatest problems is that the post-construction phases at village level have not been properly thought through. There is no support structure that can facilitate and support sustainability in phased out villages. District councils are having an important role in the programme but district councils have very limited financial resources. Serious financial constraints are also characteristic of the central government, something that implies that the ability of Tanzania to replicate or cover the recurrent costs of the programme institutions after the phase out of financial aid must be regarded as low. The legal ownership of facilities and water rights is still not resolved and this also constitutes a sustainability risk for the programme.

The sustainability potential of water and sanitation installations is, however, regarded as relatively good after the end of the programme, provided that key issues such as the distribution and costs of spare parts can be solved. During the remaining years the programme has been advised to prioritise rehabilitation over new construction. The establishment of a rehabilitation fund has been recommended, which would be used only for rehabilitation of water supply and institutional sanitation facilities. In sum, the two main potential barriers to sustainability of HESAWA interventions are weak user commitment to sustainability and poor availability of affordable spare parts for purchase by users. As we have seen above, there are also different trade-offs to be made by the programme related to conflicts that may emerge between sustainability and poverty reduction ambitions.

The Mid-Term Review Team 2000 has recommended that, during the last two years of the programme, resources should be focused on the best performing districts and not wasted on poorly performing districts. By doing this, communities where the users lack commitment to improved water facilities and unwillingness to contribute financially are being penalised. Yet, the real reason for low commitment may be that such districts suffer from untrustworthy district authorities and that the promotion of the HESAWA concept has been less successful in these areas.

In the long-term the LAMP programme is expected to become financially sustainable through increased local revenues generated as a result of programme activities (improved natural resource management and capacity building for local government and administration). Part of the potential surpluses from improved taxation and revenue collection would then be allocated to improve social service, education and infrastructure. In relation to the above discussion on poverty objectives and targeting, also this project idea is vague, long-term and to a certain extent represents a trickle-down, linear conception of development and poverty reduction. The Formative Evaluation 2000 of LAMP asserts that the view of the links between activities and outcomes of the programme tends to assume, without any further discussion, equal opportunities and fair distribution of benefits from project activities.

Some initial effects on revenue collection were obtained, mainly through training activities. Nevertheless, the increased revenue could not match the annual cost of programme activities and after an initial period collected amounts are beginning to level off in several districts. The increased incomes from taxation, thus, do not seem to be sustainable. Even if such incomes would have been collected at a sustainable level an important targeting problem remains, since in the end (as should have been expected) the better-off categories of the rural population have been able to avoid taxation, in turn increasing taxation pressures on lower income categories that have taxable incomes.

Another main sustainability problem, noted by the Formative Evaluation and the Follow-up Team, is that none of the key LAMP actors (government institutions, Sida, Swedish embassy) seems to have taken the lead or demonstrated genuine ownership, dialogue or partnership in the course of project implementation. Weak and discontinuous programme management at the ministry due to frequent personnel changes, and passive project management at the embassy has created a vacuum

only partially filled by the consultancy firm and its local support offices. The high level programme leadership (ministry, embassy) has, according to the Formative Evaluation, demonstrated inability to deal with sensitive and difficult issues such as unaccounted spending and land tenure issues, and has avoided confronting sensitive matters.

The Follow-up Team concludes that there is still a long way to go to attain national ownership of development programmes and processes in Tanzania where most donors continue to be driven by pressures to disburse funds. To improve sustainability prospects Sida has been advised to take a more active role in the partnership dialogue with the programme. Having noted this, the team also suggests that true sustainability may not be dependent upon external finance, but on the success of the communities and individual natural resource users in influencing their neighbours to adopt improved and profitable practices in the management of farm, grass and forest land. The team also expresses repeated concerns about the shift in focus from natural resources management to general capacity building among elected district leaders and departmental heads, in areas that are only remotely related to the natural resource management objective. Such a shift has obvious implications for the relevance of LAMP from the perspective of the natural resource users, including the poor.

It is also important to note that one of the key suggestions of the recent LAMP Formative Evaluation mission, is to shift the programme focus from primarily natural resource management to *empowerment* and *mobilisation* processes for sustainable natural resource management at the village level. This involves supporting, deepening and expanding ongoing processes (forestry, wildlife) rather than initiating new activities, and suggests concentrating on production (community based sustainable harvesting), environment (protection, rehabilitation of forests and wildlife, conservation of agricultural land) and rights (land security, village legal workers, by-laws, gender). This will enhance the likelihood of sustainability and increase the potential to reach the poor and disadvantaged in the next phase. This has been a recurrent theme in various monitoring and evaluation reports from other programmes as well (e.g., PROANDES and RESP).

The Amhara National Regional State programme has been influenced by the earlier Community Empowerment Project, CEP, wherein bypass structures created serious distrust at all levels of the bureaucracy. It was clear to all stakeholders, when planning the ANRS programme that the current programme must address this issue by being entirely integrated into existing structures.

As a result, institutional ownership in the programme is strong, and, apart from some questionable operational roles of the consultants (e.g., reporting, lack of counterparts, etc.) the potential for institutional sustainability can in some respects be perceived as good if considered separately from resource flows and recurrent costs. Although the Regional government has taken a strong stance in minimising the use of external consultant support, capital resource flows from Sida are an essential aspect of the programme. Discussions of if and when local revenues will be able to replace these inputs have begun, but have been inconclusive. Available governmental revenues have shrunk considerably in recent years due to the conflict while at the same time there is no locally anchored discussion of "sustainable" staffing levels for most departments, and with that an expanded role for the private sector and civil society.

In the Amhara context the key issue is thus "What is it that is to be sustained?" Programme activities are so thoroughly integrated into existing structures that the "Programme" has relatively little identity beyond the individual components. Another key factor is related to the character of the partner government and its policies. Like in Vietnam, the Ethiopian government has a clear faith in a strong and *operational* role for the state in rural service provision. Ambitious plans exist for expanding the bureaucracy, particularly in extension and other agricultural and food security related

services. Some components clearly run the danger of encouraging the pre-existing disposition to establish or enlarge unsustainable State institutions. Although Sida has raised these concerns (especially regarding plans to establish an agricultural college), and the Supervision teams have placed special emphasis on these themes, there is no "meeting of minds" between the Regional government and Sida on these issues. In sum, "programme sustainability" is not a major issue. The question is rather how the programme contributes to (or detracts from) the sustainability of existing institutions.

The question of trade-offs related to poverty focus and sustainability has mostly emerged in relation to the credit component. Since this is the programme's only clear-cut direct tool for poverty alleviation, pressures have emerged to target the "poorest of the poor" in increasingly isolated areas, which has conflicted with objectives to place ACSI, the institution responsible, on a firm financial footing. The recurrent costs of providing services to the poorest of the poor in the most isolated areas are high. In this project (as in others) different actors in Stockholm and in country have had differing perceptions of the poverty alleviation versus sustainability trade-offs in micro-finance.

MRDP in Vietnam has relied upon existing governmental structures (primarily extension) in a consistent manner, and has thus in some respects taken institutional sustainability seriously. By doing so, however, it has not brought in the heavy level of consultant support that would (perhaps) stimulate a radical change in attitudes towards poverty alleviation among governmental staff. This has also limited the programme's capacity to introduce more extensive targeting measures, as this would inevitably require far more intense contacts at village level. In this respect, sustainability has been addressed by accepting and working within the bureaucracy's inherent limitations to a large extent.

A major aspect of the MRDP programme is subsidisation of inputs. As in any subsidisation scheme, this becomes a central sustainability issue. Since reduction of subsidies has greatest impact on the poor, a conflict between poverty alleviation and sustainability objectives is unavoidable. Much of the advice that the programme has received has failed to face this challenge head on. There are recommendations to decrease subsidisation of fertilisers and pesticides, paired with advice to increase the level of extension advice and target credit to the poorest.[17] The net result, however, is the same in terms of institutional sustainability, or lack thereof. Revenue and finance issues in subsidised service provision, be they inputs, credit or advice, have not been analysed in a broad perspective. There is an extensive and growing body of knowledge available internationally regarding financing and sustainability of extension and other agricultural services that has not been referred to in discussions of how to increase the focus on poverty in MRDP. There are no easy answers to these questions, but it is essential that information regarding failure to reach the poor not be used to as an excuse to ignore the other side of the coin.

The programme has aimed to promote more pluralistic approaches to service provision by encouraging the engagement of non-state actors. The very limited presence of such actors in the project area, and the prevailing faith in governmental service provision, has limited these efforts considerably. There is a long way to go. The beginnings of a discourse on these objectives have, however, begun to emerge.

Another aspect of pluralism and sustainability that the project has effectively captured is that of adapting methodologies to prevailing provincial, district and village capacities, goals and perspectives. By accepting such variation, the project has increased sustainability by unavoidably also

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[17] Rick Davies, Lasse Krantz, A Study of Perceptions and Responses to Poverty within the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme, 1999, David Gibbon, Nguyen Thi Yen, A Study of Extension and Applied Research Models Applied by the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme 1997–2000, 1999.

accepting the "rules of the game" within the local power structure. Reaching out to the "poorest of the poor" is often not a major objective of these actors, again leading inevitably to trade-offs between sustainability and poverty targeting.

Most reviews of MRDP[18] tend to juxtapose the sustainability of programme service delivery mechanisms against the sustainability of programme impact on the poor. The ultimate choices faced by the programme are far more multifaceted than this would imply. Vietnam is currently undergoing a broad process of reassessing the role of the state and its responsibility for ensuring equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. This reassessment has proceeded at different speeds and in different directions in different parts of the country. The programme will inevitably have to deal with the trade-offs that will (and should) emerge regarding competing objectives. Analyses of this process should not fall into a rut of assuming that it is the "programme" that must decide between two alternatives. Inevitably this is an issue for the Vietnamese State to consider. Using an eventual area development study as an input into discussions related to sector-wide approaches may be a way of looking beyond narrow and false dichotomies.

The RESP programme in Bangladesh was initiated in 1986 and preceded in 1981 by the Intensive Rural Works Programme. The present RESP III is a phase out stage of Sida programme funding. According to the Project Description, the sustainability of present project interventions is to be ensured through more complete assimilation of programme activities into the Bangladeshi implementing institutions (mainly Local Government Engineering Department and Bangladesh Rural Development Board). These institutions and other government staff are gradually taking over responsibilities from current technical assistance staff. In the long-term perspective target groups and local communities are expected to be assertive enough to approach commercial banks, institutions, NGOs or government in order to receive commercial and social services. The government and Sida have agreed on delegation of responsibilities to the implementing agencies, leaving the Programme Coordinating Unit to perform core functions of programme coordination.

The issue of sustainability, clearly stated as an objective in all programme documents has, however, been left to the very end. Over the years there have also been conflicting messages from Sida and from its Advisory Team, the former emphasising phase out by 2000 and the latter giving indications of prolongation in various areas. The latest evaluation, 1998, of the programme clearly suggests that the donor bears the heaviest responsibility for introducing measures to promote sustainability. A major reason for this is that various key stakeholders (e.g. the government, implementing consultants) naturally have vested interests in continued sponsorship, which only the supplier of funds can orchestrate.

The same evaluation thus recommends that donors should make sustainability and phase out an integral goal at every stage of a programme and make clear what these mean to the various stakeholders. It furthermore questions the very conception of sustainability with regard to public sector institutions under the conditions prevailing in many developing country administrations. In resource-poor and aid-dependent environments it is unrealistic to expect that public sector institutions will become self-financing and non-corrupt in the near future. Sustainability issues cannot be solved by a "project". Donors will continue to play a pivotal role in the sustainability of any activities initiated and the institutions will continue to show instances of corruption (which is sustainability

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[18] Michael Flint, Nguyen Xuan Nguyen, Review of Objectives, Monitoring and Policies, 1999, Rick Davies, Lasse Krantz, A Study of Perceptions and Responses to Poverty within the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme, 1999, David Gibbon, Nguyen Thi Yen, A Study of Extension and Applied Research Models Applied by the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme 1997–2000, 1999.

depleting). The example of the Local Government Engineering Department shows that a managed dependency on donors combined with performance orientation (concern with the quality of output rather than with the level of corruption per se) should be seen as goals, which will serve institutional sustainability.

The poor phase out preparation in RESP casts a shadow over a programme with some notable achievements and overall good performance. Maintaining staying power, but not skating over important points flagged in evaluations, and which might slow the momentum of the programme for a time is one balance to attain in the promotion of sustainability. Having the conviction to continue sometimes in the face of tough criticism, but not allowing disbursement pressures and time limits to destroy the need for learning, change and process orientation is another. The natural interests of all the stakeholders in a long-term programme with a successful reputation like IRWP/RESP will work against the attainment of such balances, and it is up to the donor to orchestrate them to achieve the best possible outcome for sustainable development.

The most sustainable impacts of PROANDES, according to the External Evaluation 1997, are those involving the creation of "human capital" (investment in human knowledge and capacity) and "social capital" (investment in community mobilisation and the creation of networks, values and civic organisations). Were PROANDES to withdraw now some services would continue to be delivered, albeit at a reduced level. In some cases this reflects the capacity that PROANDES has built, but in most cases it is due to capacities that already existed (e.g., the national health and education systems, etc.). The most important point to be made regarding sustainability, however, is that in almost all of the municipalities in PROANDES' area of operation, the capacity to deliver, manage and finance these services still does not exist.

The structure of the programme is very complex, according to UNICEF due to a combination of donor and government demands on cooperation with UNICEF over time. There is a risk that this broad and diverse programme is spreading efforts too thin, especially geographically, and that the staff is overloaded with work on donor-oriented project proposals and reports, taking their time away from activities such as thorough planning and monitoring of activities in cooperation with central and local government counterparts. With reference to what could be perceived as the "soul" of the project, it aimed initially to follow a basic primary health care strategy, focusing on education, community mobilisation, and linking community (traditional) and formal health care systems. Yet, since 1993 it has focused on supporting the National Health System in Bolivia through a series of conventional health care activities and inputs. This focus has distracted it from synergies with other PROANDES programme components and objectives, such as the re-legitimisation and recovery of indigenous practices, the integrated delivery of services and women's empowerment. Different projects have developed their own conceptions of approaches to development and experience suggests that a service based approach to poverty alleviation in Northern Potosí and Southern Cochabamba has not been effective.

The external evaluation mission (September 1997) therefore recommended that PROANDES redefine itself as a *human development programme* focused on the formation of social capital and promoting the quality of life of women and children through: (i) fostering community mobilisation, (ii) strengthening the capacities of women and children and (iii) scaling up its experience via public policy. PROANDES should thus concentrate on local associations for literacy and training (*Yuyay Jap'ina*) as a vehicle for community mobilisation, women's empowerment and capacity building; water, sanitation and hygiene training, as interventions that both save time for women and have a direct impact on women and child health; child development (*wawa wasis*) as investment in the capacities of young children; village banks as mechanisms for women's economic empowerment

and of improved family nutrition; small scale irrigation as a means of community mobilisation. Sequentially, interventions would begin with water and *Yuyay Jap'ina* to stimulate trust and community mobilisation. Subsequently, village banks, *wawa wasis* and irrigation would be based on this mobilisation.

This redefinition also implies greater geographical concentration of PROANDES work. The universe of where to work would be defined by the communities in which *Yuyay Jap'ina* is or has worked. Other implications are that PROANDES should reduce its target population and shift from six projects to three programs: Women, Child and Community Mobilisation, Water, Hygiene and Community Development, and Municipal Capacity Building. Within UNICEF-Bolivia, PROANDES would be understood as a project "adding value" to UNICEF's national programs and generating innovations for scaling up via public policy. This structure should also be more decentralised than at present, allowing greater field presence, knowledge of counterparts, and of the performance of PROANDES' activities in the field, and stronger links between PROANDES and its government counterparts.

An exit strategy for fostering sustainability must involve far more attention to strengthening civic organisations. This building and strengthening of social capital can be done primarily through continuing and strengthening local organisations such as *Yuyay Jap'ina*, municipal governments and the links between civil society and government institutions. PROANDES must also improve its links to prefectural and central government in order that they endorse and scale up innovations that derive from the program.

The Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project, CARERE2, supports the national government in its efforts to decentralise planning, financing and implementation of integrated rural development. It also supports the creation and operationalization of SEILA, (a rural development policy) and the SEILA Task Force. SEILA did not originally have status as national policy for rural development. Various alternative models existed, supported by different donors. As from mid-2000, however, SEILA was adopted as the model for the whole country. The SEILA Task Force, recently created by the government, is a step in the direction of harmonising these models and enhancing the partnership between the reformed government and the civil society. But CARERE2 is also an area development project for capacity building at local and provincial level, comprehending in addition a reconciliation and an investment component (rural roads, dams, forestry, irrigation, schools, health clinics, etc.). The core ambition of the programme is to build a bottom-up approach to needs assessment and local planning, combined with capacity building at local and provincial levels, and financial support to local development projects.

During the first two years of the programme a model for coordinated planning and development of communes and provinces has been created. Through many experiments SEILA has developed a whole system of methods and procedures that collectively represent a proven model for decentralised planning and development that is highly relevant to ongoing government reforms for democracy and governance. Presently, the programme is in a phase of consolidation and transference of this system to the Cambodian counterparts at national, provincial and local levels.

The point of departure for the financial sustainability of CARERE2 is the fact that virtually the whole Cambodian public investment budget is financed through aid. This situation is not likely to change in the course of the next few years for which reason the program will be dependent on external financial support for the remaining period. The Cambodian government has done what can possibly be expected under the circumstances in terms of financial support. About 15 percent cost sharing is mobilised at the village level, but resource mobilisation in a short- and mid-term

perspective remains a serious problem that will extend into a potential new phase of the programme.

Another crucial sustainability issue is to what extent provincial and local capacity for decentralised rural development can be transferred and survive at the time of programme phase out. In this context, the Strategic Evaluation 2000 recommends that steps should be taken to institutionalise CARERE's functions within the governmental structure and ensure that all future donor funding of SEILA should be channelled through government structures.

The Strategic Evaluation furthermore makes a distinction between CARERE as a *concept* and CARERE as a *programme*. Replicating the programme in other provinces is mainly about replicating it as a concept, changing minds and attitudes in line with basic principles of good governance and democracy. But the programme concept risks getting lost if it is pushed too fast into new provinces. CARERE/SEILA as a programme faces an immediate risk of disruption if CARERE support staff leaves and if their jobs are not secured while preparations for the next phase are made. Human resources are viewed as a key resource of the programme and a precondition for its sustainability.

Given the process character of programme objectives and implementation, also donor sustainability is a critical requirement. Although the programme up to now has shown tangible results, the institutions, systems and structures that have evolved are still vulnerable, and changes in social norms and attitudes is a process that calls for long-term and continuous presence of change agents.

7.1.4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

As we have noted above (section 6), learning from experience is essential in complex and changing projects and settings. A precondition for learning and adaptation is the existence of structures, organisations and channels for monitoring and evaluation, which constitute the vital links of interaction and communication between different levels and actors of a project.

Monitoring is usually defined as the *continuous* assessment of project implementation in relation to agreed schedules, and of the use of inputs, infrastructure, and services by project beneficiaries. Monitoring provides managers and other stakeholders with permanent feedback on implementation and identifies actual or potential successes and problems as early as possible to facilitate timely adjustments. Evaluation is the periodic assessment of a project's expected (and unexpected) relevance, performance, efficiency, and impact in relation to stated objectives.

Traditional monitoring and evaluation have involved primarily the perspective of a few key stakeholders such as donors, project management, and host government institutions. Along with a call for more comprehensive approaches to monitoring and evaluation (involving analysis of objectives, means, settings or contexts), new perspectives and participants in monitoring and evaluation have increasingly been incorporated through "participatory monitoring and evaluation".[19] Comprehensive, "fourth generation" and participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation[20] are obviously essential to projects adopting a process or learning and innovation approach and some of the reviewed programmes have introduced participatory methods for planning, monitoring and evaluation. These procedures and systems, however, are mostly limited to local or subproject level and suffer from lack of integration and feedback channels to regional and national levels and to the project as a whole.

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[19] Marisol Estrella, John Gaventa, Who counts reality? Participatory monitoring and evaluation, a review of the literature, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, 1998, Marisol Estrella et al., Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, 2000.

[20] Egon G. Guba, Yvonna S. Lincoln, Fourth Generation Evaluation, Sage, Newbury Park, London, 1989.

From the review of the programme sample emerges a generally dismal picture of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and, consequently, of the programmes' capacity to learn from experience and best (or worst) practice. Apparently, this situation extends beyond the programme level and also characterises the monitoring, evaluation and learning relationships connecting or disconnecting donor, embassies, implementation consultants, supervision teams and host country governments. More than constituting a coherent *system* for interaction, assessment, adaptation and learning the elements, key actors and links involved tend to be disconnected, apparently performing a series of ad hoc tasks and activities without clear objectives and direction.

All programmes (except to some extent PROANDES and CARERE implemented by UNICEF and UNDP respectively) have in common a formal system for monitoring and evaluation consisting of some sort of monitoring and evaluation system at the programme level, which is linked to Sida, the Swedish embassy and the host government through quarterly and annual review or planning meetings. In addition, Sida contracts supervision, follow up or monitoring teams that conduct monitoring on a more iterative basis generally through annual missions. External evaluations and special ad hoc studies are carried out periodically and constitute a complement to the components mentioned above.

Apparently, this system is not functioning well. The review of the area development projects included in the sample leaves the impression that neither the individual parts of the system nor the links and dynamics between the parts are performing adequately. There is also considerable evidence demonstrating that this system disregards or is particularly weak concerning the learning aspect of monitoring and evaluation.

Logical framework analysis that should constitute the conceptual point of departure and backbone for further monitoring, evaluation and learning from experience, seems to be a donor-driven and formal exercise in most of the projects. In HESAWA, due to the fact that Sida had not introduced log frame analysis when HESAWA was initiated, this planning instrument was only included in the course of the programme and has never really taken off. In LAMP, log frame analysis has been applied at subproject level, but in a very detailed and cumbersome way, and has not had much impact on overall project management, monitoring and decision-making.

The LAMP Follow-up Team reports that the design and application of the present log frame format for planning and reporting does not encourage a dialogue with the intended beneficiaries of the programme, nor does it provide a benchmark for impact assessment. The CARERE programme was also initially planned and designed without the log frame instrument. In the amendment to the project document presented in October 1998 a new logical framework for the project was presented to replace the partial log frame presented in the original project proposal.

In the Amhara and PROANDES programmes log frame analyses do exist, but are in many cases incomplete (i.e., devoid of targets or levels above outputs or activities). Quality varies, but is often very poor. In ANRS national actors clearly view the log frame as irrelevant. There is no apparent effort to use log frame analysis as an internal tool for monitoring, evaluation or learning. The poor quality of the documents makes them unusable by external monitors.

In MRDP and RESP the quality of the log frame analysis is relatively good but it does not seem to have entered into a thorough analysis of the causal relationships between activities and goals. It appears that not in any of the cases reviewed is logical framework analysis used as a day-to-day instrument for planning and management decision-making throughout the project cycle.

With respect to information, monitoring and evaluation systems at programme level, in some cases (e.g., RESP, MRDP) ambitious attempts have been made and significant attention has been paid to the establishment of such systems. Nevertheless, these attempts share some fundamental features and weaknesses with the rest of the programme sample. These systems thus tend to put emphasis on progress or output, often in physical terms in relation to targets, at the expense of quality of performance, outcomes and relevance in relation to programme objectives. Additionally, poor data collection and a strong tendency toward aggregation of data work against contextual understanding and perception of important trends and patterns in the data. As a result, most of the reviewed monitoring systems have been unable to produce useable reports on cumulative implementation progress as well as on more specific and contextually determined phenomena or problems.

One reason for the dysfunctional character of the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems at project level is related to the ownership of these systems, and to different or contradictory perceptions among key actors about objectives, character and crucial requirements related to such systems. In some instances the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system is regarded largely as a donor-driven and formal requirement for funding. In many cases implementing bureaucracies traditionally tend to see themselves as primarily a mechanism for delivery of instructions and inputs to the rural areas. Incoming information and data are perceived exclusively as a tool for planning of input deliveries and not as a tool for reflection on impact and the effectiveness of the system.

In such contexts, monitoring and evaluation of quality and outcomes, especially participatory monitoring and learning, is not an obvious priority. Many of the incongruities within the reviewed systems seem to stem from the different inherent assumptions (or lack of assumptions) by different actors regarding the role of monitoring, evaluation and learning in the context of development projects.

One example of the lack of impact of efforts to reform monitoring and evaluation procedures is the Amhara programme. Considerable support has been provided to the Bureau of Planning and Economic Development, intended to develop their monitoring capacity in general, with improved monitoring of the Amhara programme as an indirect benefit. A major "baseline" study was initiated, but at the end of the first phase this study was still not complete and was not being used as a basis for monitoring or planning of phase two. An elaborate and mechanistic new regional planning system was prepared, but has also not resulted in any concrete mechanisms being put into place.

A monitoring and evaluation system, as well as baselines, are missing altogether in the PROANDES programme, making it impossible to learn from experience and to assess in more direct ways the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of project activities. The Strategic Evaluation 2000 of the CARERE programme considers its monitoring and evaluation system as perhaps the weakest and least sustainable programme element. As in several of the other reviewed programmes, massive amounts of data and reports are generated but much of it is of limited use for management and learning purposes. There is hardly any monitoring of processes and impacts or analysis of the data. The evaluation mission recommended that the system should focus more on what is needed for management purposes and stressed the importance, for learning purposes, of documenting less successful experiences and the lessons drawn from these. Sida's Advisory Team concludes that CARERE's monitoring and evaluation staff as well as that of the Planning Department are still looking for a role and an understanding of what monitoring and evaluation is s all about.

The effects of Sida's monitoring, advisory or supervision teams can, as a general conclusion, be regarded a limited. The approach to monitoring and supervision varies among the teams the majority taking a more process, quality, and analytical stance; while fewer teams represent a more traditional quantitative and output oriented approach. Even if some of these teams have done an

excellent job their conclusions and recommendations, when not entirely neglected, have only been taken into account and acted upon to a very limited extent. The LAMP case is significant as regards the general lack of clarity on the role of the Follow-up Team among all programme stakeholders. This team is to report to the Swedish embassy, which should report at annual review meetings for decision-making. According to the conclusions of the Formative Evaluation, however, the embassy staff has not fulfilled this role and therefore a lot of insightful analyses and sound recommendations from the team have been hanging in the air.

In the Amhara programme context the reports of the supervision teams have been highly controversial. So much so that the composition of the team needed to be changed at one point as a result. The findings of the teams regarding poverty and vulnerability have not had a major impact on programme thinking, nor have criticisms of the internal monitoring and learning systems within the programme.

The lack of a systemic approach to applying the advice of different monitoring and evaluation activities stems from poor integration of efforts and lack of consensus among major stakeholders (Sida, embassies, host ministries, implementing consultants, supervision teams, etc.) regarding the role of these inputs in the learning process. This presents three challenges to any broader meta-evaluation initiative to bring together these efforts:

· The entire process may be dismissed as redundant and irrelevant due to assessment fatigue.

· The unsystematic nature of prevailing processes rules out a systematic meta-review.

· Disagreement regarding what are the essential issues may result in lack of ownership of many components.

In sum, any broad evaluation of area development projects runs the risk of itself being part of the fundamental problem of poor learning systems, rather than a solution. The following proposal aims to address this through a "demand-driven" methodology that relates cases to those overarching strategic issues that key actors themselves deem to be contextually relevant.

8. Evaluation of Area Development Projects – a proposal

8.1. Notes on method

An important question concerning the evaluability of the present sample of area development projects refers to the feasibility of conducting more strict quantitative impact evaluation of these projects. To determine what can be done in terms of quantitative impact evaluation, we will therefore briefly review the data and technical requirements that have to be fulfilled according to the rules of this approach, and how the monitoring and evaluation systems and databases of the projects meet these requirements.

One of the main conclusions from the project review is that the monitoring and evaluation systems of the projects are very weak and in some instances virtually non-existent. In some projects attempts to collect baseline information have been made, but the quality of baseline data is very uncertain and most likely low. There are no indications in the documents of, for example, establishment of (randomly assigned) "treatment" and control groups in connection with baseline or other data. The character of the monitoring and evaluation systems and the absence or low quality of

baselines thus renders quantitative approaches impact evaluation, difficult and in many cases impossible.

It should be added that even if good baselines and controls did exist the complex nature of area development projects (different project settings, components and activities, and operations which affect both national, regional and local levels) would still constrain comparisons and measurements according to the rules of quantitative evaluation methods. To enable comparisons and measurement of effects or impacts this approach requires establishment of "treatment" and "control" groups, that are respectively affected and not affected by the project, but are virtually identical with respect to all other characteristics or variables. A critical assumption that has to be made in this approach is that the two groups really *are* identical on all characteristics with the exception of the project intervention. Under this assumption the control group allows assessment of "what would have happened in the absence of the project". Measurement of outcomes or impacts of project activities on the treatment group compared to the same variables for the control group gives, according to this logic, the project impact. In practice most such measurements are so-called cross-sectional designs conducted only before and after (*ex ante-ex post*) a project intervention.

The ideal quantitative evaluation approach is to measure outcomes or impacts through longitudinal studies involving panel data (i.e., various measurements throughout the project, and years after project completion to perceive impact) collected on randomly assigned treatment and control groups. Longitudinal panel studies, however, are both very expensive and awkward to carry out in practice, and randomisation is impossible in most field situations. Attrition, self-selection etc., in the course of a project tends to contaminate and bias the originally selected groups, and random assignment involves exclusion of some randomly assigned individuals or categories from potential project benefits.

Random assignment may also be problematic for ethical reasons (e.g. health, nutrition projects), and is not popular among power holders keen to distribute benefits according to political or electoral criteria. It is also difficult to reconcile with participatory approaches where "self-selection" of project participants is a basic and democratic principle. This approach is therefore extremely rare in evaluation of development projects.

So-called quasi-experimental designs, which do not involve randomisation, are even more problematic. The validity of any such design is open to questioning because the open and constantly changing nature of social systems makes it virtually impossible to control for effects of intervening unobserved variables and to create convincing control groups. Causal links and relationships cannot be taken for granted in dynamic social systems since, for example, one and the same event may be due to different causes and may have alternative plausible explanations.

Less sophisticated non-experimental designs, such as the cross-sectional survey are in an even weaker position with respect to validity. Analyses of cross-sectional survey data primarily establish simple associations and correlation among variables, not causality. To establish causal relationships among variables in a cross-sectional study it has to be demonstrated:

1. that there is a relationship among the variables concerned (that they are not independent of each other); 2. that the relationship is non-spurious; 3. that a temporal order has been established to the assembly of variables. Designs like the cross-sectional survey entail the collection of data at one single point in time. In consequence, the temporal order has to be imputed and this introduces an intuitive component in the analysis of such data.[21]

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[21] Alan Bryman, Quantity and Quality in Social Research, Unwin, Hyman, London, 1988.

In practice, the logic of quantitative impact evaluation probably serves best as a heuristic device guiding less sophisticated and more practically feasible approaches which do not necessarily build exclusively on the probability reasoning characteristic of quantitative impact evaluation. A comparative evaluation of area development projects could take as a point of departure complementary or alternative conceptions of comparability, attribution, etc., which are not entirely based on the logic of probability. To arrive at a systematic selection of "units of investigation" and to satisfy the need for some sense of comparability, issues or problem areas of general significance and strategic importance (e.g., poverty reduction, sustainability, learning) can be used as the organizing criterion or principle for selection of appropriate projects (or components, geographical areas, project phases, etc.).

To determine the extent to which the quantitative approach to impact evaluation might be applied, further and more careful exploration of the quality and consistency of existing quantitative project data sources (e.g., monitoring and evaluation systems, baseline data, data bases, surveys and special studies) needs to be made. Our cursory review of such sources indicates, however, that the basis for application of the quantitative evaluation approach is very weak. The quantitative approach nevertheless remains an option that should be applied to the extent allowed by available data sources. New data gathering through cross-sectional surveys applying reflexive, generic or shadow controls (see below) could also be considered as a means to assess impact. New software packages for "lighter" versions of such surveys have made them less cumbersome and demanding in terms of time and resources than traditional sample surveys.[22]

In light of the poor basis for application of more orthodox versions of quantitative impact evaluation alternative approaches should be considered. As a complement to, or when necessary as a substitute for the quantitative approach, a comparative evaluation of area development projects should explore alternative approaches to conventional impact evaluation. One such approach which is likely to fit well into Sida's evaluation purposes and the restrictions in terms of available data mentioned above, is the so-called "theory based evaluation" approach.[23] The purposes of comparisons and evaluation in this context do not exclusively imply to determine the impact of a project intervention according to the logic of probability, but rather to analyse:

> The "project narratives" i.e., the set of beliefs, assumptions and implicit hypotheses that underlie the project and make involved stakeholders believe that it will work or enables them to explain why it has worked or not worked. The emphasis is placed on how different stakeholders make sense of poverty reduction and sustainability objectives within their various roles as bureaucrats, consultants, politicians or village leaders. One variation of this approach, theory based evaluation, involves making explicit, through interviews and dialogue with key people involved with the project, its underlying assumptions and the sequence of steps that these people believe will take place to achieve desired results. The next step is to assess the practical outcome of these "theory hypotheses" and steps.

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[22] A useful example of light approaches to data collection and processing of survey data is the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire, CWIQ, developed jointly by the World Bank with UNDP and UNICEF. A presentation of the CWIQ can be found at the World Bank web page, Statistics in Africa, http://www4.worldbank.org/afr/stats/cwiq.htm.

[23] Carol H. Weiss, Theory-Based Evaluation: Theories of Change for Poverty Reduction Programs, in Evaluation and Poverty Reduction: Proceedings from a World Bank Conference, (eds.) Osvaldo Feinstein, Robert Picciotto, Operations Evaluation Department, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2000, and, Johanna D. Birckmayer, Carol H. Weiss, Theory-Based Evaluation in Practice, What do we learn? Evaluation Review, Vol.24, No.4, August, 2000. For a broad discussion of this and similar approaches see, New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Vol.1., Concepts, Methods and Contexts, (eds.) James P. Connell, Anne K. Kubitsch, Lisbeth B. Schorr, Carol H. Weiss., The Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C., 1995, Vol.2., Theory, Measurement, and Analysis, (eds.) Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Anne, C. Kubitsch, James P. Connell, The Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C., 1998.

This will enable the evaluator to tell where the project theory broke down in practice, to indicate why the project has worked or to determine the extent to which unplanned effects occur. Several or none of the theories may turn out to be working and it is recommended to choose one or two assumptions for intensive examination, e.g., the most central and the most problematic.[24]

This approach is not situated too far from conventional impact evaluation in terms of objectives. The basic purpose is to determine the results, effects or impact of given project activities including unforeseen and unintended consequences, and taking into account intervening factors which may influence outcomes. An important difference is that theory based evaluation dedicates more efforts to assess the varying perceptions of project actors and stakeholders regarding project goals and means as well as the relationships between goals and means, as a basis for determining and understanding outcome or impact.

Another alternative but complementary approach is more associated with monitoring and implementation at an operational level. It consists of identifying, analysing and assessing recurrent patterns and experiences in relation to different aspects of implementation, operation and project management. Such analysis of practices, procedures and processes in constitutes the basis for gradual learning, modification and improvement and this is what makes the approach useful not only for monitoring but also for evaluation purposes. The point of departure is:

Best and worst practice, with respect to a certain project phase, component, area, procedure or technique. Identification of what is considered among people involved in a project as good or best practice concerning any or various of the abovementioned fields or topics. When best practices have been identified and assessed, they can be compared within a programme or across selected programmes. Comparisons may involve current as against best or worst practice, actual versus target performance, or the features and expected outcomes of innovations, new designs or procedures. Best practices, in this context, constitute the point of departure for continuous, progressively expanded comparisons and "benchmarking" across similar, comparable groups, settings, activities or procedures. Such disciplined comparisons allow project participants and collaborators to rank performance and achievement of outcomes and also to continuously revise their mutual goals and the organizational means by which they tend to realise them.[25]

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[24] To illustrate the meaning of "theories of change" or "theory-based evaluation" Weiss offers the following example: small class size for students is promoted in the early grades of school. The expectation is that they will learn more. What is the theory? Presumably, the theory is that with fewer students the teacher will pay more attention to each child. With more attention, each child will get instruction that is better suited to her own style of learning, or perhaps simply more instruction. Or children will have more opportunity to ask questions, and getting answers to their individual questions will help them learn. Another possible theory is that the teacher will feel less hassled and more relaxed and so will establish warmer relationships with the children. With warmer personal relationships, children will like the teacher and try to please him, and so do better work. Or another assumption might be that the overall climate of the classroom will be less noisy and distracting. Or perhaps the teacher will spend more time on planning lessons, reflecting on his experience, and trying new pedagogical techniques. These are all reasonable theories. But instead of evaluating the reduction in class size by looking only at children's achievement scores at the end, the evaluator examines some of these intermediate links: Do teachers spend more time with individual children? Do children raise more questions? Do teachers feel more relaxed? Do they establish warmer relationships with the students? Do they try new teaching methods? The evaluation collects data to see whether these intermediate steps actually take place.

[25] Charles Sabel, Intelligible Differences: On Deliberate Strategy and the Exploration of Possibility in Economic Life, paper presented to the 36th Annual Meeting of the Società Italiana degli Economisti, October 20–21, 1995, Columbia Law School, 1995.

"Before-after" comparisons in the context of this approach can still be made, on the basis of so-called *reflexive*, *generic* or *shadow* controls. Reflexive controls involve that groups who receive or are affected by an intervention are compared to themselves before and after the intervention. Generic controls are comparisons of the impact of project activities on beneficiaries compared with established norms about typical changes occurring as a result of such activities. Shadow controls are judgments of experts, program staff and/or participants on what is ordinarily to be expected as a result of an intervention, confronted with actual outcomes.

8.2. Point of departure

At the outset of designing a major evaluation of area development projects it is essential to clarify where the study will lead, and what its value will be to the actors who will use the results. The evaluation will need to be positioned within a continuum between, on the one hand, improving the internal design of the projects themselves, and on the other, reconsidering the role of these projects in the radically changing context of development cooperation in the perspective of globalisation, sector-wide approaches and declining aid flows. Any evaluation must take into account both ends of the spectrum. Some projects operate as enclaves, and with respect to the latter questions would thus mainly offer empirical material to analyse the characteristics, problems and limitations associated with such restricted approaches. Some are already being discussed within the broader perspectives just mentioned. The internal approach of each project and the national discourse in which it is embedded will be influential in determining how to situate such an evaluation. It is essential to ensure consensus within Sida and any other relevant actors regarding where the overall emphasis should lie.

This review has shown that a consensus does not exist within Sida regarding the nature of the "soul" of area development projects or which "theories of change" or "project narratives" should lead policy formation. One factor, which contributes to explaining this apparent lack of clarity, is that objectives, design and history of development projects are also influenced by factors beyond "pure" planning and implementation processes. Project concepts and models (e.g., Land Reform in the 1960's, Integrated Rural Development in the 1970's, Structural Adjustment and Social Funds in the 1980's, Comprehensive Development Framework, Sector-wide approaches and Sustainable Livelihoods in the end of the 1990's) are frequently launched and promoted internationally by international and bilateral agencies.

The origin and development of project ideas and projects are also the result of a political process among key stakeholders at the development agency and government level and the history of formal and informal relations, commitments and vested interests within and between these stakeholder groups with respect to development cooperation. An analysis of the operation and effects of these forces and trends would be an important task. They constitute an essential part of the overall project context and have obvious implications for most evaluations (cf. end of section 6. Learning).

Some of the reviewed projects see the strengthening of central level institutions and increased awareness of the overall context of rural development as a support function to obtain better results in field level implementation. Other projects see field level activities as a methodological testing ground or reality check for a process that ultimately concentrates on the strengthening of institutional capacity of both direct counterpart institutions and those community institutions that shall be empowered to demand relevant services and accountability from government, the private sector, farmer organisations, etc.

Many projects offer no explicit prioritisation or hierarchy of these objectives, resulting in a "have one's cake and eat it too" approach which in turn creates confusion and frustration when monitoring and evaluation teams assess projects based on assumptions that may not be shared by key actors in the field. There is a high degree of ambiguity, and a major objective of the evaluation should be to obtain a greater degree of clarity and strategic direction regarding what area development projects are expected to achieve. This can only be done if the central trade-offs between sustainability and poverty alleviation objectives, and the political processes in which these trade-offs are managed, are analysed in a frank and transparent manner.

The following diagram illustrates how such a structure would work:

	MRDP	LAMP	ANRS	Etc.
Thematic study A	X	X		
Thematic study B		X	X	
Thematic study C	X		X	
Thematic study D			X	

Each thematic study will include three crosscutting issues, poverty, sustainability and learning. These issues will provide the basis for the overall synthesis review. The following are short summaries of three proposed thematic studies. This list is by no means exhaustive, but reflects what appear to be among the most relevant themes for the projects in question. The final choice of studies should be made through a participatory inventory of existing programmes. Desk officers, supervision/monitoring teams and other key host country actors should be asked what they perceive to be the most relevant issues for the projects that they are involved in, and for which they feel a comparative analysis with other Sida projects would provide significant added value.

A crosscutting challenge within all the studies will be to anchor analyses within an understanding of prevailing economic and political power structures. Most area development projects display what must be seen as a rather naïve perspective on the prospects for participation and empowerment of the poor while operating within the institutional power structures that accept or even generate that poverty. Evaluations of these projects repeatedly point out that the gap between rhetoric and reality regarding participation by the poor is tremendous. Nonetheless, this is an issue that is rarely acted upon due to the political implications involved. Institutional learning regarding issues of power and participation in area development projects can only be described as dismal. These thematic studies should provide an empirical basis for considering the underlying challenges of adopting a rights based approach to development cooperation by bringing to fore the social and political implications of a consistent and informed commitment to democratisation and justice.

8.2.1. Thematic Study A
Integration: What has become of integration after integrated rural development?
In a very general sense "integration" in the context of integrated rural or area development projects can be regarded as the selection, design and implementation of mutually supporting activities contributing to solve a particular problem or set of problems. This requires consideration of the spatial distribution of activities (e.g., area development to create a critical mass), the temporal distribution of activities (e.g., sequential combination of activities or components where one step/ activity is linked to a previous or subsequent step, and the distribution of effects of the activities on

individuals, households or groups (e.g., different forms of targeting).[26] Both the "old" integrated rural development programmes and "new" area development projects can be viewed in relation to the above definition and requirements since both project generations attempt to meet such requirements.

The new generation of area development projects is in many respects defined as being different from the older integrated rural development programmes. A changed approach to integration is at the heart of what is "new", since the older projects often failed due to the complex and non-viable bypass mechanisms used for achieving integration. While the new initiatives are defined by what they aren't, there is no consensus on what they *are* with respect to integration and the requirements mentioned above. It is essential to gather experience of the emerging lessons regarding integration after integrated rural development projects.

Integration should be looked at from two interlocking perspectives. First, how are components planned, implemented and coordinated to ensure coherence, dialogue and synergy? In old programmes this was accomplished through (bypass) planning and management mechanisms. In the new projects, such integration is ostensibly driven by ownership and anchoring in existing host country coordination mechanisms. Does this really happen, or do disbursement pressures and the overall nature of the aid relationship inevitably still lead to a slide toward bypass solutions?

The second issue related to integration is the question of how the poor rural villager ultimately integrates the array of services and institutional relationships that he or she needs and values? If support to poor people's own livelihood strategies is the ultimate objective, it is *their* integration that matters. The old projects stressed the *supply* of services and institutional relationships, whereas the new projects at least ostensibly claim to apply participatory approaches that are intended to be more *demand driven*. Given that these projects are still essentially based on supply of resources, it may be asked whether such a paradigm shift has actually occurred.

Poverty
Poor people need integration more than rich people. Earlier efforts with participatory methodologies, as well as this review of area development projects, have shown that the poor are often excluded from elaborate planning processes due to an inability to invest their time in coordinating access to credit, input packages, etc. Participatory techniques have not proven to be a panacea. This social exclusion relates to their more general lack of resources, connections and influence. An actor oriented analysis of the strategies that different social groups use in arranging their own integration (including access to credit, political influence, etc.) could be compared with how the project attempts to mount a holistic approach to poverty alleviation.

Such an analysis would also provide an improved understanding of how area development projects inter-relate to decentralisation processes. The empowerment of local government may provide new openings for poor villagers to draw down an integrated structure of support. It may, however, solidify local power structures that exclude the poor. The impact of decentralisation on the ability of poor people themselves to overcome social exclusion is a major factor in judging the impact of area development projects.

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[26] Lars-Erik Birgegård, Experiences with IRD Projects in Sri Lanka, internal working paper, RD Analysis Section, International Rural Development Centre, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, March 1987.

Sustainability

Many of the new generation of area development projects seek to ensure greater sustainability in integration by strengthening and working through governmental planning and coordination structures. Integration of the Sida financed project effectively becomes a part of an overall process of improved integration within the counterpart institutions. There are indications that, although in the long-term this may be appropriate, in the short and mid-term a vacuum may exist at the top. Sufficient capacity may not exist to absorb all the intended capacity building. For the institution being strengthened, the Sida financed project may be just one small project among many. It is important to put Sida's attempts to achieve integration within a perspective of how collaborating bureaucracies and bureaucrats adapt to the broader political economy of development cooperation.

Learning

The lack of clarity regarding the nature of integration in the new projects sometimes results in a lack of awareness among actors on the ground regarding the experience of other components. For them, the Sida-financed project may appear to be a mere jumble of disconnected initiatives. A greater understanding is needed of how this issue is intended to be addressed and how this actually works in practice. A number of questions could be raised. Are there missed opportunities for synergy through joint learning, or are integration efforts an unnecessary inconvenience that can very well be managed at the level of the planning departments? Do attempts to institute management information systems within area development projects constitute unsustainable bypass structures that weaken multi-sectoral learning? Might sector-wide approaches aggravate these problems if learning within a sector is strengthened at the cost of less attention being given to learning across sectors? What is the relationship between efforts to obtain integration within the project, to efforts to establish coordination and integration with other public and aid financed initiatives?

Possible Projects to Review

This is such an overarching issue that virtually all projects should find this study to be relevant. Particular focus should be made to understand how integration functions in the projects with a very broad geographical spread (Ethiopia, Cambodia and Vietnam), and also in any countries where consideration is being given to establishing an agricultural sector-wide approach (SWap).

8.2.2. Thematic Study B
Where do security, vulnerability and livelihood diversification fit in?

In many projects there is lack of clarity regarding what characteristics of poverty are to be addressed, i.e., whether the poor should be empowered and obtain access to market opportunities, or whether the objective is to reduce their vulnerability to shocks to their livelihoods and destitution. To use current World Bank terminology (World Bank Development Report 2000–2001), the former refers to three forms of poverty reduction: opportunity, empowerment and security (in the Swedish government report *The Rights of the Poor* this is referred to as opportunity, capacity and security).[27] In many of the locations of Sida projects enhanced security is probably the major objective for the majority of the poor (e.g., Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Cambodia, etc.) in light of prevailing political volatility and high risk of natural disasters. There is, however, generally no clear Sida policy on this issue, and a recent review of Sida documents has noted that the issue of security is often ignored.[28] There may be tendencies toward a two-track approach, whereby the modestly

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[27] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, De fattigas rätt, vårt gemensamma ansvar, (The Rights of the Poor, our common responsibility), Swedish government report, 1996/97:169.

[28] Lennart Peck, Charlotta Widmark. Sida Documents in a Poverty Perspective, A review of how poverty is addressed in Sida's country strategy papers, assessment memoranda and evaluations, Sida Studies in Evaluation 00/2, Stockholm, 2000.

better off are assisted to enter the market and thereby "escape" from poverty, whereas less sustainable safety nets are proposed for "vulnerable groups". The ultimate question is rarely addressed of how to reduce the insecurity of poor groups (who perhaps need safety nets) while striving toward sustainability.

With globalisation, former assumptions about the inherent viability of small farming households are coming into question. Studies using sustainable livelihood approaches are showing that rural people have realised this for some time, and have actively struggled to diversify their livelihood strategies accordingly, combining farming with micro-enterprise, wage labour, etc. An increasing proportion of rural inhabitants have left farming entirely. Despite this, many area development projects have clung to a belief that individual "yeoman" farmers, entirely focused on agricultural production, are the basic vanguard of rural development. Where economic diversification is supported, these components are often weak and peripheral to the main project, as in Ethiopia. Migration and wage labour are often perceived of as "problems" to be "solved", rather than important components in new livelihood strategies worthy of support and encouragement. PROANDES and Northern Potosí are very clear examples of this in our sample.

Poverty
One of the most striking findings of this review has been the lack of consensus on (and sometimes the lack of interest in) defining what poverty is and what is meant by its "reduction". Many projects present an assortment of unprioritised goals regarding growth, technological advancement, household food security, national food security, etc. A first step in assessing project performance would be to systematically review what these objectives are, how they have emerged, and which stakeholders actually take them seriously. Based on this, it will be possible to then better grasp the underlying question of how the norms and values of key actors are related to project priorities and performance.

Sustainability
Sustainability can be achieved in different ways. Economic and productive growth can generate surpluses, and reduced risk can increase the viability of credit programmes and villagers willingness to invest their own resources in technological change. Older assumptions that subsistence production was a lower risk strategy than commercialisation are often no longer valid in many rural economies. The mantras of globalisation suggest that the least sustainable and most vulnerable strategies are those based on reinforcement of traditional livelihoods and avoidance of change. Such hypotheses demand verification, and an understanding of the changing nature of vulnerability, related to the ability of area development projects to support such changes is a basis for redefining objectives related to asset accumulation and vulnerability.

Learning
By charting the differences and complementarities between poverty reduction and vulnerability reduction objectives, the groundwork can be laid for clearer and more constructive systems of monitoring and evaluation. A basis will be found for dialogue on the various national objectives, Sida objectives and the norms and values of key institutions in the field. Traditional aggregate impact assessment measures (e.g., increase in production of staple crops) may actually work against efforts to understand and support the dynamic and diversified strategies that poor people increasingly apply to reduce risk. A review of the implicit priorities embedded in the information systems developed within the different projects may be highly revealing regarding how the projects are steered toward asset accumulation and vulnerability reduction objectives respectively.

Possible projects to review:
Insecurity and vulnerability are particularly central issues in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Cambodia and Bolivia. Some contrasts could be made between those projects where diversification (including migration) are clear trends, with areas where humanitarian assistance has been used to address crisis situations, such as in Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

8.2.3 Thematic Study C
Implementation versus institutional development: where is the project's soul?

There is an ambiguous relationship in many of the current projects between the two objectives of activities focused directly on the target group and indirect efforts through institutional development (often referred to as methods development and capacity building). This is an area where there is a great need for increased clarity in Sida area development objectives and practice. Are area development projects structures for channelling aid and (eventual national) resources to poor people, or are they about influencing the knowledge, capacities, norms and values of host country institutions, with the intention that improved governance will eventually lead to an environment wherein poverty is alleviated and vulnerability is reduced?

There is potential for developing comparative analyses regarding how competing objectives are addressed. With regard to micro-finance, for example, it is likely that sustainability is best served by strengthening national level institutions and avoiding the proliferation of small and perhaps amateurish projects. At the same time, area development projects often need to ensure access to capital for "their" beneficiaries in a limited geographical area. An international review of how the institutional sustainability versus access to capital question is handled in different contexts could be useful in finding new approaches to this common dilemma in area development practice.

Poverty
What is measurable and within how long of a time frame if institutional development is the central theme of a project? Should a project aim to establish totally new systems and structures for more poverty-oriented services on the assumption that institutions will eventually learn and follow good examples? Or should all efforts be based within the reform process in existing institutions to ensure ownership over the "process"? If the former is chosen, are we in danger of repeating the past mistakes of integrated rural development? If the latter is chosen, might we end up unintentionally sustaining inappropriate institutions that lack commitment to poverty reduction? This review has shown that these are questions that are rarely confronted in current practice.

Sustainability
If implementation is chosen as the prime objective of a project, it is essential to include a two-pronged strategy to monitor the progress of sustainability. First is to examine the sustainability of the specific services and activities being provided. Second is to determine the level of ownership for these activities within the host institutions. The first factor requires micro-level and perhaps relatively technical approaches. The latter includes an analysis of the policy environment, norms and values of the organisations and the individuals within them, as well as the political context in which priorities are chosen.

In many projects there is a need to relate the internal discourse on subsidisation to the broader international discourse around financial viability and public goods in service provision. While looking at projects from the perspective of these international trends, it is at the same time important to identify when faddish panacea's have been applied without critical monitoring and analyses (e.g., "basing extension in a farmer organisation will ensure sustainability", "the poor can afford to cover the full cost of services", or "a PRA will ensure ownership, so that the community will then

take care of everything"). A matrix comparison of these issues could be made looking at similar services in different projects and different services in the same project. In many cases very different discourses have emerged in health, education, extension and rural finance. The opportunities for cross fertilisation of ideas between projects and sectors are great.

Learning
Many projects include rather vague assumptions that someone will eventually learn from and replicate the project elsewhere. What are the different implications of this learning process in the two alternatives, implementation and institutional development? The former provides concrete and visible examples, whilst the latter (hopefully) relies on greater ownership. What are the trade-offs and synergies in combining these two approaches? Are there ready strategies to link these two forms of learning, or are these "after-the-project" objectives merely vague aspirations?

Possible Projects to Review
MRDP is an example of a project where one can observe a clear division of different perspectives on implementation versus institutional development. Also in PROANDES and LAMP strengthening of institutions is an important objective. The various projects with micro-finance components (MRDP, ANRS, RESP, CARERE) could provide an interesting comparative sample.

8.3. Next Steps

An initiative of this kind implies a large commitment from various Sida departments, above all Sida-NATUR. In order to develop a sense of ownership for the evaluation it is essential to first appoint a project contact-point within Sida-NATUR, and investigate possible ways to anchor the study with Sida's other initiatives related to institutional development and poverty reduction since there are large potential synergies.

A full departmental meeting at Sida-NATUR, with key staff from other departments as well, should be held. The overall concept of the study should be presented, together with the "menu" of strategic thematic studies. Desk officers will then be given an opportunity to choose which of the options above would be relevant for the projects for which they are responsible, and which would benefit from exchange of experience with other Sida projects. Other thematic studies should also be considered. Ideally, each strategic thematic study should cover 2–5 projects.

As part of the study, representatives of host country institutions should be given an opportunity to visit the other projects being reviewed. Their insights into the comparisons being made would provide valuable input into the study, and their involvement would enhance ownership of the eventual results.

The current lack of baseline data and broad contextual analyses of these programmes will create a major burden for any eventual evaluation team. The geographical, sectoral and socio-cultural variations in the study require a major undertaking. The following are two suggestions for how the proposed evaluation could be implemented. The first constitutes a relatively traditional consultancy team approach requiring a comparatively modest (though still quite considerable) investment. The other is a larger research team effort that would take a longer period, but would result in a more empirically grounded product, and even serve to better anchor the study in the broader Swedish and international discourses on rural development.

The first option would require a team of five to seven consultants, of whom two to three would visit each participating programme and perform the thematic studies directly. In effect, the consultants would cover much of the same ground as earlier evaluations and reviews, but seek to (re)-

analyse prevailing discourses on poverty, sustainability and learning within a different conceptual and theoretical context. Given the number and variety of projects to be visited, fieldwork would inevitably largely focus on "ground truthing" of the preliminary hypotheses included in this review, and efforts to further develop the relevant issues that have been raised in earlier studies.

The limitation to such a process is that it would be unrealistic to expect such a consultant team to fill the broad empirical gaps in understanding the underlying contexts of power, participation and the local discourses on trade-offs between sustainability and poverty reduction. Such a consultancy team structure would highlight and compare the issues raised in this review based on the views of national and a small selection of local stakeholders. A consultancy team of this type would not be able to draw definitive conclusions regarding the micro-politics that frame area development initiatives, nor be able to accurately present the perspectives of the ultimate beneficiaries of these projects.

The second option would be to contract a larger team led by two senior evaluators, assisted by a support group of development researchers and a team of junior field researchers. The latter would presumably be doctoral and younger post-doctoral researchers at selected Swedish and host country university institutions. The field researchers would, under the supervision of the two senior re-searchers, be given the task of gathering the empirical material necessary to develop the thematic studies within an understanding of these local contexts and the perspectives of the poor. During visits by the senior researchers, these field studies would be anchored in national level discussions. The support group would contribute to the final synthesis study and would provide other advisory support in countries and topics where they have particular relevant experience (e.g., sector-wide approaches or sustainable livelihoods methodologies). This support group would presumably be drawn from other Nordic (e.g., Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, Institute of Development Studies, Helsinki) and international (e.g., ODI, IDS Sussex) institutions.

Such a structure would require a longer time frame and be more expensive than the first option, but would also serve a broader purpose. It would both fill the gaps in our empirical understanding of the processes underway in area development programmes and also would help to anchor this analysis of area development projects in an international discourse on the future of aid more generally. This latter object is important given the fact that overcoming the myopia of area development thinking is one of the essential underlying objectives of such an evaluation. It is essential that these individual projects be analysed within a far broader context than that which is commonly addressed in conventional evaluation.

Appendix 1

Overview of Reviewed Sida Area Development Projects

Project	Project description	Organisation	Period	Sida inputs	Evaluations	Department
RESP, Rural Employment Sector Programme, Phase III, Bangladesh	Rural development in two districts. Distinct poverty reduction profile particularly in one of the components. Gender is also considered. According to the Assessment Memo the project provides a pattern model for poverty reduction in Bangladesh.	Four components: employment (capacity building, empowerment, (mobilisation of local resources), infrastructure (roads), institution development in local departments and authorities. Cofinancing with NORAD in earlier stage. Other donors are active in the sector.	The present phase, 1996-2000, is the phase-out of a programme initiated in 1981.	MSEK 210 + MSEK 40, a concessionary credit for the present phase.	RESP, Bangladesh, *Sida Evaluation 98/29*, vol. 1-2, Lindahl, et al., Evaluation 1989, Nigel Hawkesworth; RESP-Bangladesh, Women in RESP II, Raka Rashid 1990; Evaluation of the IRWP in Bangladesh, Lis Garval, 1986. A final evaluation will, according to the Assessment Memo, possibly be conducted during the year 2000.	NATUR, INEC, ASIEN
UNICEF Social Development Programme, Bolivia	Sida support to integrated rural development component, bilingual primary schools and health education. The target group includes a large proportion of indigenous peoples. Poverty reduction profile. Participatory approach.	UNICEF's programme consists of 12 subprojects covering 120 of Bolivia's 311 municipalities. Sida participates in only three of the subprojects. UNICEF is responsible for the current contacts with Bolivian authorities. Sida receives annual programme reports and interacts with programme stakeholder during annual programme reviews.	Present Sida support refers to 1999-2001. Sida support was initiated in 1989.	1989-1999: MSEK 112,5. 1999-2001: MSEK 55.	The present support will be evaluated in 2001. Sida has previously evaluated the support to bilingual education, Hyltenstam, Quick 1996, water and sanitation, Boman, Essner, and support to PROANDES integrated rural development programme, Bebbington, 1997. Two other relevant studies are: David Booth, Empowering the Poor through Institutional Reform? An initial appraisal of the Bolivian experience, 1996, and Stefan de Vylder, 1989, UN Development Assistance to Bolivia.	DESO, RELA
Rural Development Programme in Amhara Regional State, (ANRS), Ethiopia,	Support to rural development project in Amhara National Regional State. The project should support sustainable growth of agriculture in a region where the whole population is considered to be poor, but where considerable intra-regional differences in poverty seem to exist.	Strengthening of the local administration from community to provincial level. Elements of popular participation in planning and implementation. According to project documents process thinking should characterize the project.	Start 1997. Swedish support to rural development in Ethiopia, however, goes back to the 1960's and the CADU project.	1997–2000: MSEK 196	An evaluation may be conducted during the fall 2000. Thorough follow-ups in 1998 and 1999. An observation of the 1999 follow-up was that the project lacks a distinct poverty focus. The 1997 Assessment Memo foresees difficulties in reconciling the growth objective with the poverty reduction objective. According to the insats-pm Sida has suggested that an "impact research" component be linked to the programme. Both Swedish and Ethiopian researchers will participate in this project component.	NATUR, AFRA

Project	Project description	Organisation	Period	Sida inputs	Evaluations	Department
Cambodia Area and Regeneration Project, (CARERE2), through UNDP.	Poverty reduction in five provinces and 500 villages through locally identified projects. The rural population shall get access to credits and labour through subprojects. The programme is intended to promote popular participation in local administration. Project funds are managed by a trust fund. Various donors support the project. 65% of project funds are according to estimates allocated to expatriate consultants.	The immediate target group are government officials and elected representatives of village committees, but also NGOs and private enterprises. According to the Assessment Memo it may be difficult to reach the poorest. Also the popular ownership of the project is problematic. The Assessment Memo stresses the experimental character of the programme and its importance for the development of new knowledge. The programme has a monitoring and evaluation unit.	Swedish support to rural development in Cambodia through UNDP since 1993.	1996-1998: MSEK: 80 1993-1994: MSEK 50.	CARERE has according to the NATUR desk officer been assessed each year by Sida's Advisory Team. Also Sida's internal auditors have examined the project. A more comprehensive UNDP evaluation is underway. A background study, Developing rural Cambodia: a background study for proposed Swedish development cooperation with Cambodia, has been made by Samuel Egerö Sida, 1996	NATUR; ASIEN
Local Land Management of Natural Resources in Tanzania, LAMP	Programme in four districts supporting sustainable growth of production in livestock raising, agriculture and forestry as well as improved access to food, water, staple commodities, social services and infrastructure. Innovative programme for district development according to the Assessment Memo.	Broad popular participation in planning. Process approach. Institution and capacity building at village and district levels. Includes agricultural research and development components.	The programme started in 1995, after thorough planning. The present agreement refers to the 1997-2000 period.	1997-2000: MSEK 130	Havnevik, Rwebangira, Tivell, Land Management Programme in Tanzania, March 2000. LAMP is also discussed in Lindahl, Catterson, The Sustainability Enigma, 1998. Many studies on different aspects of LAMP have been produced over the years.	NATUR, SAREC, AFRA
Rural Water, Health and Sanitation Programme, in Tanzania HESAWA,	The project primarily attempts to improve existing water and sanitation facilities, installation of new, simple water supply systems and improved latrines. The project presupposes active local participation and willingness among users to change traditional attitudes and behaviour. Cooperation with local authorities.	Project aiming to raise the living standard and health in three districts through health education, sanitation and water supply. The local participants as counterpart contributions supply labour and materials. No explicit poverty targeting. According to Sida, however, the project has contributed to increased equality and poverty reduction.	The project was initiated in 1985 and is now in a phase-out stage. According to plans it will be phased out 2002.	MSEK 125 has been accorded for the 1998-2002 period. During the previous four years period MSEK 150 were disbursed.	HESAWA has been evaluated two times, 1992 and 1996. A mid-term review focusing on phase-out and sustainability will be conducted by Hifab and an ex post evaluation will be carried out in 2004, that is two years after the phase out of Sida support. Many studies on different aspects of HESAWA have been produced over the years.	NATUR, AFRA

Project	Project description	Organisation	Period	Sida inputs	Evaluations	Department
Mountain Rural Development Programme (MRDP), Vietnam	Programme supporting poor farmers in five provinces in the highlands of northern Vietnam. The programme should contribute to the re-establishment of green productive uplands managed in a sustainable way by healthy farmers. Project objectives include development, testing and implementation of systems for effective and sustainable agricultural production, institutional support system for agriculture at various levels, creation of policies, recommendations and guidelines for sustainable upland and mountain development.	Officials and staff at national, provincial and district levels are the immediate target group of the programme, but the ultimate intended beneficiary is the poorer section of the farming population in the project area who rely on upland farming systems. Process approach within a ten-years perspective. Includes a strategic research component. No other donors are supporting the programme.	1996-2000 MRDP was preceded by FCP 1991-1995, which in its turn was preceded by the Bai Bang project.	1996-2000: MSEK 145. 28% of the Swedish support is allocated to expatriate advisers.	Evaluation by NATUR is under preparation.	NATUR SAREC

Appendix 2

List of Reviewed Agency and Project Documents

Bangladesh Rural Employment Sector Programme (RESP)

Sida project documents:

Fortsatt stöd till Rural Employment Sector Programme i Bangladesh, NATUR, 1995-240/20.

Fortsatt stöd till Rural Employment Sector Programme RESP III Bangladesh, NATUR, 1995-0240, NATUR, R. Samuelsson, 1996-02-27.

Project Description, Bangladesh Rural Employment Sector Programme, Phase III 1996–2000.

Specific Agreement Between the Government of Sweden and the Government of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh on Rural Employment Sector Support 1996–2000, draft.

Annual Progress Report, 1 July 1998–30 June 1999, Rural Employment Sector Programme III, Programme Coordination Unit, September 1999.

Evaluations, reviews, special studies, etc:

Lindahl, C., Catterson, J., Andersen, R. et al. (1998) The Nordic Funded Rural Employment Sector Programme in Bangladesh, Vol.1, 2, Sida Evaluation 98/29, Department for Natural Resources and the Environment.

Bolivia UNICEF Social development programme

Sida project documents:

Beslut om insatsstöd. 1999-02-25, Diarienr.1998-05106, GD 38/99.

Evaluations, reviews, special studies, etc:

Bebbington, A., Bohman, K., et al (1997) External Evaluation of UNICEF-PROANDES, Bolivia: The Andean Sub-Regional Program of Basic Services Against Poverty, Final Report.

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Appendix 3

Sida/UTV
2000-04-10
Stefan Molund

Terms of reference for an evaluability assessment of an evaluation of the poverty reduction impact and sustainability of area development projects

Background

Sida/UTV's has made a preliminary decision to commission a study of the poverty reduction impact and sustainability of area development projects. As noted in the attached review of a sample of such projects by Gösta Edgren, former head of Sida's Policy Department, the area development model has encountered many problems over the years (Annex 1). A major one is that rural poor have not benefited from such projects as expected; more privileged sections of farmers have frequently captured most of the benefits. Sustainability has also been a serious problem; projects have in many cases created institutional structures and incentives that could not be sustained without external funding.

The study proposed by Sida/UTV will try to find out how problems of poverty reduction and sustainability have been tackled in more recent area development projects as well as in new phases of older projects. It will attempt to answer questions like the following: What are the strategies for poverty reduction and sustainability in area development projects currently supported by Sida? What are the actual and likely results of such projects with regard to sustainable poverty reduction? To what exent and in what respects do new area development projects represent an advance over past projects of the same kind? To what extent have remaining older projects improved their performance over time? Are projects equipped with adequate mechanisms for feedback, learning and adaptation?

Initial Sida responses indicate that a study concerned with such questions would be useful. Before it can be launched, however, an evaluability assessment is required. Directives for such an assessment are given in these terms of reference. Information about the proposed evaluation can be found in annexes 1–3.

Purpose

The purpose of the assignment is to provide Sida/UTV with an evaluability assessment required for an informed decision concerning the design, timing and implementation of a proposed study of the poverty reduction impact and sustainability of area development projects currently supported by Sida.

The assignment

The assignment consists of the following tasks:

1 Review of poverty reduction objectives of sample projects

Some of the proposed projects in annex 3 seem to be more centrally or more explictly concerned with poverty reduction than others. The consultants should describe the poverty reduction objectives of each one of them and assess their importance relative to other, possibly competing, objectives. Are there any projects in the sample that should be excluded from the proposed study on the ground that poverty reduction is not a central project aim?

2 Review of targeting in sample projects

The consultants should make an inventory of targeting in the sample projects. While some of the projects seem not to make any use of targeting beyond that involved in the selection of the project area, others may have been designed to benefit a smaller segment of the project area population, exlusively or primarily.

3 Review of expected and likely poverty reduction impacts

What are the kinds of poverty reduction impacts that the sample projects are intended to produce, and what are the kinds of poverty reduction impacts that an evaluator could expect them to produce (regardless of stated intentions)? How and by what route could they possibly affect the lives of poor people? Dealing with these questions, the consultant should consider the heterogeneity of the project sample as well as the multidimensionality of poverty itself.

4 Review of monitoring and learning mechanisms

What are the mechanisms for monitoring, learning and adjustment within each one of the projects? What kinds of monitoring data do the projects produce? How are monitoring data used for project adjustment? To what extent are project beneficiaries involved in the design and management of project activities?

5 Timing of proposed evaluation in relation to expected project impacts

The consultants should make a project-by-project review of the feasibility of assessing project impacts at this point in time. Must we exclude some of the sample projects on the ground that it is too early to look for impact? Would it be possible to identify early indicators of impact (or lack of impact) in case a study of impact would be premature?

6 Preliminary inventory of existing project information

The consultants should make a preliminary inventory of results information available and likely to be available for each one of the proposed projects. What is known about their povery reduction impact and likely sustainability? Where and how is this information stored?

7 Analysis of the need for and feasibility of further data collection.

For each sample project the consultants should make a preliminary assessment of the *need* for further data collection as well as an assessment of the *feasibility* of further data collection. How could it be done? What would it cost? Would it be worth the effort? Would it be at all possible?

8 Review of attribution problems.

To what extent can attribution problems be solved? What can we say about impact if it is not possible to make an impact analysis that satisfies textbook requirements regarding counterfactuals, base lines, control groups, etc.?

9 Preliminary review of key sustainability issues

What are the key sustainability issues in each project? More specifically, what are the issues most directly relevant to the poverty reduction aims of the projects? What could a deeper study of these issues look like? What kinds of data would it require?

10 Suggestions for revision of project sample.

In case the consultants come to the conclusion that less than six of the sample projects satisfy study requirements, they should try to identify possible replacements. New candidates for inclusions should be assessed in the same way as the projects in the proposed sample.

11 Additional suggestions

Sida/UTV welcomes any further comments relevant to the design and implementation of the proposed study. The consultants are specifically invited to comment on the proposed projects sample in the perspective of international developments in the design of area development projects. What could we learn about sustainable poverty reduction from a study of these projects? Would some of them provide more instructive case study material than others? Why?

Implementation

The evaluability assessment should be based on a desk study of existing project documention and supplementary interviews with Sida staff and consultants involved in the implementation and evaluation of the projects. Project visits and collection of new data in the field are not deemed necessary.

The consultant should work in close dialogue with Sida/UTV. The UTV coordinator of the study will facilitate contacts with concerned Sida department as required. The consultants will be responsible for necessary copying of project documents from Sida headquarter files. The study should be delivered to Sida/UTV no later than May 29, 2000.

Reporting

The assignment should result in a report covering the issues listed above. The report, including a brief executive summary, should not exceed 30 pages.

Annexes

1. Gösta Edgren, Review of the new generation of Sida-funded area development projects targeting the poor.

2. Evaluation of regional development projects in the perspective of sustainable poverty reduction: points for discussion. Sida/UTV, 2000-03-13, Stefan Molund.

3. Utvärdering av regionutvecklingsprojekt: projektöversikt. Sida/UTV, 2000-03-07, Stefan Molund.

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