



New Approaches to Planning

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Contents

v	Acknowledgments
vii	Preface
1	Overview
3	Introduction
5	A Short History of Holistic Approaches to Planning
6	Integrated Rural Development
8	River Basin Development Planning and Management
9	Multisectoral Nutrition Planning
9	National Food Security Planning
10	Poverty Planning
11	Industrial Organization
13	Lessons of Experience with Integrated Planning
15	Target-Based Planning
15	Do Targets Distort Policy?
16	What Is the Opportunity Cost of Monitoring Progress?
16	Can Unrealistic Targets Destroy Political Momentum?
17	Lessons for Target-Based Planning
19	Conclusion
19	Lessons for the Comprehensive Development Framework
23	Bibliography
27	Endnotes
	Boxes
3	Box 1. The Approach to Planning in the Comprehensive Development Framework
6	Box 2. Need for Partnership in Planning: Donors and the Education Sector in Cambodia
7	Box 3. Blueprint and Process Approaches in Integrated Rural Development Planning
13	Box 4. Contrasting Approaches to Corporate Organization and Planning
21	Box 5. Dos and Don'ts for the Comprehensive Development Framework

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Preface

Despite the potential benefits of globalization and technological change, world poverty has increased and growth prospects have dimmed for developing countries during the 1980s and 90s. The Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) was launched by the World Bank in January 1999 in response to these difficult circumstances. It has evoked considerable interest throughout the development community as an approach that can address the increasingly intertwined challenges faced by development practitioners. Its basic elements are not new. What is new is their joint articulation as a framework to guide development assistance. The first point is that development constraints are structural and social, and cannot be overcome through economic stabilization and policy adjustment alone—they require a long-term and holistic vision of needs and solutions. Second, policy reform and institutional development cannot be imported or imposed; without domestic ownership, reforms and investments are not sustainable. Third, successful development requires partnership among government, local communities, the private sector, civil society, and development agencies. And fourth, development activities must be guided and judged by results.

In this context, the *1999 Annual Review of Development Effectiveness* (ARDE), authored by Nagy Hanna under the guidance of Robert Picciotto, set out to examine development experience through the lens of CDF principles. A number of papers were commissioned to support the ARDE by providing in-depth review of evaluation and research findings that assess the relevance of the CDF principles and constraints as well as promising approaches to their implementation.

Overview

This chapter addresses the question of multisectoral planning, taking up the pillars of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) that call for a long-term, holistic approach and, to a lesser extent, a focus on results. While we have been here before, without great success, we now have new planning models that may help planners avoid the pitfalls of the past. This chapter looks at previous experience with multisectoral, holistic planning in integrated rural development, river basin management, multisectoral approaches to nutrition, national food security, and poverty reduction, on the public sector side, to industrial organization on the private sector side. This review has exposed many common problems, some of which resonate with the CDF: overly ambitious goals, too much emphasis on data collection at the expense of implementation, imposition of new administrative structures, political naivete about the scope for genuine consensus, poor quality dialogue between donors and recipients, and a lack of linkage between planning and implementation.

There are ways forward, however, that can inform the CDF. In general terms, the current conventional wisdom emphasizes process planning over blueprint planning, and recommends forms of organization that replace traditional, role-based hierarchies with new, more flexible, task-based approaches. Specific recommendations can be applied to the CDF: starting small, building in a bias to action, avoiding complex new bureaucracies, and training staff in multidisciplinary work.

A feature of the new approaches to planning is to set clear, short-term goals. At one level targets are very attractive: they raise awareness, facilitate fundraising, and provide a structure for monitoring. On the other hand they can oversimplify complex problems, distort policy, and divert attention into measurement at the expense of action. A degree of common sense is required to use targets with moderation and with a good appreciation of local realities.

Introduction

The CDF is a classic example of multisectoral planning. It emphasizes a long-term, holistic, and strategic approach, while also being participatory, flexible, and carefully sequenced (box 1). Of the four pillars of the CDF, three are of particular relevance to development planning:

- The emphasis on a *holistic approach* to the long-term transformation of complex, integrated structures (social, economic, and political);
- The stress on *partnership* – shared objectives translated into equitable burden sharing based on a rational analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different organizations (central and local government, donors, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector);
- An orientation toward *results*, implying investment in developing suitable indicators and linking these indicators to learning and accountability.

Box 1. The Approach to Planning in the Comprehensive Development Framework

“I believe that unless we think of having *all* the basic prerequisites, say over a twenty year timeframe, we will endanger and sometimes ruin the effectiveness of individual projects and programs which we undertake with our cli-

ents. Clearly not all the objectives can be approached simultaneously. The framework should not become a straightjacket. We need the flexibility to adjust to the varied conditions of each country. There will be a need for setting priorities, for phasing action based

on financial and human capacity and on necessary sequencing to get to our objectives...

What is new is an attempt to view our efforts within a long-term, holistic, and strategic approach, where all the component parts are brought together.

Such development should, in our judgment, be a participatory process, as transparent and as accountable as possible within the political climate prevailing in each country. This is not a return to central planning...”

Source: Wolfensohn 1999 (pp. 7-8, 30-31).

We have, however, been here before.¹ Indeed, if “here” means full-scale multisectoral planning, we have been here before with notably unsuccessful results. Maxwell (1997, 515) remarked :

The death of planning is widely advertised; and it is not surprising that this should be so. The pretensions of planning to objectivity and impartiality have long been questioned. Current conventional wisdom privileges the market over the state and disparages the jobs that planners do, like setting targets, allocating resources, or even designing projects. Further, the philosophical tide has turned, away from concepts familiar to planners, like order, sequence and predictability, toward other, less manageable constructs, like variability, risk and diversity...in 1997 (p515) time to abandon government, one might think, and find a job in the private sector.²

Wolfensohn’s emphasis on participation, flexibility, and sequencing (see box 1) suggests that the Bank is well aware of the problems posed by the idea of planning. Nevertheless, it is worth asking what model of planning is then to be adopted. Current research provides pointers that governments and other actors can use to help make the CDF work.

A Short History of Holistic Approaches to Planning

To begin, it is worth noting that *planning* means different things, depending on context. It can refer broadly to any willed intervention in which planners define goals, specify inputs, and present a model of causality linking activities to goals. This can cover sectoral plans (industrial planning), multisectoral or thematic planning (food security planning), or national, macroeconomic planning (five-year plans or centrally planned economies).³ In the broad sense, then, planning is simply what governments do, although the degree to which they should do it is a matter of debate. A second meaning of planning is more specific, derived as much from the diagrammatic plans of architecture or engineering as from planning as an input-output model. Both types of planning are central to the work of the Bank, whose role is defined primarily by its “responsibility for the structural and social aspects of development” (Wolfensohn 1999, 3).⁴ In both broad usage (government regulation and direction of economic and social change) and narrow usage (design, implementation, and management of integrated systems of productive or social infrastructure), planning has undergone numerous crises of identity and conscience. Since the late 1970s the underlying global trend has been away from directive planning toward enabling planning (World Bank 1996a).

While planning failures occur in rich as well as poor states, failures are more likely, and their effects more serious, in the developing world, where the state typically:

- Has more limited analytical capacity, and so faces greater problems in identifying best-choice solutions to complex problems
- Displays more rigid demarcation between planning functions
- Is less subject to checks (either by regulatory state bodies or by civil society) on misguided or self-serving planning
- Is more dependent on coercive rather than institutional means of enforcing its will in the face of opposition to planning decisions.

These problems may be exacerbated by a failure of donor discipline in coordinating development aid. In many poor and aid-dependent countries the state itself has been marginalized by the independent project planning processes of donors. Sometimes this has been seen by donors as a logical solution to the problems of working through weak or corrupt state structures. This “solution” is largely illusory, however. In the long term improvements will be sustained only if implemented through improved government structures. When a multiple donors pursue independent approaches, the result is limited or even counterproductive impact (box 2).

Box 2. Need for Partnership in Planning: Donors and the Education Sector in Cambodia

Between 1989 and 1994 the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) pursued its humanitarian and development objectives in Cambodia by funding the projects of multilateral agencies and international NGOs. At one point SIDA provided support for the development of primary education by

funding both UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank. These two agencies subsequently pushed for different approaches to education sector planning, resulting in a public division between donors and a retrenchment of attitudes in the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Having made grants to both organizations, SIDA was caught in the frustrat-

ing position of having “unintentionally supported different, and to a large extent conflicting, approaches to educational development in Cambodia” (Bernander and others 1995 p. 149). In general, “too much, and sometimes conflicting, donor pressure on the Ministry has led to a reaction, by which the Government is likely to take a much more conservative stand, and be

less open to reform.” While the problems of the education ministry cannot be blamed entirely on poor donor planning, the lack of partner ownership of sectoral planning can be seen to have further retarded the development of the sector.

This following sections summarize experiences with integrative or holistic approaches to planning, drawing on examples from development planning and, in one case, industrial organization.

Integrated Rural Development

From the late 1970s donors and governments broadened their understanding of rural problems. The solution was seen to lie in a multipronged approach to interlocking problems: although approaches varied widely, most attempted to combine interventions to raise agricultural productivity (inputs, irrigation and advice) with improvements in health care, education and access to credit (Kleemeier 1988).

The planning and organizational problems of integrated rural development (at least in its first incarnation) have been a common theme of the literature.⁵ A good example is the review by Crener and other (1984), which lists seven reasons for failure, two of which clearly concern planning:

- Projects were conceived in a rigid manner, due to an overly idealized economic, political, and institutional environment.
- Both newly created and existing organizational structures did not foster effective and efficient project management.⁶

Birgegard’s 1987 analysis reached a similar diagnosis (pp. 6–7). He points out that the characteristics of the IRD task requires management which is:

flexible, adaptable, willing to experiment, to learn and to accept mistakes. Managers need to have bargaining and negotiating skills to reconcile conflicting interests [and] placate influential demands at different levels...and have the ability to explore and to understand the dynamic informal processes between conflicting interests in the project environment. . . . Sadly, the “control-oriented,” compartmentalized government bureaucracies with centralized decisionmaking hardly match the prerequisites of effective management of [integrated rural development] projects.

A number of different problems surface in these analyses, and in many others on the same theme.⁷ Crener and others (1984) offer one set of solutions, in the form of five general principles for a new-style integrated rural development planning approach:

- Simple or medium term interventions on an initially limited scale at the outset;
- Constant interaction between planning, execution and evaluation;
- Dynamic analysis and more in-depth comprehension of the milieu;
- Increased participation on the part of target groups in decisionmaking, implementation and evaluation;
- Diversification and strengthening of the support given to local capacity for institutional organization.

These five principles encapsulate the new approach to rural development planning, styled “process approaches” in contrast to earlier “blueprint” models. Chambers has summarized the differences between blueprint and process approaches (box 3). Blueprint planning uses technical specialists to devise a scientific plan in the capital city, which is then implemented according to a rigid timetable; process planning, by contrast, is bottom-up in nature, organic, flexible, and action oriented.

Box 3. Blueprint and Process Approaches in Integrated Rural Development Planning

	Blueprint	Learning Process
Idea originates in	Capital city	Village
First steps	Data collection and plan	Awareness and action
Design	Static, by experts	Evolving, people involved
Supporting organization	Existing, or built top down	Built bottomup, with lateral spread
Main resources	Central funds and technicians	Local people and their assets
Staff development	Classroom, didactic	Field-based action learning
Implementation	Rapid, widespread	Gradual, local, at people's pace
Management focus	Spending budgets, completing projects on time	Sustained improvement and performance
Content of action	Standardized	Diverse
Communication	Vertical: orders down, reports up	Lateral: mutual learning and sharing experience
Leadership	Positional, changing	Personal, sustained
Evaluation	External, intermittent	Internal, continuous
Error	Buried	Embraced
Effects	Dependency-creating	Empowering
Associated with	Normal professionalism	New professionalism

Source: Chambers 1993 (p. 12), adapted from Korten (1980).

River Basin Development Planning and Management

River basin planning can be seen as a special case of regional integrated rural development. River basins, as natural systems with clear areal boundaries, would seem logical candidates for geographically defined planning authorities with jurisdiction over interlinked issues of forest management, agriculture, fishing, river navigation, and water supply for human and industrial consumption. Since the Tennessee Valley Authority was established in the United States in 1933, “multipurpose,” “integrated,” or “holistic” river basin planning has been used throughout the developed and developing world for a variety of reasons. In the Philippines (Koppel 1987) and Mexico, river basin planning was introduced to promote decentralized rural development; in Africa, central governments have seen it as a way of circumventing local administrative structures that are “stagnant, corrupt, or difficult” (Adams 1992, cited in Barrow 1998, pp. 176–77).

Although there are differences of opinion on some points, the lessons of integrated or holistic river basin planning can be summarized as follows:

- Formal politics does not appear to strongly influence performance. Management structures and styles seem to explain why some schemes work and some fail, regardless of whether the national system is characterized as a democracy or one-party rule.
- Lack of baseline data and adequate monitoring leads to decisions based on false assumptions.
- Single basin authorities tend to be either ineffective relative to established line departments or too effective, ignoring national rules and regulations (as in Kenya).
- History is important: a legacy of previous failures with river basin planning approaches may mean that planners are better off moving to another system (such as state-based planning) rather than attempting to reform deeply discredited river basin planning institutions.
- Strong river basin planning institutions - especially national institutions that monitor or police projects and mediate between regional and national interests - can avoid some of the problems that arise from donor insistence on bilateral negotiation on projects (multiple conditionalities).
- Participatory mechanisms are essential to ensure that development does not harm the interests of local stakeholders, such as smallholder farmers or artisanal fishers (Barrow 1998).

The prescription emerging from a review of river basin planning schemes is to apply a sensitive multidisciplinary approach in order to integrate the needs of numerous local and national stakeholders; adopt a flexible, adaptive process approach to deal with inevitable unforeseen problems; consult with and encourage participation of the private sector (for funding and for identifying economic interests); and ensure community participation to hold administrators accountable to local communities. Authorities with responsibility for coordinating the work of existing regional, national, commercial, and private organizations may be more effective than all-encompassing bodies.

Multisectoral Nutrition Planning

Large-scale and systems-oriented multisectoral nutrition planning underwent a boom in the 1970s. In reviewing experiences with multisectoral nutrition planning, Field (1987 p.23ff) identified seven “intellectual flaws” (many familiar from the diagnosis of integrated rural development planning problems) that “derailed” the approach⁸. These were:

- Planners who were largely oblivious to problems of implementation, ignoring that it is “an inherently pluralistic, often conflictual process that is uncertain, even precarious...”
- Programmatic features that were “devastating to effective implementation,” with ambitious goals, long chains of causality, and multiple decision points
- Organizational overload, with a “premium placed on inter-ministerial coordination [that] was neither realistic, desirable, nor necessary”
- Naiveté about political economy and illusions about technocratic omnipotence
- Political conservatism and disregard of broader social, economic, and political relationships
- Neglect of wider development linkages
- Multisectoral nutrition planning fell between sectoral stools and suffered from an identity crisis.

Field identified eleven lessons for the future of multisectoral nutrition planning. These included introducing a process dimension to nutrition planning, with increased emphasis on beneficiary participation and “backward mapping;” downgrading the importance of planning; emphasizing the need for simplicity and for subordinating analysis to action; and focusing on the implementing role of the existing sectoral ministries. This is a list that is familiar from the integrated rural development process model, except that it applies the lessons to questions of national planning rather than to project implementation.

National Food Security Planning

National food security planning has suffered from numerous organizational difficulties. The review literature has identified and described these as, among others, communication problems between government departments in Ethiopia; difficulties of donor coordination on food security in Sudan; the quality of dialogue between governments and donors, the difficulty donors face in integrating instruments in pursuit of food security; and the institutional problems of trying to link relief and development in food security planning (Belshaw 1990; Maxwell 1991; Kennes 1990; Davies 1994).

As with integrated rural development, the attempt to provide an integrated solution to the problem of food security has run into constraints of capacity, flexibility, and sustainability.

How, then, can the ideal of promoting food security as an “organizing principle” (Hindle 1990) be put into practice? The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has pioneered planning methods involving workshop sessions to develop and analyze multiple criteria tables for ranking and choosing food security interventions (Huddleston 1990). More generally, an approach to food security planning has been proposed (Maxwell 1990 p. 6) that draws on the lessons of previous experience and emphasizes:

- Integrated planning, but independent implementation (no super ministries)
- Importance of a bias to action over planning (start small and grow)

- Value of risk-taking and innovation (pilot projects)
- Importance of addressing explicitly the need for new modes of organisation in multi-disciplinary team work (task cultures, not role cultures).

These, again, are familiar themes. Davies (1994) suggests caution, however, citing Moore (1993) to the effect that many African countries may need to (re)create a public service that meets minimal Weberian requirements for competence and accountability before adopting more complex and appropriate systems. “Paradoxically,” Davies concludes, “overcoming institutional constraints...may therefore necessitate the establishment of a minimal level of apparently old style bureaucracies before these can then be reformed to respond to the complex needs of linking relief and development” (p. 52).

Poverty Planning

A wave of work on poverty followed the publication of the *World Development Report 1990: Poverty* (World Bank 1990), including a large number of poverty assessments and poverty reduction strategies. A 1994 review of World Bank work in this area in Sub-Saharan Africa identified two main areas of weakness that are relevant to a discussion of planning issues (IDS/IUED 1994).

The first was a lack of interdisciplinary analysis of poverty, particularly the lack of political and social analysis: the poverty assessments reviewed had concentrated on collecting economic (consumption) data and had neglected analysis of underlying social processes. Toye and Jackson (1996 pp. 58–59) concluded that “the analysis of the process of poverty...has been the major weak point of the Bank’s poverty assessment efforts to date...it is a critical area of weakness, given the boldness and ambition of the new poverty agenda.”

The second weakness was a lack of linkage between poverty assessments and other instruments of planning and policy. Poverty reduction strategies were designed to influence policy across the board, but it often seemed that they had little influence. Toye and Jackson noted that “there seems to be little connection between the processes of preparing the new Poverty Assessments and other tasks of country documentation, including the preparation of Public Expenditure Reviews...without any particular sensitivity to the logical links between the attempt to achieve a new antipoverty emphasis in country policies and the implications of this for changes in their public expenditure management” (p. 60).

Implicit in these criticisms is a model of preparing poverty assessments that entrusts the task to a small group that may or may not consult as widely as it should and whose report is thrown into a competitive arena with other sectoral or thematic special interests.

The World Bank has been aware of the problems, and its response throws further light on how to approach multisectoral planning. A recent task force report is remarkably frank about the difficulties of integrating poverty assessments into country assistance strategies and lending programs, and concludes that although poverty assessments “have done a reasonably good job of identifying the policy and strategy options that will assist the poor to become more active participants in the growth process, these options, typically, are not being reflected in the Bank’s assistance strategies or operations” (World Bank 1996b p. 102).

Various reasons are cited for the shortcomings, including inadequate information, complacent attitudes by governments, a willingness by Bank management to compromise on poverty in the interest of good country relations, and — important for our purposes — the

fact that “operational interests tend to be made based more on sectoral interests and less on the understanding that poverty reduction requires a multi-sectoral, integrated approach” (World Bank 1996b p. 110).

The solutions offered by the task force (World Bank 1996b, 111–12; emphasis added): are to strengthen links among the poverty assessment, the country assistance strategy, and the lending program, and to achieve this by

- Establishing poverty reduction as the pervasive organizing principle, “through the *leadership* of managers and the actions of staff”
- Establishing a strengthened *process* for preparing country assistance strategies, working with country teams, governments, donors, and other stakeholders
- Introducing *procedures* for country business plans to set out in detail how the poverty reduction strategy will feed into the Bank’s work program
- New *training* and *incentives* for staff
- Rigorous *monitoring* of how well a new poverty strategy is being implemented.

Industrial Organization

A final example of integrative planning comes from “post-Fordist” industrial organization, characterized by a move from repetitive production line routines to more flexible and responsive team work. Many of the precepts of new approaches to development planning - process planning, participation, a bias to action, and decentralization - are familiar to students of what Murray (1992) calls the “new managerialism.”⁹ It is interesting, for example, to compare Chambers’ description of process planning (see box 3) with a description of contrasting corporate cultures (box 4); the two are entirely complementary.

Many of these points emerge from a longstanding literature on organizational cultures and structures. Handy (1985 chapter 7), for example, classified organizational cultures as *power*, *role*, *task*, or *person* cultures.¹⁰ In development administration there is often a need to change traditional “role cultures” (characterized by hierarchical relationships and the prevalence of rules) into more innovative “task cultures” (in which teams come together with minimal hierarchy to engage in particular tasks). A task culture is particularly suitable for collaborative projects of the kind envisioned by the CDF.

The teamwork found in task cultures has generated a large literature of its own. Bradford and Cohen (1997) identify the ideal working environment as one in which team members share a commitment to an overarching goal; pursue open, expressive, and supportive relationships; share decisions, where possible by consensus; and look for supportive rather than authoritarian leadership. This description echoes the partnership theme running through the CDF.

The great challenge for corporate and other organizations is always how to move from one culture to another and, more generally, how to thrive in rapidly changing environments (hence the popularity of books such as *Thriving on Chaos*; (Peters 1987). Change is not easy, however; it often takes a crisis to drive change forward. Managers are advised to build “change coalitions” and to offer “quick wins” to reinforce the desire for change (Plant 1995; Kotter 1996). It is interesting to speculate what the “quick wins” will be in the case of the CDF.

Box 4. Contrasting Approaches to Corporate Organization and Planning

	Mechanistic		Organic
Closed system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting • Internal orientation • Passive consumers • Arms-length suppliers • Competition 	Open system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting • Interplay of internal and external • User-centeredness • Close, long-term supplier relations • Collaborative networks
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-planning • Concentration at centre • Detailed targets • Imposition by center 	Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from action • Participatory process • Adjustable range of targets within constraints consensus
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilayered pyramid • Vertical flow of information and command • Unitary segmented organization • Departmental specialization • Role culture • Organograms and job descriptions • Centralization of operating • Responsibility and rules and manuals • Management role: planning, command, coordination, control, organization as instrument 	Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat hierarchies • Horizontal connectedness through project teams, task forces, matrix methods, decomposed system; functional redundancy or duplication • Task culture • Clusters and project goals • Workplace autonomy • Management role: boundary management system adjustment, enabling, supporting, educating, monitoring • Organization as learning
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor as cost • Incentives through pay • Strict hierarchies • Rate for the job • Taylorization: fragmentation, de-skilled division of labor between mental and manual 	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor as asset • Incentives through quality of work • Less inequality • Incremental pay • Lower turnover • Multiskilling—requisite variety and group working

Source: Murray 1992 p. 81.

Lessons of Experience with Integrated Planning

In summarizing the lessons from previous attempts at multisectoral, holistic planning, the challenge is how to implement the shift from a role culture to a task culture, or from a blueprint approach to a process approach. Our case studies provide suggestions for practical action to be taken by program managers and policymakers. Eleven specific lessons on planning, implementation, and evaluation and public relations (adapted from Maxwell 1997) Supplement Davis' (1994) concern for minimal bureaucratic soundness:

On planning

- Articulate a clear long-term vision to structure goals and activity planning.
- Set specific short-term goals and work toward them. Focus on the task.
- Train the team to work together, with training in communication, conflict-resolution, and multidisciplinary skills.
- Build team cohesion through collaborative fieldwork and participative leadership.
- Stay close to the customer and build in participation.

On implementation

- Build in a bias to action. Start small and grow.
- Take risks and innovate. Embrace error.
- Downgrade overt integration. Apply integrated planning but independent implementation.

On evaluation and public relations

- Build in constant iteration between planning, execution, and evaluation. Be flexible.
- Monitor progress. Be publicly accountable for targets.
- Raise the profile of the topic. Raise consciousness.

Target-Based Planning

Targets are now a prominent feature of development discourse.¹¹ Many targets adopted at UN conferences provide the basis for planning in governments and donor agencies.¹² Leaving aside the question of whether the right targets and timescales have been chosen, are targets a good idea? The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) argues in favor, citing the example of the World Summit for Children in 1990, which “helped raise general awareness... .Low cost and cost-effective actions [made] it possible to achieve the goals by restructuring budgets rather than by making big increases in spending. Monitoring was also vital... .Up-to-date information [is] widely used to assess progress and mobilize and maintain support. (UNDP 1997, 111).

A contrary view sees international targets as oversimplifying and overgeneralizing complex problems. “They distort public expenditure priorities, both because they misrepresent the problem and because they privilege some sectors at the expense of others. Monitoring progress is extremely expensive and detracts from action on the ground. And the political benefits, though appreciable at first, may rapidly be lost if targets are not achieved” (Maxwell 1996c, 1998 p.79).

Simple targets may misrepresent the complex reality of life.¹³ Poverty provides a good illustration, because it is a multidimensional concept, with a large subjective component. An income or consumption measure of poverty may fail to capture important aspects of poverty, including deficiencies of access to health, education, and other services; social exclusion; powerlessness; lack of autonomy; and loss of self-esteem.¹⁴

In planning to meet targets, multidimensionality does not matter if alternative indicators are closely correlated so that any one can stand as a proxy for the others. Thus, low income might not capture the full reality of poverty, but it might serve adequately to identify the poor and to measure the extent of their deprivation. Unfortunately, it is hard to defend the assumption that this is the case. In some cases of multiple deprivation, all the indicators agree; in other circumstances they clearly do not.¹⁵ This matters because one objection to target-based planning is that targets distort policy.

Do Targets Distort Policy?

There is always a risk that a single-minded pursuit of targets will result in the distortion of policy at various levels. Some sectors are privileged above others. Those that have been the subject of an international conference are likely to benefit from target-driven increases in resources. Those that are less fortunate are likely to become the orphans of public expenditure reviews. The DAC targets provide a case in point. They have become hege-

monic in international discourse, even though they are deliberately selective. It is not clear why the nutrition goals of the World Summit for Children or the International Conference on Nutrition were not incorporated, for example (WFS 1996, 1; UNICEF 1990; FAO and WHO 1992). Leaving these out would not matter if everything were strongly correlated to everything else — but this is rarely the case.

What Is the Opportunity Cost of Monitoring Progress?

In a liberalized economy public expenditure is the main instrument of economic policy, and the public expenditure process is the main arena in which arbitration between competing policy priorities takes place. Monitoring progress toward targets is itself a public expenditure and therefore has an opportunity cost. How high the cost is depends on the complexity of the targets. Simple-sounding targets may be difficult to measure. In halving dollar-a-day poverty, for example, what assumptions are to be made about purchasing power, variability in prices, the valuation of subsistence production, seasonal or other variations in income, or intrahousehold distribution? These are not trivial problems.¹⁶

These difficulties are multiplied if the targets are broadened to include nonmonetary aspects.¹⁷ Some people have argued that the use of participatory methods can cut through the complexity, give a higher priority to people's own perceptions, and simultaneously cut costs. Participatory methods are certainly ethically attractive and greatly enrich analysis, but their very diversity makes it difficult to aggregate their findings and thus difficult to use them to monitor international targets.¹⁸

Leaving aside the feasibility or desirability of deriving generalizable explanations,¹⁹ we are still left with a problem. If targets work, they do so because progress toward them can be monitored. But monitoring is expensive, and the more subtle the targets, the more expensive monitoring is likely to be. This cost must be measured in the time of scarce skilled professionals as well as in money. Measurement may become the dominant activity of policymakers: the DAC targets and the follow-up to the World Food Summit increased the workload for statisticians and advisers in the development ministries of OECD countries. The investment in information may not be matched by investment in action, with a “missing link” between analysis and response (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995).

Can Unrealistic Targets Destroy Political Momentum?

A final question concerns the political value of targets. The justification for targets is that they can mobilize and sustain political support for actions to help the poor. This they clearly do. The use of the DAC targets has been impressive, for example, in the UK White Paper on development and in the political discourse that surrounds it.

Management texts remind us that teams thrive on goals that are SMART (stretching, measurable, agreed, recorded, and time-limited; Leigh and Maynard 1995 p. 220).²⁰ The DAC targets appear to succeed as SMART goals - with a qualification regarding the degree to which they are agreed. The wording of the core DAC target is stronger than the wording of the international conference (the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit) from which it was derived, which merely stated that countries would define and work toward poverty targets. In this sense the more specific DAC target for poverty reduction is not

“agreed” to by the governments of the developing world, who will have to carry the main burden of implementation.

Targets may also fail because they appear to be unrealistic and set too far in the future. Goals should be stretching, so it is acceptable that they may initially appear unrealistic. If targets appear to be hopelessly ambitious, however, planners will fail to mobilize the support required to transform aspirations into outcomes. Shorter horizons are more effective: the private sector, for example, generally aims to reduce two or three year deadlines to practical incremental steps in order to generate commitment and action (Leigh and Maynard 1995 pp. 62, 64).

It is thus hard not to be a little cynical about the current enthusiasm for ambitious development targets. Many past targets have been disturbingly aspirational and have not been met. The DAC 21st century targets run the same risk. A 20-year time horizon is part of the problem. Most of the civil servants who devised these targets, and most of the politicians who use them, will not still be active in 2015. UNICEF's approach of setting mid-decade targets for the World Summit for Children goals may be the right one.

Lessons for Target-Based Planning

A target-based approach to development planning is like the curate's egg: excellent in parts. The translation of SMART targets from management theory to international development has many political attractions, galvanizing opinion and concentrating minds. But not all targets are SMART, and a certain cynicism is understandable when the same targets reappear at regular intervals. Targets are reductionist, may distort spending plans, can be expensive to monitor, and entail political risks if not met. Those whose job it is to devise targets should think hard about appropriate time horizons (five years maximum?) and ambitions (stretching, but not to the breaking point).

We should also acknowledge that targets (particularly international targets) have only a tenuous connection to national planning. In assisting in national processes, donors should be guided by a different epistemology, one that recognizes the diversity and complexity of real-world situations and that builds on the knowledge, insights, and ideas of partners.

Finally, we should understand that the very number of national action plans engendered by international conferences now poses real problems for planners in developing countries (despite the great deal of overlap between plans required for different purposes). We also need to recognize that national action plans, in keeping with SMART principles, exhibit a top-down approach. There is a need to temper this approach with a more open, participatory process planning approach, in which poverty features prominently, but with no requirement that any given international target will feature at all.

Conclusion

Lessons for the Comprehensive Development Framework

Failures of planning coordination occur in the large and professionally trained bureaucracies of the advanced economies, where planners are subject to the scrutiny of organized civil society (community or environmental groups, business associations, and a free press).²¹ It should not then be surprising that planning failures are common in the developing world, where states are often underendowed with material or human capital and lack good social and economic information on which to base planning decisions, and where civil society may lack the security or institutions to challenge state planning prescriptions.

There are thus strong arguments for new approaches to planning, approaches in which disciplinary perspectives, actors, and sectors behave in a more integrated (or holistic) manner and in which targets are used to monitor and drive performance. Yet these approaches are themselves not without problems. The lessons from earlier attempts at holistic planning tell us that:

- Planning needs to move from a blueprint to a process approach. We need to acknowledge that reality is complex and information imperfect and that planning will have to be flexible enough to account for and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Complex, ambitious efforts at multisector or multiagency planning have tended to fail. In holistic approaches to planning it is better to start small, achieve initial successes in order to establish credibility and enthusiasm, and then expand in stages. The actors involved need to develop clear, short- to medium-term goals; allocate tasks to meet these goals; and build on these successes to address more complex problems (Maxwell 1997 p. 524).
- Tempting though it may be, it is best to avoid delegating responsibility for integrated planning problems to separate “super-institutions” created specifically for the task. Experience suggests that these are either ineffectual in the short term (unable to assert themselves in relationships with established line structures and local government) or unproductive and unsustainable in the long term (failing to influence the practices of parallel mainstream structures and sustained only by donor funds). This is especially likely when, as in the case of integrated rural development or river basin development, integrated planning bodies take the form of regional structures that attempt to claim (but in fact often merely duplicate) the responsibilities of the existing, regional departments of national ministries. New bodies should instead be given responsibility for coordinating the relevant elements of existing organizations.
- Even with these more limited goals it is necessary to rein in ambition. Integrated implementation is often too complex and cumbersome for existing structures. It is better to agree on an analysis of the problem and, on this basis, on a division of tasks among the

various organizations involved. These contributions to the overall goal, agreed among partners, should be semi-independent (although sequencing will require some tasks to be implemented before others can begin). Integrated planning institutions should thus see their primary role as encouraging cross-ministerial analysis and obtaining agreement on the division of labor to tackle intersectoral problems. This is encapsulated in the advice to planners to pursue “integrated planning but not integrated implementation” (Maxwell 1997 p. 522).

- There can be problems with this approach too: it predisposes those involved toward perceiving intersectoral planning as a series of clearly defined steps (analysis, division of tasks, implementation by existing authorities according to this agreed plan), when it should more properly be seen as a continuous and recursive process. It is necessary to institutionalize the process of coordinated planning, with successive rounds of analysis, allocation of tasks, implementation, and evaluation driven by the coordinating body. This approach requires both regular interministerial meetings and improvements in routine communication between different government institutions. Independent “policing” bodies - perhaps a committee reporting directly to the prime minister’s office, as in river basin planning in the Philippines, or a capable local grassroots organization - can be used to oversee progress, in both interministerial and central-local coordination.
- In pursuing integration in planning, it is necessary to invest effort in changing the work culture of the organizations involved. Most governments or development assistance agencies can be categorized as role cultures, based on clearly demarcated duties reflecting technical or statutory specializations. Interorganizational partnerships formed to address intersectoral problems require a move away from a rigid role culture in the direction of a team-based, objective-oriented task culture.

There is some overlap between these prescriptions (or, to be less didactic, observations) and those that emerge from a review of the precepts of target-based planning. Targets can serve as the locus for national ownership of policy and donor coordination. But, as top-down influences on the planning and policy process, targets can also distort decisionmaking. The most influential targets tend to be determined at the international level. There is a danger that as national governments and the country managers of bilateral and multilateral agencies try to incorporate these targets in their planning processes, agreement on goals (essential for coordination and integrated planning) will slip into blueprint planning. It is necessary to remember that:

- The use of global targets based on measurable indicators can obscure national and local variations around a global problem. Targets will be most useful if they are derived or operationalized in a consultative or participatory manner: ownership of the analysis both improves the quality of that analysis and strengthens commitment to the targets that emerge from it.
- Actions that are chosen because they are most likely to result in desirable changes are not always exactly the same as actions that are most likely to result in *measurable* changes. There is a danger that a one-size-fits all application of targets can bias planning decisions away from actions likely to result in desirable change to actions likely to result in measurable change. Emphasis on targets may then divert limited resources into measurement rather than action.

- Donors using targets to guide the work they execute in partnership with governments need to walk a careful path. They need to use targets to drive action, but must simultaneously remain open to the possibility that targets may be inappropriate or unmeasurable - or may come to be so in the future. Targets should be pitched to encourage all partners to strive harder for essential improvements, but not pitched at an unattainable level, which will discourage efforts. Targets need to be based on a realistic appraisal of the likelihood that they might be achieved.

It is possible from both the literature and experience to synthesize some “dos and don’ts” for the CDF. These are summarized in box 5.

Box 5. Dos and Don’ts for the Comprehensive Development Framework

Do

- Encourage a broad-based debate in the country.
- Expect the government to develop a strategic development vision.
- Talk to the government about areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Set SMART (stretching, measurable, agreed, recorded, and time-limited) targets.
- Reinforce government leadership (for example, through the ministry of finance).
- Invest in training and capacity building.
- Find ways to disburse quickly.
- Revise plans frequently.
- Build two-way accountability.

Don’t

- Be naive about the expression of a single national consensus. A statement of consensus is a necessary condition for the initiation of donor cooperation, but this consensus will always be contested and subject to change in the future.
- Expect to agree with every word.
- Impose rigid conditionalities.
- Simply replicate international targets, without local adaptation.
- Develop piecemeal plans with sectoral ministries.
- Make unrealistic demands for data, accounts, and the like.
- Insist on the perfect plan before starting to implement.
- Insist on a rigid logical framework.
- Set performance standards for recipients without also setting performance standards for donors.

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Endnotes

1. This section draws on Maxwell (1997).
2. See also Scott (1998) and, for an extreme position, Escobar (1992).
3. The slightly old-fashioned use of the word *planning* in a national, macroeconomic context—where today it is more likely that *policy* or *management* would be used instead—can be seen in the entry under *Planning* in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (Vohra 1987 pp. 885-891), or in the chapter headings that fall under “planning and resource management” in Volume II of the *Handbook of Development Economics* (Chenery and Srinivasan 1989).
4. Wolfensohn (1999) uses this definition of the Bank’s work to distinguish it from the International Monetary Fund, whose primary role is macroeconomic stabilization and surveillance.
5. See, for example, Korten (1980); Korten and Klauss (1984); Gwyer and Morris (1984); Rondinelli (1983); and Chambers (1993).
6. Crener *et al* 1984 p. 40ff.
7. See bibliography in Birgegard (1987), especially footnote 2.
8. Despite disagreement on details, others concur with the main points of this diagnosis, especially with regard to the large-scale multisectoral systems analysis projects of the 1970s (Berg and others 1990; Levinson 1995).
9. See also Peters and Waterman (1982) and Peters (1987).
10. See also Moris (1989), reproduced in Maxwell (1997, 517-18).
11. This section draws on elements of Maxwell (1998).
12. A selection of targets has been drawn together as the DAC goals (OECD/DAC 1996) and have in turn influenced national policy statements (for example, UK 1997).
13. Reductionism is, of course, a general problem in development research; see Chambers (1997 p. 42).
14. See, for example, UNDP (1997 pp. 15-16); Baulch (1996a); Chambers (1983); and Shaffer (1996).
15. UNDP notes that: “Someone can enjoy good health and live quite long but be illiterate and thus cut off from learning, from communication and from interaction with others;...[or someone] may be literate and quite well educated but prone to premature death because of the epidemic ecological characteristics or physical disposition;...[or someone] may be excluded from participating in the important decision-making processes affecting her life. The deprivation of none of them can be fully captured by the level of their income” (UNDP 1997 p. 16).

16. See Hanmer and others (1997 Section 8.3) for a review of “problematic” money-metric poverty assessments in Sub-Saharan Africa.

17. See, for example, Oppenheim and Harker (1996) and CESIS (1997), cited in Maxwell 1998.

18. Compare Chambers (1997) and Baulch (1996b p. 39–40).

19. Baulch (1996b) accepts that participatory methods yield diverse pictures of poverty and dismisses them because no replicable answers emerge. The proponents of poverty reduction assessments argue that this is a core strength, that there *are* no simple answers, and that policy needs to avoid reductionism and adapt to the complex reality on the ground (Chambers 1997): an approach I have dubbed “post-modern” (Maxwell 1996b).

20. In private and public sector organizations targets are in common use to motivate employees and monitor progress: thus “the purpose of clear goals is to ensure that people know what the team is trying to achieve, mobilising their enthusiasm, curiosity, energy, creativity and talent. Goals justify the team’s existence” (Leigh and Maynard 1995 p. 52).

21. In the United Kingdom, for example, there has in recent years been more attention to the lack of “joined-up thinking” about issues of poverty and social exclusion (see Oppenheim 1998).