

Renegotiating Development Partnerships: A Case Study Of National Execution Of A UNDP Program In The Gambia

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**Renegotiating
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A Case Study
Of National Execution
Of A UNDP Program
In The Gambia**

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ABSTRACT: Anthropology has evolved a whole literature whose goal is to expose some of the underlying fallacies of international development. While it is naive to think of the major bilateral and multilateral aid donors as saints doing “God’s work,” it is equally naive to discount them entirely. This same perspective can blind otherwise well meaning first-world and third-world based academics and practitioners to the current efforts underway to reform these bureaucracies. This article describes the early accomplishments of one of the first UNDP projects in The Gambia to be carried out under a new mode for National Execution (NEX) based on the results of a routine end of term evaluation. Although the project made substantial progress toward achieving all of its anticipated products, it was less successful in developing the local and national level partnership processes needed to sustain these project products. Two of the dominant factors which influenced this were the lack of clear management structures or procedures for sorting out responsibility for specific activities that were to be carried out by the principal and secondary partners. A comparison of these results with the results of a more broad based assessment of NEX procedures that was conducted in 1995 suggests that the issue of development partnerships—how they are formed, changed, and assessed—provides a valid topic for applied anthropological research.

Introduction

Since the late 1980s there has been a major shift in the ideology of development. In this revised setting, the concept of development partnership has gone from “doing” to “facilitating” self-help initiatives that link local communities with governmental and non-governmental service agencies and the private sector. This new ideology has catalyzed major changes in the formal procedures by which multilateral and bilateral aid agencies design, monitor, and evaluate the projects that they fund.

How sustainable are these new partnership arrangements? Do the recommended changes really effect the way that local people participate in and derive benefits from donor-funded initiatives? Are donor-funded initiatives that are designed under the new “modes” of execution or procedures more sustainable once project funding ends? If not, why not, and how should these new implementation methodologies be reformed? These are high priority research questions that need to be examined if social scientists are to affect the massive procedural reforms that are currently underway throughout the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the other United Nations (UN) specialized agencies.

The data which provide the basis for this article was collected as part of a routine end of term evaluation of a UNDP project in The Gambia that was one of the first UNDP projects to be executed under a new UNDP model for National Execution (NEX). This new mode of project execution (in which no UN agency is involved in either the direct execution or the implementation of projects) differs dramatically from the traditional UNDP tripartite model in which some UN executing agency (such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], or United Nations Volunteers [UNV] office) was involved in almost every phase of project design, implementation, and evaluation.

Background

Anthropological Research to Assess the Impact of Donor Policies and Procedures

Relatively little anthropological research critiques the local impacts of major shifts in donor policies and procedures despite the fact that anthropological research provided the sociological “grist” for many of the most important shifts in

development ideology and procedures since the mid-1970s (Staatz and Eicher 1986; Pinstруп-Anderson et al. 1984; Berry 1986; Cernea 1988, 1991, 1993, 1997; McMillan 1991; Staudt 1985; Chowdry 1995). Anthropology's contribution to the revision of basic procedures increased as more anthropologists moved into line positions in the big multilateral (e. g., UNDP and World Bank) and bilateral (e. g., the United States Agency for International Development [USAID]) aid agencies in the late 1970s and 1980s (Cernea 1991; Eddy and Partridge 1987; Schonhuth 1991).

The research that does assess donor procedures tends to be in the form of internal agency studies (Bhatnagar and Williams 1991; World Bank 1985, 1995; Cook 1994; Pinstруп-Anderson et al. 1984; Salmon 1987). Two of the best examples of longitudinal assessment of agency and government project procedures are Scudder and Cernea's research on: (1) over 100 spontaneous and sponsored settlement areas in thirty-five countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Scudder 1962, 1968, 1969, 1981, 1984, 1991; World Bank 1985); and (2) World Bank projects implemented before and after the implementation of the World Bank Operational Directive (OD4. 30) on Involuntary Resettlement (Cernea 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1997). One of the major implications of this research was to show how the initial design of resettlement schemes continued to have a dramatic impact on "downstream" development and equity issues ten to thirty years later.

1994 Reforms in UNDP National Execution Procedures

NEX is only the most recent chapter in an evolution of UNDP policies which "renegotiate" the terms of UNDP's engagement with the developing countries that it was designed to serve. Established in 1965 through a merger of the UN's Expanded Program of Technical Assistance (formed in 1949)

and the United Nations Special Fund (formed in 1959), UNDP was designed to pool resources, simplify procedures, improve planning, and generally strengthen UN development aid (UNDP 1976: 6; UNDP 1989: 11). Most of the early (1965-1974) UNDP projects were designed and implemented by one of the UN system's specialized agencies or special funds¹ with various degrees of collaboration from host country governments. Although the agency began a major shift toward a new mode of "national" and "government" implementation after 1974, it continued to rely on various specialized UN agencies and funds to execute its projects. An executing agent is defined as "an entity to which the UNDP Administrator has entrusted the overall management of a project, along with the assumption of responsibility and accountability for the production of outputs, the achievement of project objectives, and the use of UNDP resources" (UNDP 1997a: 4). These same "executing agencies" continued to play an important role in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects which were officially being "nationally implemented."²

In 1976 the agency announced its intention to move toward a new model of government execution in which projects would be both implemented and executed by national government agencies. In this revised program model, the role of the UN executing agencies was redefined as "technical assistance." The rapid expansion of national execution³ from 1992 onwards (Table 1) followed the General Assembly Resolution 47/199, which called for national execution to be the norm for projects and programs, "taking account of the needs and capacities of recipient countries" (UNDP 1997b: 2).

The first comprehensive evaluation of national execution (NATIONAL EXECUTION: PROMISES AND CHALLENGES [UNDP 1995])⁴ concluded that national execution has greatly increased national personnel's involvement in the formulation, decision-making, and overall management of UNDP funded and co-funded development programs. The same evaluation

argues that nationally executed programs are more likely to be sustainable to the extent that they are more integrated into national efforts and generate a greater sense of ownership. The report concludes (UNDP 1995, chapter 1⁵) that two emerging problems remain to be resolved in order to consolidate the gains from the broad implementation of national execution since 1992:

The first problem is the loss of conceptual clarity regarding the roles of government, UNDP, and specialized agencies, and a loss of clarity regarding the system of programme management. The other problem is that NEX has yet to discover an optimal way to effectively involve UN specialized agencies while simultaneously respecting the new responsibilities of the participating governments.

Based on this analysis, three recommendations were put forward:

Recommendation 1: UNDP should modify its traditional conceptual framework for the design, implementation, and monitoring of national execution that is better adapted to the multiple partnership arrangements that characterize national execution and the more active role that UNDP offices often have to play in nationally executed projects.

Recommendation 2: UNDP and the UN specialized agencies (FAO, etc.) should improve/simplify the mechanisms for accessing the technical expertise of the UN specialized agencies (who no longer play a role in project implementation and execution on nationally executed projects).

Recommendation 3: UNDP should continue to evaluate critical aspects of NEX in order (UNDP 1995, chapter 1): "to monitor the extent to which UNDP-funded programmes continue to reflect overriding UNDP mandates and themes such as poverty alleviation, grassroots participation, environmental preservation, women's participation, and so forth. . . . [and] . . . to assess the longer-term and more dynamic aspects of sustainability."

The 1997 report to the second regular session of the Executive Board provides the most recent report and the actions undertaken to follow-up on the recommendations and issues that were identified in the 1995 NEX assessment (UNDP 1997b).⁶

The GAM/93/004 Project: “Enhancing Livelihoods through Livestock Development”

To date, the growth in national execution has been greatest in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, with a much smaller percentage of projects following this mode in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP 1997b). The project which provides the focus of this article was one of the first projects to be chosen for national execution in The Gambia after UNDP announced its renewed commitment to expand national execution in Sub-Saharan Africa (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Growth of UNDP National Execution Expenditure (1988-1997).

Biennium	Total Project Expenditure (\$ million)	National Execution Expenditure (\$ million)	% of Total Project Expenditure
1988-1989	1731	195	11
1990-1991	2180	300	14
1992-1993	2044	639	32
1994-1995	2014	1135	56
1996-1997	-	-	79 ¹

¹ Preliminary figures from the Division of Finance for the current biennium. Source: UNDP 1997b.

This particular project was designed to address two high priority issues identified by two of the three preceding UNDP-funded livestock projects and a 1991 review of the livestock sector (Jagne et al. 1996; UNDP 1991; Sonko 1996). These issues included: (1) the need to foster the development of a more secure supply of veterinary drugs to control epidemic disease; and (2) the need to strengthen the weak capacity of the Department of Livestock Services and its village level agents to collaborate with the complex array of partners with which it was expected to interact (e. g., community-based organizations, the private sector, NGOs, and other governmental and UN agencies) in the post-structural adjustment⁷ environment which restricted government hiring and commercial ventures.

To accomplish these tasks, the project document outlined a series of 32 training and extension activities designed to achieve eight outputs (Table 2). One of the unique aspects of this project, distinguishing it from the three previous UNDP/GOTG (Government of The Gambia) efforts executed by the government with implementation assistance from one or more UN executing agencies (notably FAO), was that the government would not only execute but implement. The government was to be assisted by the new Swiss office of the internationally recognized livestock development NGO, *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* (Veterinarians without Frontiers) (VSF-Swiss)⁸ under the modalities of a subcontract for the implementation of specific project activities. Other activities were to be implemented in collaboration with the private drug company GAMVET.⁹

The same project document outlined a series of innovative partnership arrangements that linked these three partners (DLS, GAMVET, and VSF-Swiss) with other actors for the execution of specific activities. These other actors included (Figure 1): (1) private sector butchers and livestock middlemen; (2) the Department of Community Development (DCD) under the Ministry of Local Government; (3) the United Nations

TABLE 2: Immediate Objectives and Anticipated Outputs, GAM/93/004.

Immediate Objective 1: To improve the health and nutritional status of cattle, small ruminants, poultry, equines, and donkeys.

Outputs Needed to Achieve Objectives:

- Output 1. 1.** Enhanced Capacity of GAMVET to ensure nation wide supply of drugs and vaccines on a sustainable basis.
 - Output 1. 2.** Fully operational network of seven divisional veterinary pharmacies.
 - Output 1. 3.** A well trained cadre of 20 veterinary assistants in the CRD Division.
 - Output 1. 4.** Livestock owners and producers in CRD Division well trained and supported in improved animal breeding and nutrition techniques.
 - Output 1. 5.** Yoro Beri Kunda (YBK) Training and Demonstration Center fully operational.
-

Immediate Objective 2: To improve the processing and marketing of livestock products.

Outputs Needed to Achieve Objectives:

- Output 2. 1.** 20 community-owned villages slaughter slabs fully operational in CRD.
 - Output 2. 2.** Improved availability and marketing of standard quality live animals and livestock products meeting local needs at the divisional level.
-

Immediate Objective 3: To determine the appropriate mechanism for savings mobilization and credit formation among livestock owners and producers to enhance commercialization of the livestock sub-sector.

Volunteers Domestic Development Service (UNV/DDS) field workers; (4) other UNDP and non-UNDP projects including the GAM/91/001 WID project, "Improving Extension Services for Women's Livestock Production;" and (5) one or more private sector consulting firms that would be contracted to carry out specific livestock marketing and credit studies as well as management support to GAMVET.

Thus in many respects, GAM/93/004 was an innovative experiment: (1) as a new model of a highly diversified development partnership linking community-based organizations with the private sector, NGOs, the Department of Livestock Services and other government agencies; (2) as a model for a participatory extension approach supported by the development of needs based, situation specific, animal production options; (3) as an integrated approach linking livestock production with upstream inputs and services and downstream processing and marketing; and (4) as a model for third party cost sharing (in this case from the Swiss Confederation) in the main financing of a UNDP project. If the current reforms being implemented in the wider UN system continue, many of these innovative ideas will become increasingly mainstream.

Although the focus of the project's proposed collaboration with GAMVET (Output 1. 1 and 1. 2., Table 2) and the development of small reference libraries for the division-level extension services foreseen under Output 1. 3 were national in scope, the other activities concentrated on the Central River Division (CRD), one of seven administrative divisions in the country. This decision was based on the idea that many of the innovative programs being espoused would need to be developed, tested, and modified before being extended.

GAM/93/004 was funded by UNDP (\$US 84,000, 7%), the Swiss Confederation (\$US 1,117,000, 93% under the Compensatory Financing Program), and the Government of The Gambia (\$US 85,000) for a period of three years ending in December 1997. The project was signed by the Government of

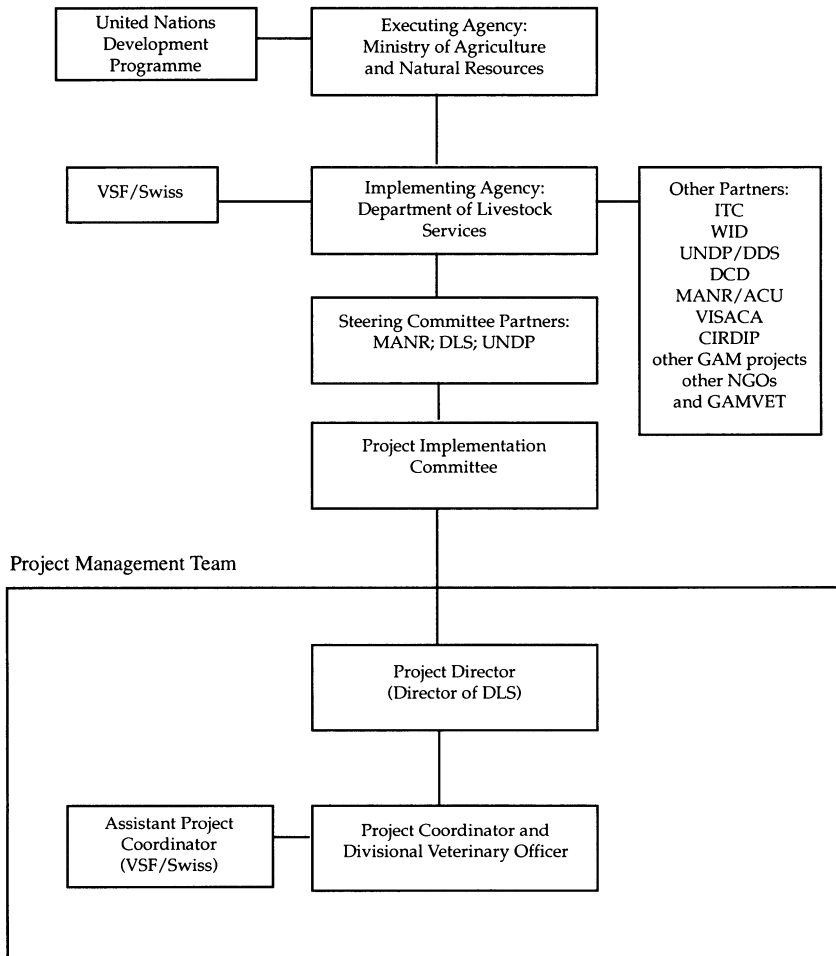


FIGURE 1: GAM/93/004 Planned Partnership/Implementation Structures.

The Gambia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on May 12, 1994. Due to a major change in the Gambian Government (the first in 20 years), the implementation of the main activities at the principal project site (the CRD of The Gambia) was delayed until the beginning of 1995.

Methodology

The evaluation team was mandated to do an end of term assessment with a view to obtaining recommendations regarding technical, institutional, and financial sustainability of the program activities supported by the project. The same review process was expected to inform future UNDP investment in the sector as well as a new agricultural program that was undergoing design. The team also was expected to provide feedback into the global UNDP reforms as well as routine monitoring by the UNDP evaluation and procedures department.

The principal goal of the evaluation was to evaluate GAM/93/004 in terms of its achieving a specific set of *products*, outlined in the project document's stated objectives, outputs, and activities or products (Table 2). At the same time, the team felt that it was important to assess some of the project's achievements in developing the necessary *processes* (e. g., participatory extension methodologies, management structures, and innovative partnerships) that would be needed to maintain these outputs and activities over time.

For GAM/93/004 this meant that the various project outputs being produced by specific project activities (see Table 2), would have to be linked to the necessary processes to sustain these accomplishments. Especially important would be to establish a new model for participatory livestock services that would link livestock owners and caretakers to the Department of Livestock Services and the new private veterinary drug com-

pany (GAMVET) and a host of other private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and UN (UNDP, UNV/DDS) actors needed to develop and sustain these services.

Based on this conceptual approach, the UNDP planning guidelines, and the TOR, the three person team¹⁰ interviewed project participants connected with specific project-supported activities at three levels:

1. Senior administrators, staff and policymakers connected to the sector and the three principal partners (UNDP headquarters, DLS headquarters and the Swiss government);
2. Village and division-level stakeholders (including farmers, private sector institutions [GAMVET pharmacies] and traders [butchers], community leaders, Livestock Assistants, Animators, NGO community workers and divisional leaders; and
3. The direct implementors at the principal project site (livestock extension staff in the Central River Division and at the YBK Training and Demonstration Center).

More than 110 individuals in eleven villages and towns were interviewed individually or in groups within the project area over a three week period from October 7 to October 28, 1997. Each individual or group of individuals was asked to discuss his/her patterns of participation in different phases of the project (design, implementation, evaluation) as well as perceptions of the direct and indirect benefits of this participation and areas that need to be strengthened to guarantee the sustainability of these activities. Most group interviews were conducted with all three members of the team present, with individual members focusing on different issues such as the quality and impact of Livestock Assistant training, the relevance of the proposed technical themes, gendered patterns of participation, and project impact. The second step of the

TABLE 3: Baseline Situation, Target, and Achievements of GAM/93/004.

Output 1. 1 and 1. 2: GAMVET**BASELINE SITUATION:**

- No veterinary pharmacies outside the capital
- \$US 27,000 revolving fund
- 1 central office staff manager
- Cold Storage only in central office.

TARGET:

- Pharmacies: 7
- Recruit and Train Pharmacists: 7
- Cold Storage Units:7
- Improved management

ACHIEVED:

- Pharmacies: 6
 - Trained Pharmacists: 7
 - Cold Storage Installed: 5
 - Management consultancy report submitted
-

Output 1. 3: LA Training**BASELINE SITUATION:**

- Fortnightly and monthly training for LA's through T&V extension training
- General extension themes with little emphasis on pharmaceutical, surgery, or health issues

TARGET:

- Train 20 LAs in CRD
- Construct 9 on-site veterinary health care centers (VHCCs)

ACHIEVED:

- 40 LA's from 3 divisions trained
- More focused curricula compiled and tested
- Linkages established with relevant research and training institutions in Senegal and The Gambia
- Created 9 new VHCCs

Output 1. 4. : Improved Farmer Training

BASELINE SITUATION:

Dissemination of new extension themes through national system of livestock assistants coordinated through regional livestock and agriculture offices under T&V extension service

TARGET:

- Rehabilitate some houses, clinic and training facilities
- Create 3 demonstration sites

ACHIEVED:

-Rehabilitated all foreseen buildings plus showroom, restroom, 3 processing demonstration units, and 2 production demonstration sites

Output 2. 1 and 2. 2: Improved Processing and Marketing of Livestock Products

BASELINE SITUATION:

No extension on these topics

TARGET:

- Creation of 20 improved slaughtering and 10 improved marketing facilities
- Introduction of new processing techniques

ACHIEVED:

- 13 slaughtering and 4 marketing sites created
- Butchers associations organized to manage facilities
- Trained 65 butchers in sanitation, meat drying and hides preparation

Output 3. 1: Identification of savings and credit mechanisms

BASELINE SITUATION:

Little understood

TARGET:

Consultancy and workshop

ACHIEVED:

Consultancy conducted; workshop planned

Source: GAM/93/004 Administration, YBK.

methodology included: (1) a participatory analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and potentials of the activities designed to achieve specific project results with the principal partners; and (2) a detailed review of more than 40 administrative and sector reports (including Gerard 1995; VSF-Swiss 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1996e, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; GOTG 1995, 1997) and 50 teaching modules.

The third step involved group meetings with representatives of the major partners to try to reach a clear understanding of the recommendations and global lessons learned for future projects (McMillan et al. 1997).

Results

Products

Comparing GAM/93/004's achievements against its stated objectives and outputs (Table 3), the team reached a positive overall assessment of the project. The project achieved major progress on all but two of the activities that were proposed in the original project document. These two activities—a milk store in Bansang and a plan to promote poultry and milk consumption in the district—were deemed insufficiently profitable to continue. In addition, the project administration was flexible enough to create 20 new activities that were not outlined in the project document, most of which were in response to needs that were identified in the course of the project or new resources, such as the arrival of new UNV/DDS field workers with specific technical skills.

These results were achieved at a relatively low cost (\$US 1,117,000 over 3 years), with the majority being spent on NGO training staff for the YBK Training and Demonstration Center (55%); non-Center training (through university fellowships, livestock shows, seminars, and study tours) (17.6%); outside

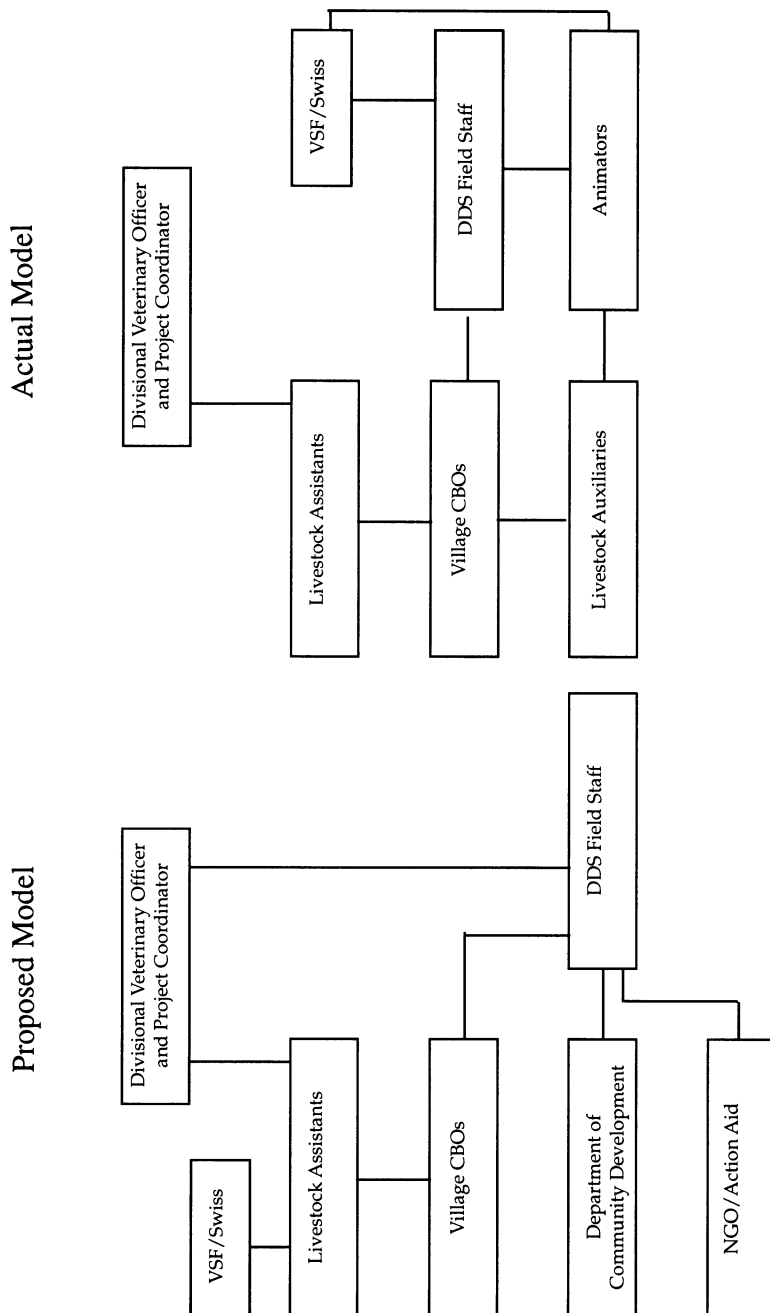


FIGURE 2: GAM/94/004 Proposed versus Actual Model of Village-Based Livestock Extension Training

consultants for GAMVET and the credit survey (6.7%), and permanent equipment for the GAMVET pharmacies and veterinarian assistants (8%). In contrast to more traditional project models, very little proportional to the total budget was spent on project vehicles (3.7%), general administration (7%), or supervisory travel (2%). All costs for national personnel were paid by the government, and in contrast to the typical model for UN executing agencies, UNDP did not claim any project overhead.

Despite the complex distribution of funds (from UNDP to the Department of Livestock Services with a sub-component to the NGO subcontractor [VSF-Swiss]), the team found no evidence that the flow of funds had caused a major constraint for implementation. There was sufficient flexibility from UNDP's side for reallocating funds for new activities which increased the overall relevance of the program. Budget control by the Department of Livestock Services and the NGO subcontractor (VSF-Swiss) was rigorous and efficient. The project was also extremely resourceful in leveraging support from other projects to enable cost savings which could be reallocated to other budget lines. The chief budgetary problem was that the government's financial rules and regulations sometimes prevented the Department of Livestock Services from being as efficient in implementation as they would have liked.

Processes

The same comparison of achievements against stated objectives in the project proposal, however, showed that the project was less successful in developing the local and national level partnership processes needed to create and sustain the major project "products."

YBK Training and Demonstration Center. Although the rehabilitation of the YBK Training and Demonstration Center was a major project goal, there was no plan for guaranteeing either the management or maintenance of the Center's physical facilities, teaching staff or materials in the original project plan. This omission was based on the implicit assumption that the government would have the means to shoulder this responsibility once the project support through VSF-Swiss was discontinued. Past experience with two previous rehabilitations shows that the national budget does not have sufficient funds for proper operation and maintenance of the YBK training facilities and equipment. Any long-term attempt to address this problem requires all of the partners to collaborate in the elaboration of a financial plan that would enable the Center to manage its own funds earned from training.

GAMVET. Similarly, although GAMVET had made substantial progress toward its goal of becoming a financially stable private company (by rehabilitating six pharmacies, recruiting and training seven livestock pharmacists, and developing new systems of accounting), the company was still a long way from being able to operate like a full private sector partner for livestock development. This delay is not unreasonable, however, given the extremely limited base of trained staff and operations that the company started with (Table 3, Output 1. 1 and 1. 2). A more realistic time line could have been developed if the project plan had included a more detailed analysis of GAMVET's baseline staff and operations.

Community-Based Extension. Although the project concept of participatory "grassroots" development was good in principal, it was not well thought out in terms of the key institutional bases for sustainability. The original project plan anticipated that the livestock assistants (LAs) would be the major points of contact between the project and the village associations and authorities in the 20 villages that they were expected to strengthen (Figure 2). There was also an implicit assump-

tion in the project document that besides her or his already full workload as a para vet (administering vaccinations and drugs), the LA would be the main actor in this "participatory process." It was further assumed these activities would be facilitated by the Department of Community Development under the Ministry of Local Government even though no representative of their divisional or national office appears to have been formally involved in the project design.

The difficulty of forging this type of *ex-post facto* relationship with the Department of Community Development (DCD) combined with the time demands placed on the LAs by their main department activities and administrative duties (including attendance at routine Agricultural Services Project Training and Visit [T&V] bimonthly meetings) made it difficult for the project to really orient and involve the LAs in community development activities. This was further complicated by large-scale transfers of LAs during the second year.

The subcontractor's difficulties in scheduling sufficient time with the LAs for carrying out the activities it was supposed to conduct under Output 1.4 (strengthening farmers associations, assessing training needs, formulating and implementing training programs, organizing farmers visits, setting up demonstration sites [Table 2]) led them to create four new staff positions of animators that they alone could control (Figure 2). The same pressure to produce results encouraged them to create a new system of contact persons for the village-based training persons (Figure 2). This "process" of participatory extension and working through the animators and auxiliaries to train and strengthen village groups enabled the project to carry out the planned activities and even more. The evaluation team and project members agreed, however, that this new "process," which was created by necessity to achieve the needed output, was not sustainable without project funds. First, the Department of Livestock Services, which has difficulties supporting its existing staff, would have difficulty creating four new per-

manent positions for the animators who do not have the educational background of LAs. Second, the professional profile of the LA is not that of a community worker. Third, the project was unable to forge the appropriate linkages with either the DCD or the local NGO Action Aid that intervenes in the livestock sector, both of which have community-based staff that specialize in community development.

Analysis

Factors that Contributed to or Detracted from Sustainable Processes

A number of factors appear to have influenced this peculiar pattern of success which was strong on cost-effective products but weak on sustainable processes to maintain these project products.

Weak institutional structure linking principal and secondary partners. Although the original project document outlined 32 activities that the three lead partners (DLS, VSF-Swiss, GAMVET) were supposed to carry out individually or in collaboration with other partners (Figure 1), there was no clear indication of who would provide the lead role for specific activities, nor was there a clear management structure for implementation. This lack of clarity created major problems for sorting out responsibility for specific activities.

Similarly, despite the project proposal's written intent to build working partnerships with several pre-existing NGOs and other governmental organizations with deep ties to the CRD project area, this wasn't done. One of the most visible omissions was the lack of any formal collaboration between the project and one of the largest NGOs in the country, Action

AID, which was working in 16 of the project's 20 villages and more than 200 villages in the division; another visible omission was the lack of collaboration with the DCD.

Although the project plan outlined a series of joint activities with each of these institutions, there does not appear to have been any sort of serious discussion with the senior management of these organizations about how these joint activities would be sorted out or funded prior to signing the official project document. This appears to have been one of the major reasons that fruitful collaborations with these organizations did not materialize. A contributing factor may have also been the conflicts over resources, timing, and responsibilities among the three major partners (VSF-Swiss, the DLS, and GAMVET) which resulted from the unclear partnership arrangement, and prevented the project managers from adopting a more outward looking attitude.

Weak concept of partnership management. A second design flaw was project planners' insufficient appreciation of the challenges that this type of multi-partner participatory project would pose for the management styles and procedures of all of the major partners, VSF-Swiss, the Department of Livestock Services, and UNDP included. The traditional UNDP tripartite aid partnerships rely heavily on UN specialized agencies to execute key project functions in collaboration with the lead government agency that UNDP would finance.

Although the project plan for GAM/94/001 was supposed to be a "grassroots" project based on "identified needs," its design focused on the implementation and monitoring of a preconceived set of eight outputs and 32 activities in 20 pre-selected villages. One result was to encourage project managers to focus on producing the specific products for which they would be held accountable rather than on the processes and partnerships that would be needed to sustain these products once the project funding stopped.

This was especially true in areas where program responsibilities overlapped, such as when the DLS was responsible for maintaining the vehicles operated by the NGO VSF-Swiss subcontractors, or when the DLS was responsible for rehabilitating the divisional pharmacies staffed by pharmacists paid by GAMVET and trained by VSF-Swiss. The same process of assigning credit (but also blame) for specific project delays or achievements meant that the principal partners (DLS, VSF-Swiss, GAMVET) were often misinformed about some of the constraints (government budget cuts, major delays in getting government funds, cumbersome government purchase arrangements) behind these delays. The process of inter-partner management was further exacerbated by frequent turnover in the government-supplied post of project coordinator. This resulted in a perpetuation of the earlier pattern in which a foreign expert (previously supplied by FAO; now replaced by the NGO subcontractor, VSF-Swiss) became the *de facto* project manager for the vast majority of the project. The management challenges of modifying these inherited project administrative styles and procedures were inadequately envisaged in the project design.

The innovative nature of this type of multi-partner project necessitated creative input from the funding donor to facilitate the development of these new partnership arrangements and management tools. Changing roles lead to changing functions and skills and therefore changing relations and inputs, monitoring and other supports from donors. Unfortunately, UNDP did not realize this sufficiently and the administrative hierarchy continued to be the same one that was used to administer the three previous FAO-assisted projects with the portfolio being ascribed to a Junior Professional Officer or JPO. While well intentioned and prompt in her attention to monitoring the project, this JPO did not have the necessary experience in process or conflict management needed to sort out this type of complex partnership arrangement. One result was that

the role of the field mission's higher management (Resident Representative and Deputy Resident Representative) became increasingly focused on mediating disputes between partners, consuming staff time well beyond what UNDP managers normally assign to these duties.

Recommendations for Immediate Follow-up Action for GAM/93/004

The team recommended that UNDP facilitate a one year extension of the project in order to give project administrators sufficient time to focus on project processes. The team identified seven priority areas for action under the proposed extension. These grouped recommendations are outlined below:

1. increased collaboration with Action Aid and the division-level office of the DCD in developing joint plans for livestock extension services in the Central River Division villages where Action Aid already intervenes;
2. clarifying the YBK Training and Demonstration Center's management and teaching structure by stable posting of a senior national Department of Livestock Service veterinarian and national camp manager;
3. developing a financial plan that would guarantee the semi-autonomous operation of the Center;
4. strengthening the gender component of the Center's training programs;

5. reducing the project's emphasis on some of the less profitable technical themes introduced by the UNV/DDS fieldworkers (pasteurizing milk, poultry farms) in order to emphasize activities which could be profitably sold;
6. hiring outside management support to facilitate the partnership and the creation of a YBK Center steering committee/board of directors; and
7. following up with GAMVET's management consultant's recommendations to develop a medium term strategy on marketing and company institutional development.

Lessons Learned

For National Execution Methodologies

Anticipate the need to adapt administrative styles and procedures to reinforce creative administrative partnerships. GAM/93/004 is a vivid illustration of the high returns and rigorous financial accountability that can result from this new type of innovative "horizontal partnering" of national institutions with dynamic NGOs and relevant regional programs (Table 3). The same mode, however, includes a number of risks.

The first of these concerns the extreme novelty of the national execution (without an intervening UN agency) and multi-partner implementation modes for the principal partners. Most African governments have two to three decades of experience with the traditional mode of UN execution through one of the UN executing agencies (like FAO) who are paid to assist them. In the absence of major changes in their management styles and procedures, there is a real risk that these government agencies will use their new NGO partners (like VSF-Swiss) to simply replace the roles that the UN executing agencies used to play.

Although UNDP has been one of the most vocal donors behind the current shift toward “participatory” project planning, the administrative structure that we observed in the field continues to be organized in ways that support the old way of administering projects through UN executing agencies. This old way of doing business is ill-adapted to the new system of national execution which exposes the UNDP staff to implementation problems and inter-partner conflicts in ways that they were not exposed before. This new mode of interacting with their funded or co-funded (as in the case of GAM/93/004) projects requires that a smaller number of project portfolios be handled by fairly senior national UNDP staff with the necessary skills in UN procedures and the technical areas being supported. The current system of rotating portfolios among staff reduces the creative input that the field mission might have in managing partnership issues before they flare up. The same lack of administrative continuity within the mission can detract from UNDP’s ability to attract additional outside funds with which to co-fund its country programs.

Modify project design procedures to increase informed participation in program design and partnership arrangements. Since ownership of a program or a project (like GAM/93/004) tends to be in direct proportion to one’s input into the conceptual stage of such collaboration, it is important that such partnerships evolve from the expressed interests of the partners themselves. One important design flaw in this project was the fact that the project document outlined a large number of ill-defined collaborative partnerships. This type of idealistic proactive partnering is an outgrowth of the demand that project proposals show they are collaborative in order to get funded. While these strictures may be well intended, they have the unintended consequence of saddling project administrators with an unwieldy mass of “collaborative” relationships that have been developed with little input from the proposed partners. The

same “proactive partnering” prevents administrators from engaging with the more suitable partners that are likely to be identified once project execution starts.

For this reason, we recommend that future projects precede the design period with a “preface period” to allow for an analysis of the pre-existing institutional, technical, and social environment and to enable partners to get to know one another and “test the water.” The same experience with GAM/93/004 suggests that this type of diversified partnership is usually better served by having a few strong, committed partners working together than a large number of less well-defined proposed collaborations. That is to say, in a diversified partnership, quality usually prevails over quantity.

Focus project design on developing clear processes for project design, monitoring and evaluation, not results. While bureaucratic procedures can be cumbersome, they can also liberate by leveling the playing field for inter-partner negotiation and collaboration. UNDP has been a leader in the process of clarifying donor regulations and procedures. This process has included a major effort to simplify and clarify the terms for design, monitoring, and evaluation. One result has been the agency’s commitment to a simple planning process in which projects are planned in terms of immediate goals, outputs needed to achieve these goals, and activities that need to be carried out to achieve these outputs. This simplified design is linked to a number of internal monitoring procedures that are designed to monitor progress toward the achievement of these activities, outputs, and goals (see UNDP 1993). The same simple formats have been used since the mid-1980s.

This evaluation re-emphasizes the need for these types of simple, codified project planning and evaluation procedures. We discovered, for example, that the project partners found it extremely useful to read and refer to the evaluation guidelines handbook which explained the different criteria by which they

would be evaluated. Current efforts to reformulate UNDP's evaluation guidelines (UNDP 1997b: 7-8) need to maintain the agency's historic commitment to a simple, relatively stable, transparent evaluation process.

The same process needs to consider ways that the project planning and evaluation process can be less prescriptive. The current emphasis on monitoring progress toward a relatively fixed set of intermediate goals, outputs, and activities may unintentionally lock planners into a blueprint which they feel impelled to execute. More likely to be successful would be a more flexible project proposal format which would emphasize the development of strong mechanisms for project planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation as well as common goals and objectives. These mechanisms would in turn provide the framework allowing for the development of short two-to-three year projects which build upon lessons learned and accomplishments.

Care must also be taken to increase the project partners' understanding of these standard planning and assessment tools. It is interesting to note that neither the national consultant on the team (who had been part of a three person team on an earlier UNDP/FAO evaluation) nor the national Project Director (who had been project director on three previous UNDP funded projects) had ever seen the evaluation guidelines handbook, the basic format for which has been the same since April 1987 (UNDP 1993: 3).

Reinforce partnership management support. Projects with participatory approaches and diverse partners involve important development processes that are quite different from the ones that were used by the previous generation of development projects. It would be naive to expect that the shift from old to newer models would be either smooth or automatic. More at-

tention should be paid to the need for special management training to facilitate these shifts within the UNDP field offices and the programs they support.

One useful strategy for increasing the chance that project documents will address this issue would be to classify the “risk” of new institutional arrangements in the same category as other project risks. Planners might also consider creating some means of monitoring progress toward participatory project monitoring and planning.

Encourage institutional networking and financial autonomy. Projects that aspire to high levels of institutional networking and financial autonomy enhance the likelihood that their results will be sustainable once project-funding stops. Both of these aspects are the logical result of the structural adjustment programs which means that most African governments are hard pressed to sustain additional services. These are especially relevant for the Gambian context, where development programs are still mainly financed through donor funds.

For Social Science Research, Collaboration, and Training

Anthropological research has provided a great deal of the “grist” for the major shifts in guiding paradigms since the 1970s. To date, however, the vast majority of “mainstream” development anthropology still acts as if these dynamic project policies and policy shifts don’t exist. This perspective fails to do justice to the incredible pressure these agencies are under to reform their administrative procedures and development “ideologies.” Some of this pressure is in response to internal mechanisms—like the end of term evaluation described in this article—whose ascribed function is to bring about policy review. Other pressure for change is external, caused by the shrinking supply of development dollars in conjunction with

structural adjustment policies which make governments more reluctant to pick up the recurrent costs of activities once project funding stops.

Although the literature is replete with examples of cases where anthropological knowledge of a negative project policy was suppressed, there are numerous counter-examples (Horowitz et al. 1993; Koenig 1990; Scudder 1981, 1984; World Bank 1985; Cernea 1988; McMillan et al. 1993; McMillan et al. 1992; Elder and Cooley 1995). One example, closer to hand, was UNDP's attempt to minimize its interference with the research and analysis associated with this evaluation. This hands-off attitude is in sharp contrast to the flagrant suppression of the negative findings associated with the OECD environmental assessment described by Reyna (this volume).

Encourage Comparative Research on New Partnership and Execution Policies and Procedures. Academic researchers need to study donor policies' impact on programs the same way that they study the social or political structures that local people and civil servants interact with. The articles in this volume represent a step in the right direction. More applied research needs to examine the short, medium, and long-term impact of specific project policies, procedures, and guidelines. It is also useful to consider the many factors that affect the ways that governments and donors respond to anthropological research findings, routine monitoring, and evaluations.

One of the best ways to move forward would be to "deconstruct" project guidelines and partnership models into testable hypotheses. One could investigate, for example, whether or not and in what way the actual mode of execution makes a difference in how development programs deliver project products and processes and manage budgets. Another useful analysis would be to compare the impact of including women versus not including women in different categories of

activities on a given project. One could also examine the impact of factors not currently being monitored (e.g., literacy) on project sustainability and results.

Encourage major donors like UNDP to publicize and facilitate access to agency documents. For anthropological research to have a greater impact on donor policies and procedures, anthropologists need to increase their basic understanding of how and why the major donors work. This knowledge, however, is often lacking outside the agencies themselves.

Even when donors make a special effort to publish documents on their evolving policies and procedures (such as the UNDP Office of Evaluation and Strategic Planning [OESP] Series on Lessons Learned) (See <http://www.UNDP.org//UNDP/eo/netoc.htm>) researchers don't use them very much. This can in part be attributed to the fact that many researchers do not consider this to be a legitimate topic for research. Even when they are interested, their efforts may be frustrated by the difficulty of getting access to all but the most general policy statements and reports.

UNDP has done many things well, with one of them being the way they have attempted to learn from past mistakes and from the evolution of the countries that they serve. NEX is an exciting development which offers a major opportunity for developing countries to renegotiate their terms of engagement with one of the largest multilateral donors. The same process exposes UNDP to a much more complex array of management issues than the existing base of policies, procedures, and management structures was designed to address. The process of developing new policies and procedures presents a major challenge to applied social science. For this challenge to be met, however, the NEX process needs to be taught and studied.

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NOTES

- 1 A sample of participating, executing and associated agencies of UNDP in 1981 includes the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Special-purpose funds which were active in Africa during the same time period include the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) (UNDP 1981).
- 2 During 1981, UNDP's participating agencies continued to play a sizable role in government-implemented projects. A 42 project sample studied by UNDP showed them involved in formulating 19 projects, appraising 32, monitoring nearly half, and mobilizing the experts, equipment, and subcontracts for over one quarter (UNDP 1981).
- 3 The primary objectives of national execution, as clarified in a 1993 statement by the UNDP Consultative Committee for Substantive Questions, are: (a) recognition of the central role, 'ownership,' direction and control of the government; (b) enhancement of capacity building, self-reliance and sustainability, including through the building of national institutions and their management; (c) internalizing of external inputs and ensuring greater relevance, and impact in relation to national programmes" (UNDP 1997b:3).
- 4 The evaluation was based on field studies in 11 countries. After initial visits to Egypt and Zimbabwe where the methodology was developed and refined, the Evaluation Team conducted intensive visits to nine other countries to gather concrete and empirical evidence on the practical functioning of NEX at the national and project

level. More than 35 projects (or components of programs) in these countries were reviewed. The team also implemented a survey questionnaire which was completed by more than 65 respondents, including UNDP Country Offices and Regional Bureaus.

5 This report is published on the UNDP web site for the UNDP Evaluation Office and does not include page numbers (<http://www.undp.org/undp/eo/netoc.htm>.)

6 These steps include (UNDP 1997b): (a) revision and simplification of the current national execution procedures; (b) instructions for the greater use of specialized agencies in quality control and program formulation; (c) introduction of a requirement that all nationally executed projects and programs contain provisions for an independent audit; (d) further review of the rules on UNDP country office support; (e) better assessment of the capacity of the executing agency; and (f) the formulation of new guidelines on monitoring and evaluation.

7 See McPherson and Radelet (1995) for a good overview of structural adjustment and its aftermath in The Gambia.

8 The Swiss branch of *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* is a major international NGO with extensive experience in the design of community-based livestock projects in Senegal and other areas of West Africa, but no previous history of working in Gambia.

9 GAMVET was the private drug company incorporated in 1991 to take over the task of supplying farmers and the DLS veterinarians, livestock assistants, and clinics with a reliable supply of veterinary drugs.

10 The UNDP representative (and team leader), Della McMillan, was an American anthropologist with experience with agricultural research, project design and evaluation in West Africa but none in The Gambia. The national representative, Omar Jallow, was an animal scientist and former lecturer in animal production at The Gambia Livestock Training School with more than 10 years of research and administrative experience in bilateral aid programs. The Swiss representative, Herman Mulder, was a livestock specialist with 20 years of experience administering both NGO and government-sponsored livestock projects in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

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